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PATTERNS OF PERCEPTION IN AESCHYLUS[*]

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> Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae*…, it is rather an active
> and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression…—
> [a] so-called "incorporation."
>
> —Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*

I. INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I will take up a number of issues that bear on the limits and licenses of interpretation as they are currently conceived in Aeschylean scholarship. These, in turn, crucially affect the way in which certain stock elements of a play are viewed, such as characterization, development, division of scenes, and imagery—all of which, I will argue, need to be carefully reconceived. For the sake of illustration, I offer the following set of readings, the status of which is meant to stand somewhere between a program and an exegesis. Again for the sake of illustration, and for economy of space, the primary focus in this essay will be *Agamemnon*, although I wish to claim that what makes possible and so to speak governs the logic of these readings not only is at work in the rest of the trilogy, but is inescapably so. For the force of various meaning-effects that are generated from *Agamemnon*, once "introjected" into the text, may be resisted in the sequel, but they cannot be disavowed or effaced, nor even "contained":[1] the Erinyes cannot be made to vanish. Furthermore, at stake in the *Oresteia* is as much the process of signifying as the significations themselves, and it is this signifying process, the positing and construction of value,[2] that Aeschylus exposes from the start, and that he requires us to interrogate no less painstakingly than any meanings which can be alienated from it. To divide up and then disavow the signifying process (only, say, to affirm the "happier" portion, e.g., the bright finale of the trilogy), Aeschylus seems to be saying, even as he encourages this response, is to stumble into helpless contradiction.[3] Arguments of this nature, plus occasional references to the *Eumenides* along the way, will have to serve as a sketch towards a reading of that play which would be consistent with the reading of *Agamemnon* to be offered below. Even this momentary, selective reading of *Agamemnon* will be a regrettable shorthand for what in fact demands the minutest commentative scrutiny.

[32]II. INTERPRETATION AS TROPE

As is true of any endeavour to understand or appreciate, interpretations will only be as responsive to a text as the richness of the interpreters' assumptions will allow. The underlying rationale of Aeschylean criticism, particularly criticism of the *Oresteia*,[4] has with few exceptions been a direct descendant of Casaubon's early intuitions into Aeschylus, what Fraenkel styles "Casaubon's *ars interpretandi*." Two of Casaubon's marginalia, cited by Fraenkel, yield exemplary, programmatic rules of this interpretive technique: "*debemus notare … Aeschylum solitum esse quod dixit obscuris verbis postea quid intelligat explicare*"; and "*ut iam diximus semper solet Aeschylus illa quae satis obscure dixit postea illustrare clariori sententia*."[5] It is perhaps to Fraenkel more than to anyone else that we owe the current reformulation of these insights into Aeschylus' style. Crossing terms from grammar and stylistics, Fraenkel glosses Casaubon's notion of the progressive clarification and resolution of Aeschylean meaning with terms like "γρῖφος" (*griphos*, "riddle"), "epexegesis," "kenning," "apposition," and the "*guttatim*" mode.[6] For Fraenkel, epexegesis in Aeschylus has reference mainly to local meaning, although the tenor of the trope of explication carries with it a global reference to an Aeschylean semantics: meaning simply is the unfolding, decrypting, of meaning. The distribution and frequency of such *griphoi* alone can be taken to justify the conversion of a local technique into a general principle of interpretation. Thus, Lebeck's treatment of image patterns is premised on the assumption of a forward progression of meaning that results in "clear statement." Image systems are a *griphos* writ large, as is, evidently, the *Oresteia* itself: "Prolepsis and gradual development of recurrent imagery, along with the corollary, movement from enigmatic utterance to clear statement, from riddle to solution, dominate the structure of the *Oresteia*."[7] Lebeck's working assumption, which is Fraenkel's as it was Casaubon's, epitomizes the interpretive bias of an entire generation of scholars, the effects of which are still detectable in more recent treatments.[8]

It is perhaps not unsurprising that with so much agreement about the laws governing the semantic properties of a play or trilogy there has been so little unanimity about what constitutes "clarity" and what "statement" in plays like those of the *Oresteia*. There are other intrinsic difficulties with the conception of meaning as something proleptically driven towards its solution, on the model of the *griphos*. First, what prompts us to label something enigmatic is generally also what allows us to identify its "explication." This coherence of riddle and solution can work both for and against the idea of "resolved" meaning. Fraenkel was alive to the contradictions a term like *griphos* implies: "every reader must be struck by his anxiety to append (*sic*) an unambiguous solution, although this runs counter to the nature of the *griphos* and impairs its effect" (p. 9). Do we, however, find genuine solutions in the text of Aeschylus, or are these not perhaps the offspring of our self-inflicted anxieties about exegesis? In other words, is a classic instance like διψία κόνις (*Ag.* 495) itself a *griphos* or a solution to one, e.g. to κάσις πηλοῦ ξύνουρος (494-95), as it is usually read?[9]

Or to take another, more involved case, are the eagles of the omen first darkly named with πτανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρός by Calchas (135) and then glossed **[33]**two lines later with the "explanatory" αἰετῶν? Or are these "eagles" and their feasting themselves not rather a *griphos* susceptible of—and in fact requiring—another level of comprehension (with the eagles viewed as φάσματα, viz. as ξύμβολα, 144-45)? Whether such a requirement is ever totally satisfied is another question, and warrants a momentary digression. For if Calchas authorizes the trading of "eagles" for the Atreidae (124), echoes from an earlier context would appear to have rendered his authority redundant, at first glance, and then altogether inadequate. Here a *griphos* acts like a condensed periphrasis and sends us *back* approximately 75 lines, to the gyres of the vulture simile (49-54).[10] And although the simile purportedly is to the Atreidae, the echoes are not overt, nor do they address us to a proper name, but only to a trope (τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν, 49), and a complex one at that:

> τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν οἵτ' ἐκπατίοις
> ἄλγεσι παίδων ὕπατοι **λεχέων**
> **στροφοδινοῦνται**
> πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι,
> **δεμνιοτήρη**
> **πόνον** ὀρταλίχων ὀλέσαντες·   (49-54)

The language circles about its referent in the same "frustrated motion" as that displayed by the vultures, whose circlings about conflict, as Rosenmeyer keenly observes (p. 126), with the "linearity" of the military expedition to which the image is likened. The frustrations go a stage further. The active circlings are also a "being rowed" (ἐρεσσόμενοι): the birds (and the Atreidae, or the Greek host) are the subject and object of their own actions. One could, perhaps, dissolve this tension by referring it to the mixed medium of the metaphoric vehicle: the Atreidae, directors of their expedition, will in fact be borne to their destination.[11] But borne, precisely, by whom? "Either Apollo, Pan, or Zeus" sends (**πέμπει**) an Erinys (59), who through the logic of simile turns back into the children of Atreus (Ἀτρέως παῖδας …/… **πέμπει ξένιος / Ζεύς**, 60-62), and "things now stand as they are" (67). Or as they were, at 123ff., when Calchas saw in the eagles his warlords,

> Ἀτρεΐδας μαχίμους ἐδάη λαγοδαίτας,
> **πομποὺς ἀρχάς**   (123-24)

_____

124 Thiersch, Fraenkel : πομπούς τ' ἀρχάς MV, πομπούς τ' ἀρχούς FTr, πομπᾶς ἀρχούς Karsten, πομποὺς ἀρχᾶς Rauchenstein, Denniston-Page

The text is troubled, but equally troubling. In defense of πομποὺς ἀρχάς, Fraenkel (pp. 76-77) points to the immediately preceding lines, where the Atreidae and their host are the object of yet another πέμπει (Ἀχαιῶν δίθρονον κράτος … / **πέμπει** … / θούριος ὄρνις / Τευκρίδ' **ἐπ'** αἶαν, 109-11), that is, "where the relation is established between the eagles and the Atridae" (the Atreidae have been *sent*),[12] but then oddly concludes that πομπούς must mean

"the *conducting* chiefs" (p. 77).[13] I am less interested in the logic that goes into reconstructing a minor manuscript error, which is plausible enough,[14] than in the discrepancy between $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\epsilon\iota$ and $\pi o\mu\pi o\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$ that this line of reasoning produces and then ignores in order to salvage the text. Rauchenstein, avoiding **[34]**the discrepancy, read $\pi o\mu\pi o\grave{\upsilon}\varsigma$ $\mathring{\alpha}\rho\chi\hat{\alpha}\varsigma$, and created an apposition with $\lambda\alpha\gamma o\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\tau\alpha\varsigma$: "those who send forth, who prepare the way for, the chieftains."[15] Fraenkel admits the possibility of this reading, only to reject it on the grounds of "simplicity and clarity" (p. 77). He never explicitly says what he finds complicated and unclear in Rauchenstein's rendering, unless it is the harsh juxtaposition of the two antithetical nouns, $\pi o\mu\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$ and $\mathring{\alpha}\rho\chi\acute{\eta}$ (which his own reading attempts to eliminate). It is quite possible, however, that the echo with $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\epsilon\iota$ is there to generate complexities equal to the complexity of the situation at hand, even at the cost of oxymoron. Parallels are numerous: $\nu\acute{o}\mu o\varsigma$ $\mathring{\alpha}\nu o\mu o\varsigma$ (1142) is one, possibly $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\iota$ $\mu o\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ (293) is another;[16] $\pi\rho\hat{\omega}\tau o\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$ $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\tau\alpha\hat{\iota}o\varsigma$ (314), and especially $\mathring{\epsilon}\boldsymbol{\mu}\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}o\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\alpha\iota\sigma\iota$ $\boldsymbol{\sigma\upsilon\mu}\pi\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega\nu$ (187), come closer thematically to the present instance.[17] The real juxtaposition, then, is between $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\epsilon\iota$ and $\mathring{\alpha}\rho\chi\acute{\eta}$, and no amount of textual emendation can remove it.[18]

Fraenkel notwithstanding, a shudder of indecision in the adjective $\pi o\mu\pi o\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$ (if that is what it is)[19] seems difficult to evade: is it "sending," or does it not rather imply "having been sent"?[20] An ambiguity in the force of the adjective $\pi o\mu\pi o\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$, owing at the very least to context, if not to the nature of the word,[21] is conceivable, on the model of $\phi\acute{\alpha}o\varsigma$ $\tau\eta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi o\mu\pi o\nu$ in line 300, which is generally taken by commentators as a passive,[22] but which then arguably exerts some ambiguous force on the closely preceding $\pi o\mu\pi o\hat{\upsilon}$ $\pi\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ (299), which is universally construed as an active:[23] the light, however, is both sending and being sent (it is Hephaestus, after all, the very personification of fire, who initiates the sequence in 281)—an effect which looks intentionally circular, expressed as though in a language that deliberately effaces differences before a self-propagating and all-consuming brilliance: $\phi\rho\upsilon\kappa\tau\grave{o}\varsigma$ $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$ $\phi\rho\upsilon\kappa\tau\grave{o}\nu$ ... / $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\mu\pi\epsilon\nu$ (282-83). $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\omega$ in the Beacon Speech is only a figure of speech, and the very fact that the self-same light can be said to send and be sent seems to be an advertisement of the figurative quality not only of the sending, but of the light itself. Is the same true, or being shown true, of $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\omega$ (not to say, light) elsewhere in the play?

Made to apply to $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\epsilon\iota$ in 110, this will take us closer, not to Agamemnon's or to any individual "will," but to the large patterns of meaning in which questions about volition, action, and results must ultimately be framed, and addressed. Like the beacons, the Greek chiefs, though "conducting" their army, are at the same time being "sent" on their mission by the questionably auspicious example of Zeus' eagle, and ultimately by Zeus himself (109, 60). Menelaus and Agamemnon are of course in some sense sending themselves too. But this "too" is an all-important qualification: Aeschylus is not interested in exploring autonomous volition (or autonomous signification); if anything, he is interested in demolishing these notions. The

Atreidae, and especially Agamemnon, are in a profound sense "θεήλατοι" (cf. 1297)—that is, "plot-driven," defined in and by their (con)textual environment.[24] It is no accident that what is said of Helen holds *pari passu* for the Greeks: *συμένα Πριαμίδαισιν*, / **πομπᾶι Διὸς ξενίου**, / *νυμφόκλαυτος* **Ἐρινύς** (747-49); the resonances (emphasized here) with lines 59-62 (cited above) are unmistakeable. All of this is just a further example of a well-known fact: the **[35]**play turns obsessively on the issue of original sin, and thus too, of original sense.[25]   But each hopeful locus of a first cause is dislocated by the very language in which it is relayed, tautologously: Hephaestus (fire) "sends" fire; Zeus and the Atreidae are simultaneously the ἀρχή (cf. 1192, *πρώταρχον*); Persuasion (Peitho) is the unbearable child of (the persuasions of) *fore*counseling (*προβούλου*)[26] and unbearable Ate (385-86); Helen is the Erinys that the Greeks approximate, in order to lay their claim to Helen, and so on.[27]   To paraphrase the problem in somewhat different terms, apart from this ravaged logic of cause and effect, which is the very root of the play's magnificent ambiguities and ironies, *Agamemnon*, indeed the trilogy as a whole, is structured on another kind of tautology: there is a tendency towards the (partial) conflation of agents and actions in Aeschylus, through the presence of verbal repetitions and structural echoes, like the uncanny near-identification of Helen and the Greek expedition that set out to regain her. This feature of Aeschylean artistry, which might be termed the "Aeschylean uncanny" (in order to pay homage to the psychological effects of the technique), or else homophonic (158: *τοῖς δ' ὁμόφωνον*) "similar differences" (in order to emphasize the structural homologies of the text), has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the past.[28]

    It is not by accident, moreover, that the hunt for meaningful quarry leads us *away*, rather than back to our departure point, i.e., the *griphos* supposedly contained in *πτανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρός*. The *griphos* was said to have been resolved in *αἰετῶν*, but the solution drew us in turn—anaphorically, not proleptically—to earlier passages, and then forward—metaleptically, not proleptically—to later passages. In the attempt to locate meaning we discovered the edge of a complex structure of meanings. The "reference" contained in *αἰετῶν*, rather than unravelling the *griphos* it purportedly glossed, directed us, not to a word, image or idea, but to a structural feature of the play's diction. The attempt to isolate meaning carries with it the risk of destroying meaning altogether: if we try to unravel a thread of meaning at any one moment in the play and tug at it alone, we shall eventually unravel the play instead. What readers locate in a *griphos*, in other words, is not a singular event of meaning, but something that is always a matter of "other words": the Aeschylean self-alluding and "homophonic" text is in ceaseless motion, and its self-motions spread in all directions simultaneously. It is the frailty of the critical act that it cannot present its object in all of its ideal simultaneity: but this is also the ambition of criticism, just as, I will argue, it was the ambition of the implicit poetics of Aeschylus.

Let us briefly take stock. In juxtaposing, to the point of conflating, active and passive actions, causes and effects, and prior and subsequent temporalities, Aeschylus is characteristically engaging meaning from all its sides at once. The result is not a progressive "clarification" of meaning; neither is it a progressive obfuscation and "darkening" of sense.[29] These alternatives, standing in stark opposition, are merely conditioned, causal reflexes of one another. And yet it is this very sort of opposition that Aeschylus' poetics seems to erode, in the very process of eroding the causalities in the play that would also govern their interpretation from outside the play.

[36]The *griphos* which we have been discussing is by no means exhausted, or to paraphrase its sister riddle from which we set out, "dried up." Further "homophones" ensure that the play of meanings will go unresolved. For if the vulture simile quoted above (especially the words **ὕπατοι λεχέων στροφοδινοῦνται**) will be recalled in a later echo, supplying the perverse antithesis to the parental image (λέοντ᾽ ἄναλκιν ἐν λέχει στρωφώμενον, 1224), it more immediately recalls the play's opening lines: the **δεμνιοτήρη πόνον** of the vultures echoes and in fact summarizes the Watchman's self-described task (which requires him to keep a νυκτίπλαγκτον **εὐνήν**, 12-13; cf. νυκτίπλαγκτος **πόνος**, 330). What are the boundaries of an image? The antithesis (the perversion) mentioned here is of course already implicit in the construction of the image of the vultures at 49-54, nor can that "image" be isolated from its surroundings, which are equally at play in its construction. One might insist, at this point, that δεμνιοτήρη πόνον (53f.) is itself a *griphos*, to be explicated by the genitive that follows it, ὀρταλίχων. If I am right, the overdetermination of πόνος (*ponos*, "toil") at 54, through its association with an earlier *ponos* from the prologue (to be discussed presently), would make all such explication problematic. The *ponos* of v. 54 is, however, itself already overburdened with charges: it describes a locus of impossibilities, less a textual (un)riddling than a *textual (be)laboring*. The logic of causation, which the simile allegedly is there to illustrate, collapses under its own weight: "For it turns out that the loss of a dear one and the killing of the young are suffered and performed by one and the same agent, at one and the same time."[30] The ambiguity in the meaning of ὀλέσαντες (54), an ambiguity that governs δεμνιοτήρη πόνον, certainly supports this reading of the passage; indeed, it imports into these lines their own "eventual" complication. Shortly, we shall see that *ponos*, in the wake of the prologue, carries with it the connotations of another kind of impossibility as well. These, in turn, will be reasserted towards the end of the play, where the only other occurrence of δεμνιοτήρης is found, in a passage that encapsulates some of the key themes of the Watchman's prologue, though in an extremer, because more hauntingly "uncanny," form:

> φεῦ, τίς ἂν ἐν τάχει μὴ **περιώδυνος**
>   **μηδὲ δεμνιοτήρης**
> μόλοι τὸν αἰεὶ φέρουσ᾽ ἐν ἡμῖν
> μοῖρ᾽ ἀτέλευτον **ὕπνον**, **δαμέντος**
> **φύλακος** εὐμενεστάτου

πολλὰ τλάντος γυναικὸς διαί;   (1448-53)
With this passage in mind, we should turn to the prologue proper.

III. INTERPRETATION AS RESISTANCE: (COUNTER)SETTING AN EXAMPLE
        ὄψιν ἄβυσσον   —*Suppl.* 1058
        Ist Sehen nicht selber—Abgründe sehen?
                                —Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*

    The Watchman (Φύλαξ, *Phulax*) who speaks the prologue of *Agamemnon* has been the subject of much critical discussion, but his function remains nonetheless a cipher.[31] He has proved capable of arousing the widest variety of responses—compassion, amusement, disparagement, mystification—**[37]**not infrequently in a single observer alone. There are reasons to suppose that this prismatic effect of character has a correlate in the way in which Aeschylus has framed the prologue. Let us consider only one of the most telling of the responses to the prologue, namely the affirmation, which is widely held, that there is something non-functional, something obscure and incoherent, not to say irrelevant, about the Watchman—whether this failure to cohere is revealed in his physical posture or through his loosely organized thoughts—, even as his indispensability as a προλογίζων (his indispensability as scene-setter and information-passer) is conceded. Thus it can be said of him, "The man's scanning of the stars has been casual and secondary and done over the course of a year's long and tedious watch: *it was his diversion, not his task.*"[32] Or else, reading this incoherence into the Watchman's mind, it can be said that the second word to pass through his lips, a μέν *solitarium*, is "a syntactic device [used] to characterize a speech which is itself asyntactical, without coherence."[33] All of this stands in general accord with Fraenkel's powerful summary of the situation, which has never been questioned, and at best has only been modified: "Drop by drop, one by one, ideas and images form in his weary head, and as they come he gives them utterance, advancing to clearer and more forceful expression of his experience."[34] This "mute and reluctant spectator"[35] is "oppressed by the weight of the immediate and fails to recognize larger issues."[36]   His expression may advance "*guttatim*" to a more forceful clarification, but only within the limits that define him as a character: "In his limited sphere this character is perfectly presented."[37]

    If there were space, I would want, at this point, to open the question of just what constitutes our notion of "dramatic purpose," what are the kinds of subordinations it generally entails, and how it is linked to an assumed natural teleology of the gaze. I would also want to question the assumption, to which each of these issues is closely tied, of the functional incoherence of the Watchman, and demonstrate that the Watchman is more lucid and coherent— about a reality that is itself in many respects incoherent—than has previously been allowed. Moreover, as a reflection on the prologue would bear out, Aeschylus is concerned to complicate beyond any simple intuitions the concept of "spectacle" (the *phulax* is after all—although this is rarely acknowledged and

its implications rarely realized—a figure for the spectator), and to render vision into something *irreducible* to what is viewed—into a metaphor, we might say, for the series of relations that constitute a drama. But, as I said, all of this will have to be suggested rather than argued closely, in the brief space of the few pages that follow.

The attempt to "resolve" the dissonance of the Watchman's occupations by effacing them before his (dramatic) function would appear to have been suggested by the very language of the prologue: it is, one could say, the attempt to resolve his *ponoi* into their ultimate ἀπαλλαγή (*apallagê*, "release"). This transit has all the marks of a *griphos*. Have the need for dramatic resolution and the need for semantic release been turned into the cause of each other's effect? Another approach is necessary. Only once we have established the exact nature of the Watchman's *ponoi* will it be possible to determine what their *apallagê* might consist in. And only so will we be able to **[38]**come to terms with the cipher that is the Watchman. Let us begin with his posture, which is defined appositively, if hazily, after the first of two appearances (in ring composition) of the expression *apallagê ponôn* (1, 20): φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἣν κοιμώμενος / στέγαις Ἀτρειδῶν ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην (2-3). The phrase κυνὸς δίκην has generally been taken to signify the physical position or posture of the Watchman, as though it were a mere gloss on the much debated ἄγκαθεν.[38] Robert Renehan has surveyed the information on this term recently, and I do not wish to dispute his findings.[39] Denniston-Page have observed, rightly or wrongly, that "a man in such an attitude [viz. "resting on his own arms (or elbows)"] would not noticeably resemble a dog," but the stronger point can be made that κυνὸς δίκην need not, and should not, be construed narrowly as a gloss on the preceding word. It can easily cover the whole of the initial three lines—glossing in particular φρουρά and all that this word entails—, and there are parallels from elsewhere in the play to make this abundantly clear. Two will suffice: Clytemnestra's "semiotic" fidelity (having guarded, ἐν μήκει χρόνου, the σημαντήριον, 609-10 [compare φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, 2; and cf. 26, 269, 316], she too can lay claim to the title of δωμάτων κύνα, 607), and Cassandra's powers of unriddling and clairvoyance (1093-94).   All three examples occur in emphatic final position; the third is a precise echo of the first.[40] κυνὸς δίκην in the latter cases is emphatically *not* tied to physical position or posture, nor is there any reason to suppose that it is so restricted in the case of the Watchman. A close analysis of the language of the prologue, and a comparison with the prologue of *Choephoroi* (especially 4-7 and 10-12), would bear out what can only be indicated in outline here. For now, let us simply observe that the Watchman's labors are defined by his semiotic competence, this very faculty of watchfulness (*tueor*), which in turn defines the Watchman: καὶ νῦν **φυλάσσω** λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον (8).

Defines but also threatens. What does he see? On a given reading of the Watchman, one would want to credit his vision with a larger capacity, and hence a larger meaning, than has been acknowledged heretofore.   The text provides sufficient evidence of his cognitive role (κάτοιδα, 4)[41] and of the

discerning, diacritical nature of his vision (4-7), which entails a full awareness of the modalities of causal logic (causation, necessity, or circumstantial fact all being suggested but not neatly separated).[42] The Watchman's insight covers, moreover, the crisis of the house (οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ᾽ ἄριστα **διαπονουμένου**, 19), whose *ponos* he knows to be inextricably bound up with his own: νῦν δ᾽ εὐτυχὴς γένοιτ᾽ **ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων** (20)—πόνων now doing double duty for his labors and those of the οἶκος (cf. 1). The Watchman knows more than he tells (τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλα σιγῶ, 36-39), and it is only by a convenient fiction that we confer incomprehension on this figure, as if we could not otherwise accommodate the power of his vision, which is expressed by its sheer range, and the impotency of his agency, which is plain to all.

Desperate for sleep (ἔχω / εὐνὴν ὀνείροις οὐκ ἐπισκοπουμένην / ἐμήν, 12-14), the Watchman is terrified at the consequences that this lapse of duty would bring (φόβος γὰρ ἀνθ᾽ ὕπνου παραστατεῖ, / τὸ μὴ βεβαίως βλέφαρα συμβαλεῖν ὕπνωι, 14-15). His desire is for sleep, occultation, darkness; he **[39]**would gladly "turn off" the spectacle (**βλέφαρα συμβαλεῖν**) to which he has been appointed, and subjected. The spectacle is a burden (*ponos*), a form of toil, a seeing that simultaneously seems to entail the pain of *recognition*,[43] and not least, the recognition that he is a victim of his vision. Increased awareness only heightens the painfulness, like the "cure" of a further "incision" (17).

A visual emblem for the visual, for whom the spectacle is already a burden, the Watchman resists the aesthetics of his own visual labor, and so asks for an impossible and forbidden deliverance, from "*this* very labor" of viewing (**τῶνδ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων**),[44] which is to say—if the analogy drawn above still holds—for a deliverance from spectacle.[45] This wished-for negation indeed yields something of a paradox. Thematically, it tends to bracket and annul the content of the Watchman's vision (once he is released from spectacle, spectacle will no longer be, for the Watchman); formally, it resists the very grounds on which an interpretation of the wish can be made, e.g., by the viewer (for to be released from spectacle, the Watchman can only wish this negation from within spectacle). Lines 14-19 restate this paradox in a somewhat more intricate form. Subjected to the terror of fear, the Watchman takes to mitigating his plight, significantly, by singing or humming. Song is related to sleep (to the desire to terminate vision, to the resistance to spectacle) as its antidote (ὕπνου ἀντί-μολπον), that is, as the resistance to a resistance. As it happens, the song stands in an awkward relation to the tale of the house, which is difficult, at this point, to distinguish from *Agamemnon* itself:[46] "And *when* I have a mind to sing or hum, incising this remedy of song against sleep, *then* I weep, lamenting the misfortune of this house (οἴκου τοῦδε συμφορὰν)" (tr. Lloyd-Jones). It would seem to follow that these two activities (spectacle and song) are so to speak identified in—or rather as—each other's (self-)resistance.[47]

The Watchman is not a passive, casual screen, an innocent. But neither is he wholly intelligible as a mere character. Occupying a point of tension between character, trope, and process, the figure of the Watchman is

assimilated, in the course of the prologue, into the figure of his visual activities, and everything that these entail (including their resistance). With the arrival of the signal, the Watchman finally discharges his function and exhausts his role by himself becoming the most recent link in a chain of signals: σημαίνω (26). As a later evocation of his functionality will show, the *phulax* from the prologue is only an element (not even the final element) of a much greater chain, or catalogue, of virtually identical functions (ἑκὰς δε φρυκτοῦ φῶς … **φύλαξι** σημαίνει μολόν, 293-94).[48] By so dissolving into the assemblage of signs he has been observing, the Watchman merely becomes what he always in fact was—another sign. The interpretive motions of the Watchman land him in the state of pure signhood when ultimately he lapses into a muteness, into a highly resistant, even voluble muteness, at the end of his speech. We might say that at this point he is no longer even simply a sign, but the sign of a sign, removed—by one degree only—from the hermeneutical resistances that he constitutes for the viewer in his refusal to explicate his own language:

> τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ· **βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι** μέγας
> βέβηκεν· οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι,
> σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν·   (36-38)

[40]These words are famously enigmatic, perhaps even worthy of the *griphos*-cum-solution epithet. Surprisingly, no one, to the best of my knowledge, has tried to discover a *griphos* in these lines, presumably because of the non-original, and therefore (presumably) instantaneously transparent character of the language. Instead, parallels adduced from popular speech have turned the phrase βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι into a "homely" (Denniston-Page) "proverb" (Fraenkel: "what we have is clearly a widespread proverbial phrase"), and left it to do the work of characterization, and nothing more.[49] The phrase, however, is anything but semantically inert.

The Watchman silences himself, or rather, disquietingly gags his mouth with a dense locution that is neither a *griphos* in the exegetical sense nor a riddle without solution. The act cannot help but ramify. After all, in an important sense that has been recognized by commentators since John Jones, the Watchman is the spokesman for the House of Atreus, the very φθογγή that the Watchman names (and performs) when he suggests, οἶκος δ' αὐτὸς, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι, σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν (37-38): "The Watchman lying on top of the building … is the eye and tongue and consciousness of the household asleep beneath him, and the poet's means of communicating its mood."[50] Jones' characterization of the house, and *a fortiori* its "voice," etc., has the virtue of capturing the universality of the Watchman's function. The logic of his insight has, however, a further follow-through.

One consequence of the Watchman's reverting to signhood requires that he be "present" wherever the house sees or is seen, has voice and a consciousness, is heard and comprehended—which is to say, requires that he be seen, voiced, or known throughout the course of the play (if only through allusion). Alternatively, we might view the Watchman as a kind of trace-element, whose successive transformations (reappearances or betokenings)

might tell us something about the vicissitudes of the house itself, his final disappearance coinciding, say, with a loss of consciousness, voice, or vision by the house. We have already witnessed one of the Watchman's "resurfacings" (1448-53, quoted at the end of the previous section), a passage in which the emphasized words call vividly to mind, and as it were reconstitute, his presence (περιώδυνος [cf. πόνων], δεμνιοτήρης [cf. εὐνήν], ὕπνον [cf. ὕπνωι], [δαμέντος] φύλακος [cf. φυλάσσω, etc.]).   There are many other such betokenings in *Agamemnon* (the whole of the Beacon Speech, for example, and in particular the second panel). As the Watchman dissolves into the fabric of signs about him he becomes a part of the play's substance: henceforth, he remains visible (audible) to those who have eyes for him, and vanishes, escapes notice, forgets himself and his utterances for those who do not. In his own "parting" words, μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κοὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι (39).[51]

   The repression enacted by the Watchman on his own tongue will now be enacted on the person of the Watchman. Here we turn to the most graphic portion of the parodos, the cinematic picture (ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, 242; cf. 801) of Iphigenia at the altar. It would be odd if the Watchman's presence were undetectable in this, the most memorable, and most resisted, visualization in the play. As it turns out, our expectation does not go disappointed. I excerpt the key passage:

> **[41]**φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατὴρ μετ' εὐχὰν
> **δίκαν χιμαίρας** ὕπερθε βωμοῦ
> [...]
> προνωπῆ λαβεῖν ἀέρ-
>   δην **στόματός** τε καλλιπρώι-
>   ρου **φυλακᾶι κατασχεῖν**
> **φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις**,
>
> βίαι χαλινῶν τ' **ἀναύδωι** μένει.   (231-38)

Needless to say, these lines take us directly back to the closing "enigma" of the Watchman's prologue. Common features are, to begin with, the actions of silencing (in the transitive sense: muting); the (ritual) violence alluded to or elided in the prologue and in full evidence here (euphemistic gagging); and, subtending these, the explicit verbal correspondences (**φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις** / οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ **φθογγὴν** λάβοι; **ἀναύδωι** μένει / σιγῶ; **στόματος** / γλώσσηι; **δίκαν χιμαίρας** / **βοῦς**[52]). The *phulax*, moreover, figures in both passages, reduced to a metonym for gagging here (**φυλακᾶι κατασχεῖν**), a personified gag there. (The corruption to φυλακὴν κατασχεῖν, "to keep a watch"[!], the reading of the manuscripts, suggests how easy confusion on this point can be,[53] and testifies to a conscious, and I would argue motivated, innovation on the part of Aeschylus). Does βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι tell more than it claims?   The cross-allusions between the two passages—the euphemistic close of the Watchman's speech and the sacrifice it anticipates— suggest that what the Watchman is muting (repressing), even as he "names" them, are the slaughter of Iphigenia ("for those who know"), as well as the

history of slaughters in the past of the house (for as he says, in language that calculates its imprecision, οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ' ἄριστα διαπονουμένου [οἴκου], 19).[54]   Thomson once commented on lines 37-38, "Possibly the phraseology is designed to indicate the nature of the secret." Neither he nor Denniston-Page who quote this remark pursued the issue, or divulged the secret. How much more telling is this intuition when it is referred specifically to the preceding line: the great ox weighing on the Watchman's tongue is none other than the thing that it names.[55]

IV. EXEGESIS AS EPEXEGESIS
τορὸν ἄγαν

The Watchman is by no means the only figure in the play who has difficulties keeping his eyes open. In a sense, the Chorus have been struggling with a repressed vision and knowledge from the start, beginning with the repression of the sorrows of the house of Atreus, about which we learn for the first time, in the course of the epirrhema, that "the whole city is crying them aloud (βοᾷ)" (1106). This statement is calculated to come as a shock. It roundly, and "loudly," contradicts the close of the Watchman's prologue and its pretensions to muted secrecy. It does this, however, only if we mistake the glimpse into a repressed knowledge (the admission, ἐκεῖνα δ' ἔγνων, by the Chorus in 1106) for a singular revelation at this late date in the play. But as we have been seeing, the opposition between knowledge and ignorance becomes **[42]**less and less clear-cut in the face of the much more difficult pair of terms, recognition and acknowledgment, and their complicity with denial or refusal.[56]

Any contrast between the dark sayings of the Watchman and Cassandra's final unriddling of her prophecies would be equally reductive and false. Cassandra's promise of a "bright, clear wind" (1178-80), a sudden disengagement from dark obscurity, goes unfulfilled. Her language (like that of all the members of the trilogy) is too infected with past associations, and too resistant, to free itself into meaning, into a natural clarity (ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολάς, 1180). The next lines dash that hope: her words will pile a "greater woe" into view (πρὸς αὐγάς), will produce a vision *and* its resistance. The words bracketed in parentheses here are "quotations" from the Watchman's prologue (cf. 7, 9; ἀντολή occurs in *Ag.* only in these two passages). The parallelism between Cassandra and the Watchman is rigorous, and deserves to be sketched in briefly. As mentioned, both are said to be κυνὸς δίκην (3, 1093), suggesting a common perceptual acumen. Perception, however, brings as a consequence pain. This pain, too, is shared, as the following sequence will illustrate. At 1156-61, Cassandra bemoans the fate of her people (τότε μέν), and then veers aside with an excursus into the present: νῦν δ' ἀμφὶ Κωκυτόν τε κἀχερουσίους / ὄχθους ἔοικα θεσπιωιδήσειν τάχα (1160-61).[57] The Chorus come back with the reply,

τί τόδε τορὸν ἄγαν ἔπος ἐφημίσω;
νεογνὸς ἂν ἀΐων μάθοι·
πέπληγμαι δ' ὑπαὶ δήγματι φοινίωι...   (1162-64).

The passage ought to be something of an interpretive crux: the response of the Chorus literally makes no sense. Cassandra threatened that she was *about* to hold forth in prophetic discourse. How can she have spoken in words so (painfully) clear (τορὸν ἄγαν), so plain that a child could follow them? The Chorus' response is only intelligible if they are referring to, or are anticipating, Agamemnon's imminent death (so τόδε ἔπος refers to the contents of 1160-61, which contain this idea in a semi-transparent form; n. b. νῦν δέ), which at one level—at a textual level that is simultaneously a repressed level of meaning— *they in fact are*, as we shall see in a moment. Lines 1162-64 thus carry on the work of lines 1105f., in repressing repression.

    After a few more words by the Chorus, Cassandra bursts out, ἰὼ **πόνοι πόνοι**, "O pains, sorrows!"—sorrows of her city, although the implications for Argos are almost self-evident—which lacked all **ἄκος**, all remedy. This shrill-voiced exchange occurs in the so-called epirrhematic sequence, before both parties have modulated back into rational trimeters. Some sixty lines later (1214) Cassandra breaks out into another cry, ἰοὺ ἰού, ὢ ὢ κακά, "Ah ah, oh misery!," and then goes on to mention further *ponos*, further pain, that is, now, *visual* pain:

> ὑπ' αὖ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας **πόνος**
> στροβεῖ ταράσσων φροιμίοις ⟨δυσφροιμίοις⟩.
> **ὁρᾶτε** τούσδε τοὺς δόμοις ἐφημένους
> νέους, ὀνείρων προσφερεῖς μορφώμασιν;   (1215-18)

The vision, or preview, is of a genealogical image of the crimes of the House of Atreus.[58] Further on, Cassandra prays for a speedy end (ἐπεύχομαι δὲ καιρίας **[43]**πληγῆς τυχεῖν), and then states her final wish, ὡς … **ὄμμα συμβάλω** τόδε, "that I may close these eyes of mine" (1294). The words are a direct quotation from the prologue (**βλέφαρα συμβαλεῖν**), a repetition of the wish abnegated by the Watchman himself—the wish for the death of spectacle, an irremediable cure. If her knowledge of the play is uncanny, in other respects she is simply modelling her thoughts after the circumstances to hand. That defines her share in this Greek tragedy; she may be able to reject Apollo's raiment, but she cannot reject the idiom (language) of the play: καὶ μὴν **ἄγαν** γ' Ἕλλην' ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν (1254).

    The spectacle at once proffered and resisted by the play is dramatically thematized by the death of Agamemnon, as advertised by Cassandra: Ἀγαμέμνονός σέ φημ' **ἐπόψεσθαι** μόρον (1246). The Watchman had virtually made the same forecast, in what, in light of the above analysis, may now be construed as his oblique reference to the sequel to Agamemnon's arrival: γένοιτο δ' οὖν μολόντος εὐφιλῆ χέρα / ἄνακτος οἴκων τῆιδε βαστάσαι χερί. / **τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ** (34-36).[59] The text (and spectacle) of *Agamemnon* requires that we read the play as a transtextual and transtheatrical event even as we submit to its dramatic illusions. So, Agamemnon's death is— dramatically—satisfying. On another level, it never occurs, or rather occurs only in the dead space of a dead spectacle. Aeschylus is careful to orchestrate the signs of Agamemnon's death so that it is legible as a non-event. His death

is conveyed not so much in the mood of emotional suspense as in its dislocation: suspense is not denied, it is displaced (as always in this play) by an uncanny sense of repetition,[60] one constituted not by the shocking revelation of original (terminal) speech but by words encrypted in citational markings. It thus befits the culminating moment of *Agamemnon* that it be the least original, most anticipated,[61] and most predictable moment in the play. That moment coincides with Agamemnon's death-cry:

ὤμοι πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγὴν ἔσω.   (1343)

What is so strikingly peculiar about this line is the fact that it is a patchquilt, not just of "homophones," but of actual quotations from other characters' words in the play. Utterly preempted, it is also utterly unexpressive of any personal content.[62] Consider the sources of these lines. Most immediately, we have Cassandra's wish (quoted above), to which Agamemnon's words provide an ironic fulfillment: ἐπεύχομαι δὲ **καιρίας πληγῆς** τυχεῖν (1292). This correlation by itself is enough to cast an odd, troubling light on Agamemnon's line. It may be that Cassandra is a prophetess, and is entitled to quote from the future: the irony nonetheless remains, though irony is perhaps not the right word; further sources show how Agamemnon's last words have been *voided* of all proprietary meaning. Prior to Cassandra the Chorus claimed for itself, **πέπληγμαι** δ' ὑπαὶ δήγματι φοινίωι (1164); its connection with Κωκυτόν τε κἀχερουσίους (1160), via 1162, only reinforces this ghastly convergence of meanings (1164, too, forfeits its autonomy, in referring not only forward to 1343, but backward to the Ἀργεῖον δάκος associated with Agamemnon in 824). Furthermore, we might, without being the least bit controversial, say of Agamemnon that he falls under the category of those τῶν ἀντερώντων ἱμέρωι **πεπληγμένοι** (544, relevant here to his representative, **[44]**the herald, but with clear ironies relevant to Agamemnon;[63] cf. its first cruel inversion/iteration at 1203); certainly that he, and other wrongdoers, Διὸς **πλαγὰν** ἔχουσιν εἰπεῖν (367; this will be Clytemnestra's claim at 1386-87, and it surely congrues with one's sense of the drama, regardless of the apparent speciousness of that claim). I think this much should be sufficient to establish the decidedly textual character of Agamemnon's words in 1343: the line is a composite, and undisguisedly so. The two remaining particles are also imports from previous discourse: ὤμοι has its homophone in Cassandra's οἴμοι at 1225, occasioned by the thought of Agamemnon's lurking fate.[64] ἔσω is tied to a whole thematics of inner/outer oppositions, one dominated by the commanding figure of Clytemnestra: **εἴσω** κομίζου **καὶ σύ**, Κασσάνδραν λέγω, 1035. But more importantly, its use here marks the *devastation* of all interiority and autonomy: it is no accident that Agamemnon's claims to interiority coincide with his precise reduction to a textual surface.[65]

I have already given reasons why this citational moment befits the dramatic moment: it represents, in exemplary fashion, that moment when the play turns on its own axis, futilely. The exemplarity is complete, because, as I hope is becoming apparent, that moment is synchronous with every moment during the play (just as the Watchman's aversion to spectacle haunts, even

defines, the spectacle of *Agamemnon*). Dealt this death blow, the play staggers, or is rather caught in a moment of stuttering, in a dead reiteration:

> Χο. σῖγα· τίς **πληγὴν** αὐτεῖ **καιρίως** οὐτασμένος;
> Αγ. **ὤμοι** μάλ᾽ αὖθις δευτέραν **πεπληγμένος** (1344-45)

Having "quoted" from the play (or having been quoted by the play, before he speaks), and then quoted in turn by the Chorus,[66] Agamemnon now quotes himself (quoting). The filler words in 1345 function like virtual quotation-marks (αὖθις δευτέραν), signalling (in their very pleonasm) and intensifying the duplication that occasions his repeat performance.[67] The *phulax* has been slain (δαμέντος **φύλακος**, 1451-52). But even this figurative end has a possible reiteration.

Agamemnon's death marks a culmination, not the terminus, of the spectacle whose death it (transtheatrically) announces. His corpse presents a visual reminder of the coterminous boundary between death and spectacle in tragedy: οὕτω καλὸν δὴ καὶ τὸ κατθανεῖν ἐμοί, / ἰδόντα τοῦτον (1610-11). Nor will *Agamemnon* ever achieve the *apallagê ponôn* that would define its completion. Clytemnestra's words, which close the play, pose a defiant rebuke to the protests of the Chorus in the face of the punishing violence of spectacle (οὐχ ὁρᾶις ὁρῶν τάδε; 1623):

> μὴ προτιμήσηις ματαίων τῶνδ᾽ **ὑλαγμάτων**· ⟨ἐγὼ⟩
> καὶ σὺ θήσομεν κρατοῦντε τῶνδε **δωμάτων** ⟨καλῶς⟩.
>   (1673-74)

Clytemnestra is quelling a resistance to spectacle. On a textual level, her words are directed against the Watchman's initial noises (κλαίω . . . στένων, 18), his lamentations over the house's misfortunes (οἴκου τοῦδε συμφοράν, 18), which the Chorus has now resumed. ὑλαγμάτων here (cf. 1631) signals both a degradation of language and communication (to a debased level of bestiality,[68] **[45]**cf. ἀλέκτωρ ... θηλείας πέλας, 1671: the play's savage ironies leave us contemplating a conversation between a cock, a hen, and a pack of dogs), and a reprise of the thematics of resistance from which we set out (κυνὸς δίκην). Such a resistance is built-into the very language of the trilogy, like a contamination that haunts every utterance and every perception. Aeschylus has taken pains to see to it that the wished-for *apallagê ponôn* will never arrive, as long as the stage is occupied and the theater filled. Apollo's greeting words to Orestes, at the outset of the third play, indicate to what lengths the trilogy has gone to fullfil this wish, and how far it has yet to go:

> μύθους ἔχοντες μηχανὰς εὑρήσομεν
> ὥστ᾽ **ἐς τὸ πᾶν** σε τῶνδ᾽ **ἀπαλλάξαι πόνων**. (*Eum.* 82-
> 83)

If I am right, the promise tendered this time by Apollo, in his capacity as *phulax* (*Eum.* 64),[69] is in principle unfulfillable, given the conditions under which it is made.[70] We might ask ourselves what, having assigned these conditions, Aeschylus was seeking not to achieve.[71]

V. CONCLUSION

ἀλλ᾽ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀναφορὰ τῆς συμφορᾶς.   (Eur. *Or*. 414)

I hope it is evident by now that *Agamemnon* does not travel an arc from riddling announcement to the revelation and clarification of unknowns, but only a lateral path of knowing resistances to knowledge. If the second of these alternatives seems disquieting in the extreme, this may owe to an Aristotelian bias on our own part, or to our having been taken in by a structural ruse on Aeschylus' part. Here, however, it is Aeschylus, not Aristotle, who has logic on his side: clarification will always be bought at the price of opacity (the rich ground of *griphos*-style readings, viz., the indeterminacy which they posit at their origin). Such is the debt-structure of beholden meaning. It was our expectations that *produced* what seemed to be a riddling, forward-looking structure. Once we reach its apparent structural "middle" (wherever that may be), this structure turns out to be (or to resemble) an anaphoric structure. Here, our expectations leave us in an uncomfortable lurch: trained and habituated in anticipation, we embark, frustrated, on a backward search for clues to exegesis (as if the meaning lay in the past). Aeschylus encourages proleptic readings. He also shows them to be ultimately untenable.

So it happens that the closer we approach a potential point of clarity, the further it recedes from reach: each new hoped-for focus passes into a blur. Like Agamemnon's death scene, which brings the play to a linguistic culmination, its graphic counterpart, the "carpet scene," is a paradigm of frustration (embodying the "death-drive" of spectacle). Brilliant and tangible, the flowing carpet represents a moment of perceptual saturation unlike anything that preceded it. It is the logical culmination of every previous visual image that had, perforce, to be related in words (whether by the Watchman, the Chorus, or Clytemnestra). Even so, staked at the height of visual definition, the identity of the cloth/robe/tapestry could not be any less determinate or less determinable a thing than scholarship has shown it to be (compare the symptomatic debate between Denniston-Page and Fraenkel on 909), or than Aeschylus wished it to **[46]**be (by "naming" it, through a prolific string of non-equivalent nouns and adjectives: πετάσματα, εἵματα, ὑφαί, πορφύραι, etc.). Is the "carpet" a visual *griphos*? If so, clarification is not forthcoming. Rather than focus, to no end, on the definition of the fabric and trying to unriddle it, we should instead be focusing on the paradoxical fact that the fabric's loss of identity is *calculated* to coincide with the moment of its most conspicuous presentation. The carpet is a thing constructed and interpreted *in situ*. It engulfs meaning, and with meaning, the play.

Such crises in naming meaning are stock moments in *Agamemnon*. Almost by definition, they tend to forfeit their specificity and yield to the totality of the play's texture. Indeed, in dramatic, verbal and visual terms, the carpet scene constitutes a reenactment, or rather refabrication, of the Aulis episode.[72] To take a different example, Clytemnestra's abortive attempt at naming her husband (λέγοιμ᾽ ἂν ἄνδρα τόνδε…) replicates the quandaries of the carpet's "true" definition on a human scale. The man is palpably there (τόνδε), for all to see, and yet she refuses to form a coherent image of him: he

is, severally, a watchdog (κύνα), forestay, roof-holding (στέγης) pillar, child, landmark, day, and fountain (896-901); worse still, for each of these terms there exists in Clytemnestra's mind a black and vengeful equivalent. And yet, for all its incoherence (the picture falls apart, whether in the positive image or in its negative relief), the portrait does have a coherent frame to it: the images are all drawn from the language of the play, into which individual characters (here, Clytemnestra, in her obsessive focus; and Agamemnon, at the receiving end) are likewise absorbed. The language used by characters and even of characters is emphatically common property, and so too, emphatically non-distinctive. To explain this intensive overlapping of language with itself, one has to look beyond the terms of "appropriation" and its rhetoric (those clear-cut instances in which competing claims are made on the meaning of a term like "justice"), and consider instead, ultimately, even the unstressed language of tragedy, the throwaway particles of its diction.[73] For there is, concurrently in Aeschylus, a radical disappropriation of idiomatic language, such that individual characters tend to surrender their speech, along with their individuality, to the language and imagery of the play, just as Clytemnestra's disappropriative naming of Agamemnon is too overdetermined to be seen as the expression of an individual consciousness: it can only be read as a specific effect of the text, and of the conditions of representation.[74] This view of language as a constructing and constrictive system is admittedly harsh. Meaning nonetheless can always be recuperated as a glimpse into a mythological curse, if one likes, or else more profoundly, into the mythologies of an accursed *condition humaine* (the frailties, and violence, of language, value and judgment). Either way, the glimpse is into an abyss, a long vertiginous view that only from a distance can be made out, or into, an opacity, and that only metaphorically can be labelled "clarity."

   The tension we find in Aeschylus between individual fact and the whole to which that fact relates might be compared to the tension that exists between allegory and its objects. Such a tension would be "melancholic," in the sense Walter Benjamin gave it in his brilliant essay on the baroque German **[47]***Trauerspiel:* melancholia characterizes a reading of items that provide a sensuous image of an abstract, or better still: abnegated content, a *Sinnbild* that is always poised over the gulf within meaning and in the depths of language.[75] Fraenkel cites one critic's appreciation of Aeschylean "sensuality" (p.169). To this appreciation should be added that which gives such sensuousness its full intensity (be it of imagistic detail or verbal richness), and which also gives such images their ultimate abstract content: the abyssal structures that ground sense-bearing meaning.[76]

   From this perspective, the presumed constitutive elements of a play (character, division of scenes, imagery, development) no longer can be taken at face value.[77] What we have instead are these things constituted as sites of resistance: character as the resistance to characterization, scenes the resistance to division, individual moments the reluctant witnesses to their own dramatic progression, and so on. Even Fraenkel's *guttatim*-analysis cannot free itself of

contamination. His note on ψακὰς δὲ λήγει (1534) merely perpetuates what he
would elsewhere halt, the flow of meaning: "The old explanation '*guttatim
enim* sanguine *pluere desiit* [or rather *desinit*]' (Schütz) is correct" (italics in
original).

A fuller account of Aeschylus' poetic practice and its deepest motivations
would have to include discussion of the *Oresteia* as a whole (in particular, its
genealogical critique of justice).[78] For now, it is sufficient to conclude that in
the case of *Agamemnon* we observe these resistances through no one's eyes, but
our own.

❈

NOTES

*This paper has ancestors in notes prepared for courses taught at Berkeley in 1984 and
in 1985, and then at Michigan in 1987. It was conceived, so to speak, in transit, at a time
when Tom Rosenmeyer provided me with considerable moral and intellectual support. I
dedicate this paper, accordingly, to him. I thank the editors of this volume for showing
me ways to tame and improve a much bulkier first draft; the members of each of my
classes, for provocations of all kinds; and D. Cameron and R. Scodel, for discussions on
textual problems.

1. "Once" is a metaphor masking the very process of the constitution of meaning. Cf.
J. Derrida, "Fors," *The Georgia Review* 32 (1978) 64-116.   The psychoanalytic
mechanism of repressed meaning is a useful analogue to the—often competing—
structures of meaning that determine Aeschylean tragedy.

2. "Value" in the deep and difficult sense that Saussure initially gave it; see *Course in
General Linguistics*, tr. W. Baskin (New York 1959) 107-22.

3.   It is, after all, the same language—rather, the same silent core within that
language—that transmutes the Erinyes into the Eumenides and that traduced
Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. This silence is always an audible one for Aeschylus.
Examples: on *Ag.*, see below, *passim;* in *Cho.*, Pylades is a compact symbol for this
tension; in *Eum.*, the name "Eumenides" is conspicuous for its never having been
pronounced, or for its having been pronounced almost incidentally and in passing (if we
postulate a lacuna, with Hermann, between 1027 and 1028, an awkward solution to a
genuine problem): **[48]**even so, their re-naming, in close company with the highly
charged φοινικοβάπτοις ἐσθήμασι (1027), could only be the source of further *frisson*
(cf. *Ag.*, e.g., 239, 1121-22 [with 179-80], 958-60, *Cho.* 1011-13); as would the "pomp"
of the final procession (with the so-called "Προπομποί" contrast προπομπούς, 206; on
πομπός, see below). The "puzzle" of their name is well discussed by Winnington-
Ingram (infra n. 17) 166 n. 39.

4. Arguments about the unequivocal "resolution" of the *Prometheia* betray the same
logic, being patterned after the standard readings of the *Oresteia*. For the evidence, and
bibliography, see M. Griffith, *Aeschylus*:   *Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1983),
Appendix, 281-305.

5. Eduard Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) I.37 (references by page
only will be to the two volumes of commentary).

6. E.g., on *Ag*. 5-6 (p. 9); 131 (p. 81); 136; 238 (p. 136); 494; 2 (p. 2, and n. 1). See further the discussion in Rosenmeyer, *The Art of Aeschylus* 91-93.

7. Cf. Anne Lebeck, "Image and Idea in *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus" (diss. Columbia 1963) and *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971) 1-2. References will be to the latter work. Lebeck compares the "early" occurrences of an image, which are "elliptical and enigmatic," to "a γρῖφος or riddle whose solution is strung out over the course of the individual drama or the entire trilogy."

8. To take two examples of concern for "progressive" clarification: Froma Zeitlin, "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 463-508, esp. 487 (progressive "concretization" of meaning), 502 (a parallel resolution of the play's tensions, its "ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων"; cf. Lebeck [supra n. 7] 141), and 508 (Manichean "triumph"); all of this despite her—to my mind, valid—conclusions about the "suspension" of meaning and the "dynamism" of Aeschylean thought in "Postscript to Sacrificial Imagery in the *Oresteia* (*Ag*. 1235-37)," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 645-53, esp. 653; and Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: the Oresteia* (Cambridge 1985), who occasionally still summons the power of resolution and the reducibility of meaning ("This is indeed a γρῖφος, riddle, not properly understood until its substantiation" [p. 9]; "a *griphos* which is instantly cashed out" [p. 49]; cf. *LCM* 11.10 [1986] 167), despite his interesting exploitation of the structure of *griphoi* to deconstructive ends (e.g., p. 49), in recognition of the irreducible metaphoricity of (the text's) language (cf. pp. 20-24). Likewise largely liberated from the need to "puzzle out" meaning ("He does not aim for the puzzle but for enrichment," p. 128), Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) still often engages in proleptic criticism: "Our passage engulfs the perceptions of the audience with its grand message, before a clearer, discursive understanding of the crime and its consequences is introduced" (p. 89); meanwhile, the more intractable kennings are self-defeating "excrescences of a rhetoric not yet smoothed into predictable patterns" (p. 93). At the root of all these dilemmas is a fundamental opposition, which has to be assumed, between metaphor and logic, between aggregates of meaning (Fraenkel's alogical "sums"; Rosenmeyer's "total mood," p. 88) and parsed propositional meaning (no citation from Aeschylus has ever been convincingly adduced to illustrate the latter, whereas examples in the critical literature are abundant).

9. Unless otherwise marked, all citations are after the text of Denys Page (Oxford 1972).

10. The complexities of this passage are well discussed by Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 127. It would be inadequate to rest a case on an identification (eagles = Atreidae), as I will show below, and so we should limit our identifications to salient structural reminiscences.

[49]11. This would perhaps fall under Rosenmeyer's observations ([supra n. 6] 128) about Aeschylus' preference for a "partial replacement of tenor by vehicle."

12. "Sped," Fraenkel, Lloyd-Jones; "launched" Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 126; not "escorted." Cf. Hdt. 1.153, ἐπὶ δὲ ῎Ιωνας ἄλλον **πέμπειν** στρατηγὸν. The significant parallel with the present passage is of course at *Ag*. 60-62, οὕτω δ᾽ ᾽Ατρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσων / ἐπ᾽ ᾽Αλεξάνδρωι **πέμπει** ξένιος / Ζεύς.

13. Thus, LSJ *s.v.* πομπός II. πομπός as adj. is attested only three times: twice in this play, and once in Aelian.

14. See Fraenkel (supra n. 5) 76 and n. 2 for further examples of haplessly inserted connectives.

15. This solution is endorsed by J. D. Denniston and D. L. Page, *Aeschylus. Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957) [hereafter Denniston-Page] *ad loc*. But the problems persist, in part because the logic remains unchanged: here, Rauchenstein's reading is defended

against Fraenkel by means of Fraenkel's arguments, viz. by a reference back to what "is shown" by πέμπει in 110: "the eagles are said to give a *send-off* to the *commanders*" (Denniston-Page on 122ff.; my emphasis).

16. A recondite example, perhaps, but in other respects it is paradigmatic of Aeschylean thought. The light "signals its coming"; but its signal is what "comes" (it "signals, coming"). The ambiguity is built-in (as Fraenkel allows). The figure of speech (metonomy) dilates a phenomenon into a pseudo cause-and-effect scheme (via "*espacement*").

17. On line 187, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 95-96, despite his psychologizing tendency (the unwarranted introduction of the term "emotions"). Aeschylus deliberately leaves the *motivational structure* a near blank, and instead concentrates on the *structural features of the scene* (frustrated, self-cancelling motion) that affine it with other like conceits in the play—immediately, with παλιρρόχθοις at 190, and with τροπαίαν at 219; and more distantly, with the kinds of oxymoron mentioned above. See further below on Aeschylus' technique of "voiding" character.

18. Indeed, on the Rauchenstein and Denniston-Page reading ("The eagles are πομποὺς ἀρχᾶς"), the clash of meaning is foregrounded; retention of the τε here, though defensible, will not change the situation. Karsten's πομπᾶς ἀρχούς ("*expeditionis duces*") fares no better. First, πομπή for "expedition" is strained: "mission" is the attested sense, but a mission initiated precisely by whom? Secondly, the echo with πέμπει in 110 persists, leaving open, or just complicating, the question of agency and initiative. ἀρχαί construed as "beginning of the war" (cf. Fraenkel [supra n. 5] 77), or else as "beginnings of things to come," involves us again in the question of "first" beginnings (πρώταρχον, 1192).

19. Is it too bold to view πομπούς and ἀρχάς as two asyndetic nouns, in free apposition to either or both Ἀτρείδας and λαγοδαίτας? No parallels come to mind.

20. The momentary clash between πέμπει and ἀρχή, which may have been responsible for a textual corruption, only drives home the significance of this question. The ambivalence, on the (non-narrated) textual level, of the linguistic identity of the referents in 124 reflects the conflation of identities on the (narrated) exegetical level. The latter conflation is governed by the principles of symbolic efficacy (on which, see Rosenmeyer [supra n. 6] 127).

21. I am not sure why πομπός (adj.) should be any less equivocal than πομπός (n.), which often, if not always, carries a "quasi-passive" force. The noun may in fact be active in origin, but it is this only through a transference of authority: a πομπός is someone who has himself been sent (an envoy, whose purpose is to lead or to accompany, or to deliver a message), and the poets were alive to this wrinkle in the word's semantics. An early example: *Il.* 16.671 = 681, **πέμπε** δέ μιν **πομποῖσιν** ἅμα κραιπνοῖσι φέρεσθαι, a transformation of 16.454, πέμπειν μιν Θάνατόν τε φέρειν καὶ νήδυμον Ὕπνον. Cf. too Soph. *OT* 288-89, *Vita Herodotea* 237-38 **[50]**(Allen). These semantic nuances escape Schwyzer's distinction (*Griechische Grammatik* I.457): "'nomina actionis' bzw. 'rei actae' (Typus γόνος)" / "'nomina agentis' (Typus πομπός)." Context exerts pressures toward an ambiguity in "voice," regardless of the linguistics of πομπός (n. or adj.).

22. So Fraenkel *ad loc.* with references.

23. Indeed, the two lines run parallel: light far-sent is not "spurned" (300), light sent forth is "received" (299).

24. I am thinking of a striking, early insight by Rosenmeyer: "Zeus *teleios* is the personal avatar of fate or accomplishment or realization; he is the author's plot

externalized, unerring as the plot itself" (*AJP* 76 [1955] 253). Zeus' "brilliant opacity," his identifiable effectiveness as a "figure" that "endows a scene or an ode" with "less articulate, less clear-cut" overtones (p. 252), is precisely that: effective *because* identifiable, the visible incarnation of a familiar literary device practiced and recognized since Homer. Obscurity, to be effective, must be *perceived*, viz., clearly marked out and delineated. What, then, does this do to our notions of "clear" and "obscure"? These are, of course, always ideologically laden notions. See my "Aristotle on Specular Regimes: The Theater of Philosophical Discourse," in *Pacific Coast Philosophy* 21 (1986) 20-24.

25. E.g., Lebeck (supra n. 7) 177 n. 21: "Why is confusion deliberately created in *Agamemnon* concerning the cause of guilt, the origin of wrath? The reasons for Agamemnon's guilt are so complex they cannot be reduced to a simple statement…." So penetrating is this statement, it pierces Lebeck's own argument: one wonders how Aeschylus, or anyone, could ever arrive at the "clear statement," the "solution" to the enigma, that Lebeck proclaims is the culminating moment of the *Oresteia* (p. 2, quoted supra n. 7). The sequel, I suggest, offers no simple or simplifying solutions, for the same reasons that the "origin" is so complex. Aeschylus is demonstrating, not rejecting, his view of the only way in which human acts can be intelligibly perceived, let alone interrogated.

26. The full sentence reads: $\beta\iota\hat{a}\tau\alpha\iota$ δ' ἁ τάλαινα Πειθώ, / προβούλου παῖς ἄφερτος ῞Ατας. I accept Lloyd-Jones' translation "forecounseling"; similarly, Verrall ("counsellor"). Peitho's irretrievable connections with violence alone make its distinctness from Ate an academic question. $\beta\iota\hat{a}\tau\alpha\iota$, moreover, is arguably ambivalent between passive and deponent (Peitho enforcing and being forcibly subjected to Ate's counsellings). This suspicion is strengthened by the coupling, in 386 and 394-95, of παῖς and ἄφερτος, which creates, *pace* Fraenkel, a chiasmus of active and passive effects: Paris, embodying violent persuasion (cf. κλοπαῖσι γυναικός, 403), but also resembling the bird-chasing παῖς of 395, is a figure for this being an agent and object of a self-same destruction (cf. ἄτης παναλώτου, 361; δίλογχον, 643). Ate is both cause and result; Peitho is a synonym for violence ($\beta\iota\hat{a}\tau\alpha\iota$). From a very tangled later passage in *Ag.* (763-71) we know that Ate "resembles its offspring" (771). For Aeschylus in *Ag.*, *hubris* and *atê* are morally indistinguishable, and only aspectually discernible from one another (cf. Pasquali, quoted in Fraenkel on 767ff., p. 353: "L'ὕβρις figliola, che é insieme ῞Ατη, é chiamata 'ira novella'"). Aeschylus' innovation is to include Peitho, for dramatic reasons, in the traditional family of moral concepts, and then to undo the linearities implied by succession and "genealogy" (Fraenkel, *ibid.*), through the resemblances and repetitions that constitute the chain of appearances.

27. "[T]he ἀρχή and the τέλος are terms whose certainty of determination is rendered problematic in this trilogy," Goldhill (supra n. 8) 66. Cf. 64 for a similar treatment of Helen/Erinys, and on *telos* in general, "Two notes on τέλος and related words,"*JHS* 104 (1984) 169-76. A proper analysis of the much-vexed issue of πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος in 314 should follow along similar lines as those taken here, viz., from the point of view of a problematization of the circularities that analysis discovers/entails.

[51]28. Goldhill (supra n. 8) 64 discusses this question with reference to the two passages cited here (59, 747). The best, because the most consequential, example of the broaching of such conflations in the critical literature remains B. M. W. Knox's "The Lion in the House," *CP* 47 (1952) 17-25, repr. in *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater* (Baltimore 1979) 27-38, which traces the symbolic efficacy of the lioncub parable: its relevance, in *Ag.,* to Helen, Aegisthus, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra; in *Cho.*, to Orestes; in *Eum.*, to the Furies. Along the same lines, cf. Zeitlin ("Motif…" [supra n. 8] 483) on the "similarity" of victims and avengers.

Aeschylus' plays, looked at in all of their radical design, are in fact a tapestry of such cross-referencings. On the concept of "similar differences" and on the undoing of character through representation, see my "Reading Representation in *Der arme Spielmann*," *DVj* 55 (1981) 293-322 = C. A. Bernd, ed., *Grillparzer's Der arme Spielmann: New Directions in Criticism* (Columbia, S.C. 1988) 177-205.

29. Rosenmeyer's assertion ([supra n. 6] 136) that "[i]n the *Oresteia,* the imagery does not clarify, it darkens. But the darkening is part of the understanding" is a healthy and refreshing antidote to the "proleptic" style of exegesis (for an attack on which, see *ibid*. 236-37). But as an antidote, it remains locked in opposition with the notion of "clarity," against which it takes its meaning. A third, displacing term is need to countervail the pairing, clear/obscure. "Power" (*ibid., * p. 137) and "density" (p. 88) come closer to satisfying this need, although these are still conceived on an incremental model (density develops, by degrees), and as allomorphs of "obscurity."   The phenomenology of the reading process and the properties of the text are all too easily conflated; in some works of literature such conflation may be appropriate, but not, I feel, in the *Oresteia.*

30. Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 127.

31. The treatments to which I will refer are: Fraenkel (supra n. 5), John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London 1962) 82-85, Robert Renehan, "Agamemon and ἄγκαθεν," *CR* 20 (1970) 125-27, John W. Vaughn, "The Watchman of the *Agamemnon,*" *CJ* (1975) 335-38, O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 276-77, R. M. Harriott, "The Elders, the Shepherd and the Dog," *CQ* 32 (1982) 9-17, Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 90-91, 216-17, and Goldhill (supra n. 8) 8-13.

32. Renehan (supra n. 31) 126 (my emphasis).

33. Vaughn (supra n. 31) 335-36. Vaughn makes an interesting attempt at rationalizing (making coherent) the Watchman's incoherence (see esp. the explanation of circularities, p. 237).

34. Fraenkel (supra n. 5) 2.

35. Fraenkel (supra n. 5) 25.

36. Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 217.

37. Fraenkel (supra n. 5) 25.

38. "κυνὸς δίκην illustrates ἄγκαθεν"; so Denniston-Page (taking ἄγκαθεν to mean "up above"). Fraenkel, followed by most others, including most recently Taplin, refers ἄγκαθεν to the Watchman's posture, not his place.

39. Renehan (supra n. 31), affirming Fraenkel's view, against Denniston-Page.

40. Harriott (supra n. 31) 15 and 16 n. 27 makes only a glancing reference to 1093-94. These lines, like Clytemnestra's mention of the σημαντήριον (which, I have suggested, must further be contextualized with 914, and thus with σημαίνω in 26), have a more specific purpose than to exemplify the "paradigm of loyalty" (p. 16) that is the focus of Harriott's article (although loyalty is duly recognized to encompass watchfulness; cf. her n. 28, and esp. the perceptive n. 26). The placement of the phrase κυνὸς δίκην in 3 and 1093, it might be objected, is determined by its metrical shape. Aeschylus' decision to use it twice in the same play in the way that he did was, however, not.

[52]41. Fraenkel (on 4) robs κάτοιδα of its distinctive force, but in tragedy the verb has a special emphasis, connoting both thoroughness of knowledge (cf. Goldhill [supra n. 8] 8, "he knows them well, 'through and through'") and visual acquaintance (cf. LSJ *s.v.* 2). Sophocles frequently plays on the knowing/seeing root in οἶδα, as in *Phil*. 250, πῶς γὰρ κάτοιδ᾽ ὅν γ᾽ εἶδον οὐδεπώποτε; (cf. *El*. 923). From the context, κάτοιδα

could well mean "recognize"; contrast the question to which it is an answer: οὐ γὰρ οἶσθά μ' ὅντιν' εἰσορᾷς; (249).

42. Key to this assertion is the counter-assumption that the Watchman's gaze is far from "casual" and desultory (an argument which I cannot take the time to make here). This much can be said: there is nothing to gainsay that the Watchman, at the very least, knows (or "recognizes") the astral bodies *from* their settings and risings, even if this involves assuming a horizontal gaze (posited by Renehan, as a counter to desultory star-gazing; in favor of horizontal star-gazing, however, cf. Lucretius 4.391-94, esp. 393-94, and *P. Louvre* Inv. 7733 R° col. IV-V, 71-81, ed. F. Lasserre in J. Bingen et al., eds., *Le Monde Grecque. Hommages à Claire Préaux* [Brussels 1975] 537-48); nor does this reading depend upon making the ὅταν clause in 8 into an object of the verb.

43. Awareness is invariably linked to remembrance, as in a later pair of lines: στάζει δ' **ἀνθ' ὕπνου** πρὸ καρδίας / μνησιπήμων **πόνος**, 179-80.

44. τῶνδε is proleptic for the watching. Cf. Fraenkel (supra n. 5) 1: "the πόνοι consist precisely in the φρουρά."

45. There may be antecedents to this view of self-resistant aesthetics. Cf. Gorgias' πόθος φιλοπενθής (DK 82 B11, 9), and especially Anaxagoras' πᾶσαν αἴσθησιν μετὰ πόνου (DK 59 A94).

46. μολπή can refer to the content of tragedy (cf. 106), and stand loosely for all tragic diction. For Aeschylus, tragic "speech" and "song" are in principle metaphors for each other: a μέλπειν is simultaneously an ἐννέπειν, as in 247. The Chorus replay a parallel "(self-)victimization" of their own: in resisting the very events they view and relate (e.g., τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω, 247); in staring, as it were, deep into the abyss of tragic spectacle (e.g., 988-1000); in *singing* their resistance to tragic song. *Inflatus* for the Chorus results from a καταπνεῖν (105), which inaugurates the motif of violent, opposing winds, and which culminates in the paradoxical moment mentioned above, in which an agent becomes the object of his own agency, and is assimilated into a force working on him/her from outside (ἐμπαίοις τύχαισι συμπνέων, 187). In a sense, in Aeschylus metalanguage and object-language are radically merged: here (105), the language of description (*inflatus*, *peithô*) is thoroughly involved (enmeshed) in its object (the violence of winds, persuasion).

47. It is difficult not to see a connection between 23-24 (the χορῶν κατάστασιν / πολλῶν to which the Watchman's voice will give rise) and 18 (the συμφοράν that he bemoans there), which is reiterated, rather than transformed, in 24 (τῆσδε συμφορᾶς χάριν). On the self-resistance embodied in the Chorus, see previous note.

48. The concordance between 293f. and 8 (φυλάσσω … τὸν σύμβολον) is further brought out by language expressive of function in the prologue: Ἀγαμέμνονος γυναικὶ **σημαίνω** τορῶς (26). Lest there should be any doubts about this identification, consider what we need and what we have to make the identification. Aeschylus is himself as clear as he needs to be. Neither does the identity (or function) of the προλογίζων appear to have bothered his earliest redactors. The generic name "φύλαξ" features in the list of *dramatis personae* from the hypothesis (in all codd.), as the first named character (and FGTr all read, after Αἴγισθος, προλογίζει ⟨δὲ F⟩ ὁ φύλαξ). The remaining variations on this nomenclature are accountable for different reasons. In the text of the hypothesis he is called a σκοπός, and in M, beneath the title before the prologue, a marginal note—possibly once part of the hypothesis (so Fraenkel)—presents him as a θεράπων. This is not, however, a discrepancy. His being **[53]**a σκοπός, apart from the Homeric echo, is a functional description, and is tied to his "semiotic" function, the importance of which the hypothesis notes: Agamemnon promised to **σημαίνειν** his victory, **ὅθεν σκοπὸν** ἐκάθισεν … Κλυταιμήστρα **ἵνα τηροίη** τὸν πυρσὸν (cf., in

the text, the linked appearances of σκοπαῖς and φύλαξι at 289 and 293; cf. further the echo, by association, in δεμνιοτήρης at 53 and 1449). In M, his being called a θεράπων is a cue designed to defeat the expectation that our knowledge of the *Odyssey* version would create: hence the warning tag, which expresses a supposition more than a determinable fact, οὐχὶ ὁ ὑπὸ Αἰγίσθου ταχθείς (similarly FGTr, in an addendum to the *dramatis personae*). It is appropriate to an Aeschylean semantics that the Watchman (as name, as character—or as mere *characteristic*) have the status of an "inference," nothing more—that he be an unspoken nomination, as are, possibly, the eponymous heroes of the third play. Their name could be inferred (and their character constructed) from its being played upon, by way of oblique references, throughout the trilogy (not just in *Eum.*, as remarked by Winnington-Ingram [supra n. 3]), in the form of εὐμενής, δυσμενής, πρευμενής, εὔφρων, etc., and with the cue of the title, apparently genuine, and known to Aristophanes of Byzantium (cf. the hypothesis); cf. also Soph. *OC* 486. (Even if explicitly named at, e.g., *Eum.* 1027-28, the word "Εὐμενίδες" would of necessity be heavily inflected with prior connotations: see again supra n. 3.) The subject merits further study. On this last scene, see the excellent discussion by Goldhill (supra n. 8) 278-83.

49. There is supporting testimony from lexicographers, e.g. Hesychius, and other later sources (conveniently gathered in G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* [Prague 1966] *ad loc.*), to indicate the proverbial, popular provenance of the phrase. This does not rule out a poetic exploitation, by Aeschylus, of a "homely proverb" (for purposes of *double entendre*, association, structural marking, etc.).

50. Jones (supra n. 31) 82.

51. In some respects similar to Pindar's φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν (*Ol.* 2.85), even in being opposed to vulgar παγγλωσσία (*Ol.* 2.87), the Watchman's words are aimed, as will be seen, in the opposite direction of Pindar's: towards a reticent assimilation and effacement, towards a subtle dispersal of "knowledge" and linguistic "substance." For a recent appreciation of the Pindar passages, see G. W. Most, *CQ* 36 (1986) 304-16.

52. And more remotely, κυνὸς δίκην.

53. See LSJ *s.v.* φυλακή, II.1 and Fraenkel's discussion, for the expression φυλακὴν (κατ)έχειν.

54. Commentators have noted the unusualness of the term διαπονουμένου in this context. A *hapax* in poetry (see Fraenkel *ad loc.*), it is surely there to resonate with πόνων in the following line, etc. (*pace* Denniston-Page, who miss out on the ironies at play here). ἄριστα and διαπονουμένου make for a jarring combination, and a virtual *contradictio in adjecto*. Cf. also Goldhill (supra n. 8) 10-11, who catches the ironies well, and reads what I would view as the overriding circularities among 1, 19 and 20 rather as marking a progression from "assurance" to "uncertainty." For the same reason that οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ᾽ is ironically understated (and is no new realization), the phrase signifies the opposite of what it says: "things are as they always were"—*plus ça change*. This is, as it were, a fundamental poetic principle of Aeschylus'. Circularity of a related kind is evident in 829, where Agamemnon uncannily recapitulates, quotes, and paraphrases the Watchman's opening lines and preamble: **θεοῖς μὲν** ἐξέτεινα φροίμιον **τόδε**; cf. **θεοὺς μὲν** αἰτῶ **τῶνδ᾽**…(1). The play, as it were, tries to begin afresh, half-heartedly, or else: protracts (ἐξέτεινα) its beginnings, interminably.

55. There is, throughout, an unmistakeable allusion to Homer in the ox-imagery of *Agamemnon*. Is there a precise Homeric echo here? Compare *Od.* 4.534-35: alerted by the Watchman (σκοπός; φύλασσε δ᾽ ὅ γ᾽ εἰς ἐνιαυτόν), Aegisthus lays a trap for Agamemnon; τὸν δ᾽ οὐ εἰδότ᾽ ὄλεθρον ἀνήγαγε, καὶ κατέπεφνε / δειπνίσσας, **[54]**ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε **βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνηι**. The syntactic and phonetic similarities with *Ag.*

36 βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι are striking, even if the two phrases are not metrically equivalent. Reference to Agamemnon's slaughter like a bull or cow is found later at 1125-26 (conjointly an allusion to Iphigenia, contrast 1126-28 and 233-34). Lines 1297-98, another bull/cow allusion, refer in the first instance to Cassandra, but also to Agamemnon (cf. 1125-26, 957), Iphigenia (cf. 210, 232), and generically to human sacrifice.

56. Cf. Rosenmeyer (supra n. 6) 323-24, esp. the striking remark that "[d]ramatic irony is greatly reduced in scope in Aeschylus, because the principal characters are *conceived of as knowing*, or as sharing the limitations upon their knowledge with the audience" (my emphasis). The scope can be further reduced, if we abandon, finally, any last vestiges of "subjectivity" for characters. Human subjectivity, Aeschylus seems to be arguing, is constituted in the marketplace of language (language as a social phenomenon).

57. ἀμφί ("about") is ambiguous: it can be spatial, as well as delimit the verb and furnish a topic (e.g., at *Il.* 18. 339-40). Here, ἀμφί is usually taken in the former sense, but this is to miss the irony, viz. the figurative use of Cocytus and the netherworld banks for their future occupant. Good discussion of Cassandra will be found in Goldhill's article (supra n. 27) 174-75.

58. There is more here than can be compressed into this discussion. Cassandra's daydreams and the Watchman's dreamless (13) nightwatch are only superficially contrastable. Curiously, though, the furies/children/etc., like the Watchman, sing (presumably, sing the House's song, 1191), having positioned themselves by [or is it on?] the house (1191, 1217). How far can this "identification" be pursued? Are the children a "memory-trace" of the Watchman? Is the Watchman a figure for the house's self-resistance? Is Cassandra's vision of the Watchman an objectification of his (and the play's) resistance to vision? Cf. the further complication, linking the Watchman, Agamemnon, and the "Eumenides," at 1451-2: δαμέντος φύλακος εὐμενεστέρου. These are all questions that deserve to be explored.

59. Fraenkel comments: "Lines 34f. are the more moving because the spectator knows, or at least suspects, that in spite of the master's homecoming the wish is destined not to be fulfilled." On the reading offered here, line 37 alludes directly to this knowing suspicion, and complicates considerably the "mood" of this passage.

60. Agamemnon has, in fact, already died repeated deaths by this time—in his proxy, the herald (see infra n. 63), and again (and again) in the mind-made-public of Clytemnestra (863-65, 866-68, 869-73, 874-76). He is a literal "shadow image" or "shade" (σκίαν, 967), a projection of death.

61. Etymologically, "anticipate" (like the German, "vorwegnehmen") suggests the divestiture of meaning before the event. "Prolepsis," so understood, would be an acceptable equivalent.

62. This may provide a partial confirmation to one approach to the nagging question, "What does Agamemnon actually learn?" A traditional answer has been "nothing"; cf. E. R. Dodds' observation that "ὤμοι, πέπληγμαι conveys no final flash of insight" ("Morals and Politics in the *Oresteia*," *PCPS* 186 [1960] 29). Edification does not seem to have been foremost in Aeschylus' mind at this point (nor is it essential to him in the remaining plays of the trilogy, I would argue). The doctrine of πάθει μάθος has been subjected to a large amount of unfair criticism: it is no less valid a maxim for being maintained by the Chorus as a universal ideal (or, perhaps, delusory ideal) even when they can find no individual to instantiate it. Perhaps Aeschylus is giving us a lesson in the efficacy of maxims.

63. As an analysis of the context would show. Compare the line that frames 544: χαίρω, ⟨τὸ⟩ τεθνάναι δ' οὐκέτ' ἀντερῶ θεοῖς (539). The entrance of the herald is **[55]**an uncanny anticipation of Agamemnon's imminent death-upon-arrival (cf. θανών, 507; and the grim confusions at 550).

64. I accept οἴμοι (manuscripts) rather than Denniston-Page's ὠμόν. ὤμοι, like οἴμοι and its congeners, linguistically is a "shifter," designating not a speaker but the property of being a speaker (a "subject position").

65. ἔσω has met with opposition (cf. the discussion of conjectures and arguments in Fraenkel). Construing it narrowly as "within the house" is spurned by Groeneboom (this won't protect ἔσω from inside/outside associations from elsewhere in the play, however). The solution offered by invoking the scholium to *Od*. 21.116ff. (cited by Paley and Fraenkel) leaves us with an ἔσω standing for visceral reality. But the physical reading of ἔσω is a reduction in itself, which can be argued in turn to complete the psychological reduction (e.g., to a physical penetration). More to the point, however, both reductions occur within a framework that reveals character as a contingency of language.

66. Denniston-Page's shrewd note reads: "πληγήν apparently governed by αὐτεῖ, the accusative giving the gist of, or an *extract* from, the *words actually used by the subject* of αὐτεῖ" (my emphasis). καιρίως similarly reconstitutes the previous line, in hovering between gist and citation. Groeneboom *ad loc*. observes the phonetic resemblance between οὐτασμένος and πεπληγμένος.

67. A later tragedian like Sophocles would seize upon the quotability of these lines (Clytemnestra in *Electra* 1415f.); cf. Fraenkel's comments on this "conscious reminiscence."

68. Such a "bestialization" is the logical consequence of the irradiating simile patterns in the play: no character is immune from comparison with an animal; and all the central characters are likened, at some point or by extension, to all the beasts named in the play—a further way in which characterological boundaries are eroded in Aeschylus. See supra n. 28, and Goldhill (supra n. 8) 205 (on the "dissemination" of a motif; cf. p. 65, citing G. Hartman on "the disseminating movement of antonomasia"). I would prefer to assimilate these discursive effects more directly to a cultural diagnosis, and more closely to Aeschylus' reflections on theater and spectacle as a mediating apparatus (cf. infra n. 74 and n. 78).

69. The role shifts onto the shoulders of the Erinyes, e.g., at 704-706. The *apallagê ponôn* is thus deferred, interminably.

70. Nor do the frequent reiterations of the phrase ἐς τὸ πᾶν (52, [200], 401, 538, 670, 891, [1044]), whose repetitions if anything betray, rather than confirm, its meaning, bring more assurance. *Ag*. 681-82 (τίς ποτ' ὠνόμαζεν ὧδ' / ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμως;) would appear to be still in effect, as is the already contaminated structure of repetition itself, familiar from, e.g., *Agamemnon*. See the excellent remarks by Goldhill (supra n. 8) 281 on the close of *Eum*.: "The escorts' words as the procession leaves recall many of the terms of the play, resisting also the moment of final significance in repetition, citation."

71. My reading of the figure of Apollo would follow the lines taken by Winnington-Ingram, in his all too neglected essay, "The Role of Apollo in the *Oresteia*," *CR* 47 (1933) 97-104, revised as "Orestes and Apollo" in *Studies* (supra n. 17) 132-53. The essay, together with its companion piece, "Zeus and the Erinyes" (*ibid*., 154-174), forms a trenchant critique, on internal grounds, of divinity in the *Oresteia*.

72. See Winnington-Ingram (supra n. 17) 90-95.

73. Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1986) 46, usefully outlines a "rhetoric of appropriation" in Aeschylus, and its limits: the "very multiplicity" of such claims leaves us with as many "uncertainties." And yet, turning to the increasingly unmarked cases (a concept that is as problematic as it is strategically crucial to an Aeschylean semantics; let us say, "marked as being unmarked"), uncertainties take on the **[56]**aspect of indifference, cognitive stress turns into a sense of fatigue, claims turn into a "being claimed."

74. This is not to "textualize" meaning, but to recognize the legitimacy of the question whether violence and power are alienable—can ever be severed—*from* their representation. Often, part of Aeschylus' motivation may be to produce uncanny "family resemblances" in diction, a haunting effect in language equivalent to (and mirroring) a biologically descendant curse. But his motivation may take in a wider, which is to say, culturally critical aim. On Clytemnestra here, cf. Goldhill (supra n. 8) 56-57: "Yet the ambiguity of κύνα indicates that language escapes even her (absolute) control…. [L]anguage still e-ludes her." The ambiguity may also be that Clytemnestra, like all other characters in the trilogy, is and is not being represented as a "character." It is worth emphasizing that Aeschylus is enacting a kind of aggression on his principals that mirrors their own violence towards each other: reducing characters to figures (and then to figures for each other), Aeschylus is probing the violent nexus that obtains between language and power. To put this in a somewhat different form, Aeschylus is exploring the consequences, not of power, but its representation.

75. See *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928, tr. J. Osborne, London 1977) 201.

76. Certainly in evidence in the case of the Beacon Speech, which inspires the critic in question (Sewell) to eloquence: it is a major piece of (groundless) confabulation, as it were, πλέον καίουσα τῶν εἰρημένων. Another name for this play between sense and signification is "*signifiance*": cf. R. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, tr. S. Heath (New York 1977) 182, and the translator's introduction, p. 10.

77. To take one example, "development," which can mean so many different things on so many registers, is easily confused. Consider the following quotation from Lebeck (supra n. 7) 16: "This riddling image is the initial *statement* of a motif fully *developed* in the final play." The musical jargon leads to semantic confusions and mixed metaphors. The same holds for the conflation of development and its "corollary," "clear(er) statement" (p. 2). More accurate is the following, despite its being trivially true: "its *thematic value* is not yet *realized*" (p. 18), which is to say fully *instanced*. To instance a theme, even completely, is not to clarify it. On "value," see supra n. 2 and the following note.

78. A direction whose justification can be found in, e.g., Edward Said's relevant remarks, *Orientalism* (New York 1979) 321: "Mythic language is discourse, that is, it cannot be anything but systematic; one does not really make discourse at will, or statements in it, without first belonging—in some cases unconsciously, but at any rate involuntarily—to the ideology and institutions that guarantee its existence. These latter are always the institutions of an advanced society dealing with a less advanced society, a strong culture encountering a weak one. The principle feature of mythic discourse is that it conceals its own origins as well as those of what it describes." Nietzsche would help us understand the implied semantics here, namely that "weak" is the repressed— and defining—content of "strong." It is above all to Nietzsche that my understanding of resistance is indebted. See especially the "physical" fragments of the "*Will to Power*," grouped together under the heading, "Principles of a New Evaluation" (more literally, "Principle of a New Positing of Value," "*Prinzip einer neuen Wertsetzung*").