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THE ARGIVE ELDERS, THE DISCERNING SHEPHERD AND THE FAWNING DOG: MISLEADING COMMUNICATION IN THE *AGAMEMNON**

ἄγε δὴ βασιλεῦ, Τροίας πτολίπορθ',
Ἀτρέως γένεθλον,
πῶς σε προσείπω; πῶς σε σεβίξω
μήθ' ὑπεράρας μήθ' ὑποκάμψας
καιρὸν χάριτος;
πολλοὶ δὲ βροτῶν τὸ δοκεῖν εἶναι
προτίουσι δίκην παραβάντες·
τῶι δυσπραγοῦντι δ' ἐπιστενάχειν
πᾶς τις ἑτοῖμος, δῆγμα δὲ λύπης
οὐδὲν ἐφ' ἥπαρ προσικνεῖται.
καὶ ξυγχαίρουσιν ὁμοιοπρεπεῖς
ἀγέλαστα πρόσωπα βιαζόμενοι
〈 〉
ὅστις δ' ἀγαθὸς προβατογνώμων,
οὐκ ἔστι λαθεῖν ὄμματα φωτὸς
τὰ δοκοῦντ' εὔφρονος ἐκ διανοίας
ὑδαρεῖ σαίνειν φιλότητι.
σὺ δέ μοι τότε μὲν στέλλων στρατιὰν
Ἑλένης ἕνεκ', οὐκ ἐπικεύσω,
κάρτ' ἀπομούσως ἦσθα γεγραμμένος
οὐδ' εὖ πραπίδων οἴακα νέμων,
θράσος ἐκ θυσιῶν
ἀνδράσι θνήισκουσι κομίζων·
νῦν δ' οὐκ ἀπ' ἄκρας φρενὸς οὐδ' ἀφίλως
εὔφρων πόνον εὖ τελέσασιν 〈ἐγώ·〉
γνώσηι δὲ χρόνωι διαπευθόμενος
τόν τε δικαίως καὶ τὸν ἀκαίρως
πόλιν οἰκουροῦντα πολιτῶν.

Agamemnon returns victorious from Troy; the Argive Elders who form the chorus of the play greet and praise him. On a first reading the praise seems lukewarm, the passage as a whole rambling and uninteresting.[1] Is the address unimportant because our eyes are intent upon Agamemnon and his retinue? If so, the tone of these anapaests would still be puzzling, in giving the king's arrival the effect of an anticlimax, particularly considering the duration and nature of the dramatic preparation for it. This preparation concentrated on the feelings generated by return after a long absence both in the homecomer and in those to whom he is restored; it began as early as the watchman's prayer to clasp his master's beloved hand again (34–5) and continued in the Herald's excited apostrophe of his native land and in the message of loyal love

* I am indebted to Margaret Williamson for her advice and comments.

[1] Although the address is quite distinct from the preceding ode it picks up the theme of deceptive appearances from the lion-cub fable and that of Helen as destroyer from the opening stanza.

he took from Clytemnestra to her husband. In the Beacon speech light has leaped from Troy to Argos and in the Herald's words Agamemnon has been proclaimed as 'bringing light in darkness' and 'most worthy of praise' (522, 531). Then perhaps we should say that such muted tones are unsurprising in a chorus by now characterized as wary and prudent, given to meditating upon the gods' anger and the sufferings of war, rather than to joy and celebration?

In my belief first impressions are misleading; the passage has dramatic point, and its structure and tone are carefully controlled. Moreover the means by which Aeschylus achieves his effects are interesting, in that the address, while in obvious ways unlike Pindaric lyric, draws on the conventions of the epinician ode, for good dramatic reasons.

First let us consider one dramatic function of these lines by looking at Agamemnon's reply to this loyal address. It is of course essential for the plot that Agamemnon misunderstand the Elders' warning, better that he misunderstand without appearing obtuse. (To have passed over their advice in silence would not accord with conventions.) If we examine the king's reply we can see how the necessary incomprehension is made to seem natural. To some extent Agamemnon hears what he expects to hear and replies to what he thinks he has heard. The first part of his speech (810–29) he calls a 'prelude to the gods'; in it, like the homecoming Herald, but less effusively, he addresses his native land and its gods, emphasizing that there is *dike* in what he does. Next he turns to the Elders' advice, which he answers point by point, first stating that he is in accord with them and understands them. Ironically he immediately shows that he has not grasped their meaning when he says that few men can look on a successful man without feeling *φθόνος* (833). Now it is noteworthy that the Elders had not mentioned the *φθόνος* conventionally endangering victors. Their warning had instead concentrated on the likely insincerity of apparent sympathizers and had mentioned only mortal reaction, whereas gods as well as men traditionally experienced and showed *φθόνος*. Agamemnon goes on to illustrate his awareness that appearances can deceive by referring to his own experience with Odysseus, originally unwilling to sail to Troy but in the event his sole willing partner (838–44). This is a particularly interesting section, following so naturally that its effectiveness can be overlooked. Agamemnon has heard the Elders say that a discerning shepherd is not fooled by flatterers (795–8); he has heard them admit their original disapproval of the expedition (799–804) and their present sincere loyalty (805–6). He shows that he takes the point that he is the discerning shepherd by his distinction between Odysseus and people seeming well disposed; his reference to opposition to the idea of the expedition on Odysseus' part is a tacit indication that the Elders' admission of disapproval will not be held against them. This reaction is further illustrated when he turns to his plans for the future (844–50). In these lines he uses the first person plural, thus incorporating the Elders in his proposals. Their three-line prediction that he will discover in time who has not and who has 'rightly watched over the city' is answered precisely but without real comprehension. The Elders' choice of words had indicated that a disloyal individual might be found; the king naturally thinks of a disaffected group, of political rather than domestic threats, and he speaks of communal discussion to ensure the maintenance of what is good and of their joint endeavours to reduce without harshness the effects of disease. His metaphor of disease,[2] already used at 835, is not suggested by any word

[2] The disease metaphor, by which Agamemnon as doctor, assisted by the Elders, will endeavour, with cautery or with 'the cruel compassion of the surgeon's knife', to remove the suffering caused by illness, can only apply to something wrong in the body politic; the metaphor thus conveniently illustrates Agamemnon's concern for the well-being of the community and his unawareness of the true location of danger.

spoken by the Elders; he has not seen the precise implication of their repeated image (discussed below) of the guard dog. His answer complete, he turns to enter the house, to find his way barred by Clytemnestra. So far I have tried to show that an intelligent, statesmanlike Agamemnon can credibly misunderstand the Elders' warning and can accept without resentment the meagre praise they offer. Agamemnon finally leaves the stage unaware that he has misunderstood, or rather confident that he has understood, as shown by his references to the φθόνος of the gods (946–7) and to the power of popular opinion (938).[3]

The fact that the king has dealt systematically with the address suggests that the Elders' welcome should not be dismissed as unworthy of detailed attention, and the careful nature of the composition is also indicated by stylistic features such as verbal antithesis, echo and reiteration, which draw attention to the subjects of most concern.[4] In fact the early impression of lack of cohesion is wrong and a closer reading reveals the underlying connection of thought. The proem (782–7) consists of threefold address and double question, the second question itself twofold. The Elders' query, 'How shall I address you?', is left unanswered as they move to their generalization about the many who do wrong in setting appearances above truth,[5] a remark amplified by reference to superficial grief and forced look of joy. In a second generalization, at the heart of their message, they speak of the discerning shepherd who cannot be deceived by the appearance of the fawning flatterer. The connection between the two generalizations is obvious, and the change to the singular permits the hearer to guess that the shepherd is Agamemnon, but there is as yet no answer to the initial questions. However, now generalizations give way to direct address, to 'you' and 'I', and timeless truth to 'then', 'now', and at last to the future. The Elders' admission of their initial dislike of the expedition 'for Helen's sake' demonstrates that *they* do not cloak their true feelings and leads to their statement of their present attitude to Troy's conquerors. This is in fact their answer to the opening question 'How shall I address you, how praise you without overshooting or falling short of the target of praise?'. Having voiced their wholehearted and loyal praise for the victors, in the remaining three lines, which balance and reinforce the central passage, they give Agamemnon a further warning, tactfully expressed as a prediction.

The structure of this passage resembles the familiar ring-composition save for the initial leap between the preamble and the first generalization, a leap which must be chiefly responsible for the impression that the passage is disconnected. Further evidence of its planned structure is to be seen in the repetition at the end of the guard-dog image from the central lines, each time in advice aimed at Agamemnon. The presence of the verb σαίνειν (798) suggests the fawning animal; the metaphor is used, as I shall show later, of behaviour designed to placate, to entice, or as here to deceive. Agamemnon is advised to be aware that a loyal disposition does not underlie all professions of devotion.

The use of the verb for fawning, σαίνειν, here and in the lion-cub fable (725–6) has interesting and significant parallels in Pindar. In the Fourth *Olympian* fawning, this time (unusually) in a favourable sense, is associated with the arrival of the good news of victory.[6] The unfavourable meaning is present in the Second *Pythian*, in the epilogue of which poem Pindar condemns deception and flattery towards men of power and

[3] In *Agamemnon* understanding of the true meaning of events is withheld from the hero as he goes to his death and reserved for Cassandra, the knowing victim.

[4] Antithesis: e.g. 786 and the sound of mourning contrasted with the look of rejoicing, 790 ff. Repetition of key words: προβατογνώμων γνώσηι; δίκην δικαίως; καιρόν ἀκαίρως; δοκεῖν δοκοῦντ'; εὔφρονος εὔφρων.

[5] On hearing 788–9 one would suppose, wrongly, that the initial questions were rhetorical.

[6] *Ol.* 4. 5.

dissociates himself from the man who 'fawns on everyone'; earlier in this epinician, in recounting the myth of Ixion, he had spoken in moral terms of the kind frequently used by the Argive Elders.[7] Connections of thought and imagery are not the whole story: Aeschylus has turned the epinician convention to clever use in Agamemnon's scene, solving the problem of composing an address to the king whose hints will be theatrically effective from the audience's point of view without alerting the victim to Clytemnestra's intentions.

Agamemnon returns victorious from Troy; by convention, the victor is to receive public praise; by convention, in the encomium wise counsel will be added to congratulation; by convention, if the *laudandus* is a man of importance the *laudator* will choose his tone with especial care. And so, as I wrote earlier, Agamemnon hears what he expects to hear, judicious praise mingled with frank advice about the relationship of king, courtiers and subjects. Aeschylus has turned his Elders for the moment into a chorus performing a kind of epinician, a role they abandon upon beginning their next song, which they significantly describe as 'unbidden and unhired' (979); they have witnessed with their own eyes the victorious return, but now feeling that they share the experiences of a seer their heart sings, without the lyre accompaniment appropriate to epinician, a lament hymning an Erinys (988–92).

In the course of my analysis of the Elders' 'Pindaric' anapaests I stated categorically that σαίνειν is used metaphorically of behaviour designed to placate, to entice or to deceive. In the remainder of this paper, only incidentally concerned with the address to Agamemnon, I shall begin by illustrating some uses of σαίνειν in greater detail, partly to support and amplify my earlier assertion. These illustrations may also serve as a means of introducing a wider-ranging discussion of the dog and its 'language' in the play, so that we examine fawning in the context of non-verbal communication and also as an instance of canine behaviour, the dog in his different roles becoming a symbol or paradigm of different functions, values and persons in the tragedy. But first the most familiar of the *Agamemnon*'s uses of σαίνειν, to describe not a dog, but a lion cub.

In the second stasimon the Elders, in the course of their song about Helen the destroyer, tell the fable of the man who took into the house an unweaned lion cub, 'gentle, dear to children and a delight to the aged. And often he took it in his arms like a newborn child bright-eyed, and fawning on the hand as its belly's needs compelled it' (*Ag.* 721–6, translated by H. Lloyd-Jones). The lion cub in this fable is not responsible for its behaviour but acts in accordance with the dictates of nature; responsibility for the destruction wrought by the full-grown lion when it fouls the house with the blood of slaughtered sheep rests upon the man who wrongly brought the cub from the wild regions where it belonged into a dwelling inhabited by people.[8] The

[7] *Pyth.* 2. 82 σαίνων ποτὶ πάντας. R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford, 1962) p. 111, uses words that with little change could apply to our passage: 'Pindar speaks not as an obsequious court-poet who relies on the arts of the flatterer, but as a candid counsellor, convinced of his own integrity and of the rightness of the instruction he feels called upon to give to a king who has allowed himself to be influenced by jealous, ill-disposed persons.' Cf. *Pyth.* 1. 51–2 σὺν δ' ἀνάγκᾳ μιν φίλον καί τις ἐὼν μεγαλάνωρ ἔσανεν, which brings to mind not only σαίνειν φιλότητι (*Ag.* 798) but also σαίνων γαστρὸς ἀνάγκαις (*Ag.* 725–6). For the use of καιρός see for example *Pyth.* 1. 42 ff., 57, 81. The image of *Ag.* 786–7 finds parallels in Pindar, e.g. at *Ol.* 13. 9 and *Nem.* 6. 27–8. For the conventions of epinician, and in particular their application to the interpretation of the Second *Pythian*, an ode addressed to Hieron, see H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 93 (1973), 109 ff., and works there cited.

[8] See B. M. W. Knox, 'The lion in the house', *CP* (1952), 17 ff., for the interpretation of the fable in the context of the trilogy as a whole. See now also R. Friedrich, *AJP* 102 (1981), 120 ff., who discusses Homeric lion similes used critically; in the present context, *Od.* 6. 130 f., which

childlike helplessness of the cub no doubt made it appealing, and its wordless communication, as it seemed, reinforced its appeal. The Elders, unlike the people in the story, saw the bright eyes and friendly gestures for what they were, involuntary actions, caused by hunger. They saw that fawning was an activity to be outgrown, no longer manifested when the weaned lion began to show its inherited characteristics.

The story shows how men can fail to make essential distinctions between wild and tame and how they can be mistaken about the true nature of a creature. In the trilogy this kind of misunderstanding is an important theme, applicable to several of the persons of the myth.

Just as the lion 'spoke' without words, so it is undisputed that Greek drama communicates not only verbally but by dance and by significant patterns and movement, particularly to and from the stage.[9] To accompany this significant wordless action we can find in the text of the *Agamemnon* passages which *describe* non-verbal communication, the most obvious and extended being Clytemnestra's account of the message conveyed by the beacon fires (281–316). It is interesting in the context here under consideration that the Elders do not easily accept the validity of the message of the beacon and question the wisdom of offering thanksgiving for victory before the news is confirmed (475–87).[10] In the case of the animal imagery which pervades the *Oresteia* the animal's inability to speak, its reliance on wordless action, is only one element, but on some occasions it is the important element. Just as non-verbal communication can be described in words, so it can find a parallel in action or posture shown in the theatre.[11] I shall later show how the word picture of the fawning animal has its counterpart in symbolic action in the play.

Most examples of the fawning image apply not to lions but to dogs, and by way of introduction I can do no better than summarize what Redfield has written about dogs in Homer.[12] The dog can be, he says, an ornament, or man's instrument (or subordinate) when he hunts, or part of man, the unruly part. To call a person a dog is an insult, applied to conduct that is self-indulgent and does not conform to the principles of social behaviour. 'The dog is the most completely domesticated animal; he is capable even of such human feelings as love and shame. But he is only imperfectly capable; he remains an animal. The dog thus represents man's resistance to acculturation. In Homeric language we would say that the dog lacks *aidos*.'[13] Later in this paper I shall hope to show that in the *Oresteia* the full range of canine behaviour from predator to loyal watchdog is exemplified, whether in words or actions.

A dog may fawn in recognition and greeting, like Argos in the *Odyssey*, as enticement, or to appease. Fawning behaviour, shown by posture, by movements of ears and tail, by bright eyes and by 'grinning', is clearly distinguishable from

likens Odysseus to a lion whose 'belly commands him to enter the thronged dwelling', and *Od.* 22. 401, where he stands among the slaughtered suitors, spattered with blood, like a lion which has feasted on an ox, are particularly significant.

[9] See O. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London, 1978); it is useful to recall the importance in Aristophanic theatre of the idea made visible, the godlike Socrates in the *Clouds*, or the 'weight' of Aeschylus' poetry in the *Frogs*.

[10] The motif of silence, the antithesis of Clytemnestra's volubility, is suggested in the watchman's speech (36–9) and made 'visible' when Cassandra confronts Clytemnestra.

[11] For animal imagery in the *Oresteia* see A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia* (1971), and J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Nacquet, *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (1973).

[12] J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad (1975), pp. 193 ff.; see also M. Faust, *Glotta* 48 (1970), 8 ff., S. Lilja, *Dogs in Ancient Greek Poetry* (1976), and J. A. Scott, *CW* 41, 226 ff. The 'poetic relationship' of Odysseus and Telemachus with their dogs is discussed by G. P. Rose, *TAPA* 109 (1979), 215 ff.

[13] Redfield, p. 195.

aggressive displays (although the two patterns may occur in close sequence). People probably believe that the fawning dog is communicating friendly feelings and can be trusted; the signals they pick up from this 'body language' may be misleading and they may suffer in consequence.[14]

(1) *Recognition and greeting.* Eumaeus' dogs in the *Odyssey* provide an excellent example of contrasting behaviour, fawning on Telemachus, whom they know, aggressive towards Odysseus, newly arrived and unknown; they are guard dogs fulfilling their task (*Od.* 16. 4–10, 14. 29–30). Speechless mutual recognition is strikingly conveyed when Antigone says of Ismene φαιδρὰ γοῦν ἀπ' ὀμμάτων | σαίνει με προσστείχουσα, 'her bright eye greets me as she draws near' (Sophocles, *O.C.* 319–20).[15]

(2) *Fawning for food.* Like the lion cub in the fable, a dog may fawn when hungry. In Aristophanes' *Knights* (1030 f.) Cleon, the watchdog of the people, is described as wagging his tail while his master dines but devouring the food when his master's attention is distracted. It is characteristic of Circe's unnatural kingdom that wolves and lions fawn on Odysseus (a sight which terrifies his comrades) 'as when dogs surround their master as he returns from a banquet and fawn, because he always brings them nice things to eat' (*Od.* 10. 212–19).[16]

(3) *Deprecatory fawning.* Although by fawning an animal may gain ascendancy over the man who is his master, the fawning posture itself may express self-abasement and deprecation. Aeschylus uses the verb in this sense more than once. When the Elders deny that Argives would submit to Aegisthus (*Ag.* 1665 φῶτα προσσαίνειν κακόν), English 'cringe before' perhaps conveys the force of their denial.[17]

(4) *Misleading fawning.* I have already hinted that the dog can change from one moment to the next, and this is shown by the fragment of Sophocles in which someone says 'You snap while fawning' (fr. 885 Pearson σαίνεις δάκνουσα). The bite is unexpected by the victim, falsely made to feel secure, like the sheep in the fable who are attacked by the fawning sheepdog. Fawning can literally mislead too; witness the lines in Aeschylus' *Persae* (96–7) which describe Ruin enticing man into trapnets: φιλόφρων γὰρ ποτισαίνουσα τὸ πρῶτον παράγει βροτὸν εἰς ἄρκυας Ἄτα.[18]

Cerberus in Hesiod's *Theogony* misleads in a comparable way, since he welcomes all those who wish to pass into the House of Hades, fawning with ears and tail, but if anyone should wish to leave he devours him (*Theog.* 769–73). The behaviour of Cerberus, who guards the gates of Death, is a model, I believe, for the false welcome

[14] The fawning action is described fully in Hesiod, *Theog.* 769 f., quoted below, n. 19; see also Sophocles, fr. 687 Pearson, which probably also describes Cerberus 'wagging his tail and letting his ears droop', and *Od.* 17. 302; the dog Snatcher enters court 'grinning', *Wasps* 901.

[15] Cf. Bacchylides fr. 24, σαίνει κέαρ for the joy of greeting; the bright eye of Ismene recalls the lion cub (φαιδρωπός, *Ag.* 725). In Sophocles' *Antigone*, 1214, Creon, recognizing Haemon's voice, says παιδός με σαίνει φθόγγος, 'it is my son's voice, I must hurry'. Jebb ad loc. compares Euripides, *Hippolytus* 862 ff.

[16] The greed of dogs and their theft of food is well illustrated in the trial scene of Aristophanes' *Wasps*, 891–1008. Sexual appetite is mentioned below, n. 29; wolves and lions fawn on Aphrodite also, *H. Hymn Aphro.* 69–72. For the fawning, flattering sycophant or politician see J. Taillardat, *Les Images d'Aristophane* (1965), pp. 403 ff.

[17] cf. *Seven against Thebes* 383, 704 for the meaning 'cringe from'. Deprecatory fawning may not succeed: see the difficult lines in *Libation-bearers* (418–22) where there seems to be a contrast between fawning and appeasing.

[18] The word order of the Greek suggests the movement from friendly seduction to final death in a trap, and this is lost in English. Electra, seeing what she hopes may be a lock of Orestes' hair, says σαίνομαι ὑπ' ἐλπίδος (*Cho.* 194). She means 'hope entices me to believe but I may be led astray by my hopes'.

given by Clytemnestra when, despite the Elders' warning, she entices Agamemnon to his destruction.[19]

Leaving aside for the moment one particular form of canine behaviour, I hope to show that the dog's metaphoric flexibility is fully exploited in the trilogy, both verbally and in dramatic terms. At one extreme, the puppy-like lion cub who eventually becomes minister of destruction and who stands for the ambiguity and uncertainty of communication across a natural barrier; at the other, the devoted loyalty of the watchman. One example is the subject of part of a choral ode, which can be taken to refer to more than one person in the play; the other, although indicated by verbal elements, is mainly conveyed by the physical presence and position of the watchman, who is the embodiment of loyalty.

The lion cub belongs, in Redfield's categories, to Nature; near him should be placed dogs which have not been domesticated and which form a predatory hunting pack because of inner necessity. Such dogs have potential for domestication but in their wild state they are formidable predators, skilful and persistent in hunting down their prey by his bloody spoor (*Eum.* 246–7).[20] At first their nature is revealed by wordless actions, their utterances mere growls and whimpers; finally, when they abandon their roving existence and are given a fixed home and status, their savagery is turned to good effect as they become guardians of the state, 'receiving and conferring benefits, given the honour which is their due' (*Eum.* 868). The pack which could be stirred into fresh activity by Clytemnestra was tamed, although not enfeebled, by Athena.

The hunting dog, while obedient to his own nature in tracking down and in chasing and attacking prey, is bred and trained to serve huntsmen, and is valued for his speed and ferocity as well as for persistence and skill in following a trail. Thus Odysseus' dog Argos, 'whom he himself raised', is described by the swineherd Eumaeus: 'if he were such, in build and performance, | as when Odysseus left him behind, when he went to Ilion, | soon you could see his speed and strength for yourself. Never | could any wild animal, in the profound depths of the forest, | escape, once he pursued. He was very clever at tracking' (*Od.* 17. 313–17). The qualities of the dog complement those of the huntsman, in imagery as in reality; so Cassandra, εὔρις, keen-scented (*Ag.* 1093–4), perceiving the taint of blood in the House of Atreus, persists in her tracking, and the Erinyes too are dog-like, hounding Orestes. In the *Oresteia*, as in the *Bacchae*, the hunting images also bring out the situation of the prey, mainly in depicting the terror of Orestes, but also in the tracking down of Helen.[21]

The watchdog. The hunting dog, although carefully bred and trained, is closer to nature in the hinterland between nature and culture than is the watchdog. The most valuable quality in the guard dog is his ability to distinguish friend from foe (and this is the quality which Clytemnestra claims for herself in the message she sends to Agamemnon; 'May he find a faithful wife, just as he left her, in the house, the watchdog of the palace, well disposed to friends and hostile to enemies', *Ag.* 606–8).[22] The dog

[19] δεινὸς δὲ κύων προπάροιθε φυλάσσει,
νηλειής, τέχνην δὲ κακὴν ἔχει· ἐς μὲν ἰόντας
σαίνει ὁμῶς οὐρῇ τε καὶ οὔασιν ἀμφοτέροισιν,
ἐξελθεῖν δ' οὐκ αὖτις ἐᾷ πάλιν, ἀλλὰ δοκεύων
ἐσθίει, ὅν κε λάβῃσι πυλέων ἔκτοσθεν ἰόντα.
See further below, 17.

[20] The Erinyes 'enter as a pack of hounds tracking their victim by his bloody spoor' (Lebeck, 66).

[21] Orestes' terror at pursuit by αἵδε μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες, *Libation-bearers* 1044–62; warrior-hunters pursue Helen, *Ag.* 694–8.

[22] It should be noticed that Agamemnon picks up the image in his address to his wife as 'custodian of my house' (*Ag.* 914).

who guards flocks out in the fields protects them by driving off predators with barks and aggressive displays, although no match for attacking wolves or lions in actual fighting.[23] Since he may stand in for an absent shepherd he must be relied upon to leave the sheep alone, subordinating his natural appetite to the duty of protecting them.[24] As a trusted custodian his role is like that of the Homeric 'shepherd of the people', and Clytemnestra, addressing Agamemnon himself as 'watchdog of the fold' (*Ag.* 896), is emphasizing his kingly protection of those who are his.[25] The function of the house dog is in many ways like that of the sheepdog since he must protect the inhabitants and possessions inside the house, mainly by barking as soon as he hears anyone approaching, sometimes by actively deterring intruders. Patient, loyal vigilance is his chief attribute. Like the sheepdog he may become the familiar companion, as well as the trusted servant, of his master, although he is of course still a working dog, not an ornament nor a pet kept only to be cherished.

It is the watchdog who may be a paradigm of loyalty. Argos himself in his youth had been used for hunting; in his old age, unlike most of the occupants of Odysseus' palace, he watches and waits for his master's return, in hope. In the end, however, the greeting he gives Odysseus by wagging his tail and moving his ears cannot be returned, although it is observed.[26]

In old age the dog Argos had endured privation and discomfort, his loyalty to Odysseus unchanged. It is fitting that the watchman, the speaker of the prologue to the *Agamemnon*, should embody the qualities of the loyal and patient Argos. His position on the roof (and maybe his posture) is like that of the house dog; he endures boredom and discomfort as the seasons pass; he is obedient to Clytemnestra but loyal to Agamemnon, waiting for the moment when he can again clasp his master's beloved hand, an action which will signify his feelings without need of words. His hope is not fulfilled.[27]

The watchman has had to do nothing but look out for the beacon fire, whereas Clytemnestra has been entrusted with the guardianship of the house and of the people belonging to Agamemnon; during his absence she is his regent, who must watch over his children and his house, with all its wealth, and consult with the Elders, who are also to some extent custodians of the land while the king is at Troy. The Elders are wary of Clytemnestra; the true cause of their mistrust must not be revealed too soon, although it is well founded, and so their wariness takes the form of doubting what she says and questioning what she does. Clytemnestra has the capacity, but not the wish, to do all that is required of someone in her position and to distinguish friend from foe. Her treachery lies in the conscious and deliberate, but well-concealed, shifting of her loyalty away from Agamemnon, while seeming to serve his interests.

The Elders had concluded their advice to Agamemnon with the prediction that he would discern the quality of 'the watcher over the city' (808–9), again alluding to the

[23] This is the behaviour of the dogs in the similes of the *Iliad* (e.g. 13. 468 ff. and 11. 284 ff., where they are subordinate to Hector) and of those pictured on Achilles' shield (18. 577–8), where nine dogs fail to press home their attack on two lions.

[24] In the early scenes of *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra acts as substitute for the absent king, rather than as wife, mother or mistress. In Aristophanes' *Wasps* (970–2) the house dog bites.

[25] Not 'farmstead', as Fraenkel proposes in his note on the line, but 'fold'.

[26] Odysseus' disguise was penetrated instantly, without test or token, by Argos and only by Argos.

[27] See Fraenkel ad loc. for interesting parallels between the watchman and the guard dog. Electra in the following play (444–9), also lacking freedom of movement, says she had been shut up 'like a dog', closely echoing the watchman (*Ag.* 3, 1093).

guard dog, though not this time to the shepherd's animal of the earlier lines.[28] The identity of this dog should not be doubted. She is Clytemnestra, who had described herself as δωμάτων κύνα ἐσθλὴν ἐκείνῳ in her message sent via the Herald to her husband (607); she will be addressed by her husband as δωμάτων ἐμῶν φύλαξ (914). Although, *qua* dog, she is potentially a guardian, she lacks self-control (*aidōs* and *sophrosunē*) and she obeys the dictates of her own nature.[29] In Redfield's terminology, she is 'imperfectly accultured'. Therefore she should not be trusted. The dog stands between nature and culture, an ambiguous position. The fawning dog is an ambiguous creature who may be loyal or a cunning rogue. It is this uncertainty which makes the image particularly useful in the depiction of Clytemnestra. When the Elders warn the king against the person who fawns with watery friendship they are warning him against the wife who has called herself a loyal guard and who will shortly entice him to his death. The dog can symbolize both loyalty and its opposite, and its means of communication are ambiguous also.

So, as a general rule, CAVE CANEM. But, more specifically, look out for Cerberus. I return to my earlier suggestion that the guardian of Hades is a model for Clytemnestra, whose fawning deceives and entices. Cerberus' friendly welcome to the newly dead, a task in which he loyally obeys his master, has its counterpart in the long speech which the queen, a false custodian, addresses to her newly returned husband (855–913). In this speech, in which 'false face must hide what the false heart doth know', she tells of her grief during Agamemnon's absence and of her joy at his return, the latter section producing an effect Lloyd-Jones describes as 'one of almost nauseating flattery'.[30] Thus here fawning is verbalized in extravagant, prolonged, obsequious speech. But words tell only half the story. As Dr Oliver Taplin has shown us, Clytemnestra controls entrance to the House of Atreus, a control which is visually presented by means of staging.[31] Red silks mark the path along which the king is to walk, enticed by his wife into a house from which there will be no return. Did Aeschylus recall the dog who prevented egress, the servant of Death, who in the *Theogony* 'with tail and both ears fawns on those arriving, but does not let them depart; if he catches anyone trying to leave, he devours him'?[32] The king was misled by words and by actions; heedless of warnings he walked into his house, to find it in truth the House of Death.

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[28] Fraenkel maintains at length that here and at 1625 f. οἰκουροῦντα and οἰκουρός do not convey 'the idea of watching'. He argues that the original idea had been weakened by this time to the meaning of 'keeping at home' and he adduces examples of the weakened meaning, particularly in abuse of the effeminate stay-at-home. To my mind his examples do not prove the complete disappearance of the original meaning; in some passages the presence of a word like φύλαξ strongly suggests that the 'stay-at-home' is a watchful protector. Here we have an allusion to a woman who guards a house in her husband's absence and who watches over the community as substitute for the king.

[29] The Homeric use of 'dog' and 'dog-faced' for wanton female sexual behaviour is relevant here, particularly the application of κυνῶπις to Aphrodite, Helen and Clytemnestra herself: see for full references and discussion the article by G. P. Rose cited above, n. 12.

[30] Her speech displays false sorrow ('crocodile tears'), then false joy, exactly fulfilling the Elders' warning (859–94, cf. 790; 895–913, cf. 793). H. Lloyd-Jones is commenting on 895 in his translation of the *Agamemnon* (New Jersey, 1970). When we hear this speech its adulatory repetitions are the more obvious because they have been preceded by the controlled economy of the Elders' greeting.

[31] O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 307 f. Cassandra calls the house "Ἀιδου πύλας (1291). Earlier in the scene (1228–30) Cassandra had described Clytemnestra's fawning speech as the work of a destructive bitch.

[32] *Theog.* 769–73, quoted above, n. 19.