The Influence of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* on Seneca’s *Thyestes*

**THE GUILE OF ATREUS**

1a **SATELLES** *Quid novi rabidus struis?*

*ATREUS* *Nil quod doloris capiat assueti modum; nullum relinquam facinus et nullum est satis.*

(Sen. Thy. 254-57)

1b **SAT.** *Sed quibus captus dolis nostros dabit perductus in laqueos pedem? inimica credit cuncta.*

*AT. Non poterat capi, nisi capere vellet. regna nunc sperat mea.*

(Sen. Thy. 286-90)

**THE GUILE OF CLYTEMNESTRA**

2a **ΧΟΡΟΣ**

*μή τίνας ἀντιπνόους Δαναοῖς χρονίας ἐχενήδας ἀπλοίας τεύξῃ σπευδόμενα θυσιν ἔτεραν ἄνομον τιν’ ἄδαιτον, νεικέων τέκτονα σύμφυτον, οὐ δει-σήνορα· μίμην γάρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος οἰκονόμοι δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος.”*

(Aesch. Ag. 1492-96, 1517-20)

2b **ΧΟΡΟΣ** *κεῖσαι δ’ ἀράχνης ἐν υφάσματι τῶιδ’ ἀσεβῆθανάτοι βίοι ἔκπνεον, ὡμοί μοι, κοίταν τάνδ’ ἀνελεύθερον, δολίωι μόρωι δαμείς ἑκ χερός ἀμφιτόμωι βελέμνωι.*

(Aesch. Ag. 1492-96, 1517-20)

2c **ΑΙΓΙΣΘΟΣ** *ιδὼν ὕφαντοις ἐν πέπλοις ἔριννοις τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε κείμενον φίλοις ἐμοί, χερός πατρώιας ἐκτίνοντα μηχανάς.*

(Aesch. Ag. 1580-82)

2d **ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ** *τοιάδε μέντοι σκῆψις οὐ δόλον φέρει* (Aesch. Ag. 886)

THE GUILE OF THE VICTIMS

3a ATREUS  Fas est in illo quidquid in fratre est nefas. quid enim reliquit crimen intactum aut ubi sceleri pepercit? coniugem stupro abstulit regnumque furto: specimen antiquum imperi fraude est adeptus, fraude turbauit domum. (Sen. Thy.220-24) Cf. dolus in 176-81

3b KLAYTAIMNISTRA  οὐδὲ γὰρ οὗτος δολιαν ἀτην οἴκοισιν ἔθηκ᾽; ἀλλ᾽ ἐμὸν ἐκ τοῦδ᾽ ἔρνος ἀερθὲν τὴν πολυκλαύτην Ἱφιγένειαν ἀνάξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων ἡμέρον ἔν Λιδοῦ μεγαλαυχείτοι, ξιφοδηλήτοι θανάτοι τείσας ἀπερ ἤρξεν. (Aesch. Ag. 1523-29)

NET IMAGERY

4a KLAY. ἀπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὅσπερ ἤθοιν, περιστιχίζῳ, πλοῦτον εἵματος κακόν· (Aesch. Ag. 1382-83)

4b ATREUS Plagis tenetur clausa dispositis fera: et ipsum et una generis inuisi indolem iunctam parenti cerno. iam tuto in loco uersantur odia. uenit in nostras manus tandem Thyestes, uenit, et totus quidem. uix tempero animo, uix dolor frenos capit. sic, cum feras uestigat et longo sagax loro tenetur Umber ac presso uias scrutatur ore, dum procul lento suem odore sentit, paret et tacito locum rostro pererrat; praeda cum propior fuit, ceruice tota pugnat et gemitu uocat dominum morantem seque retinenti eripit. (Sen. Thy. 491-503)

ANIMAL IMAGERY

5a KASSANDRA αὕτη δίπους λέαινα συγκοιμωμένη λύκωι, λέοντος εὐγενοῦς ἀπουσίαι (Aesch. Ag. 1258-59)

KLAY. λέγοιμ ἂν ἁνόρα τόνδε τῶν σταθμῶν κύνα (Aesch. Ag. 896)

KAS. τί νιν καλοίσσα δυσφιλίς δάκος τα τύχοι ἂν; ἀμφισβησαν ἢ Σκύλλαν τινά (Aesch. Ag.1232-33)

ATREUS Whatever is wrong against a brother is right against him. For what did he leave untouched by offence or when did he spare a crime? He stole my wife by adultery and my kingdom by theft: by fraud he obtained the ancient token of my power, by fraud disturbed the house.

CLYTEMNESTRA For did he not bring deceitful ruin upon the house? But for his unworthy deeds to my offspring conceived by him, the much-bewailed Iphigeneia, he suffers worthily: let him not brag in Hades, paying for what he started, with a death by sword.

ATREUS The beast is shut up in the spread nets: and I see together him and this hope of the detestable family joined with their father. My hatred is already in a secure place. At last Thyestes has come to my hands, in his entirety he has come. I can hardly restrain my mind, my pain can hardly be bridled. Such as, when a keen-scented Umbrian hound traces out the beasts, is held on a long leash and probes the path with his snout pressed down, while he catches the scent of the boar far off and faintly, obeys and roams around silently scouring the place; when the prey is closer, he struggles with his whole neck and loudly barks at his slow master and escapes from his restraint.

CASSANDRA This two-footed lioness sleeping next to the wolf, in the absence of the noble lion

CLYT. I would call this man a watchdog of the homestead

CAS. What hateful beast’s name should I call her by to be right? A serpent or some Scylla?
5b NUNTIUS Silva iubatus qualis Armenia leo in caede multa victor armento incubat (crure rictus madidus et pulsa fame non ponit iras; hinc et hinc tauros premens vitulis minatur dente iam lasso inipiger), non aliter Atreus saevit atque ira tumet ferrumque gemina caede perfusum tenens, oblitus in quem fureret (Sen. Thy. 732-37) Cf. 707-14: Tigress of Ganges

CLYTEMNESTRA AND THE FURIES
6a ΟΡΕΣΤΗΣ μητρός ἔγκοτοι κύνες (Aesch. Cho. 1054)

6b ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ γυναῖκα πιστὴν ἐν δόμοις ἐυρέοντας κύνες, ἐπικείμενα δωραὶ ἐπὶ θησαυρίων ῥυθμοὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνδραῖς καὶ τάλις ἀλίμων πάντα, συμμαθιῶν οἴοδὲν διαφθείρασαν ἐν μῆκος χρόνον· οὔδ' ὅλας τέρμων οὐδ' ἔπισωσεν φάτνῃ άλλον πρὸς ἀνδρὶ μᾶλλον ἢ χαλκῷ βαρφαίς. τοίονδ' ὁ κόμπος, τῆς ἀληθείας γέμων, οὐκ αἰσχρὸς ὡς γυναικὶ γενναίαι λακεῖν (Aesch. Ag. 606-14)

6c ΚΑΣΣΑΝΔΡΑ τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ' οὔποτε εκλείπει χορός ξύμφθογγος οὐκ εὔφωνος· οὐ γὰρ εὖ λέγει. καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον, βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει, δύσπεμπτος ἐξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων· (Aesch. Ag. 1185-90)

6d ΚΛΥΤ. φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναῖκα νεκροῦ τοῦν' ὁ παλαῖος δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ τινῶν ἀπέτεισεν τέλεοι ἐπιθύμες. (Aesch. Ag. 1500-4)

CLYT. Taking the form of this dead man's wife the old fierceful avenging daimon of Atreus, the cruel lord of the feast, paid him out by adding a full-grown sacrificial victim to the young ones.

CASSANDRA
This chorus never leaves this roof, singing in unison but not pleasantly. For they speak evil words. And drinking human blood, so that it emboldens itself more, this revel-band of the kindred Erinyes, stays in the house and is hard to send away.

CLYTEMNESTRA May he come and find his wife as faithful as he left her, a watchdog of the house, good for him, hostile to the ill-disposed, and similar in everything else, having broken no seal in this long time. I know no pleasure or blameful rumor by another man more than the tempering of steel. Such a truthful boast is not shameful for a noble woman to utter aloud.

MESSENGER As in the forest of Armenia a maned lion falls victoriously upon the herd in much slaughter (his jaws soaked with blood and driven by hunger, he does not abandon his anger: attacking the bulls here and there, unwearied threatens the calves with his jaw-teeth already weary), so much Atreus rages and swells with anger holding the sword soaked by a double murder, forgetful of whom he is furious with.
7b AT. Excede, Pietas, si modo in nostra domo umquam fuisti. dira Furiarum cohors discorsque Erinys ueniat et geminatas faces Megaera quatiens: non satis magno meum ardet furore pectus, impleri iuuat maiore monstro. 
(Sen. Thy. 249-54)

AT. Go away, Piety, if ever you have been in our house at all. Let the dreadful throng of the Furies and the discordant Erinys come and Megaera brandishing her twin torches: my chest burns with a madness, one not great enough, and to be filled with a greater monster pleases me.

WORKS CITED