

*Scelus est pietas: The Oresteia in Ovid's Metamorphoses*

<p>Passage 1:</p> <p><b>Ag. 1590-1610:</b>      ξένια δὲ τοῦδε δύσθεος πατήρ      Ἄτρεϋς, προθύμως μᾶλλον ἢ φίλως, πατρὶ      τῶμῳ, <b>κρεουργὸν ἡμᾶρ εὐθύμως ἄγειν      δοκῶν</b>, παρέσχε δαῖτα παιδείων κρεῶν.      τὰ μὲν ποδήρη καὶ χερῶν ἄκρους κτένας      ἔθρυπτε, ἄνωθεν ἀνδρακᾶς καθήμενος      ἄσημ'. ὁ δ' αὐτῶν αὐτίκ' <b>ἀγνοίᾳ</b> λαβῶν      ἔσθει βορὰν ἄσωτον, ὡς ὄρας, γένει.      κᾶπειτ' ἐπιγνοῦς ἔργον οὐ καταίσιον  <b>ῥῶμωξεν</b>, ἀμπίπτει δ' <b>ἀπὸ σφαγῆν ἔρῳν</b>,  <b>μόρον δ' ἄφερτον Πελοπίδαις ἐπεύχεται</b>,  <b>λάκτισμα δειπνοῦ ξυνδίκως τιθεὶς ἀρᾶ</b>,</p>	<p>Atreus, the father of this godless man, in an act of hospitality done to my father eagerly rather than friendly, happily pretending to hold a day of slaughter and feasting, prepared a feast of his children's flesh. Cutting them up into small pieces from their feet to the combs of their hands, away from men sitting apart&lt;so they were?&gt; unrecognizable. He, taking of them in ignorance, ate food that was, as you see, destructive to the family. And then, learning of the unrighteous act, he wailed, and fell back vomiting up the slaughter and vowed an unbearable fate for the descendants of Pelops, kicking away the table as a witness to his curse...</p>
<p><b>Met. 6.647-649:</b>      His adhibet coniunx <b>ignarum</b> Terea mensis      et <b>patrii moris sacrum mentita</b>, quod uni      fas sit adire viro, comites famulosque removit.</p> <p><b>6.661-666:</b>      Thracius <b>ingenti mensas clamore repellit      vipereasque ciet Stygia de valle sorores;</b>      et modo, si posset reserato pectore <b>diras      egerere inde dapes</b> immersaque viscera gestit,      flet modo seque vocat bustum miserabile nati,      nunc sequitur nudo genitas Pandione ferro.</p>	<p>The wife brought her husband unaware to the table and, feigning a sacred rite according to her father's custom, which it was right for one man to attend, she removed his companions and servants.</p> <p>The Thracian pushed away the table with a loud shout and called upon the viper sisters from the Stygian valley; now, if he were able to vomit up the dire feast, after opening his chest, he would exult over the swallowed flesh, now he cries and calls himself the wretched pyre of his son, now he chases the daughters of Pandion with bared iron.</p>
<p>Passage 2:</p> <p><b>Ag. 1140-1149:</b>      Χορός      φρενομανῆς τις εἶ θεοφόρητος, ἀμ-      φι δ' αὐτᾶς θροεῖς      νόμον ἄνομον, οἶά τις ξουθα      ἀκόρετος βοᾶς, φεῦ, ταλαίνας φρεσὶν      Ἴτυν Ἴτυν στένουσ' ἀμφιθαλῆ κακοῖς      ἀηδῶν βίον.</p> <p>Κασάνδρα</p>	<p>Chorus      You are maddened, possessed by a god,      and around yourself you cry out a songless      song, like some bird chirping insatiably, alas!      crying out from its wretched heart "Itys! Itys!"      the nightingale, lamenting a life with evils      on both sides.</p> <p>Cassandra</p>

<p>ἰὼ ἰὼ λιγείας μόνον ἀηδόνος: περέβαλον γάρ οἱ πτεροφόρον δέμας θεοὶ γλυκύν τ' αἰῶνα κλαυμάτων ἄτερ: ἔμοι δὲ μίμνει σχισμὸς ἀμφήκει δορί.</p>	<p>Oh! Oh! The fate of the clear-voiced nightingale! The gods cast a feather-bearing form about her, and a sweet life free from weeping: for me it remains to be cloven by a double-edged spear.</p>
<p>Passage 3:</p> <p><b>Ag. 1313-1320</b> ἀλλ' εἴμι κὰν δόμοισι κοκύσουσ' ἐμὴν Ἀγαμέμνονός τε μοῖραν. ἀρκεῖτω βίος. ἰὼ ξένοι, οὔτοι δυσοίζω θάμνον ὡς ὄρνις φόβῳ ἄλλως: θανούση μαρτυρεῖτέ μοι τόδε, ὅταν γυνὴ γυναικὸς ἀντ' ἐμοῦ θάνη, ἀνὴρ τε δυσδάμαρτος ἀντ' ἀνδρὸς πέση. ἐπιξενούμαι ταῦτα δ' ὡς θανουμένη.</p> <p><b>Ag. 1322-1326</b> ἄπαξ ἔτ' εἰπεῖν ῥῆσιν οὐ θρηῖνον θέλω ἐμὸν τὸν αὐτῆς. ἠλίω δ' ἐπεύχομαι πρὸς ὕστατον φῶς ἴ τοῖς ἐμοῖς τιμαόροις ἐχθροῖς φονεῦσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς τίνειν ὁμοῦ, ἴ δούλης θανούσης, εὐμαροῦς χειρώματος.</p>	<p>Well, I will go into the house, lamenting the fate of Agamemnon and myself. Enough of life! Friends, I do not tremble in fear like a bird at a bush; be my witnesses when I am dead, when a woman dies in return for me, a woman, and a man falls in return for an ill-wedded man. I ask this of you, as I die.</p> <p>I would like to speak once more, not a dirge, a speech. I pray to the sun at the dying of his light that my enemies may pay the same price for killing me, a slave; easy prey.</p>
<p><b>Met. 6.542-548</b> Si tamen haec superi cernunt, si numina divum sunt aliquid, si non perierunt omnia mecum, quandocumque mihi poenas dabis. Ipsa pudore proiecto tua facta loquar. Si copia detur, in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor, implebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo: audiet haec aether, et si deus ullus in illo est.”</p>	<p>However, if the gods see this, if there is any divine power, if they all have not died with me, some day you will pay the penalty to me. Casting aside my shame I will tell your deeds. If given access, I will go out among the people, if I am held, locked away in the woods, I will fill the woods and I will move the rocks as my witnesses. The aether will hear of this, if there is any god in it.</p>
<p>Passage 4:</p> <p><b>Ag. 228-237:</b> λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς. φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ' εὐχὰν δίκαν χιμαίρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῷ προνωπῆ λαβεῖν ἀέρδην, στόματός τε καλλιπρώρου φυλακῆ κατασχεῖν φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις...</p>	<p>The commanders cared nothing for her cries for her father and her virgin life. Her father, with a prayer, ordered the attendants to take her and hold her with their whole heart above the altar, like a goat, wrapped in her mantle and fallen forward and with a gag on her lovely face to hold back the curses against her house...</p>
<p><b>Met. 6.550-557:</b></p>	<p>...spurred by both causes, he freed the sword</p>

<p>...causa stimulatus utraque quo fuit accinctus, vagina liberat ensem arreatamque coma flexis post terga lacertis vincla pati cogit. Iugulum Philomela parabat spemque suae mortis viso conceperat ense: ille indignantem et <b>nomen patris</b> usque <b>vocantem</b> luctantemque loqui <b>comprehensam forcipe</b> <b>linguam</b> abstulit ense fero</p>	<p>with which he was girded from its scabbard and forced her to endure being seized by the hair and being bound with her arms bent behind her back. Philomela, seeing the sword, prepared her throat, and conceived a hope for death. He severed her tongue, indignant, compressed with tongs, calling the name of her father and wrestling to speak, with his iron sword.</p>
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<p>Passage 5:</p> <p><b>Ag. 1372-1378</b></p> <p>πολλῶν πάροιθεν καιρίως εἰρημένων τάναντί' εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἐπαισχυνθήσομαι. πῶς γάρ τις ἐχθροῖς ἐχθρὰ πορσύνων, φίλοις δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, πημονῆς ἀρκύστατ' ἂν φράξειεν, ὕψος κρεῖσσον ἐκπηδήματος; ἐμοὶ δ' ἀγῶν ὄδ' οὐκ ἀφρόντιστος πάλαι νείκης παλαιᾶς ἦλθε, σὺν χρόνῳ γε μὴν:</p>	<p>I have said many things previously that were necessary at the time, and I will not be ashamed to speak otherwise now. How can one pursue enemies against enemies who think they are friends set a trap, too high to leap out of? This challenge was not unexpected by me, but long- standing, it came from an old quarrel, with time, it came.</p>
<p><b>Met. 6.581-586</b></p> <p>Evolvit vestes saevi matrona tyranni fortunaequae suae carmen miserabile legit et (mirum potuisse) silet. Dolor ora repressit, verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae defuerunt; nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque confusura ruit, poenaque in imagine tota est.</p>	<p>The wife of the savage tyrant unfolded the garments, read the miserable song of her misfortune and (it is amazing this was possible) she remained silent. Sorrow curbed her mouth, and words indignant enough for her seeking tongue were lacking: she had no time for crying, but right and wrong fell into confusion, and she imagined every type of punishment.</p>

<p>Passage 6:</p> <p><b>Ag. 1388-1394</b></p> <p>οὕτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσόν: κάκφυσῶν ὀξεῖαν αἵματος σφαγὴν <b>βάλλει μ' ἔρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,</b> χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ἢ διισσότῳ γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.</p> <p>ὡς ᾧδ' ἐχόντων, πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε, χαίροιτ' ἂν, εἰ χαίροιτ', ἐγὼ δ' ἐπεύχομαι.</p>	<p>So fallen, he gasped out his life, breathing out quick spurts of blood he cast black drops of bloody dew at me, and I rejoiced no less than the earth rejoices in the Zeus sent rain at the time of the flowers' bloom.</p> <p>This is the way things are, old men of Argos, you may rejoice, if you wish, I certainly do.</p>
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<p><b>Met. 6.653-660</b>  Dissimulare nequit crudelia <b>gaudia Procne</b>,  iamque suae cupiens exsistere nuntia cladis,  “intus habes, quem poscis” ait. Circumspicit ille  atque ubi sit quaerit. Quaerenti iterumque vocanti,  <b>sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis</b>,  prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum  misit in ora patris: nec tempore maluit ullo  posse loqui et mentis testari gaudia dictis.</p>	<p>The rejoicing Procne was no longer able to conceal her cruelty, for when he wished his son to come forward she said ‘you have within you what you seek’, announcing the misfortune. He looked around, seeking him. Looking around and calling again, just as she was with her hair still splattered with the blood of the slaughter, Philomela leapt forward and cast the bloody head of Itys in his father’s face; at no other time had she so desired to be able to speak and, rejoicing, bear witness to her thoughts with words.</p>
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<p>Passage 7:</p> <p><b>Ag. 899</b>  <b>Ὅρ</b>  Πυλάδῃ τί δράσω; μητέρ’ αἰδεσθῶ κτανεῖν;</p> <p><b>Ag. 1. 927</b>  <b>Ὅρ</b>  πατρὸς γὰρ αἴσα τόνδε σοῦρίζει μόρον.</p>	<p><b>Or.</b>  Pylades, what will I do? I am afraid to kill my mother.</p> <p><b>Or.</b>  My father’s fate determines this death.</p>
<p><b>Met. 6.629-35</b>  sed simul ex nimia mentem pietate labare  sensit, ab hoc iterum est ad vultus versa sororis  inque vicem spectans ambos “cur admovet” inquit  “alter blanditias, rapta silet altera lingua?  Quam vocat hic matrem, cur non vocat illa  sororem?  Cui sis nupta, vide, Pandione nata, marito.  Degeneras: scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo.”</p>	<p>But she felt her mind slip from excessive piety  Turning from this course to the face of her sister  And seeing the duty in both, said ‘why does the  One move me with flattery, while the other is  silent, with a stolen tongue? How does this one  call me mother, why does she not call me sister?  Consider, daughter of Pandion, to whom you are  married. You dishonor your ancestors: piety is sin  in the wife of Tereus.’</p>

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