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CAMWS Annual Meeting

April 8, 2017

Atreus and Thyestes: Icons of Misrule

Known Atreus or Thyestes plays:

5th c. Greek (Athenian)

**Playwright title date occasion**

Sophocles *Atreus* (or *Mycenaiai*)

Sophocles *Thyestes at Sicyon*

Sophocles *Thyestes* II?

Euripides *Thyestes* before 425

Agathon *Thyestes*

4th c. Greek

Apollodorus of Tarsus *Thyestes*

Carcinus the Younger *Thyestes*

Chaeremon *Thyestes*

Cleophon *Thyestes*

Diogenes of Sinope *Thyestes*

Theodectes ?

Republican Roman

Ennius *Thyestes* 169 BCE Ludi Apollinares

Accius *Atreus* before 130 BCE

Cassius Parmensis *Thyestes* (40’s-30’s BCE)

Imperial Roman

Lucius Varius Rufus *Thyestes* 29 BCE Augustus’ triple triumph

Sempronius Gracchus *Thyestes* 19-10 BCE

Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus *Atreus* 14-34 CE

P. Pomponius Secundus *Atreus*

Seneca *Thyestes* 62-65 CE

M. Curiatius Maternus *Thyestes* 69-79 CE

Rubrenus Lappa ?

1. Accius, *Atreus* F5: oderint, dum metuant

Let them hate, as long as they fear

1. Seneca, *De ira* 1.20.4: Sullano scias saeculo scriptam

You can tell it [Accius’ *Atreus*] was written in the age of Sulla

1. Lucius Varius Rufus, *Thyestes* (Quintilian 3.8.45):

iam fero infandissima,

iam facere cogor

Now I endure the most unspeakable crimes,

Now I am forced to commit them.

1. Seneca, *Thyestes* 206-08: maximum hoc regni bonum est,

quod facta domini cogitur populus sui

tam ferre quam laudare

This is the greatest advantage of possessing a kingdom,

that the people are compelled to endure

rather than to praise the deeds of their master.

Works cited

Boyle, A.J. *An Introduction to Roman Tragedy*. Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

Easterling, P.E. “The end of an era? Tragedy in the early fourth century” in Alan H. Sommerstein, Stephen Halliwell, Jeffrey Henderson, and Bernhard Zimmerman, eds., *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference: Nottingham, 18-20 July 1990*. Bari, 1993.