

20TH LATIN SUMMER SCHOOL

JANUARY 20-24, 2014

Education Building, University of Sydney

LEVEL 3A.3

Instructor: ERICA BEXLEY



Sydney Latin Summer School XX

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Revenge Tragedy: Scenes from Seneca's *Thyestes*

Level 3A

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Day 1: Atreus plots his revenge

ATREUS: Ignaue, iners, eneruis et (quod maximum 176

probrum tyranno rebus in summis reor)

inulte, post tot scelera, post fratris dolos

fasque omne ruptum questibus uanis agis

iratus Atreus? fremere iam totus tuis 180

debebat armis orbis et geminum mare

utrimque classes agere, iam flammis agros

lucere et urbes decuit ac strictum undique

micare ferrum. tota sub nostro sonet

Argolica tellus equite; non siluae tegant 185

hostem nec altis montium structae iugis

arces; relictis bellicum totus canat

populus Mycenis, quisquis inuisum caput

tegit ac tuetur, clade funesta occidat.

haec ipsa pollens incliti Pelopis domus 190

ruat uel in me, dummodo in fratrem ruat.

Age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet,

sed nulla taceat. aliquod audendum est nefas

atrox, cruentum, tale quod frater meus

suum esse mallet—scelera non ulcisceris, 195

nisi uincis.

Discussion Questions

iratus Atreus: what's the effect of Atreus using his own name?

incliti Pelopis domus: who was Pelops? What is the story of Atreus' family?

scelera non ulcisceris / nisi uincis: Seneca makes a lot of statements like this: what are they called? What is their effect?

What is revenge tragedy? Can you think of some examples in Shakespeare?

Day 2: Atreus convinces Thyestes to share power

THYESTES: Di paria, frater, pretia pro tantis tibi 530

meritis rependant. regiam capitis notam

squalor recusat noster et sceptrum manus

infausta refugit. liceat in media mihi

latere turba. AT: Recipit hoc regnum duos.

TH: Meum esse credo quidquid est, frater, tuum. 535

AT: Quis influentis dona fortunae abnuit?

TH: Expertus est quicumque quam facile effluent.

AT: Fratrem potiri gloria ingenti uetas?

TH: Tua iam peracta gloria est, restat mea:

respuere certum est regna consilium mihi. 540

AT: Meam relinquam, nisi tuam partem accipis.

TH: Accipio: regni nomen impositi feram,

sed iura et arma seruiant mecum tibi.

AT Imposita capiti uincla uenerando gere;

ego destinatas uictimas superis dabo. 545

Discussion Questions

respuere certum est regna consilium mihi: how reliable is Thyestes? Why does he change his mind so quickly?

ego destinatas uictimas superis dabo: what is ironic about this line?

Meum esse credo quidquid est, frater, tuum: what is ironic about this line? How could it be interpreted?

Day 3: Atreus prepares the 'sacrifice'

NUNTIUS: Ipse est sacerdos, ipse funesta prece

letale carmen ore uiolento canit.

stat ipse ad aras, ipse deuotos neci

contrectat et componit et ferro †admouet;

attendit ipse: nulla pars sacri perit. 695

Lucus tremescit, tota succusso solo

nutauit aula, dubia quo pondus daret

ac fluctuanti similis; e laeuo aethere

atrum cucurrit limitem sidus trahens.

libata in ignes uina mutato fluunt 700

cruenta Baccho, regium capiti decus

bis terque lapsum est, fleuit in templis ebur.

Mouere cunctos monstra, sed solus sibi

immotus Atreus constat, atque ultro deos

terret minantes. iamque dimissa mora 705

adsistit aris, toruum et obliquum intuens.

Discussion Questions

Ipse est sacerdos: in what ways does Atreus' activity pervert sacrificial ritual?
How does the physical world reflect and respond to Atreus' actions?

If there is time, we will learn how to scan the passage.

Day 4: Thyestes begins to realize the truth

THYESTES: quid hoc? magis magisque concussi labant

conuexa caeli; spissior densis coit

caligo tenebris noxque se in noctem abdidit:

fugit omne sidus. quidquid est, fratri precor 995

natisque parcat, omnis in uile hoc caput

abeat procella. Redde iam gnatos mihi!

AT: Reddam, et tibi illos nullus eripiet dies.

TH: Quis hic tumultus uiscera exagitat mea?

quid tremuit intus? sentio impatiens onus 1000

meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit.

adeste, nati, genitor infelix uocat,

adeste. uisis fugiet hic uobis dolor.—

unde obloquuntur? AT: Expedi amplexus, pater;

uenere. natos ecquid agnoscis tuos? 1005

TH: Agnosco fratrem. Sustines tantum nefas

gestare, Tellus? non ad infernam Styga

te nosque mergis rupta et ingenti uia

ad chaos inane regna cum rege abripis?

Discussion Questions

Reddam, et tibi illos nullus eripiet dies: what is the irony in this line? How does Atreus use language to assert his power over Thyestes?

natos ecquid agnoscis tuos: what does Atreus show to Thyestes at this point? How could this scene be staged? Is it too gruesome to perform in the theatre?

Sustines tantum nefas / gestare, Tellus?: why does Thyestes expect that the physical world will react to Atreus' crime?