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SENECA'S TRAGEDIES

II





# SENECA'S TRAGEDIES

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY  
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IN TWO VOLUMES

II

AGAMEMNON      THYESTES  
HERCULES OETAÆUS      PHOENISSÆ  
OCTAVIA



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AGAMEMNON

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AGAMEMNON, *king of Argos, and leader of all the Greeks in their war against Troy.*

GHOST OF THYESTES, *returned to earth to urge on his son to the vengeance which he was born to accomplish.*

AEGISTHUS, *son of Thyestes by an incestuous union with his daughter ; paramour of Clytemnestra.*

CLYTEMNESTRA, *wife of Agamemnon, who has been plotting with Aegisthus against her husband, in his absence at Troy.*

CHORUS *of Argive women.*

EURYBATES, *messenger of Agamemnon.*

CASSANDRA, *daughter of Priam, captive of Agamemnon.*

ELECTRA, *daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.*

STROPHIUS, *king of Phocis.*

ORESTES, *son of Agamemnon (persona muta).*

PYLADES, *son of Strophius (persona muta).*

BAND *of captive Trojan women.*

THE SCENE is laid partly within and partly without the palace of Agamemnon at Argos or Mycenae, on the day of the return of the king from his long absence at Troy, beginning in the period of darkness just preceding the dawn.

## ARGUMENT

*THE blood-feud between Atreus and Thyestes was not ended with the terrible vengeance which Atreus wreaked upon his brother. It was yet in fate that Thyestes should live to beget upon his own daughter a son, Aegisthus, who should slay Atreus and bring ruin and death upon the great Atrides, Agamemnon.*

*The Trojan war is done. And now the near approach of the victorious king, bringing his captives and treasure home to Argos, has been announced. But little does he dream to what a home he is returning. For Clytemnestra, enraged at Agamemnon because he had sacrificed her daughter Iphigenia at Aulis to appease the winds, and full of jealousy because he brings Cassandra as her rival home, estranged also by the long-continued absence of her lord, but most estranged by her own guilty union with Aegisthus, is now plotting to slay her husband on his return, gaining thus at once revenge and safety from his wrath.*

## AGAMEMNON

### THYESTIS VMBRA

OPACA linquens Ditis inferni loca  
adsum profundo Tartari emissus specu,  
incertus utras oderim sedes magis—  
fugio Thyestes inferos, superos fugo.  
en horret animus et pavor membra excutit :  
video paternos, immo fraternos lares.  
hoc est vetustum Pelopiae limen domus ;  
hinc auspicari regium capiti decus  
mos est Pelasgis, hoc sedent alti toro  
quibus superba sceptras gestantur manu,  
locus hic habendae curiae—hic epulis locus.

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Libet reverti. nonne vel tristes lacus  
incolere satius, nonne custodem Stygis  
trigemina nigris colla iactantem iubis ?  
ubi ille celeri corpus evinctus rotae  
in se refertur, ubi per adversum irritus  
redeunte totiens luditur saxo labor,  
ubi tondet ales avida fecundum iecur,  
et inter undas fervida exustus siti  
aquas fugaces ore decepto appetit  
poenas daturus caelitem dapibus graves.  
sed ille nostrae pars quota est culpae senex ?  
reputemus omnes quos ob infandas manus

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# AGAMEMNON

## GHOST OF THYESTES

LEAVING the murky regions of infernal Dis, I come, sent forth from 'Tartarus' deep pit, doubting which world I hate the more—Thyestes flees the lower, the upper he puts to flight. Lo, my spirit shudders, my limbs quake with fear; I see my father's, nay more, my brother's house. This is the ancient seat of Pelops' line; here 'tis the custom of the Pelasgians to crown their kings; on this throne sit high lords whose proud hands wield the sceptre; here is their council-chamber—here they feast.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Fain would I turn me back. Is it not better to haunt even the gloomy pools, better to gaze upon the guardian of the Styx, tossing his three-fold neck with sable mane? where one,<sup>2</sup> his body bound on the swift-flying wheel, is whirled back upon himself; where vain uphill toil<sup>3</sup> is mocked as the stone rolls ever backward; where a greedy bird tears at the liver<sup>4</sup> constantly renewed; and the old man,<sup>5</sup> thirst-parched midst waters, catches at fleeing waves with cheated lips, doomed to pay dearly for the banquet<sup>6</sup> of the gods. But how small a part of my offence is his? Let us take count of all whom for their

<sup>1</sup> He is reminded of his own horrid banquet in this very place.

<sup>2</sup> Ixion.

<sup>3</sup> Of Sisyphus.

<sup>4</sup> Of Tityus.

<sup>5</sup> Tantalus.

<sup>6</sup> See Index *s. v.* "Pelops."

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quaesitor urna Cnosius versat reos :  
vincam Thyestes sceleribus cunctos meis.  
a fratre vincar, liberis plenus tribus  
in me sepultis ; viscera exedi mea.

Nec hactenus Fortuna maculavit patrem,  
sed maius aliud ausa commisso scelus  
natae nefandos petere concubitus iubet. 30  
non pavidus hausi dicta, sed cepi nefas.  
ergo ut per omnes liberos irem parens,  
coacta fatis nata fert uterum gravem,  
me patre dignum. versa natura est retro ;  
avo parentem, pro nefas ! patri virum,  
natis nepotes miscui—nocti diem.

Sed sera tandem respicit fessos malis  
post fata demum sortis incertae fides ;  
rex ille regum, ductor Agamemnon ducum,  
cuius secutae mille vexillum rates 40  
Iliaca velis maria texerunt suis,  
post decima Phoebi lustra devicto Ilio  
adest—daturus coniugi iugulum suae.  
iam iam natabit sanguine alterno domus :  
enses secures tela, divisum gravi  
ictu bipennis regium video caput ;  
iam scelera prope sunt, iam dolus, caedes, cruor—  
parantur epulae. causa natalis tui,  
Aegisthe, venit. quid pudor vultus gravat ?  
quid dextra dubio trepida consilio labat ? 50  
quid ipse temet consulis, torques, rogas,  
an deceat hoc te ? respice ad matrem ; decet.

<sup>1</sup> Minos. <sup>2</sup> *i.e.* Thyestes.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* Thyestes acted by direction of an oracle, which declared that by this means he might gain vengeance on Atreus' line.

<sup>4</sup> It will not be his branch of the family that shall suffer this time.

## AGAMEMNON

impious deeds the Cretan judge<sup>1</sup> with whirling urn condemns; all of them by my crimes shall I, Thyestes, conquer. But by my brother shall I be conquered, full of my three sons buried in me; my own flesh have I consumed.

<sup>28</sup> Nor thus far only has Fortune defiled the sire,<sup>2</sup> but, daring greater crime than that committed, she bade him seek his daughter's incestuous embrace. Fearlessly and to the dregs did I drain her bidding, but 'twas an impious thing I did. And therefore, that a father's power might extend o'er all his children, my daughter, forced by fate,<sup>3</sup> bore child to me, worthy to call me father. Nature has been confounded; father with grandsire, yea, monstrous! husband with father, grandsons with sons, have I confused—and day with night.

<sup>37</sup> But at length, though late and coming after death, the promise of dim prophecy is fulfilled to me, worn with my woes; that king of kings, that leader of leaders, Agamemnon, following whose banner a thousand ships once covered the Trojan waters with their sails, is now at hand,—to give his throat into his wife's power. Now, now shall this house swim in blood other than mine;<sup>4</sup> swords, axes, spears, a king's head cleft with the axe's heavy stroke, I see; now crimes are near, now treachery, slaughter, gore—feasts are being spread. The author of thy birth has come, Aegisthus.<sup>5</sup> Why dost hang thy head in shame? Why doth thy trembling hand, doubtful of purpose, fall? Why dost take counsel with thyself, why turn the question o'er and o'er whether this deed become thee? Think on thy mother; it becomes thee well.

<sup>5</sup> These and the remaining lines of the paragraph are addressed to Aegisthus, seemingly as if he were present.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Sed cur repente noctis aestivae vices  
 hiberna longa spatia producunt mora,  
 aut quid cadentes detinet stellas polo?  
 Phoebum moramur? redde iam mundo diem.

### CHORVS

O regnorum magnis fallax  
 Fortuna bonis, in praecipiti  
 dubioque locas nimis excelsos.  
 numquam placidam scepra quietem 60  
 certumve sui tenuere diem;  
 alia ex aliis cura fatigat  
 vexatque animos nova tempestas.  
 non sic Libycis syrtibus aequor  
 furit alternos volvere fluctus,  
 non Euxini turget ab imis  
 commota vadis unda nivali  
 vicina polo,  
 ubi caeruleis immunis aquis  
 lucida versat plaustra Boötes, 70  
 ut praecipites regum casus  
 Fortuna rotat. metui cupiunt  
 metuique timent, non nox illis  
 alma recessus praebet tutos,  
 non curarum somnus domitor  
 pectora solvit.

Quas non arces scelus alternum  
 dedit in praeceps? impia quas non  
 arma fatigant? iura pudorque  
 et coniugii sacrata fides 80  
 fugiunt aulas. sequitur tristis  
 sanguinolenta Bellona manu  
 quaeque superbos urit Erinys,

## AGAMEMNON

<sup>53</sup> But why suddenly is the summer night prolonged to winter's span? or what holds the setting stars still in the sky? Are we delaying Phoebus? [*Preparing to go.*] Give back the day now to the universe. [*Ghost vanishes.*]

### CHORUS

O Fortune, who dost bestow the throne's high boon with mocking hand, in dangerous and doubtful state thou settest the too exalted. Never have sceptres obtained calm peace or certain tenure; care on care weighs them down, and ever do fresh storms vex their souls. Not so on Libyan quicksands does the sea rage and roll up wave on wave; not so, stirred from their lowest depths, surge Euxine's waters, hard by the icy pole, where, undipped in the azure waves,<sup>1</sup> Boötes follows his shining wain, as does Fortune roll on the headlong fates of kings. To be feared they long, and to be feared they dread; kindly night gives them no safe retreat, and sleep, which conquers care, soothes not their breasts.

<sup>77</sup> What palace has not crime answering crime<sup>2</sup> hurled headlong? What palace do impious arms not vex? Law, shame, the sacred bonds of marriage, all flee from courts. Hard in pursuit comes grim Bellona of the bloody hand, and she who frets the

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the Northern constellations never set beneath the sea.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* waged by one member of a royal house against another.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nimias semper comitata domos,  
 quas in planum quaelibet hora  
 tulit ex alto.

Licet arma vacent cessentque doli,  
 sidunt ipso pondere magna  
 ceditque oneri Fortuna suo. 90  
 vela secundis inflata notis  
 ventos nimium timuere suos,  
 nubibus ipsis inserta caput  
 turris pluvio vapulat Austro,  
 densasque nemus spargens umbras  
 annosa videt robora frangi;  
 feriant celsos fulmina colles,  
 corpora morbis maiora patent  
 et cum in pastus armenta vagos  
 vilia currant, placet in vulnus  
 maxima cervix. 100

Quidquid in altum Fortuna tulit,  
 ruitura levat. modicis rebus  
 longius aevum est; felix mediae  
 quisquis turbae sorte quietus  
 aura stringit litora tuta  
 timidusque mari credere cumbam  
 remo terras propiore legit.

### CLYTAEMNESTRA

Quid, segnīs anime, tuta consilia expetis?  
 quid fluctuaris? clausa iam melior via est. 110  
 licuit pudicos coniugis quondam toros  
 et sceptrā casta vidua tutari fide;  
 periēre mores ius decus pietas fides—  
 et qui redire cum perit nescit pudor.  
 da frena et omnem prona nequitiam incita;  
 per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter.

## AGAMEMNON

proud, Erinys, forever dogging homes too high,  
which any hour brings low from high estate.

<sup>87</sup> Though arms be idle and treachery give o'er,  
great kingdoms sink of their own weight, and For-  
tune gives way 'neath the burden of herself. Sails  
swollen with favouring breezes fear blasts too  
strongly theirs; the tower which rears its head to  
the very clouds is beaten by rainy Auster; the  
grove, spreading dense shade around, sees ancient  
oak-trees riven; 'tis the high hills that the lightnings  
strike; large bodies are more to disease exposed,  
and while common herds stray o'er vagrant pastures,  
the head highest upreared is marked for death.

<sup>101</sup> Whatever Fortune has raised on high, she lifts  
but to bring low. Modest estate has longer life;  
then happy he whoe'er, content with the common  
lot, with safe breeze hugs the shore, and, fearing to  
trust his skiff to the wider sea, with unambitious oar  
keeps close to land.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

Why, sluggish soul, dost safe counsel seek? Why  
waver? Already the better way is closed. Once  
thou mightest have guarded thy chaste bed and thy  
widowed sceptre with pure, wifely faith; gone are  
good fashions, right doing, honour, piety, faith,—and  
modesty, which, once 'tis gone, knows no return.  
Fling loose the reins and, forward bent, rouse onward  
all iniquity; through crime ever is the safe way for





## AGAMEMNON

crime. Devise now in thine own heart a woman's wiles,—what any faithless wife, beside herself with blind passion, what step-mother's hands have dared, or what she dared, that maid<sup>1</sup> ablaze with impious love, who fled her Phasian realm in that Thessalian bark; dare sword, dare poison; or else flee from Mycenae with the partner of thy guilt, in stealthy bark. But why timidly talk of stealth, of exile, and of flight? Such things thy sister<sup>2</sup> did; thee some greater crime becomes.

### NURSE

Queen of the Greeks, Leda's illustrious child, what ponderest thou in silence, what mad deed, ungoverned in thy purpose, art planning with restless soul? Though thou say no word, thy face discovers all thy anguish. Wherefore, whate'er it be, give thyself time and room; what reason cannot, delay has oftentimes cured.

### CLYTEMNESTRA

Passions rack me too strong to endure delay; flames are burning my very marrow and my heart; here fear<sup>3</sup> blent with anguish plies the spur, and my breast throbs with jealousy;<sup>4</sup> there base love forces its yoke upon my mind and forbids me to give way. And midst such fires that beset my soul, shame, weary indeed and conquered and utterly undone, still struggles on.<sup>5</sup> By shifting floods am I driven, as when here wind, there tide harries the deep, and the waters halt uncertain to which foe they will yield. Wherefore I have let go the rudder from my hands—where wrath, where smart, where

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* of Agamemnon's vengeance.

<sup>4</sup> Of Cassandra.

<sup>5</sup> *i.e.* against lust.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

huc ire pergam ; fluctibus dedimus ratem.  
ubi animus errat, optimum est casum sequi.

NVTRIX

Caeca est temeritas quae petit casum ducem.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Cui ultima est fortuna, quid dubiam timet ?

NVTRIX

Tuta est latetque culpa, si pateris, tua.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Perlucet omne regiae vitium domus.

NVTRIX

Piget prioris et novum crimen struis ?

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Res est profecto stulta nequitiae modus. 150

NVTRIX

Quod metuit auget qui scelus scelere obruit.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Et ferrum et ignis saepe medicinae loco est.

NVTRIX

Extrema primo nemo temptavit loco.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Rapienda rebus in malis praeceps via est.

## AGAMEMNON

hope shall carry me, there will I go; to the waves  
have I given my bark. Where reason fails, 'tis best  
to follow chance.

NURSE

Blind is he and rash who follows chance.

CLYTEMNESTRA

When fortune is at its worst, why fear its hazard?

NURSE

Safe is thy sin and hidden, if thou allow it so.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Open to view is a royal house's every sin.

NURSE

Dost repent the old crime, yet plan the new?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Surely 'tis folly to stop midway in sin.

NURSE

Whoso piles crime on crime, makes greater what  
he dreads.<sup>1</sup>

CLYTEMNESTRA

Both knife and cautery oft take the place of drugs.

NURSE

Desperate remedies no one tries at first.

CLYTEMNESTRA

In midst of ills, we must snatch at headlong ways.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the penalty.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVTRIX

At te reflectat coniugi nomen sacrum.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Decem per annos vidua respiciam virum ?

NVTRIX

Meminisse debes sobolis ex illo tuae.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Equidem et iugales filiae memini faces  
et generum Achillem ; praestitit matri fidem !

NVTRIX

Redemit illa classis immotae moras  
et maria pigro fixa languore impulit.

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CLYTAEMNESTRA

Pudet doletque—Tyndaris, caeli genus,  
lustrale classi Doricae peperit caput !  
revolvit animus virginis thalamos meae  
quos ille dignos Pelopia fecit domo,  
cum stetit ad aras ore sacrificio pater  
quam nuptiales ! horruit Calchas suae  
responsa vocis et recedentes focos.  
o scelera semper sceleribus vincens domus !  
cruore ventos emimus, bellum nece !  
sed vela pariter mille fecerunt rates ?  
non est soluta prospero classis deo :  
eiecit Aulis impias portu rates.  
sic auspicatus bella non melius gerit.  
amore captae captus, immotus prece

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## AGAMEMNON

NURSE

But let the hallowed name of wedlock turn thee back.

CLYTEMNESTRA

For ten years widowed, shall I still think on husband?

NURSE

Thine offspring of him thou shouldst remember.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I do remember my daughter's<sup>1</sup> wedding fires, my son-in-law, Achilles; true faith he<sup>2</sup> showed a mother!

NURSE

She freed our becalmed fleet from delay, and roused the sluggish sea from its deep repose.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh, shame! oh, anguish! I, child of Tyndarus, of heavenly lineage, have borne a sacrifice for the Grecian fleet! Once more in memory I see my daughter's wedding rites, which *he* made worthy of Pelops' house, when, with prayer on lip, this father stood before the altars as for nuptials! Calchas shuddered at his own oracles and at the recoiling altar-fires. O house that ever o'ertops crime with crime! With blood we purchased winds, and war with murder! But, say you, by this means a thousand ships spread sail together? 'Twas by no favouring god the fleet was freed; no! Aulis from port drove forth the impious ships. Thus beginning, not more happily did he wage the war. With love of a captive

<sup>1</sup> Iphigenia.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* Agamemnon.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Zminthea tenuit spolia Phoebei senis,  
 ardore sacrae virginis iam tum furens.  
 non illum Achilles flexit indomitus minis,  
 non ille solus fata qui mundi videt,  
 (in nos fidelis augur, in captas levis), 180  
 non populus aeger et relucentes rogi.  
 inter ruentis Graeciae stragem ultimam  
 sine hoste victus mareet ac Veneri vacat  
 reparatque amores ; neve desertus foret  
 a paelice umquam barbara caelebs torus,  
 ablatam Achilli diligit Lyrnesida,  
 nec rapere puduit e sinu avulsam viri—  
 en Paridis hostem ! nunc novum vulnus gerens  
 amore Phrygiae vatis incensus furit,  
 et post tropaea Troica ac versum Ilium 190  
 captae maritus remeat et Priami gener !  
 Accingere, anime ; bella non levia apparatus.  
 scelus occupandum est. pigra, quem expectas diem ?  
 Pelopia Phrygiae scepra dum teneant nurus ?  
 an te morantur virgines viduae domi  
 patrique Orestes similis ? horum te mala  
 ventura moveant, turbo quis rerum imminet.  
 quid, misera, cessas ? en adest natis tuis  
 furens noverca. per tuum, si aliter nequit,  
 latus exigatur ensis et perimat duos. 200  
 misce cruorem, perde pereundo virum ;  
 mors misera non est commori cum quo velis.

<sup>1</sup> Chryses, father of Chryseis.

<sup>2</sup> Cassandra, his second infatuation.      <sup>3</sup> Calchas.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* Agamemnon believed him when he demanded the death of Iphigenia, but not when he required the return of Briseis.

## AGAMEMNON

smitten, unmoved by prayer, he held as spoil the child of Smynthean Apollo's aged priest,<sup>1</sup> then as now mad with passion for a sacred maid.<sup>2</sup> Neither Achilles, unmoved by threats, could bend him, nor he<sup>3</sup> who alone sees the secrets of the universe, (for me and mine sure seer, for slave-girls of no weight),<sup>4</sup> nor the plague-smit people, nor the blazing pyres. Midst the death-struggle of falling Greece, conquered, but by no foe, he languishes, has leisure for love, seeks new amours; and, lest his widowed couch ever be free from some barbaric mistress, he lusted for the Lyrnesian maid,<sup>5</sup> Achilles' spoil, nor blushed to bear her away, torn from her lord's embrace—he, the enemy of Paris! Now, wounded afresh, he rages with passion for the inspired Phrygian maid;<sup>6</sup> and after Troy's conquest, after Ilium's overthrow, he comes back home, a captive's husband and Priam's son-in-law!

<sup>103</sup> Now gird thee up, my soul; no trivial strife art thou preparing. Crime must be forestalled.<sup>7</sup> Sluggish, what day dost thou await? Till Phrygian wives shall wield our Pelops' sceptre? Do the virgin daughters of thy house and Orestes, image of his father, hold thee back? Nay, 'tis the ills that that threaten them that should urge thee on; o'er them a storm of woes hangs lowering. Why, wretched woman, dost thou hesitate? For thy children a mad step-dame is at hand. Through thine own side, if not otherwise it can be done, let the sword be driven, and so slay two. Mingle thy blood with his, in thy death destroy thy husband; death hath no pang when shared with whom thou wouldest.

<sup>5</sup> Briseis.

<sup>6</sup> Cassandra.

<sup>7</sup> i.e. I must take revenge on Agamemnon before he does the like to me.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## NYTRIX

Regina, frena temet et siste impetus  
 et quanta temptes cogita ; victor venit  
 Asiae ferocis, ultor Europae, trahit  
 captiva Pergama et diu victos Phrygas.  
 hunc fraude nunc conaris et furto aggredi,  
 quem non Achilles ense violavit fero,  
 quamvis procacem torvus armasset manum,  
 non melior Ajax morte decreta furens, 210  
 non sola Danais Hector et bello mora,  
 non tela Paridis certa, non Memnon niger,  
 non Xanthus armis corpora immixtis gerens  
 fluctusque Simois caede purpureos agens,  
 non nivea proles Cyenus aequorei dei,  
 non bellicoso Thressa cum Rheso phalanx,  
 non picta pharetras et securigera manu  
 peltata Amazon ? hunc domi reducem paras  
 mactare et aras caede maculare impia ?  
 viatrix inultum Graecia hoc facinus feret ? 220  
 equos et arma classibusque horrens fretum  
 propone et alto sanguine exundans solum  
 et tota captae fata Dardaniae domus  
 regesta Danais. comprime adfectus truces  
 mentemque tibimet ipsa pacifica tuam.

## AEGISTHVS

Quod tempus animo semper ac mente horrui  
 adest profecto, rebus extremum meis.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Ajax son of Telamon in contradistinction to Ajax the son of Oileus, called Ajax "the Less."



# AGAMEMNON

NURSE

O Queen, restrain thyself, check thine impetuous wrath and think what thou art daring; the conqueror of wild Asia is at hand, Europe's avenger, dragging in triumph captive Pergama and the Phrygians, long since subdued. Against him now with guile and stealth dost thou essay to fight, whom Achilles with his savage sword hurt not, though in grim wrath he armed his insolent hand, nor the better Ajax<sup>1</sup> raging and bent on death, nor Hector, sole bulwark against the warring Greeks, nor the sure-aimed shafts of Paris, nor swarthy Memnon, nor Xanthus, rolling down corpses and arms commingled, nor Simoïs, its waves running red with blood, nor Cycnus, snowy<sup>2</sup> offspring of the Ocean-god, nor warlike Rhesus and his Thracian horde, nor the Amazon, with her painted quiver, battle-axe in hand, and crescent shield? Him, home-returning, dost thou prepare to slay and to defile thine altars with slaughter impious? Will victorious Greece leave such a deed unavenged? Horses and arms, the sea studded with ships, set these before thine eyes, the ground flowing with streams of blood, and the whole fate of the captured house of Dardanus turned 'gainst the Greeks.<sup>3</sup> Control thy fierce passions, and do thou thyself set thine own soul at peace. [Exit.

[Enter AEGISTHUS.]

AEGISTHUS [*in soliloquy*]

The hour which always in my heart and soul I dreaded is here indeed, the hour of fate for me.

<sup>2</sup> He was changed into a snow-white swan.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. Agamemnon's death will be as terribly avenged as was the injury to Helen.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quid terga vertis, anime? quid primo impetu  
deponis arma? crede perniciem tibi  
et dira saevos fata moliri deos.

230

opponere cunctis vile suppliciiis caput,  
ferrumque et ignes pectore adverso excipe,  
Aegisthe; non est poena sic nato mori.

Tu nos periculi socia, tu, Leda sata,  
comitare tantum; sanguinem reddet tibi  
ignavus iste ductor ac fortis pater.  
sed quid trementes circuit pallor genas  
iacensque vultu languido optutus stupet?

### CLYTAEMNESTRA

Amor iugalis vincit ac flectit retro:  
referamur<sup>1</sup> illuc, unde non decuit prius  
abire; vel<sup>2</sup> nunc casta repetatur fides,  
nam sera numquam est ad bonos mores via:  
quem paenitet peccasse paene est innocens.

240

### AEGISTHVS

Quo raperis amens? credis aut speras tibi  
Agamemnonis fidele coniugium? ut nihil  
subesset animo quod graves faceret metus,  
tamen superba et impotens flatu nimis  
Fortuna magno spiritus tumidos daret.  
gravis ille sociis stante adhuc Troia fuit;  
quid rere ad animum suapte natura truce  
Troiam addidisse? rex Mycenarum fuit,  
veniet tyrannus; prospera animos efferunt.<sup>3</sup>  
effusa circa paelicum quanto venit

250

<sup>1</sup> referemus *E*: Leo referemur: Gronovius, followed by Richter, referamur: remeemus *A*.

<sup>2</sup> So Peiper, following Gronovius: Leo with MSS. sed.

<sup>3</sup> So the MSS.: Leo, following Buecheler, efferant

## AGAMEMNON .

Why, soul, dost fear to face it? Why at the first onslaught dost lay down thy arms? Be sure that for thee destruction and dread doom the pitiless gods prepare. Then set thy vile life to face all punishments, and with confronting breast welcome both sword and flame, Aegisthus; for one so born, 'tis no penalty to die.

[To CLYTEMNESTRA]

<sup>234</sup> Thou partner of my peril, thou, Leda's daughter, be but my comrade still; then blood for blood shall he repay to thee, this cowardly warrior and valiant sire. But why does pallor o'erspread thy trembling cheeks, and why in thy listless face is thine eye so dull and drooping?

### CLYTEMNESTRA

Love for my husband conquers and turns me back. Return we thither whence 'twere well never to have come away. E'en now let us reseek purity and truth, for never too late is trod the path to honesty; whoso repents his sin is well-nigh innocent.

### AEGISTHUS

Whither art borne, mad one? Dost believe or hope that Agamemnon is still true to his marriage vows? Though there were nought in thine own heart to rouse grave fears, still would his arrogant, immoderate, o'er-inflated fortune swell his pride. Harsh to his allies was he while Troy still stood; what thinkest thou Troy<sup>1</sup> has added to a spirit by its own nature fierce? Mycenae's king he was; he will come back her tyrant;—prosperity urges pride beyond itself. With what magnificence the surging throng of harlots

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the fall of Troy.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

turba apparatu! sola sed turba eminent  
 tenetque regem famula veridici dei.  
 feresne thalami victa consortem tui?  
 at illa nolet. ultimum est nuptae malum  
 palam mariti possidens paelex domum.  
 nec regna socium ferre nec taedae sciunt.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Aegisthe, quid me rursus in praeceps agis 260  
 iramque flammis iam residentem incitas?  
 permisit aliquid victor in captam sibi;  
 nec coniugem hoc respicere nec dominam decet.  
 lex alia solio est, alia privato in toro.  
 quid quod severas ferre me leges viro  
 non patitur animus turpis admissi memor?  
 det ille veniam facile cui venia est opus.

AEGISTHVS

Ita est? pacisci mutuam veniam licet?  
 ignota tibi sunt iura regnorum aut nova?  
 nobis maligni iudices, aequi sibi 270  
 id esse regni maximum pignus putant,  
 si quidquid aliis non licet solis licet.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Ignovit Helenae; iuncta Menelao redit  
 quae Europam et Asiam paribus affixit malis.

AEGISTHVS

Sed nulla Atriden Venere furtiva abstulit  
 nec cepit animum coniugi obstrictum suae.

## AGAMEMNON

comes! But one stands out among the throng and holds the king in thrall, the handmaid<sup>1</sup> of the fate-revealing god.<sup>2</sup> Wilt thou give up and endure a sharer in thy marriage bed? But *she* will not. A wife's utmost of woe is a mistress openly queening it in her husband's house. Nor throne nor bed can brook a partnership.

### CLYTEMNESTRA

Aegisthus, why dost thou again drive me headlong, and fan to flame my wrath already cooling? Suppose the victor has allowed himself some liberty toward a captive maid; 'tis meet neither for wife nor mistress to take note of this. There is one law for thrones, one for the private bed. What? Does my own heart, itself conscious of base guilt, suffer me to pass harsh judgment on my husband? Let her forgive freely who forgiveness needs.

### AEGISTHUS

Sayst thou so? Canst bargain for mutual forgiveness? Are the rights of kings unknown to thee or strange? To us harsh judges, partial to themselves, they deem this the greatest pledge of kingship, if whate'er to others is unlawful is lawful to them alone.

### CLYTEMNESTRA

He pardoned Helen; joined to her Menelaüs she returns, who Europe and Asia to like ruin dashed.

### AEGISTHUS

Aye, but no woman with stealthy love has stolen Atrides and captured his heart close-barred against

<sup>1</sup> Cassandra.

<sup>2</sup> Apollo.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

iam crimen ille quaerit et causas parat.  
 nil esse crede turpe commissum tibi ;  
 quid honesta prodest vita, flagitio vacans ?  
 ubi dominus odit fit nocens, non quaeritur. 280  
 Spartamne repetes spreta et Eurotan tuum  
 patriasque sedes profuga ? non dant exitum  
 repudia regum. spe metus falsa levas.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Delicta novit nemo nisi fidus mea.

AEGISTHVS

Non intrat umquam regium limen fides.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Opibus merebor, ut fidem pretio obligem.

AEGISTHVS

Pretio parata vincitur pretio fides.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Surgit residuus pristinae mentis pudor ;  
 quid obstrepis ? quid voce blandiloqua mala  
 consilia dictas ? scilicet nubet tibi, 290  
 regum relicto rege, generosa exuli ?

AEGISTHVS

Et cur Atrida videor inferior tibi,  
 natus Thyestae ?

## AGAMEMNON

his wife.<sup>1</sup> Already thy lord seeks charge against thee, intends cause of strife. Suppose no baseness has been done by thee; what boots an honest life and sinless? Whom a master hates is condemned of guilt unheard. Spurned away, wilt thou go back to Sparta and thy Eurotas, wilt flee to thy father's house? The rejected of kings have no escape. With false hope dost thou relieve thy fears.

CLYTEMNESTRA

None knows my guilt save one faithful friend.

AEGISTHUS

Faith never crosses the threshold of a king.

CLYTEMNESTRA

With wealth will I purchase, with bribes will I bind faith.

AEGISTHUS

Faith gained by bribes is overcome by bribes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

The remnant of my old time chastity revives; why dost thou cry against it? Why with cozening words dost give me evil counsel? Deserting the king of kings, shall I wed with thee, a high-born woman with an outcast?

AEGISTHUS

And wherefore less than Atreus' son do I seem to thee, who am Thyestes' son?

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* in Menelaüs' case his heart was not already hardened against his wife by another mistress, as is the case with Agamemnon.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Si parum est, adde et nepos.

AEGISTHVS

Auctore Phoebō gignor ; haud generis pudet.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Phoebum nefandae stirpis auctorem vocas,  
quem nocte subita frenā revocantem sua  
caelo expulisti? quid deos probro addimus?  
subripere doctus fraude geniales toros,  
quem Venere tantum scimus illicita virum,  
facesse prope ac dedecus nostrae domus 300  
asporta ab oculis ; haec vacat regi ac viro.

AEGISTHVS

Exilia mihi sunt haud nova, assuēvi malis.  
si tu imperas, regina, non tantum domo  
Argisve cedo : nil moror iussu tuo  
aperire ferro pectus aerumnis grave.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Siquidem hoc cruenta Tyndaris fieri sinam.  
quae iuncta peccat debet et culpae fidem.  
secede mecum potius, ut rerum statum  
dubium ac minacem iuncta consilia explicent.

CHORVS

Canite, o pubes inclita, Phoebum ! 310  
tibi festa caput  
turba coronat, tibi virgineas,  
laurum quatiens,



## AGAMEMNON

CLYTEMNESTRA

If that is not enough, say grandson, too.

AEGISTHUS

Phoebus was the source of my begetting; my birth shames me not.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Dost thou name Phoebus as source of an incestuous birth, whom, calling back his steeds in sudden night, you<sup>1</sup> drove from heaven? Why besmirch the gods? Thou, trained by guile to steal the marriage bed, depart at once, take from my sight the infamy of our house; this home is waiting for its king and lord.

AEGISTHUS

Exile is not new to me; I am used to woe. If thou commandest, O queen, not alone from home and Argos do I flee: I am ready at thy bidding to plunge sword into my heart, o'erweighed with grief.

CLYTEMNESTRA [*aside*]

Yet, should I, cruel daughter of Tyndareus, let this be done.

[*To AEGISTHUS.*]

Who jointly sins owes also faith to crime. Come thou with me, that the dark and threatening state of our affairs joint plans may set in order. [*Exeunt.*]

CHORUS

Sing ye, O maids renowned, of Phoebus! To thee, Phoebus, the festal throng wreaths the head, to thee, waving laurel-bough, the Argive maid in wonted

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* your house. At the horrid feast of Thyestes the sun veiled his face in darkness that he might not see.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

de more comas innuba fudit	315
stirps Inachia ;	318
quaeque Erasini gelidos fontes,	
quaeque Eurotan,	320
quaeque virenti tacitum ripa	
bibis Ismenon ;	
tu quoque nostros, Thebais hospes,	316
comitare choros, <sup>1</sup>	317
quam fatorum praescia Manto,	322
sata Tiresia,	
Latonigenas monuit sacris	
celebrare deos.	
Arcus, victor, pace relata,	
Phoebe, relaxa	
umeroque graves levibus telis	
pone pharetras	
resonetque manu pulsa citata	330
vocale chelys.	
nil acre velim magnumque modis	
intonet altis,	
sed quale soles leviore lyra	
flectere carmen	
simplex, lusus cum docta tuos	
Musa recenset.	
licet et chorda graviore sonos,	
quale canebas	
cum Titanas fulmine victos	340
videre dei,	
vel cum montes montibus altis	
super impositi	
struxere gradus trucibus monstris,	
stetit imposita	
Pelion Ossa, pinifer ambos	
pressit Olympus.	

<sup>1</sup> Lines 316, 317 were transposed by Bothe.

## AGAMEMNON

fashion spreads forth her virgin locks ; and thou who drinkest of Erasinus' cool waters, who of Eurotas, and who of Ismenus drinkest, silently flowing along its green banks ; thou, too, though stranger in Thebes, come join in our chorus, whom Manto, reader of fate, Tiresias' daughter, warned with due rites to worship the gods, offspring of Latona.

<sup>326</sup> Thy bow, now peace has come back, all-conquering Phoebus, loose, and thy quiver, full of swift arrows, lay down from thy shoulder and let resound, smit by thy flying fingers, the tuneful lyre. No stern, high strains in lofty measures would I have it sound, but such simple song as 'tis thy wont to modulate on lighter shell, when the learned Muse surveys thy sports. 'Tis thy right, too, on heavier strings to sound such strain as thou sangest when gods saw Titans by thunder overcome, even when mountains, on lofty mountains set, furnished pathway for grim monsters, when Pelion stood on Ossa set beneath, and cloud-capped Olympus weighed on both.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Ades, o magni, soror et coniunx,  
 consors sceptri,  
 regia Iuno! tua te colimus 350  
 turba Mycenae.  
 tu sollicitum supplexque tui  
 numinis Argos  
 sola tueris, tu bella manu  
 pacemque regis.  
 tu nunc laurus Agamemnonias  
 accipe victrix.  
 tibi multifora tibia buxo  
 solemne canit,  
 tibi fila movent docta puellae 360  
 carmine molli,  
 tibi votivam matres Graiae  
 lampada iactant,  
 ad tua coniunx candida tauri  
 delubra cadet,  
 nescia aratri, nullo collum  
 signata iugo.  
 Tuque, o magni nata Tonantis,  
 incluta Pallas,  
 quae Dardanias cuspidem turres 370  
 saepe petisti,  
 te permixto matrona minor  
 maiorque choro  
 colit et reserat veniente dea  
 templa sacerdos.  
 tibi nexilibus turba coronis  
 redimita venit,  
 tibi grandaevi lassique senes  
 compote voto  
 reddunt grates libantque manu 380  
 vina trementi.  
 Et te Triviam nota memores  
 voce precamur :

## AGAMEMNON

<sup>348</sup> Thou, too, be near, who as wife and sister  
 sharest the sceptre's might, Juno the royal! We,  
 thy chosen band, in Mycenae adore thee. Thou art  
 the sole protector of Argos that calls on thee with  
 anxious prayers; thou in thy hand holdest war and  
 peace. Accept now the laurels of Agamemnon,  
 victorious goddess. To thee the box-wood flute of  
 many openings soundeth its solemn strains; to thee  
 skilled maidens touch the strings in soothing melody;  
 to thee Grecian mothers wave the votive torch; at  
 thy shrines shall fall the bull's white mate, which  
 the plough knows not, whose neck the yoke ne'er  
 scarred.

<sup>368</sup> And thou, child of the great Thunderer, glorious  
 Pallas, who oft with thy spear didst attack the  
 Dardanian towers, to thee in mingled chorus mothers,  
 younger and older, kneel, and at thy coming the  
 priest throws wide the doors of the temple. To thee  
 the throng, crowned with woven wreaths, advances;  
 to thee aged and spent old men, their petitions  
 heard, give thanks and with trembling hand pour  
 wine in libation.

<sup>382</sup> Thee, too, O Trivia,<sup>1</sup> with mindful hearts and  
 prayer familiar we adore. Thou biddest thy natal

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Diana.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

tu maternam sistere Delon,  
 Lucina, iubes,  
 huc atque illuc prius errantem  
 Cyclada ventis :  
 nunc iam stabilis fixa terras  
 radice tenet,  
 respuit auras religatque rates 390  
 assueta sequi.  
 tu Tantalidos funera matris  
 victrix numeras ;  
 stat nunc Sipyli vertice summo  
 flebile saxum,  
 et adhuc lacrimas marmora fundunt  
 antiqua novas.  
 colit impense femina virque  
 numen geminum.  
 Tuque ante omnes, pater ac rector 400  
 fulmine pollens,  
 cuius nutu simul extremi  
 tremuere poli,  
 generis nostri, Iuppiter, auctor,  
 cape dona libens  
 abavusque tuam non degenerem  
 respice prolem.

Sed ecce, vasto concitus miles gradu  
 manifesta properat signa laetitiae ferens  
 (namque hasta summo lauream ferro gerit) 410  
 fidusque regi semper Eurybates adest.

EVRYBATES

Delubra et aras caelitum et patrios lares 392<sup>a</sup><sup>1</sup>  
 post longa fessus spatia, vix credens mihi,

<sup>1</sup> *Leo in line notation has followed Gronovius except in the chorus just ended, which Gronovius, with E, prints in dimeters,*

## AGAMEMNON

Delos to stand firm, Lucina,<sup>1</sup> erstwhile a Cyclad, drifting hither and yon at the will of the winds; now 'tis a stable land with root firm fixed, repels the winds and gives anchorage for ships, though wont to follow them. Victorious, thou countest o'er the corpses that their mother,<sup>2</sup> child of Tantalus, be-moaned; now on Sipylus' high top she stands, a weeping statue, and to this day fresh tears the ancient marble drips. Zealously both maid and man adore the twin divinities.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>400</sup> And thou before all others, father and ruler, god of the thunder, by whose mere nod the farthest poles do tremble, O Jove, thou author of our race, kindly accept our gifts, and with a father's care take thought for thine own progeny.

<sup>408</sup> But lo, a soldier, hurrying with huge steps, hastes hither with signs of joyful tidings clearly visible, (for his spear bears a laurel wreath on its iron tip,) and Eurybates, the ever faithful servant of the king, is here.

[*Enter EURYBATES with laurel-wreathed spear.*] .

### EURYBATES

Ye shrines and altars of the heavenly gods, ye household deities of my fathers, after long wanderings wearied, and scarce trusting mine own eyes, I humbly

<sup>1</sup> Diana.    <sup>2</sup> Niobe.    <sup>3</sup> *i.e.* Phoebus and Phoebe (Diana).

*while A alternates dimeters with monometers. Leo follows A, and adopts the notation 392<sup>a</sup>-410<sup>a</sup>, "in order not to break with Gronovius throughout the remainder of the play."*





## AGAMEMNON

give reverence. [*To the people.*] Pay now your vows to the high gods; the pride and glory of the Argive land returns to his own house at last, Agamemnon, victorious!

[*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA in time to hear the herald's concluding words.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Blessed news this that falls upon mine ears! But where delays my husband whom I have sought through ten long years? Rests he on sea, or land?

EURYBATES

Unharm'd, increased in glory, illustrious with praise, he hath set homeward foot upon the longed-for shore.

CLYTEMNESTRA

With sacred rites let us hail the day, fortunate at last, and the gods, even if propitious, yet slow in granting our request. But tell me, thou, does my husband's brother live, and where is my sister,<sup>1</sup> tell.

EURYBATES

Better than our hopes I pray and beseech the gods; for the sea's dubious lot forbids to speak certainty. When our scattered fleet met swollen seas, one ship could scarce descry her sister ship. Nay, e'en Atrides' self, on the boundless ocean wandering, endured losses heavier by sea than war, and like a vanquished man, though victor, he returns, bringing but few and shattered vessels from his mighty fleet.

<sup>1</sup> Helen.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## CLYTAEMNESTRA

Effare casus quis rates hausit meas  
aut quae maris fortuna dispulerit duces.

## EVRYBATES

Acerba fatu poscis, infaustum iubes  
miscere laeto nuntium. refugit loqui  
mens aegra tantis atque inhorrescit malis.

## CLYTAEMNESTRA

Exprome ; clades scire qui refugit suas  
gravat timorem ; dubia plus torquent mala.

420

## EVRYBATES

Vt Pergamum omne Dorica cecidit face,  
divisa praeda est, maria properantes petunt.  
iamque ense fessum miles exonerat latus,  
neglecta summas scuta per puppes iacent ;  
ad militares remus aptatur manus  
omnisque nimium longa properanti mora est.  
signum recursus regia ut fulsit rate  
et clara laetum remigem monuit tuba,  
aurata primas prora designat vias  
aperitque cursus, mille quos puppes secent.

430

Hinc aura primo lenis impellit rates  
adlapsa velis ; unda vix actu levi  
tranquilla Zephyri mollis afflatu tremit,  
splendetque classe pelagus et pariter latet.  
iuvat videre nuda Troiae litora,  
iuvat relictis sola Sigei loca.  
properat iuventus omnis adductos simul

## AGAMEMNON

CLYTEMNESTRA

Tell what calamity has swallowed up my ships,  
or what mishap by sea has dispersed the chiefs.

EURYBATES

A tale bitter in the telling thou demandest; thou  
biddest me mix the unlucky message with the glad.  
My sick mind shrinks from speech and shudders at  
the thought of such disasters.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Tell on; who shrinks from knowledge of his  
calamities but aggravates his fear; troubles half  
seen do torture all the more.

EURYBATES

When all Pergamum fell 'neath the Doric fire, the  
spoil was divided and in eager haste all sought the  
sea. And now the warrior eases his side of the  
sword's weary load, and unheeded lie the shields  
along the high sterns; the oar is fitted to the warrior's  
hands, and to their eager haste all tarrying seems  
over long. Then, when the signal for return gleamed  
on the royal ship, and the loud trumpet-blast warned  
the glad rowers, the king's gilded prow, leading,  
marked out the way, and opened up the course for a  
thousand ships to follow.

<sup>431</sup> A gentle breeze at first steals into our sails and  
drives our vessels onward; the tranquil waves, scarce  
stirring, ripple beneath soft Zephyr's breathing, and  
the sea reflects the splendour of the fleet, hiding the  
while beneath it. 'Tis sweet to gaze on the bare  
shores of Troy, sweet to behold deserted Sigeum's  
wastes. The young men all haste to bend the oars,

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

lentare remos, adiuvat ventos manu  
 et valida nisu brachia alterno movet.  
 sulcata vibrant aequora et latera increpant 440  
 dirimuntque canae caerulum spumae mare.  
 ut aura plenos fortior tendit sinus,

posuere tonsas, credita est vento ratis  
 fususque transtris miles aut terras procul,  
 quantum recedunt vela, fugientes notat,  
 aut bella narrat: Hectoris fortis minas  
 currusque et empto redditum corpus rogo,  
 sparsum cruore regis Herceum Iovem.  
 tunc qui iacente reciprocus ludit salo  
 tumidumque pando transilit dorso mare 450  
 Tyrrhenus omni piscis exultat freto  
 agitatque gyros et comes lateri adnatat,  
 anteire naves laetus et rursus sequi;  
 nunc prima tangens rostra lascivit chorus,  
 millesimam nunc ambit et lustrat ratem.

Iam litus omne tegitur et campi latent  
 et dubia parent montis Idaei iuga;  
 et iam, quod unum pervicax acies videt,  
 Iliacus atra fumus apparet nota.  
 iam lassa Titan colla relevabat iugo, 460  
 in astra iam lux prona, iam praeceps dies.  
 exigua nubes sordido crescens globo  
 nitidum cadentis inquinat Phoebi iubar;  
 suspecta varius occidens fecit freta.

Nox prima caelum sparserat stellis, iacent  
 deserta vento vela. tum murmur grave,  
 maiora minitans, collibus summis cadit

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* of Achilles, by which Hector's body was dragged.

<sup>2</sup> Priam was slain at the altar of Hercean Jove (*Zeûs Ἐρκεῖος*, protector of the courtyard) in the courtyard of his palace.

<sup>3</sup> The dolphin is so called here in remembrance of the

## AGAMEMNON

with strokes together, aid winds with hands and move their sturdy arms with rhythmic swing. The furrowed waters quiver, the vessel's sides hiss through the waves and dash the blue sea into hoary spray. When a fresher breeze strains the swelling sails, the warriors lay by their oars, trust ship to wind and, stretched along the benches, either watch the far-fleeing land as the sails retreat, or rehearse their wars—brave Hector's threats, the chariot<sup>1</sup> and his ransomed body given to the pyre, Hercean Jove sprinkled with royal blood.<sup>2</sup> Then, too, the Tyrrhene fish<sup>3</sup> plays to and fro in the smooth water, leaps over the heaving seas with arching back, and sports around, now dashing about in circles, now swimming by our side, now gaily leading and again following after; anon the band in sheer wantonness touch the leading prow, now round and round the thousandth ship they swim.

<sup>456</sup> Meanwhile all the shore is hid and the plains sink from view, and dimly the ridges of Ida's mount appear; and now, what alone the keenest eye can see, the smoke of Ilium shows but a dusky spot. Already from the yoke Titan was freeing his horses' weary necks; now to the stars his rays sink low, now day goes headlong down. A tiny cloud, growing to a murky mass, stains the bright radiance of the setting sun, and the many coloured sun-set has made us doubt the sea.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>465</sup> Young night had spangled the sky with stars; the sails, deserted by the wind, hung low. Then from the mountain heights there falls a murmur deep, worse threatening, and the wide-sweeping

Tyrrhene pirates who under the wrath of Bacchus were changed to dolphins. See *Oedipus*, 449 ff.

<sup>4</sup> This is one of numerous weather-signs.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

tractuque longo litus ac petrae gemunt ;  
 agitata ventis unda venturis tumet—  
 cum subito luna conditur, stellae latent, 470  
 in astra pontus tollitur, caelum perit.  
 nec una nox est ; densa tenebras obruit  
 caligo et omni luce subducta fretum  
 caelumque miscet. undique incumbunt simul  
 rapiuntque pelagus infimo eversum solo<sup>1</sup>  
 adversus Euro Zephyrus et Boreae Notus.  
 sua quisque mittit tela et infesti fretum  
 emoliuntur, turbo convolvit mare.  
 Strymonius altas Aquilo contorquet nives  
 Libycusque harenas Auster ac Syrtes agit ; 480  
 nec manet in Austro : flat gravis nimbis Notus,  
 imbre auget undas, Eurus orientem movet  
 Nabataea quatiens regna et Eoos sinus.  
 quid rabidus ora Corus Oceano exerens ?  
 mundum revellit sedibus totum suis,  
 ipsosque rupto crederes caelo deos  
 decidere et atrum rebus induci chaos.  
 vento resistit aestus et ventus retro  
 aestum revolvit ; non capit sese mare  
 undasque miscent imber et fluctus suas. 490  
 nec hoc levamen denique aerumnis datur,  
 videre saltem et nosse quo pereant malo.  
 premunt tenebrae lumina et dirae Stygis  
 inferna nox est. excidunt ignes tamen  
 et nube dirum fulmen elisa micat,  
 miserisque lucis tanta dulcedo est malae ;  
 hoc lumen optant.

Ipsa se classis premit  
 et prora prorae nocuit et lateri latus.

<sup>1</sup> So A : *Leo* infimum † everso polo with E, conjecturing infimum venti polo, and deleting l. 476.

## AGAMEMNON

shore and rocky headlands send forth a moaning sound; the waves, lashed by the rising wind, roll high—when suddenly the moon is hid, the stars sink out of sight, skyward the sea is lifted, the heavens are gone. 'Tis doubly night; dense fog o'erwhelms the dark and, all light withdrawn, confuses sea and sky. From all sides at once the winds fall on and ravage the sea, from its lowest depths upturned, West wind with East wind striving, South with North. Each wields his own weapons, with deadly assault stirring up the deep, while a whirlwind churns the waves. Strymonian Aquilo sends the deep snow whirling, and Libyan Auster stirs up the sands of Syrtes;<sup>1</sup> nor stands the strife with Auster: Notus, heavy with clouds, blows up, swells waves with rain, while Eurus attacks the dawn, shaking Nabataean realms, and eastern gulfs. What wrought fierce Corus, thrusting forth his head from ocean? The whole universe he tears from its foundations, and you might think the very gods falling from the shattered sky, and black chaos enveloping the world. Flood strives with wind and wind backward rolls the flood. The sea contains not itself, and rain and waves mingle their waters. Then even this comfort fails their dreadful plight, to see at least and know the disaster by which they perish. Darkness weighs on their eyes, and 'tis the infernal night of awful Styx. Yet fires burst forth, and from the riven clouds gleams the dire lightning flash, and to the poor sailors great is the sweetness of that fearful gleam; even for such light they pray.

<sup>497</sup> The fleet itself helps on its own destruction, prow crashing on prow and side on side. One ship the

<sup>1</sup> The Syrtes were shallow sand-bars off the northern coast of Africa.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

illam dehiscens pontus in praeceps rapit  
 hauritque et alto redditam revomit mari; 500  
 haec onere sidit, illa convulsum latus  
 submittit undis, fluctus hanc decimus tegit.  
 haec lacera et omni decore populato levis  
 fluitat nec illi vela nec tonsae manent  
 nec rectus altas malus antemnas ferens,  
 sed trunca toto puppis Icario natat.  
 nil ratio et usus audet; ars cessit malis.  
 tenet horror artus, omnis officio stupet  
 navita relicto, remus effugit manus.  
 in vota miseros ultimus cogit timor 510  
 eademque superos Troes et Danai rogant.  
 quid fata possunt! invidet Pyrrhus patri,  
 Aiaci Vlixes, Hectori Atrides minor,  
 Agamemno Priamo; quisquis ad Troiam iacet  
 felix vocatur, cadere qui meruit manu,<sup>1</sup>  
 quem fama servat, victa quem tellus tegit.  
 "nil nobile ausos pontus atque undae ferunt?  
 ignava fortes fata consument viros?  
 perdenda mors est? quisquis es nondum malis  
 satiate tantis caelitum, tandem tuum 520  
 numen serena; cladibus nostris daret  
 vel Troia lacrimas. odia si durant tua  
 placetque mitti Doricum exitio genus,  
 quid hos simul perire nobiscum iuvat,  
 quibus perimus? sistite infestum mare;  
 vehit ista Danaos classis et Troas vehit."  
 nec plura possunt; occupat vocem mare.

<sup>1</sup> *So A: Leo gradu.*

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<sup>1</sup> Every tenth wave was supposed to be the greatest and most destructive.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* in safety. The contrast here is between timorous



## AGAMEMNON

yawning deep sucks into the abyss, engulfs and spews forth again, restored to the sea above; one sinks of its own weight, another turns its wrecked side to the waves, and one the tenth<sup>1</sup> wave o'erwhelms. Here, battered and stripped of all its ornament, one floats, with neither sails nor oars nor straight mast bearing the high sailyards, a broken hulk, drifting wide on the Icarian sea. Reason, experience, are of no avail; skill yields to dire calamity. Horror holds their limbs; the sailors all stand stupefied, their tasks abandoned; oars drop from hands. To prayer abject fear drives the wretches, and Trojans and Greeks beg the same things of the gods. What can near doom accomplish? Pyrrhus envies his father, Ulysses Ajax, the younger Atrides Hector, Agamemnon Priam; whoever at Troy lies slain is hailed as blessed, who by deeds of arms earned death, whom glory guards, whom the land he conquered buries. "Do sea and wave bear<sup>2</sup> those who have dared naught noble, and shall a coward's doom o'erwhelm brave men? Must death be squandered? Whoe'er of heaven's gods thou art, not yet with our sore troubles sated, let thy divinity be at last appeased; o'er our calamities e'en Troy would weep. But if thy hate is stubborn, and 'tis thy pleasure to send the Greek race to doom, why wouldst have those<sup>3</sup> perish along with us, for whose sake we perish? Allay the raging sea: this fleet bears Greeks but it bears Trojans too." They can no more; the sea usurps their words.

folk who have safely sailed the sea and these brave men who must perish in it and throw away their lives for no return.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* the Trojans, on whose account, it is here assumed, the destructive storm has been sent upon the Greeks.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Ecce alia clades! fulmine irati Iovis  
 armata Pallas quidquid haut<sup>1</sup> hasta minax,  
 haut<sup>1</sup> aegide haut<sup>2</sup> furore Gorgoneo potest, 530  
 at<sup>3</sup> igne patrio temptat, et caelo novae  
 spirant procellae. solus invictus malis  
 luctatur Ajax. vela cogentem hunc sua  
 tento rudente flamma perstrinxit cadens.  
 libratur aliud fulmen; hoc toto impetu  
 certum reducta Pallas excussit manu,  
 imitata patrem. transit Aiacem et ratem  
 ratisque partem secum et Aiacem tulit.  
 nil ille motus, ardua ut cautes, salo  
 ambustus extat, dirimit insanum mare 540  
 fluctusque rumpit pectore et navem manu  
 complexus ignes traxit et caeco mari  
 conlucet Ajax, omne resplendet fretum.  
 tandem occupata rupe furibundum intonat:  
 "superasse cuncta,<sup>4</sup> pelagus atque ignes iuvat,  
 vicisse caelum Palladem fulmen mare.  
 non me fugavit bellici terror dei,  
 et Hectorem una solus et Martem tuli;<sup>5</sup>  
 Phoebea nec me tela pepulerunt gradu.  
 cum Phrygibus istos vicimus—tene horream? 550  
 aliena inerti tela mittis dextera.  
 quid, si ipse mittat —" <sup>6</sup> plura cum auderet furens,

<sup>1</sup> So M. Mueller emending ω, followed by Richter: Leo aut.

<sup>2</sup> et ω, emended by M. Mueller: Leo et.

<sup>3</sup> aut ω, emended by M. Mueller: Leo aut.

<sup>4</sup> So Richter: nunc E: nunc se A: iuvat, Leo conj.

<sup>5</sup> This line is properly deleted by Leo, as applicable to the greater Ajax and not to the present speaker. Farnabius, however, allows the line to stand, as befitting the boastful, wild words of Ajax Oileus.

<sup>6</sup> All editors read quid si ipse mittat? a meaningless phrase. I have changed the punctuation as indicated above, leaving the sentence unfinished.

## AGAMEMNON

528 But lo! disaster on disaster! Pallas, armed with the bolt of angry Jove, threatening essays whate'er she may, not with spear, not with aegis, not with Gorgon's<sup>1</sup> rage, but with her father's lightning, and throughout the sky new tempests blow. Ajax<sup>2</sup> alone, undaunted by disaster, keeps up the struggle. Him, shortening sail with straining halyard, the hurtling lightning grazed. Another bolt is levelled; this, with all her might, Pallas launched true, with hand back drawn, in imitation of her father. Through Ajax it passed, and through his ship, and part of the ship with it, and Ajax it bore away. Then he, nothing moved, like some high crag, rises flame-scorched from the briny deep, cleaves the raging sea, with his breast bursts through the floods and, holding to his wrecked vessel with his hand, drags flames along, shines brightly midst the darkness of the sea and illumines all the waves. At last, gaining a rock, in mad rage he thunders: "'Tis sweet to have conquered all things, flood and flame, to have vanquished sky, Pallas, thunderbolt and sea. I fled not in terror of the god of war; both Hector at once and Mars did I with my sole arm withstand; nor did Phoebus' shafts force me to give way. Such warriors, together with their Phrygians, I conquered;—and shall I shrink from thee? Another's weapon with weakling hand thou hurlest. What, if he himself should hurl —?"<sup>3</sup> When in his madness he would

<sup>1</sup> The shield (*aegis*) of Minerva was set with the terrifying Gorgon's head given to her by Perseus.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Ajax "the Less," son of Oileus. This scene recalls Vergil, *Aen.* I. 41 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ajax apparently would have finished by saying—"his bolt, even then I would not fear."

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

tridente rupem subruit pulsam pater  
Neptunus imis exerens undis caput  
solvitque montem ; quem cadens secum tulit  
terraque et igne victus et pelago iacet.

Nos alia maior naufragos pestis vocat.  
est humilis unda, scrupeis mendax vadis,  
ubi saxa rapidis clausa verticibus tegit  
fallax Caphereus ; aestuat scopulis fretum 560  
fervetque semper fluctus alterna vice.  
arx imminet praerupta quae spectat mare  
utrimque geminum. Pelopis hinc oras tui  
et Isthmon, arto qui recurvatus solo  
Ionia iungi maria Phrixeis vetat,  
hinc scelere Lemnon nobilem et Calchedona  
tardamque ratibus Aulida. hanc arcem occupat  
Palamedis ille genitor et clarum manu  
lumen nefanda vertice e summo efferens  
in saxa ducit perfida classem face. 570  
haerent acutis rupibus fixae rates ;  
has inopis undae brevia comminuunt vada,  
pars vehitur huius prima, pars scopulo sedet ;  
hanc alia retro spatia relegendem ferit  
et fracta frangit. iam timent terram rates  
et maria malunt. cecidit in lucem furor ;  
postquam litatum est Ilio, Phoebus redit  
et damna noctis tristis ostendit dies.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Vtrumne doleam laeter an reducem virum ?  
remeasse laetor vulnus et regni grave 580

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* of the women who killed all their men, except that  
Hypsipyle saved her father, Thoas.

## AGAMEMNON

be daring more, father Neptune, pushing with his trident, o'erwhelmed the rock, thrusting forth his head from his waves' depths, and broke off the crag. This in his fall Ajax bears down with him, and now he lies, by earth and fire and billows overcome.

<sup>557</sup> But us shipwrecked mariners, another, worse ruin challenges. There is a shallow water, a deceitful shoal full of rough boulders, where treacherous Caphereus hides his rocky base beneath whirling eddies; the sea boils upon the rocks, and ever the flood seethes with its ebb and flow. A precipitous headland o'erhangs, which on either hand looks out upon both stretches of the sea. Hence thou mayst descry thine own Pelopian shores, and Isthmus which, backward curving with its narrow soil, forbids the Ionian sea to join with Phrixus' waves; hence also Lemnos, infamous for crime,<sup>1</sup> and Calchedon, and Aulis which long delayed the fleet. Seizing this summit, the father of Palamedes with accursed hand raised from the high top a beacon-light and with treacherous torch lured the fleet upon the reefs. There hang the ships caught on jagged rocks; some are broken to pieces in the shallow water; the prow of one vessel is carried away, while a part sticks fast upon the rock; one ship crashes with another as it draws back, both wrecked and wrecking. Now ships fear land and choose the seas. Towards dawn the storm's rage is spent; now that atonement has been made for Ilium, Phoebus returns and sad day reveals the havoc of the night.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

Shall I lament or rejoice me at my lord's return?  
I do rejoice to see him home again, but o'er our

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

lugere cogor. redde iam Grais, pater  
 altisona quatiens regna, placatos deos.  
 nunc omne laeta fronde veletur caput,  
 sacrifica dulces tibia effundat modos  
 et nivea magnas victima ante aras cadat.

Sed ecce, turba tristis incomptae comas  
 Iliades adsunt, quas super celso gradu  
 effrena Phoebas entheas laurus quatit.

### CHORVS

Heu quam dulce malum mortalibus additum  
 vitae dirus amor, cum pateat malis 590  
 effugium et miseros libera mors vocet  
 portus aeterna placidus quiete.  
 nullus hunc terror nec impotentis  
 procella Fortunae movet aut iniqui  
 flamma Tonantis.

pax alta nullos<sup>1</sup>  
 civium coetus timet aut minaces  
 victoris iras, non maria asperis  
 insana coris, non acies feras 600  
 pulvereamve nubem  
 motam barbaricis equitum catervis;  
 non urbe cum tota populos cadentes,  
 hostica muros populante flamma,  
 indomitumve bellum.  
 perrumpet omne servitium  
 contemptor levium deorum,  
 qui vultus Acherontis atri,  
 qui Styga tristem non tristis videt  
 audetque vitae ponere finem.

<sup>1</sup> This awkward duplication of half-lines Richter avoids, while at the same time obtaining a presumably more logical

## AGAMEMNON

realm's heavy loss am I forced to grieve. At last  
 O father, that dost shake the high-resounding heavens,  
 restore to the Greeks their gods appeased. Now  
 let every head be crowned with festal wreaths, let  
 the sacrificial flute give forth sweet strains, and the  
 white victim at the great altars fall.

<sup>586</sup> But see, a mournful throng with locks unbound,  
 the Trojan women are here, while high above them  
 all, with proud step advancing, Phoebus' mad priestess  
 waves the inspiring laurel branch.

[*Enter band of Trojan women led by CASSANDRA.*]

### CHORUS OF TROJAN WOMEN

Alas, how alluring a bane is appointed unto  
 mortals, even dire love of life, though refuge from  
 their woes opes wide, and death with generous  
 hand invites the wretched, a peaceful port of ever-  
 lasting rest. Nor fear nor storm of raging Fortune  
 disturbs that calm, nor bolt of the harsh Thunderer.  
 Peace so deep fears no citizens' conspiracy, no victor's  
 threatening wrath, no wild seas ruffled by stormy  
 winds, no fierce battle lines or dark cloud raised by  
 barbaric squadrons' hoofs, no nations falling with  
 their city's utter overthrow, while the hostile flames  
 lay waste the walls, no fierce, ungovernable war.  
 All bonds will he break through, who dares scorn  
 the fickle gods, who on the face of dark Acheron, on  
 fearful Styx can look, unfearful, and is bold enough  
 to put an end to life. A match for kings, a match

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*arrangement, by reading ll. 605-609 after l. 595. He then  
 prints l. 596 with a lacuna: Alta pax . . . nullos.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

par ille regi, par superis erit. 610  
o quam miserum est nescire mori!

Vidimus patriam ruentem nocte funesta,  
cum Dardana tecta Dorici raperetis ignes.  
non illa bello victa, non armis,  
ut quondam, Herculea cecidit pharetra;  
quam non Pelei Thetidisque natus  
carusque Pelidae nimium feroci  
vicit, acceptis cum fulsit armis  
fuditque Troas falsus Achilles,  
aut cum ipse Pelides animos feroces 620  
sustulit luctu celeremque saltu  
Troades summis timuere muris,  
perdidit in malis  
extremum decus fortiter vinci;  
restitit quinque bis annis  
unius noctis peritura furto.

Vidimus simulata dona  
molis immensae Danaumque  
fatale munus duximus nostra  
creduli dextra tremuitque saepe  
limine in primo sonipes, cavernis 630  
conditos reges bellumque gestans;  
et licuit dolos versare ut ipsi  
fraude sua caderent Pelasgi.  
saepe commotae sonuere parmae  
tacitumque murmur percussit aures,  
ut fremuit male subdolo  
parens Pyrrhus Vlix.

Secura metus Troica pubes  
sacros gaudet tangere funes.  
hinc aequaevis gregis Astyanax, 640

<sup>1</sup> Patroclus.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* at the death of Patroclus.



## AGAMEMNON

for the high gods will he be. Oh, how wretched 'tis to know not how to die!

<sup>612</sup> We saw our country fall on that night of death, when you, ye Doric fires, ravished Dardania's homes. She, not in war conquered, not by arms, not, as aforetime, by Hercules' arrows, fell; her, not Peleus' and Thetis' son o'ercame, nor he,<sup>1</sup> well-beloved by overbrave Pelides, when in borrowed arms he shone and drove Troy's sons in flight, a false Achilles; nor, when Pelides' self through grief<sup>2</sup> gave o'er his fierce resentment,<sup>3</sup> and the Trojan women, from the ramparts watching, feared his swift attack, did she lose amid her woes the crowning glory of suffering conquest bravely; for ten long years she stood, fated to perish by one night's treachery.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>627</sup> We saw that feigned gift, measureless in bulk, and with our own hands trustfully dragged along the Greeks' deadly offering; and oft on the threshold of the gate the noisy footed monster stumbled, bearing within its hold hidden chiefs and war. We might have turned their guile against themselves, and caused the Pelasgians by their own trick to fall. Oft sounded their jostled shields, and a low muttering smote our ears, when Pyrrhus grumbled, scarce yielding to crafty Ulysses' will.

<sup>638</sup> All unafraid, the Trojan youth joy to touch the fatal ropes.<sup>5</sup> Companies of their own age here

<sup>3</sup> *i. e.* against Agamemnon.

<sup>4</sup> *i. e.* by the trick of the wooden horse.

<sup>5</sup> With this whole passage compare Vergil's description, and especially *Aen.* II. 239.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

hinc Haemonio desponsa rogo  
 ducunt turmas, haec femineas,  
 ille viriles. festae matres  
 votiva ferunt munera divis;  
 festi patres adeunt aras,  
 unus tota est vultus in urbe;  
 et, quod numquam post Hectoreos  
 vidimus ignes, laeta est Hecuba.  
 quid nunc primum, dolor infelix,  
 quidve extremum deflere paras? 650  
 moenia, divum fabricata manu,  
 diruta nostra?  
 an templa deos super usta suos?  
 non vacat istis lacrimare malis—  
 te, magne parens, flent Iliades.  
 vidi, vidi senis in iugulo  
 telum Pyrrhi vix exiguo  
 sanguine tingui.

CASSANDRA

Cohibete lacrimas omne quas tempus petet,  
 Troades, et ipsae vestra lamentabili 660  
 lugete gemitu funera; aerumnae meae  
 socium recusant. cladibus questus meis  
 removete. nostris ipsa sufficiam malis.

CHORVS

Lacrimas lacrimis miscere iuvat;  
 magis exurunt quos secretae  
 lacerant curae, iuvat in medium  
 deflere suos; nec tu, quamvis  
 dura virago patiensque mali,  
 poteris tantas flere ruinas.  
 non quae verno mobile carmen 670  
 ramo cantat tristis aedon

## AGAMEMNON

Astyanax leads, there she,<sup>1</sup> to the Thessalian pyre betrothed, she leading maids, he youths. Gaily do mothers bring votive offerings to the gods; gaily do fathers approach the shrines; each wears but one look the city o'er; and, what never we saw since Hector's funeral, Hecuba was glad. And now, unhappy grief, what first, what last, wilt thou lament? Walls by divine hands fashioned, by our own destroyed? Temples upon their own gods consumed? Time lacks to weep such ills—thee, O great father, the Trojan women weep. I saw, I saw in the old man's throat the sword of Pyrrhus scarce wet in his scanty blood.

### CASSANDRA

Restrain your tears which all time will seek, ye Trojan women, and do you yourselves grieve for your own dead with groans and lamentations; my losses refuse all sharing. Cease then your grief for my disasters. I myself shall suffice for the woes of mine own house.

### CHORUS

'Tis sweet to mingle tears with tears; griefs bring more smart where they wound in solitude, but 'tis sweet in company to bewail one's friends; nor shalt thou, though strong, heroic, and inured to woe, avail to lament calamities so great. Not the sad nightingale,<sup>2</sup> which from the vernal bough pours

<sup>1</sup> Polyxena.

<sup>2</sup> Into which Philomela was changed.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Ityn in varios modulata sonos,  
 non quae tectis Bistonis ales  
 residens summis impia diri  
 furta mariti garrula narrat,  
 lugere tuam poterit digne  
 conquesta domum. licet ipse velit  
 clarus niveos inter olores  
 Histrum cyenus Tanainque colens 680  
 extrema loqui, licet alyones  
 Ceyca suum fluctu leviter  
 plangente sonent, cum tranquillo  
 male confisae credunt iterum  
 pelago audaces fetusque suos  
 nido pavidae titubante foveat;  
 non si molles comitata viros  
 tristis laceret bracchia tecum  
 quae turritae turba parenti  
 pectora, rauco concita buxo,  
 ferit ut Phrygium lugeat Attin,— 690  
 non est lacrimis, Cassandra, modus,  
 quia quae patimur vicere modum.

Sed cur sacratas deripis capiti infulas?  
 miseris colendos maxime superos putem.

### CASSANDRA

Vicere nostra iam metus omnes mala.  
 equidem nec ulla caelites placo prece  
 nec, si velint saevire, quo noceant habent.  
 Fortuna vires ipsa consumpsit suas.  
 quae patria restat, quis pater, quae iam soror?

<sup>1</sup> The swallow (*hirundo*) into which Procne was changed.

<sup>2</sup> Cyenus (see Index) is here conceived of as swan rather than man.

## AGAMEMNON

forth her liquid song, piping of Itys in ever changing strains; not the bird<sup>1</sup> which, perching on Bistonian battlements, tells o'er and o'er the hidden sins of her cruel lord, will e'er be able, with all her passionate lament, worthily to mourn thy house. Should bright Cycnus'<sup>2</sup> self, haunting midst snowy swans Ister and Tanaïs, utter his dying song; should halcyons mourn their Ceyx midst the light wave's lapping, when, though distrustful, boldly they trust once more to the tranquil ocean, and anxiously on unsteady nest cherish their young; should the sad throng which follows the unmanned men<sup>3</sup> bruise their arms along with thee, the throng which, by the shrill flute maddened, smite their breasts to the tower-crowned mother,<sup>4</sup> that for Phrygian Attis they may lament,—not so, Cassandra, is there measure for our tears, for what we suffer has outmeasured measure.

<sup>693</sup> But why dost tear off the holy fillets from thy head? Methinks the gods should be most revered by unhappy souls.

### CASSANDRA

Now have our woes o'er-mastered every fear. Neither do I appease the heavenly gods by any prayer, nor, should they wish to rage, have they wherewith to harm me. Fortune herself has exhausted all her powers. What fatherland remains? What father? What sister now? Altars<sup>5</sup> and

<sup>3</sup> Priests of Cybele.      <sup>4</sup> Cybele.

<sup>5</sup> Both her brother Polites and her father Priam had been slain at the altar of Hercean Jove. See *Aen.* II. 526 ff.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

bibere tumuli sanguinem atque arae meum. 700  
 quid illa felix turba fraterni gregis?  
 exhausta nempe! regia miseri senes  
 vacua relictis; totque per thalamos vident  
 praeter Lacaenam ceteras viduas nurus.  
 tot illa regum mater et regimen Phrygum,  
 fecunda in ignes Hecuba fatorum novas  
 experta leges induit vultus feros:  
 circa ruinas rabida latravit suas,  
 Troiae superstes, Hectori, Priamo, sibi!

CHORVS

Silet repente Phoebas et pallor genas 710  
 creberque totum possidet corpus tremor;  
 stetero vittae, mollis horrescit coma,  
 anhela corda murmure incluso fremunt,  
 incerta nutant lumina et versi retro  
 torquentur oculi, rursus immoti rigent.  
 nunc levat in auras altior solito caput  
 graditurque celsa, nunc reluctantes parat  
 reserare fauces, verba nunc clauso male  
 custodit ore maenas impatiens dei.

CASSANDRA

Quid me furoris incitam stimulis novi 720  
 quid mentis inopem, sacra Parnasi iuga,  
 rapitis? recede, Phoebae, iam non sum tua,  
 extingue flammam pectori infixam meo.  
 cui nunc vagor vaesana? cui Bacchor furens?  
 iam Troia cecidit—falsa quid vates ago?

## AGAMEMNON

tombs<sup>1</sup> have drunk up my blood. What of that happy throng of brothers? Gone, all! in the empty palace only sad old men are left; and throughout those many chambers they see all women, save her of Sparta, widowed. That mother of so many kings, queen of the Phrygians, Hecuba, fruitful for funeral-fires, proving new laws of fate, has put on bestial form:<sup>2</sup> around her ruined walls madly she barked, surviving Troy, son, husband—and herself!

### CHORUS

The bride of Phoebus suddenly is still, pallor o'erspreads her cheeks, and constant tremors master all her frame. Her fillets stand erect, her soft locks rise in horror, her labouring heart sounds loud with pent murmuring, her glance wanders uncertain, her eyes seem backward turned into herself, anon they stare unmoving. Now she lifts her head into the air higher than her wont, and walks with stately tread; now makes to unlock her struggling lips, now vainly tries to close them on her words, a mad priestess fighting against the god.

### CASSANDRA

Why, O Parnassus' sacred heights, do ye prick me with fury's goads anew, why do you sweep me on, bereft of sense? Away! O Phoebus, I am no longer thine; quench thou the flames set deep within my breast. For whose sake wander I now in madness? for whose sake in frenzy rave? Now Troy has fallen—what have I, false prophetess, to do?

<sup>1</sup> Polyxena had been slain on Achilles' tomb.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* she was changed into a dog.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Vbi sum? fugit lux alma et obscurat genas  
 nox alta et aether abditus tenebris latet.  
 sed ecce gemino sole praeifulget dies  
 geminumque duplices Argos attollit domus.  
 Idaea cerno nemora; fatalis sedet 730  
 inter potentes arbiter pastor deas.—  
 timete reges, moneo, furtivum genus;  
 agrestis iste alumnus evertet domum.<sup>1</sup>  
 quid ista vaecors tela feminea manu  
 destrieta praefert? quem petit dextra virum  
 Lacaena cultu, ferrum Amazonium gerens?—  
 quae versat oculos alia nunc facies meos?  
 victor ferarum colla sublimis iacet  
 ignobili sub dente Marmaricus leo,  
 morsus cruentos passus audacis leae.— 740  
 quid me vocatis sospitem solam e meis,  
 umbrae meorum? te sequor testis, pater,  
 Troiae sepultae; frater, auxilium Phrygum  
 terrorque Danaum, non ego antiquum decus  
 video aut calentes ratibus exustis manus,  
 sed lacera membra et saucios vinclo gravi  
 illos lacertos; te sequor, nimium cito  
 congresse Achilli Troile; incertos geris,  
 Deiphobe, vultus, coniugis munus novae.  
 iuvat per ipsos ingredi Stygios lacus, 750  
 iuvat videre Tartari saevum canem  
 avidique regna Ditis! haec hodie ratis  
 Phlegethontis atri regias animas vehet,  
 victamque victricemque. vos, umbrae, precor,  
 iurata superis unda, te pariter precor:

<sup>1</sup> *Wilamowitz conjectures that several lines have fallen out after l. 733, concerning the fates of Troy and the crimes of the Atridae. Lines 730-733 seem to Leo to be spurious.*

<sup>1</sup> These words have no logical connection with her previous utterance, and are a dark allusion to Aegisthus.



## AGAMEMNON

<sup>726</sup> Where am I? Fled is the kindly light, deep darkness blinds my eyes, and the sky, buried in gloom, is hidden away. But see! with double sun the day gleams forth, and double Argos lifts up twin palaces! Ida's groves I see; there sits the shepherd, fateful judge midst mighty goddesses.—Fear him, ye kings, I warn you, fear the child of stolen love;<sup>1</sup> that rustic foundling shall overturn your house. What means that mad woman with drawn sword in hand? What hero seeks she with her right hand, a Spartan in her garb,<sup>2</sup> but carrying an Amazonian axe?—What sight is that other which now employs mine eyes? The king of beasts with his proud neck, by a base fang lies low, an African lion, suffering the bloody bites of his bold lioness.—Why do ye summon me, saved only of my house, my kindred shades? Thee, father, do I follow, eye-witness of Troy's burial; thee, brother, help of the Phrygians, terror of the Greeks, I see not in thine old-time splendour, or with thine hands hot from the burning of the ships, but mangled of limb, with those arms wounded by the deep-sunk thongs; thee, Troilus, I follow, too early with Achilles met; unrecognisable the face thou wearest, Deiphobus,<sup>3</sup> the gift of thy new wife.<sup>4</sup> 'Tis sweet to fare along the very Stygian pools; sweet to behold Tartarus' savage dog and the realms of greedy Dis! To-day this skiff of murky Phlegethon shall bear royal souls,<sup>5</sup> vanquished and vanquisher. Ye shades, I pray; thou stream on which the gods make oath, thee no less I pray: for a little withdraw the

<sup>2</sup> She has a clairvoyant prevision of the act of Clytemnestra.

<sup>3</sup> See Vergil, *Aen.* vi. 494 ff.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. Helen.

<sup>5</sup> Her own and Agamemnon's.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

reserate paulum terga nigrantis poli,  
 levis ut Mycenae turba prospiciat Phrygum.  
 spectate, miseri; fata se vertunt retro.

760

770

780

### CHORVS

Iam pervagatus ipse se fregit furor,  
 caditque flexo qualis ante aras genu  
 cervice taurus vulnus incertum gerens.  
 relevemus artus. en deos tandem suos  
 victrix lauru cinctus Agamemnon adit,  
 et festa coniunx obvius illi tulit  
 gressus reditque iuncta concordi gradu.

### AGAMEMNON

Tandem revertor sospes ad patrios lares;  
 o cara salve terra. tibi tot barbarae

<sup>1</sup> *Leo remarks upon the unintelligibility of ll. 766-768.*

## AGAMEMNON

covering of that dark world, that on Mycenae the shadowy throng of Phrygians may look forth. Behold, poor souls; the fates turn backward on themselves.

<sup>759</sup> They press on, the squalid sisters, their bloody lashes brandishing; their left hands half-burned torches bear; bloated are their pallid cheeks, and dusky robes of death their hollow loins encircle; the fearsome cries of night resound, and a huge body's bones, rotting with long decay, lie in a slimy marsh.<sup>1</sup> And see! that spent old man,<sup>2</sup> forgetting thirst, no longer catches at the mocking waters, grieving at death<sup>3</sup> to come; but father Dardanus exults and walks along with stately tread.

### CHORUS

Now has her rambling frenzy spent itself, and falls, as before the altar with sinking knees falls the bull, receiving an ill-aimed stroke upon his neck. Let us lift up her body. But lo! at last to his own gods, wreathed with victorious bay, Agamemnon comes; his wife with joy has gone forth to meet him, and now returns, joining her steps in harmony with his.

[*Enter* AGAMEMNON. *He has been met and greeted by his wife, who enters with him and goes on alone into the palace.*]

### AGAMEMNON

At length am I returned in safety to my father's house. O dear land, hail! To thee many barbaric

<sup>1</sup> If Seneca wrote lines 766-768, he may have had some definite reference in his mind unknown to us, or he may have meant merely to add further gruesome detail to the picture.

<sup>2</sup> Tantalus.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* of Agamemnon, great-grandson of Tantalus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dedere gentes spolia, tibi felix diu  
 potentis Asiae Troia summisit manus.—  
 quid ista vates corpus effusa ac tremens  
 dubia labat cervice? famuli, attollite,  
 refovete gelido latice. iam recipit diem  
 marcente visu. suscita sensus tuos!  
 optatus ille portus aerumnis adest.  
 festus dies est.

790

CASSANDRA

Festus et Troiae fuit.

AGAMEMNON

Veneremur aras.

CASSANDRA

Cecidit ante aras pater.

AGAMEMNON

Iovem precemur pariter.

CASSANDRA

Herceum Iovem?

AGAMEMNON

Credis videre te Ilium?

CASSANDRA

Et Priamum simul.

AGAMEMNON

Hic Troia non est.

CASSANDRA

Vbi Helena est Troiam puto.

<sup>1</sup> Cassandra.

<sup>2</sup> See Vergil, *Aen.* II. 249.

<sup>3</sup> It was at the altar of Hercean Jove that Priam was slain (*Aen.* II. 512 ff.).

## AGAMEMNON

nations have given spoil, to thee proud Asia's Troy, long blest of heaven, has yielded.—Why does the priestess<sup>1</sup> there faint and fall tottering with drooping head? Slaves, lift her up, revive her with cool water. Now with languid gaze she again beholds the light. [*To CASSANDRA.*] Awake to life! that longed for haven from our woes is here; this is a festal day.

CASSANDRA

'Twas festal,<sup>2</sup> too, at Troy.

AGAMEMNON

Let us kneel before the altar.

CASSANDRA

Before the altar my father fell.

AGAMEMNON

To Jove let us pray together.

CASSANDRA

Hercean Jove?<sup>3</sup>

AGAMEMNON

Dost think thou lookst on Ilium?

CASSANDRA

And Priam, too.

AGAMEMNON

Here is not Troy.

CASSANDRA

Where a Helen<sup>4</sup> is, I think is Troy.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* an evil, adulterous woman such as Helen. Helen was not in Greece at this time. The reference is obviously to Clytemnestra.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

AGAMEMNON

Ne metue dominam famula.

CASSANDRA

Libertas adest.

AGAMEMNON

Secura vive.

CASSANDRA

Mihi mori est securitas.

AGAMEMNON

Nullum est periculum tibimet.

CASSANDRA

At magnum tibi.

AGAMEMNON

Victor timere quid potest ?

CASSANDRA

Quod non timet.

AGAMEMNON

Hanc fida famuli turba, dum excutiat deum, 800  
retinete ne quid impotens peccet furor.  
at te, pater, qui saeva torques fulmina  
pellisque nubes, sidera et terras regis,  
ad quem triumphi spolia victores ferunt,  
et te sororem cuncta pollentis viri,  
Argolica Iuno, pecore votivo libens  
Arabumque donis supplice et fibra colam.

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<sup>1</sup> Cassandra is supposed to be still under the influence of Apollo.

## AGAMEMNON

AGAMEMNON

Fear thou no mistress, though a slave.

CASSANDRA

Freedom is near at hand.

AGAMEMNON

Live on, secure.

CASSANDRA

For me, death is security.

AGAMEMNON

For thee there is naught to fear.

CASSANDRA

But much for thee.

AGAMEMNON

What can a victor fear?

CASSANDRA

What he doth not fear.

AGAMEMNON

Ye faithful slaves, restrain her till she throw off  
the god,<sup>1</sup> lest in her wild frenzy she do some harm.  
But thee, O father, who the dire thunder hurlest,  
and driv'st the clouds, who the stars and lands dost  
rule, to whom in triumph victors bring their spoils;  
and thee, sister of thine almighty lord, Argolian  
Juno, gladly with votive flocks, with gifts<sup>2</sup> from  
Araby, and with suppliant heart will I adore.

[*Exit into the palace.*]

<sup>2</sup> Incense.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## CHORVS

Argos nobilibus nobile civibus,  
 Argos iratae carum novercae,  
 semper ingentes alumnos 810  
 educas, numerum deorum  
 imparem aequasti. tuus ille  
 bis seno meruit labore  
 adlegi caelo

magnus Alcides, cui lege mundi  
 Iuppiter rupta geminavit horas  
 roscidae noctis iussitque Phoebum  
 tardius celeres agitare currus  
 et tuas lente remeare bigas,  
 pallida Phoebe ;  
 rettulit pedem

nomen alternis stella quae mutat 820  
 seque mirata est Hesperum dici ;  
 Aurora movit ad solitas vices  
 caput et relabens imposuit seni  
 collum marito.

sensit ortus, sensit occasus  
 Herculem nasci ; violentus ille  
 nocte non una poterat creari.  
 tibi concitatus substitit mundus,  
 o puer subiture caelum.

Te sensit Nemeaeus arto 830  
 pressus lacerto fulmineus leo  
 cervaque Parrhasis,  
 sensit Arcadii populator agri,

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* to Juno, constantly angered by the children of Jove's mistresses.

<sup>2</sup> Farnabius thus explains this curious statement: the deification of Hercules (to which Juno at last consented) added to the number, not of the great gods, who were



## AGAMEMNON

### CHORUS OF ARGIVE WOMEN

O Argos, ennobled by thy noble citizens, Argos, dear to the step-dame though enraged,<sup>1</sup> ever mighty sons thou fosterest and hast made even<sup>2</sup> the odd number of the gods. That hero of thine by his twelve labours earned the right to be chosen for the skies, great Hercules, for whom,<sup>3</sup> the world's law broken, Jove doubled the hours of dewy night, bade Phoebus more slowly drive his hastening car, and thy team to turn back with laggard feet, O pale Phoebe. Backward the star turned his steps, the star who changes from name to name,<sup>4</sup> and marvelled still to be called Hesperus, evening star. Aurora stirred at the accustomed hour of dawn, but, sinking back, laid her head and neck upon the breast of her aged husband.<sup>5</sup> The rising, yea, and the setting of the sun felt the birth of Hercules; a hero so mighty could not be begotten in a single night. For thee the whirling universe stood still, O boy, destined to mount the skies.

<sup>829</sup> The lightning-swift lion of Nemea felt thy power, crushed by thy straining arms, and the Parrhasian hind, the ravager<sup>6</sup> of Arcady's fields, felt

twelve in number, but of the gods of the second rank (*diis communibus*), three in number—Mars, Bellona, and Victoria—thus making even the number which had been odd.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* for his begetting. See *Herc. Fur* ll 24 and 1158.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* it is now called Lucifer and now Hesperus, according as it is morning or evening star.

<sup>5</sup> Tithonus.

<sup>6</sup> The Erymanthian boar.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

gemuitque taurus Dictaea linquens  
 horridus arva.  
 morte fecundum domuit draconem  
 vetuitque collo pereunte nasci,  
 geminosque fratres  
 pectore ex uno tria monstra natos  
 stipite incusso fregit insultans,  
 duxitque ad ortus Hesperium pecus, 840  
 Geryonae spoliū triformis.  
 egit Threiciū gregem,  
 quem non Strymonii gramine fluminis  
 Hebrive ripis pavit tyrannus ;  
 hospitum dirus stabulis cruorem  
 praeibit saevis tinxitque crudos  
 ultimus rictus sanguis aurigae.  
 vidit Hippolyte ferox  
 pectore e medio rapi  
 spoliū, et sagittis  
 nube percussa Stymphalis alto 850  
 decidit caelo ;  
 arborque pomis fertilis aureis  
 extimuit manus insueta carpi  
 fugitque in auras levioꝛe ramo.  
 audivit sonitum crepitante lamna  
 frigidus custos nescius somni,  
 linqueret cum iam nemus omne fulvo  
 plenus Alcides vacuum metallo.  
 tractus ad caelum canis inferorum  
 triplici catena tacuit nec ullo 860  
 latravit ore,  
 lucis ignotae metuens colorem.

<sup>1</sup> It was the nature of the hydra that as each head was cut off two appeared in its place.

<sup>2</sup> *geminos* here = *trigeminos*, referring to the triple-man monster, Geryon.

## AGAMEMNON

thee, too, and loud bellowed the savage bull, leaving the fields of Crete. The hydra, fertile in death, he overcame and forbade new births from each neck destroyed;<sup>1</sup> the mated<sup>2</sup> brethren, springing three monsters from a single body, he crushed, leaping on them with his crashing club, and brought to the east the western herd, spoil of the three-formed Geryon. He drove the Thracian herd<sup>3</sup> which the tyrant fed, not on the grass of the Strymon or on the banks of the Hebrus; cruel, he offered his savage horses the gore of strangers—and the blood of their driver<sup>4</sup> was the last to stain red their jaws. Warlike Hippolyte saw the spoil<sup>5</sup> snatched from about her breast; and by his shafts down from the riven cloud from high heaven fell the Stympalian bird. The tree, laden with golden fruit, shrank from his hands, unused to such plucking, and the bough, relieved of its burden, sprang into the air. The cold, sleepless guardian<sup>6</sup> heard the sound of the clinking metal, only when heavy laden Alcides was leaving the grove all stripped of its tawny gold. Dragged to the upper world by triple fetters, the infernal dog was silent, nor with any mouth did he bay, shrinking from the hues of unexperienced light. Under thy leader-

<sup>1</sup> The man-eating horses of Diomedes, tyrant of Thrace.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* Hercules gave Diomedes to his own horses to devour.

<sup>3</sup> The famous golden girdle.

<sup>4</sup> The dragon, set to guard the golden apples.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

te duce succidit  
mendax Dardanidae domus  
et sensit arcus iterum timendos ;  
te duce concidit  
totidem diebus Troia quot annis.

### CASSANDRA

Res agitur intus magna, par annis decem.  
eheu quid hoc est? anime, consurge et cape  
pretium furoris—vicimus victi Phryges!  
bene est, resurgit Troia; traxisti iacens, 870  
parens, Mycenae, terga dat victor tuus!  
tam clara numquam providae mentis furor  
ostendit oculis; video et intersum et fruor;  
imago visus dubia non fallit meos;  
spectemus.

Epulae regiae instructae domo,  
quales fuerunt ultimae Phrygibus dapes,  
celebrantur; ostro lectus Iliaco nitet  
merumque in auro veteris Assaraci trahunt.  
en ipse picta veste sublimis iacet,  
Priami superbas corpore exuvias gerens. 880  
detrahere cultus uxor hostiles iubet,  
induere potius coniugis fidae manu  
textos amictus—horreo atque animo tremo!  
regemne perimet exul et adulter virum?  
venere fata. sanguinem extremae dapes  
domini videbunt et cruor Baccho incidet.  
mortifera vinctum perfide tradit neci  
induta vestis; exitum manibus negant

<sup>1</sup> In the time of Laomedon.

<sup>2</sup> The arrows of Hercules in the hands of Philoctetes assisted in the final fall of Troy under Priam.

<sup>3</sup> She either stands where she can see the interior of the

## AGAMEMNON

ship fell the lying house<sup>1</sup> of Dardanus and suffered the arrows, once again<sup>2</sup> to be feared; under thy leadership in as many days Troy fell as it took years thereafter.

CASSANDRA [*alone upon the stage*]<sup>3</sup>

A great deed is done within, a match for ten years of war. Ah! What is this? Rise up, my soul, and take the reward of thy madness—we are conquerors, we conquered Phrygians! 'Tis well! Troy has risen again! In thy fall, O father, thou hast dragged down Mycenae; thy conqueror gives way! Never before did my mind's prophetic frenzy give sight to mine eyes so clear; I see, I am in the midst of it, I revel in it; 'tis no doubtful image cheats my sight; let me gaze my fill.

<sup>875</sup> A feast is spread within the royal house and thronged with guests, like that last banquet of the Phrygians; the couches gleam with Trojan purple, and their wine they quaff from the golden cups of old Assaracus. Lo, he himself<sup>4</sup> in broidered vestments lies on lofty couch, wearing on his body the proud spoils of Priam. His wife bids him doff the raiment of his foe and don instead a mantle her own fond hands have woven—I shudder and my soul trembles at the sight! Shall an exile<sup>5</sup> slay a king? an adulterer<sup>5</sup> the husband? The fatal hour has come. The banquet's close shall see the master's blood, and gore shall fall into the wine. The deadly mantle he has put on delivers him bound treacherously to his doom; the loose, impenetrable folds palace, and describes what is going on within, or else she sees it by clairvoyant power.

<sup>4</sup> Agamemnon.

<sup>5</sup> Aegisthus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

caputque laxi et invii claudunt sinus.  
 haurit trementi semivir dextra latus, 890  
 nec penitus egit; vulnere in medio stupet.  
 at ille, ut altis hispidus silvis aper  
 cum casse vinctus temptat egressus tamen  
 artatque motu vincla et in cassum furit,—  
 cupit fluentes undique et caecos sinus  
 disicere et hostem quaerit implicitus suum.  
 armat bipenni Tyndaris dextram furens,  
 qualisque ad aras colla taurorum popa  
 designat oculis antequam ferro petat,  
 sic huc et illuc impiam librat manum. 900  
 habet! peractum est! pendet exigua male  
 caput amputatum parte et hinc trunco cruor  
 exundat, illic ora cum fremitu iacent.  
 nondum recedunt; ille iam exanimem petit  
 laceratque corpus, illa fodientem adiuvat.  
 uterque tanto scelere respondet suis—  
 est hic Thyeste natus, haec Helenae soror.  
 stat ecce Titan dubius emerito die,  
 suane currat an Thyestea via.

ELECTRA

Fuge, o paternae mortis auxilium unicum, 910  
 fuge et scelestas hostium vita manus.  
 eversa domus est funditus, regna occidunt.  
 Hospes quis iste concitos currus agit?  
 germane, vultus veste furabor tuos.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Clytemnestra, daughter of Tyndareus.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the wound. The formula is taken from the gladiatorial contests.

## AGAMEMNON

refuse outlet to his hands and enshroud his head. With trembling right hand the half-man stabs at his side, but hath not driven deep; in mid stroke he stands as one amazed. But he, as in the deep woods a bristling boar, though with the net entangled, still tries for freedom, and by his struggling draws close his bonds and rages all in vain,—he strives to throw off the blinding folds all around him floating, and, though closely enmeshed, seeks for his foe. Now Tyndaris<sup>1</sup> in mad rage snatches a two-edged axe and, as at the altar the priest marks with his eye the oxen's necks before he strikes, so, now here, now there, her impious hand she aims. He has it!<sup>2</sup> the deed is done! The scarce severed head hangs by a slender part; here blood streams o'er his headless trunk, there lie his moaning lips. And not yet do they give o'er; *he* attacks the already lifeless man, and keeps hacking at the corpse; *she* helps him in the stabbing. Each one in this dire crime answers to his own kin—he is Thyestes' son, she, Helen's sister. See, Titan, the day's work done, stands hesitant whether his own or Thyestes'<sup>3</sup> course to run.

[*Remains beside the altar.*

[*Enter ELECTRA, leading her young brother, ORESTES.*]

### ELECTRA

Fly, O sole avenger of our father's death, fly and escape our enemies' miscreant hands. O'erthrown is our house to its foundations, our kingdom fallen.

<sup>913</sup> But who is yonder stranger, driving his chariot at speed? Come brother, I will hide thee 'neath my

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* backward as on the occasion of Thyestes' banquet on his own sons.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quid, anime demens, refugis? externos times?  
domus timenda est. pone iam trepidos metus,  
Oresta; amici fida praesidia intuor.

STROPHIUS

Phocide relictâ Strophius Elea inclutus  
palma revertor. causa veniendi fuit  
gratari amico, cuius impulsum manu 920  
cecidit decenni Marte concussum Ilium.  
quaenam ista lacrimis lugubrem vultum rigat  
pavetque maesta? regium agnosco genus.  
Electra! fletus causa quae laeta in domo est?

ELECTRA

Pater peremptus scelere materno iacet,  
comes paternae quaeritur natus neci,  
Aegisthus arces Venere quaesitas tenet.

STROPHIUS

O nulla longi temporis felicitas!

ELECTRA

Per te parentis memoriam obtestor mei,  
per sceptrâ terris nota, per dubios deos; 930  
recipe hunc Oresten ac pium furtum occule.



## AGAMEMNON

robe. Why, foolish heart, dost thou shrink away? Strangers dost fear? 'Tis our home that must be feared. Put away now thy trembling dread, Orestes; the trusty protection of a friend I see.

[Enter STROPHIUS in a chariot, accompanied by his son  
PYLADES.]

### STROPHIUS

I, Strophius, had Phocis left, and now am home returning, made glorious by the Elean palm. The cause of my coming hither was to congratulate my friend, o'erthrown by whose hand and crushed by ten years of war has Ilium fallen. [*He notices ELECTRA's distress.*] But who is that yonder, watering her sad face with tears, fear-struck and sorrowful? One of the royal house I recognize. Electra! What cause of weeping can be in this glad house?

### ELECTRA

My father lies murdered by my mother's crime; they seek the son to share in his father's death; Aegisthus holds the throne by guilty love secured.

### STROPHIUS

Alas! no happiness is of lengthened stay.

### ELECTRA

By the memory of my father I beseech thee, by his sceptre known to all the world, by the fickle gods:<sup>1</sup> take this boy, Orestes, and hide the holy theft.

<sup>1</sup> Who may bring quick downfall to thee also.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## STROPHIUS

Etsi timendum caesus Agamemnon docet,  
 aggrediar et te, Oresta, furabor libens.  
 fidem secunda poscunt, adversa exigunt.<sup>1</sup>  
 cape hoc decorum ludieri certaminis,  
 insigne frontis ; laeva victricem tenens  
 frondem virenti protegat ramo caput,  
 et ista donum palma Pisaei Iovis  
 velamen eadem praestet atque omen tibi.  
 tuque o paternis assidens frenis comes,  
 condisce, Pylade, patris exemplo fidem.  
 vos Graecia nunc teste veloces equi  
 infida cursu fugite praecipiti loca.

940

## ELECTRA

Excessit, abiit, currus effreno impetu  
 effugit aciem. tuta iam opperiar meos  
 hostes et ultro vulneri opponam caput.  
 Adest cruenta coniugis victrix sui  
 et signa caedis veste maculata gerit.  
 manus recenti sanguine etiamnunc madent  
 vultusque prae se scelera truculenti ferunt.  
 concedam ad aras. patere me vittis tuis,  
 Cassandra, iungi paria metuentem tibi.

950

## CLYTAEMNESTRA

Hostis parentis, impium atque audax caput,  
 quo more coetus publicos virgo petis ?

<sup>1</sup> *Leo deletes this line, following Peiper.*

<sup>1</sup> Of olive.

<sup>2</sup> Of palm.

<sup>3</sup> In the Olympic games.

# AGAMEMNON

## STROPHIUS

Although murdered Agamemnon warns me to beware, I will brave the danger and gladly, Orestes, will I steal thee off. Good fortune asks for faith, adversity demands it. [*Takes ORESTES into the chariot.*] Take thou this crown,<sup>1</sup> won in the games, as an ornament for thy head, and, holding this victor's bough<sup>2</sup> in thy left hand, shield thy face with its great branch, and may that palm, the gift of Pisaeon Jove, afford thee at once a covering and an omen. And do thou, Pylades, who standest as comrade to guide thy father's car, learn faith from the example of thy sire. And now, do you, my horses, whose speed all Greece has seen,<sup>3</sup> flee from this treacherous place in headlong flight. [*Exeunt at great speed.*]

## ELECTRA [*looking after them*]

He has departed, gone, his car at a reckless pace has vanished from my sight. Now free from care shall I await my foes, and willingly oppose myself to death. [*She sees CLYTEMNESTRA approaching.*]

<sup>947</sup> Here is the bloody conqueror of her lord, with the signs of murder on her blood-stained robe. Her hands are still reeking with blood fresh-spilled, and her savage features bear tokens of her crime. I'll take me to the altar. Let me be joined, Cassandra, with thy fillets,<sup>4</sup> since I fear like doom with thee.

## [*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*]

## CLYTEMNESTRA

Foe of thy mother, unfilial and froward girl, by what custom dost thou, a maid, seek public gatherings?

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* let me join her who with the sacred fillets on her head has taken refuge at the altar.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ELECTRA

Adulterorum virgo deserui domum.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Quis esse credat virginem?

ELECTRA

Natam tuam?

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Modestius cum matre!

ELECTRA

Pietatem doces?

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Animos viriles corde tumefacto geris  
sed agere domita feminam disces malo.

ELECTRA

Nisi forte fallor, feminas ferrum decet.

960

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Et esse demens te parem nobis putas?

ELECTRA

Vobis? quis iste est alter Agamemnon tuus?  
ut vidua loquere; vir caret vita tuus.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Indomita posthac virginis verba impiae  
regina frangam; citius interea mihi  
edissere ubi sit natus, ubi frater tuus.

## AGAMEMNON

ELECTRA

Because I am a maid have I left the adulterers home.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Who would believe thee maid ?

ELECTRA

A child of thine ?<sup>1</sup>

CLYTEMNESTRA

More gently with thy mother !

ELECTRA

Dost thou teach piety ?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Thou hast a mannish soul, a heart puffed up ; but, tamed by suffering, shalt thou learn to play a woman's part.

ELECTRA

If perchance, I mistake not, a sword befits a woman.

CLYTEMNESTRA

And thinkest thou, mad one, thou art a match for us ?

ELECTRA

For you ? What other Agamemnon is that of thine ? Speak thou as widow ; lifeless is thy lord.

CLYTEMNESTRA

The unbridled tongue of an unfilial girl hereafter as queen I'll check ; meanwhile be quick and tell where is my son, where is thy brother.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* surely no one, since I am thy child.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ELECTRA

Extra Mycenae.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Redde nunc natum mihi.

ELECTRA

Et tu parentem redde.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Quo latitat loco?

ELECTRA

Tuto quietus, regna non metuens nova;  
iustae parenti satis.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

At iratae parum.

970

moreris hodie.

ELECTRA

Dummodo hac moriar manu.  
recedo ab aris. sive te iugulo iuvat  
mersisse ferrum, praebeo iugulum tibi;  
seu more pecudum colla resecari placet,  
intenta cervix vulnus expectat tuum.  
scelus paratum est; caede respersam viri  
atque obsoletam sanguine hoc dextram abluere.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Consors periculi pariter ac regni mei,  
Aegisthe, gradere. nata genetricem impie  
probris lacessit, occulit fratrem abditum.

980

# AGAMEMNON

ELECTRA

Far from Mycenae.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Restore me now my son.

ELECTRA

And do thou restore my father.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Where does he hide ?

ELECTRA

In peace and safety, where he fears no new-made king ; for a righteous mother 'tis enough.

CLYTEMNESTRA

But too little for an angry one. Thou shalt die this day.

ELECTRA

So but it be by this hand of thine. I leave the altar. If 'tis thy pleasure in my throat to plunge the sword, I offer my throat to thee ; or if, as men smite sheep, thou wouldst cut off my neck, my bent neck waits thy stroke. The crime is ready ; thy right hand, smeared and rank with a husband's slaughter, purge with this blood of mine.

[*Enter* AEGISTHUS.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Thou partner equally in my perils and my throne, Aegisthus, come. My child undutifully insults her mother, and keeps her brother hidden.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

AEGISTHVS

Furibunda virgo, vocis infandae sonum  
et aure verba indigna materna opprime.

ELECTRA

Etiam monebit sceleris infandi artifex,  
per scelera natus, nomen ambiguum suis,  
idem sororis natus et patris nepos?

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Aegisthe, cessas impium ferro caput  
demetere? fratrem reddat aut animam statim.

AEGISTHVS

Abstrusa caeco carcere et saxo exigit  
aevum, et per omnes torta poenarum modos  
referre quem nunc occulit forsanellet. 990  
inops egens inclusa, paedore obruta,  
vidua ante thalamos, exul, invisa omnibus  
aethere negato sero subcumbet malis.

ELECTRA

Concede mortem.

AEGISTHVS

Si recusares, darem.  
rudis est tyrannus morte qui poenam exigit.

ELECTRA

Mortem aliquid ultra est?



## AGAMEMNON

AEGISTHUS

Mad girl, hold thy impious tongue, and speak not words unworthy thy mother's ears.

ELECTRA

Shall he e'en give instructions, the worker of an impious crime, one criminally begot, whom even his own parents cannot name, son of his sister, grandson of his sire?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Aegisthus, why dost hesitate to strike off her wicked head with the sword? Let her at once give up her brother or her life.

AEGISTHUS

Mured in a dark, rocky dungeon shall she spend her life and, by all kinds of tortures racked, perchance she will consent to give back him she now conceals. Resourceless, starving, in prison pent, buried in filth, widowed ere wedded, in exile, scorned by all, denied the light of day, then will she, though too late, yield to her doom.

ELECTRA

Oh, grant me death.

AEGISTHUS

Shouldst plead against, I'd grant. An unskilled tyrant he who punishes by death.

ELECTRA

Is aught worse than death?

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

AEGISTHVS

Vita, si cupias mori.  
abripite, famuli, monstrum et auctam procul  
ultra Mycenae ultimo in regni angulo  
vincite saeptam nocte tenebrosi specus,  
ut inquietam virginem carcer domet.

1000

CLYTAEMNESTRA

At ista poenas capite persolvet suo  
captiva coniunx, regii paelex tori.  
trahite, ut sequatur coniugem ereptum mihi.

CASSANDRA

Ne trahite, vestros ipsa praecedam gradus.  
perferre prima nuntium Phrygibus meis  
propero—repletum ratibus eversis mare,  
captas Mycenae, mille ductorem ducum,  
ut paria fata Troicis lueret malis,  
perisse dono feminae—stupro, dolo.  
nihil moramur, rapite, quin grates ago.  
iam, iam iuvat vixisse post Troiam, iuvat.

1010

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Furiosa, morere.

CASSANDRA

Veniet et vobis furor.

## AGAMEMNON

AEGISTHUS

Yes, life, if thou longest to die. Away, ye slaves, with this unnatural girl; far from Mycenae bear her, and in the remotest corner of the realm chain her immured in the black darkness of a cell, that prison walls may curb the unmanageable maid. [*ELECTRA is dragged away.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA [*indicating CASSANDRA*]

But she shall pay her penalty with death, that captive bride, that mistress of the royal bed. Drag her away, that she may follow the husband whom she stole from me.

CASSANDRA

Nay, drag me not, I will precede your going. I hasten to be first to bear news unto my Phrygians—of the sea covered with the wrecks of ships, of Mycenae taken, of the leader of a thousand leaders (that so he might meet doom equal to Troy's woes) slain by a woman's gift—by adultery, by guile. Take me away; I hold not back, but rather give you thanks. Now, now 'tis sweet to have outlived Troy, 'tis sweet.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Mad creature, thou shalt die.

CASSANDRA

On you, as well, a madness is to come.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the madness of Orestes, who is later to slay both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.



GRANDS ÉCRITS

# THYESTES

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THYESTES, *brother of Atreus, in exile from his fatherland.*

THE GHOST OF TANTALUS, *doomed for his sins to come back to earth and inspire his house to greater sin.*

THE FURY, *who drives the ghost on to do his allotted part.*

ATREUS, *king of Argos, grandson of Tantalus, who has quarrelled with his brother and driven him into exile.*

AN ATTENDANT OF ATREUS.

THREE SONS OF THYESTES, *Tantalus, Plisthenes, and another, only one of whom, Tantalus, takes part in the dialogue.*

A MESSENGER.

CHORUS, *Citizens of Mycenae.*

THE SCENE is laid partly without the city of Argos, and partly within the royal palace.

## ARGUMENT

PELOPS, the son of Tantalus, had banished his sons for the murder of their half-brother, Chrysippus, with a curse upon them, that they and their posterity might perish by each others' hands. Upon the death of Pelops, Atreus returned and took possession of his father's throne. Thyestes, also, claimed the throne, and sought to gain it by the foulest means. For he seduced his brother's wife, Aërope, and stole by her assistance the magical, gold-fleeced ram from Atreus' flocks, upon the possession of which the right to rule was said to rest. For this act he was banished by the king.

But Atreus has long been meditating a more complete revenge upon his brother ; and now in pretended friendship has recalled him from banishment, offering him a place beside himself upon the throne, that thus he may have Thyestes entirely in his power.

## THYESTES

### TANTALI VMBRA

Quis inferorum sede ab infausta extrahit  
avido fugaces ore captantem cibos,  
quis male deorum Tantalos vivas<sup>1</sup> domos  
ostendit iterum? peius inventum est siti  
arente in undis aliquid et peius fame  
hiante semper? Sisyphi numquid lapis  
gestandus umeris lubricus nostris venit  
aut membra celeri differens cursu rota,  
aut poena Tityi qui specu vasto patens  
visceribus atras pascit effossis aves 10  
et nocte reparans quidquid amisit die  
plenum recenti pabulum monstro iacet?  
in quod malum transcribor? o quisquis nova  
supplicia functis durus umbrarum arbiter  
disponis, addi si quid ad poenas potest  
quod ipse custos carceris diri horreat,  
quod maestus Acheron paveat, ad cuius metum  
nos quoque tremamus, quaere. iam nostra subit  
e stirpe turba quae suum vincat genus  
ac me innocentem faciat et inausa audeat. 20  
regione quidquid impia cessat loci  
complebo; numquam stante Pelopea domo  
Minos vacabit.

<sup>1</sup> So A: *Leo visas*, with E: *invisas* N. Heinsius.



## THYESTES

### THE GHOST OF TANTALUS

Who from the accursed regions of the dead haleth me forth, snatching at food which ever fleeth from my hungry lips? What god for his undoing showeth again to Tantalus the abodes of the living? Hath something worse been found than parching thirst midst water, worse than ever-gaping hunger? Cometh the slippery stone of Sisyphus to be borne upon my shoulders? or the wheel<sup>1</sup> stretching apart my limbs in its swift round? or Tityus' pangs, who, stretched in a huge cavern, with torn out vitals feeds the dusky birds and, by night renewing whate'er he lost by day, lies an undiminished banquet for new monsters? To what new suffering am I shifted? O whoe'er thou art, harsh judge of shades, who dost allot fresh punishments to the dead, if aught can be added to my sufferings whereat e'en the guardian of our dread prison-house would quake, whereat sad Acheron would be seized with dread, with fear whereof I, too, should tremble, seek thou it out. Now from my seed a multitude is coming up which its own race shall out-do, which shall make me seem innocent, and dare things yet undared. Whatever space is still empty in the unholy realm, I<sup>2</sup> shall fill up; never, while Pelops' house is standing, will Minos<sup>3</sup> be at rest.

<sup>1</sup> Of Ixion.      <sup>2</sup> *i.e.* with my descendants.

<sup>3</sup> A judge in Hades.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## FURIA

Perge, detestabilis

umbra, et penates impios furiis age.  
 certetur omni scelere et alterna vice  
 stringatur ensis; ne sit irarum modus  
 pudorve, mentes caecus instiget furor,  
 rabies parentum duret et longum nefas  
 eat in nepotes; nec vacet cuiquam vetus  
 odisse crimen—semper oriatur novum, 30  
 nec unum in uno, dumque punitur scelus,  
 crescat. superbis fratribus regna excidant  
 repetantque profugos; dubia violentae domus  
 fortuna reges inter incertos labet;  
 miser ex potente fiat, ex misero potens  
 fluctuque regnum casus assiduo ferat.  
 ob scelera pulsi, cum dabit patriam deus  
 in scelera redeant, sintque tam invisi omnibus,  
 quam sibi; nihil sit ira quod vetitum putet: 40  
 fratrem expavescat frater et natum parens  
 natusque patrem, liberi pereant male,  
 peius tamen nascantur; immineat viro  
 infesta coniunx, bella trans pontum vehant,  
 effusus omnes irriget terras cruor,  
 supraque magnos gentium exultet duces  
 Libido victrix. impia stuprum in domo  
 levissimum sit; fratris et fas et fides  
 iusque omne pereat. non sit a vestris malis  
 immune caelum—cur micant stellae polo  
 flammaeque servant debitum mundo decus? 50

<sup>1</sup> Let the brothers, Atreus and Thyestes, reign, fall, be exiled and recalled, each in turn. In the present case Atreus

## THYESTES

### THE FURY

Onward, damned shade, and goad thy sinful house to madness. Let there be rivalry in guilt of every kind; let the sword be drawn on this side and on that; let their passions know no bounds, no shame; let blind fury prick on their souls; heartless be parents' rage, and to children's children let the long trail of sin lead down; let time be given to none to hate old sins—ever let new arise, many in one, and let crime, e'en midst its punishment, increase. From haughty brothers' hands let kingdoms fall, and in turn let them call back the fugitives;<sup>1</sup> let the wavering fortune of a home of violence midst changing kings totter to its fall; from power to wretchedness, from wretchedness to power—may this befall, and may chance with her ever-restless waves bear the kingdom on. For crimes' sake exiled, when God shall bring them home, to crime may they return, and may they be as hateful to all men as to themselves; let there be naught which passion deems unallowed; let brother brother fear, father fear son, and son father; let children vilely perish and be yet more vilely born; let a murderous wife lift hand against her husband, let wars pass over sea, let streaming blood drench every land, and over the mighty chiefs of earth let Lust exult, triumphant. In this sin-stained house let shameful defilement be a trivial thing; let fraternal sanctity and faith and every right be trampled under foot. By our sins let not heaven be untainted—why do the stars glitter in the sky? Why do their fires preserve the glory due the world? Let the face of night be changed, let

is on the throne, and Thyestes, who has been exiled, is recalled.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nox alia fiat, excidat caelo dies.  
 misce penates, odia caedes funera  
 arcesse et imple Tantalo totam domum.<sup>1</sup>

Ornetur altum columen et lauro fores  
 laetae virescant, dignus adventu tuo  
 splendescat ignis—Thracium fiat nefas  
 maiore numero. dextra cur patruī vacat?  
 nondum Thyestes liberos deflet suos—  
 et quando tollet? ignibus iam subditis  
 spument aena, membra per partes eant  
 discerpta, patrios polluat sanguis focos,  
 epulae instruantur—non novi sceleris tibi  
 conviva venies. liberum dedimus diem  
 tuamque ad istas solvimus mensas famem;  
 ieiunia exple, mixtus in Bacchum cruor  
 spectante te potetur; inveni dapes  
 quas ipse fugeres—siste, quo praeceps ruis?

60

### TANTALI VMBRA

Ad stagna et amnes et recedentes aquas  
 labrisque ab ipsis arboris plenae fugas.  
 abire in atrum carceris liceat mei  
 cubile, liceat, si parum videor miser,  
 mutare ripas; alveo medius tuo,  
 Phlegethon, relinquer igneo cinctus freto.

Quicumque poenas lege factorum datas  
 pati iuberis, quisquis exeso iaces  
 pavidus sub antro iamque venturi times  
 montis ruinam, quisquis avidorum feros  
 rictus leonum et dira Furiarum agmina

70

<sup>1</sup> imple scelere Tantaleam domum *A.*

<sup>1</sup> Procne and her wronged sister, Philomela, served up Itys as a banquet to his father, Tereus, king of Thrace.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* with the murder of three sons instead of one.

## THYESTES

day fall from heaven. Embroil thy household gods, summon up hatred, slaughter, death, and fill the whole house with Tantalus.

<sup>54</sup> Adorn the lofty pillar and with laurel let the festal doors be green; let torches worthy of thine approach shine forth—then let the Thracian crime<sup>1</sup> be done with greater number.<sup>2</sup> Why is the uncle's<sup>3</sup> hand inactive? Not yet does Thyestes bewail his sons—and when will he lift his hand? Now set o'er the flames let cauldrons foam; let the rent members one by one pass in; let the ancestral hearth be stained with blood, let the feast be spread—to no novel feast of crime<sup>4</sup> wilt come as banqueter. To-day have we made thee free, have loosed thy hunger to the banquet yonder; go, feed full thy fasting, and let blood, with wine commingled, be drunk before thine eyes. I have found feast which thou thyself wouldst flee—but stay! Whither dost headlong rush?

### GHOST OF TANTALUS

Back to my pools and streams and fleeing waters, back to the laden tree which shuns my very lips. Let me return to the black couch of my prison-house; let it be mine, if I seem too little wretched, to change my stream; in thy bed's midst, O Phlegethon, let me be left, hemmed round with waves of fire.

<sup>74</sup> Whoe'er thou art, by the fates' law bidden to suffer allotted punishment; whoe'er liest quaking beneath the hollowed rock, and fearest the downfall of the mountainous mass even now coming on thee;<sup>5</sup> whoe'er shudderest at the fierce gaping of greedy lions, and, entangled in their toils, dost shudder at

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Atreus.

<sup>2</sup> See Index *s.v.* Pelops.

<sup>3</sup> A common conception of punishment in Hades. See Vergil, *Aen.* VI. 601.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

implicitus horres, quisquis immissas faces  
 semiustus abigis, Tantali vocem excipe 80  
 properantis ad vos : credite experto mihi,  
 amate poenas. quando continget mihi  
 effugere superos ?

FVRIA

Ante perturba domum  
 inferque tecum proelia et ferri malum  
 regibus amorem, concute insano ferum  
 pectus tumultu.

TANTALI VMBRA

Me pati poenas decet,  
 non esse poenam. mittor ut dirus vapor  
 tellure rupta vel gravem populis luem  
 sparsura pestis, ducam in horrendum nefas 90  
 avus nepotes. magne divorum parens  
 nosterque, quamvis pudeat, ingenti licet  
 taxata poena lingua crucietur loquax,  
 nec hoc tacebo ; moneo, ne sacra<sup>1</sup> manus  
 violate caede neve furiali malo  
 aspergite aras. stabo et arcebo scelus—

Quid ora terres verbere et tortos ferox  
 minaris angues ? quid famem infixam intimis  
 agitas medullis ? flagrat incensum siti  
 cor et perustis flamma visceribus micat—  
 sequor.<sup>2</sup> 100

FVRIA

Hunc, hunc furorem divide in totam domum !  
 sic, sic ferantur et suum infensi invicem  
 sitiunt cruorem. sentit introitus tuos

<sup>1</sup> *So A : Leo sacras.*      <sup>2</sup> *Leo deletes this word.*

## THYESTES

the dread ranks of furies; whoe'er, half burned, shunnest their threatening torches, hear ye the words of Tantalus now hasting to you: believe me who know, and love your punishments. Oh, when shall it fall to me to escape the upper world?

### THE FURY

First throw thy house into confusion dire, bring strife with thee, bring lust for the sword, an evil thing for rulers, and rouse to mad passion the savage breast.

### GHOST OF TANTALUS

'Tis meet for me to suffer punishments, not be a punishment. I am sent as some deadly exhalation from the riven earth, or as a pestilence, spreading grievous plague among the people, that I a grandsire may lead my grandsons into fearful crime. O mighty sire of gods, my father, too, however to thy shame I say it, though to cruel punishment my tattling tongue be doomed, I will not hold my peace; I warn ye, defile not your hands with accursed slaughter, nor stain your altars with a madman's crime. Here will I stand and prevent the evil deed. [*To THE FURY.*] Why with thy scourge dost fright mine eyes, and fiercely threaten with thy writhing snakes? Why deep in my inmost marrow dost rouse hunger pains? My heart is parched with burning thirst, and in my scorched vitals the fire is darting—I follow thee.

### THE FURY

This, this very rage of thine distribute throughout thy house! So, e'en as thou, may they be driven on, raging to quench their thirst each in the other's blood. Thy house feels thy near approach, and has

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

domus et nefando tota contactu horruit.  
 actum est abunde ! gradere ad infernos specus  
 amnemque notum ; iam tuum maestae pedem  
 terrae gravantur. cernis ut fontes liquor  
 introrsus actus linquat, ut ripae vacent  
 ventusque raras igneus nubes ferat ?  
 pallescit omnis arbor ac nudus stetit 110  
 fugiente pomo ramus, et qua fluctibus  
 illinc propinquis Isthmos atque illinc fremit  
 vicina gracili dividens terra vada,  
 longe remotos litus exaudit sonos.  
 iam Lerna retro cessit et Phoronides  
 latuere venae nec suas profert sacer  
 Alpheos undas et Cithaeronis iuga  
 stant parte nulla cana deposita nive  
 timentque veterem nobiles Argi sitim.  
 en ipse Titan dubitat an iubeat sequi 120  
 cogatque habenis ire periturum diem.

### CHORVS

Argos de superis si quis Achaicum  
 Pisaeasque domos curribus inclitas,  
 Isthmi si quis amat regna Corinthii  
 et portus geminos et mare dissidens,  
 si quis Taygeti conspicuas nives,  
 quas cum Sarmaticus tempore frigido  
 in summis Boreas composuit iugis,  
 aestas veliferis solvit Etesiis,  
 quem tangit gelido flumine lucidus 130  
 Alpheos, stadio notus Olympico,  
 advertat placidum numen et arceat,  
 alternae scelerum ne redeant vices  
 nec succedat avo deterior nepos



## THYESTES

shrunk in utter horror from thine accursed touch. Enough! more than enough! Go thou to the infernal caves and well-known stream; now is the grieving earth weary of thy presence. Seest thou how the water, driven far within, deserts the springs, how river banks are empty, how the fiery wind drives away the scattered clouds? Every tree grows pale, and from the bare branches the fruit has fled; and where this side and that the Isthmus is wont to roar with neighbouring waves, dividing near seas with narrow neck of land, the shore but faintly hears the far off sound. Now Lerna has shrunk back, the Phoronean stream<sup>1</sup> has disappeared, the sacred Alpheus no longer bears his waters on, Cithaeron's heights have lost their snows and nowhere stand hoary now, and the lordly Argos fears its ancient drought.<sup>2</sup> Lo! Titan himself stands doubtful whether to bid day follow on, and, plying the reins, compel it to come forth to its undoing.

### CHORUS

If any god loves Achaian Argos and Pisa's homes renowned for chariots; if any loves Corinthian Isthmus' realm, its twin harbours, its dissevered sea; if any, the far-seen snows of Mount Taygetus, snows which, when in winter-time the Sarmatian blasts have laid them on the heights, the summer with its sail-filling Etesian breezes melts away; if any is moved by the cool, clear stream of Alpheus, famed for its Olympic course—let him his kindly godhead hither turn, let him forbid the recurrent waves of crime to come again, forbid that on his grandsire follow a worse grandson, and greater crime

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the river Inachus.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* in the time of Phaëthon.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

et maior placeat culpa minoribus.  
 tandem lassa feros exuat impetus  
 sicci progenies impia Tantalī.  
 peccatum satis est; fas valuit nihil  
 aut commune nefas. proditus occidit  
 deceptor domini Myrtilus, et fide 140  
 vectus qua tulerat nobile reddidit  
 mutato pelagus nomine; notior  
 nulla est Ioniis fabula navibus.  
 exceptus gladio parvulus impio  
 dum currit patrium natus ad osculum,  
 immatura focus victima concidit  
 divisusque tua est, Tantale, dextera,  
 mensas ut strueres hospitibus deis.  
 hos aeterna fames persequitur cibos,  
 hos aeterna sitis; nec dapibus feris 150  
 decerni potuit poena decentior.  
 Stat lassus vacuo gutture Tantalus;  
 impendet capiti plurima noxio  
 Phineis avibus praeda fugacior;  
 hinc illinc gravidis frondibus incubat  
 et curvata suis fetibus ac tremens  
 alludit patulis arbor hiatibus.  
 haec, quamvis avidus nec patiens morae,  
 deceptus totiens tangere neglegit  
 obliquatque oculos oraque comprimit 160  
 inclusisque famem dentibus alligat.  
 sed tunc divitias omne nemus suas  
 demittit propius pomaque desuper  
 insultant foliis mitia languidis  
 accenduntque famem, quae iubet irritas

---

<sup>1</sup> A retention of the rhetorical element in this line results in an obscurity impossible to avoid in English. The meaning is: Let not the descendants (*minoribus*) do worse sin than their ancestor.

## THYESTES

please lesser men.<sup>1</sup> Wearied at last, may the impious race of thirsty Tantalus give o'er its lust for savagery. Enough sin has been wrought; nothing has right availed, or general wrong. Himself betrayed, fell Myrtilus, betrayer of his lord, and, dragged down by the faith which he had shown, he made a sea<sup>2</sup> famous by its change of name; to Ionian ships no tale is better known. While the little son<sup>3</sup> ran to his father's kiss, welcomed by sinful sword, he fell, an untimely victim at the hearth, and by thy right hand was carved, O Tantalus, that thou mightest spread a banquet for the gods, thy guests. Such food eternal hunger, such eternal thirst pursues; nor for such bestial viands could have been meted penalty more fit.

<sup>152</sup> Weary, with empty throat, stands Tantalus; above his guilty head hangs food in plenty, than Phineus'<sup>4</sup> birds more elusive; on either side, with laden boughs, a tree leans over him and, bending and trembling 'neath its weight of fruit, makes sport with his wide-straining jaws. The prize, though he is eager and impatient of delay, deceived so oft, he tries no more to touch, turns away his eyes, shuts tight his lips, and behind clenched teeth he bars his hunger. But then the whole grove lets its riches down nearer still, and the mellow fruits above his head mock him with drooping boughs and whet again the hunger, which bids him ply his hands in

<sup>2</sup> The Myrtoan sea, that portion of the Aegean south of Euboea. The name is here fancifully derived from Myrtilus. For the whole incident see Index.

<sup>3</sup> Pelops.      <sup>4</sup> The Harpies.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

exercere manus. has ubi protulit  
 et falli libuit, totus in arduum  
 autumnus rapitur silvaque mobilis.  
 instat deinde sitis non levior fame ;  
 qua cum percaluit sanguis et igneis 170  
 exarsit facibus, stat miser obvios  
 fluctus ore petens, quos profugus latex  
 avertit sterili deficiens vado  
 conantemque sequi deserit ; hic bibit  
 altum de rapido gurgite pulverem.

### ATREVS

Ignave, iners, enervis et (quod maximum  
 probrum tyranno rebus in summis reor)  
 inulte, post tot scelera, post fratris dolos  
 fasque ~~omne~~ ruptum questibus vanis 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 silvae tegant  
 hostem nec altis montium structae iugis  
 arces ; relictis bellicum totus canat  
 populus Mycenis, quisquis invisum caput  
 tegit ac tuetur, clade funesta occidat.  
 haec ipsa pollens incliti Pelopis domus 190  
 ruat vel 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,  
 nisi vincis. et quid esse tam saevum potest

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<sup>1</sup> Not because he failed, but because he almost succeeded.  
 104

## THYESTES

vain. When he has stretched these forth and gladly<sup>1</sup> has been baffled, the whole ripe harvest of the bending woods is snatched far out of reach. Then comes a raging thirst, harder to bear than hunger; when by this his blood has grown hot and glowed as with fiery torches, the poor wretch stands catching at waves that seem to approach his lips; but these the elusive water turns aside, failing in meagre shallows, and leaves him utterly, striving to pursue; then deep from the whirling stream he drinks—but dust.

ATREUS [*in soliloquy*]

O undaring, unskilled, unnerved, and (what in high matters I deem a king's worst reproach) yet unavenged, after so many crimes, after a brother's treacheries, and all right broken down, in idle complaints dost busy thyself—a mere wrathful Atreus? By now should the whole world be resounding with thy arms, on either side thy fleets be harrying both seas; by now should fields and cities be aglow with flames and the drawn sword be gleaming everywhere. Let the whole land of Argolis resound with our horses' tread; let no forests shelter my enemy, nor citadels, built on high mountain tops; let the whole nation leave Mycenae and sound the trump of war; and whoso hides and protects that hateful head, let him die a grievous death. This mighty palace itself, illustrious Pelops' house, may it e'en fall on me, if only on my brother, too, it fall. Up! my soul, do what no coming age shall approve, but none forget. I must dare some crime, atrocious, bloody, such as my brother would more wish were his. Crimes thou dost not avenge, save as thou dost surpass them. And what crime can be so dire as to overtop his sin?

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quod superet illum? numquid abiectus iacet?  
 numquid secundis patitur in rebus modum,  
 fessis quietem? novi ego ingenium viri  
 indocile; flecti non potest—frangi potest. 200  
 proinde antequam se firmat aut vires parat,  
 petatur ultro, ne quiescentem petat.  
 aut perdet aut peribit; in medio est scelus  
 positum occupanti.

SATELLES

Fama te populi nihil  
 adversa terret?

ATREVS

Maximum hoc regni bonum est,  
 quod facta domini cogitur populus sui  
 tam ferre quam laudare.

SATELLES

Quos cogit metus  
 laudare, eosdem reddit inimicos metus.  
 at qui favoris gloriam veri petit,  
 animo magis quam voce laudari volet. 210

ATREVS

Laus vera et humili saepe contingit viro,  
 non nisi potenti falsa. quod nolunt velint.

SATELLES

Rex velit honesta: nemo non eadem volet.

ATREVS

Vbicumque tantum honesta dominanti licent,  
 precario regnatur.

## THYESTES

Does he lie downcast? Does he in prosperity endure control, rest in defeat? I know the untamable spirit of the man; bent it cannot be—but it can be broken. Therefore, ere he strengthen himself or marshal his powers, we must begin the attack, lest, while we wait, the attack be made on us. Slay or be slain will he; between us lies the crime for him who first shall do it.

ATTENDANT

Does public disapproval deter thee not?

ATREUS

The greatest advantage this of royal power, that their master's deeds the people are compelled as well to bear as praise.

ATTENDANT

Whom fear compels to praise, them, too, fear makes into foes; but he who seeks the glory of true favour, will wish heart rather than voice to sing his praise.

ATREUS

True praise even to the lowly often comes; false, only to the strong. What men choose not, let them choose.

ATTENDANT

Let a king choose the right; then none will not choose the same.

ATREUS

Where only right to a monarch is allowed, sovereignty is insecure.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## SATELLES

Vbi non est pudor  
nec cura iuris sanctitas pietas fides,  
instabile regnum est.

## ATREVS

Sanctitas pietas fides  
privata bona sunt; qua iuvat reges eant.

## SATELLES

Nefas nocere vel malo fratri puta.

## ATREVS

Fas est in illo quidquid in fratre est nefas. 220  
quid enim reliquit crimine intactum aut ubi  
sceleri pepercit? coniugem stupro abstulit  
regnumque furto; specimen antiquum imperi  
fraude est adeptus, fraude turbavit domum.  
est Pelopis altis nobile in stabulis pecus,  
arcanus aries, ductor opulenti gregis.  
huius per omne corpus effuso coma  
dependet auro, cuius e tergo<sup>1</sup> novi  
aurata reges sceptrata Tantalici gerunt;  
possessor huius regnat, hunc tantae domus 230  
fortuna sequitur. tuta seposita sacer  
in parte carpit prata, quae claudit lapis  
fatale saxeo pascuum muro tegens.  
hunc facinus ingens ausus assumpta in scelus  
consorte nostri perfidus thalami avehit.  
hinc omne cladis mutuae fluxit malum;  
per regna trepidus exul erravi mea,

<sup>1</sup> *Leo conjectures tracto: Wilamowitz, texto.*

<sup>1</sup> A ram with golden fleece, whose possession, according to an oracle, guaranteed possession of the throne. See Index *s. v.* Thyestes.



## THYESTES

ATTENDANT

Where is no shame, no care for right, no honour, virtue, faith, sovereignty is insecure.

ATREUS

Honour, virtue, faith are the goods of common men ; let kings go where they please.

ATTENDANT

O count it wrong to harm even a wicked brother.

ATREUS

Whate'er is wrong to do unto a brother is right to do to him. For what has he left untouched by crime, or where has he failed to sin? My wife has he debauched, my kingdom stolen; the ancient token<sup>1</sup> of our dynasty by fraud he gained, by fraud o'erturned our house. There is within Pelops' lofty folds a lordly flock, and a wondrous ram, the rich flock's leader. O'er all his body a fleece of spun gold hangs, and from his back<sup>2</sup> the new-crowned kings of the house of Tantalus have their sceptres wreathed with gold. His owner rules; him does the fortune of the whole house follow. Hallowed and apart he grazes in safe meadows fenced with stone, that guards the fated pasture with its rocky wall. Him did the perfidious one,<sup>3</sup> daring a monstrous crime, steal away, with the partner of my bed helping the sinful deed. From this source has flowed the whole evil stream of mutual destruction; throughout my kingdom have I wandered, a trembling exile; no

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* from the golden fleece upon it.

<sup>3</sup> Thyestes.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

pars nulla generis tuta ab insidiis vacat,  
 corrupta coniunx, imperi quassa est fides,  
 domus aegra, dubius sanguis est—certi nihil                    240  
 nisi frater hostis. quid stupes? tandem incipe  
 animosque sume; Tantalum et Pelopem—aspice;  
 ad haec manus exempla poscuntur meae.  
 Profare, dirum qua caput mactem via.

### SATELLES

Ferro peremptus spiritum inimicum expuat.

### ATREVS

De fine poenae loqueris; ego poenam volo.  
 perimat tyrannus lenis; in regno meo  
 mors impetratur.

### SATELLES

Nulla te pietas movet?

### ATREVS

Excede, Pietas, si modo in nostra domo  
 unquam fuisti. dira Furiarum cohors                    250  
 discorsque Erinys veniat et geminas faces  
 Megaera quatiens; non satis magno meum  
 ardet furore pectus; impleri iuvat  
 maiore monstro.

### SATELLES

Quid novi rabidus struis?

### ATREVS

Nil quod doloris capiat assueti modus;  
 nullum relinquam facinus et nullum est satis.

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* by which the two brothers were to reign alternately.

## THYESTES

part of my family is safe and free from snares; my wife seduced, our pledge<sup>1</sup> of empire broken, my house impaired, my offspring dubious—no one thing certain save my brother's enmity. Why standest inactive? At last begin, put on thy courage; Tantalus and Pelops—look on them; to work like theirs my hands are summoned.

<sup>244</sup> Tell thou, by what means I may bring ruin on his wicked head.

ATTENDANT

Slain by the sword, let him spew forth his hateful soul.

ATREUS

Thou speakest of punishment's completion; I punishment itself desire. Let the mild tyrant slay; in my dominion death is a boon to pray for.

ATTENDANT

Does piety move thee not?

ATREUS

Be gone, O Piety, if ever in our house thou hadst a place. Let the dread band of Furies come, the fiend Discord, and Megaera, brandishing her torches twain; not great enough the frenzy with which my bosom burns; with some greater horror would I be filled.

ATTENDANT

What strange design does thy mad soul intend?

ATREUS

Naught that the measure of accustomed rage can hold; no crime will I leave undone, and no crime is enough.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SATELLES

Ferrum?

ATREVS

Parum est.

SATELLES

Quid ignis?

ATREVS

Etiamnunc parum est.

SATELLES

Quonam ergo telo tantus utetur dolor?

ATREVS

Ipsa Thyeste.

SATELLES

Maius hoc ira est malum.

ATREVS

Fateor. tumultus pectora attonitus quatit 260  
penitusque volvit; rapior et quo nescio,  
sed rapior. imo mugit e fundo solum,  
tonat dies serenus ac totis domus  
ut fracta tectis crepuit et moti lares  
vertere vultum—fiat hoc, fiat nefas  
quod, di, timetis.

SATELLES

Facere quid tandem paras?

ATREVS

Nescio quid animo maius et solito amplius  
supraque fines moris humani tumet  
instatque pigris manibus—haud quid sit scio,

THYESTES

ATTENDANT

The sword?

ATREUS

'Tis not enough.

ATTENDANT

Fire, then?

ATREUS

Still not enough.

ATTENDANT

What weapon, pray, will thy great anguish use?

ATREUS

Thyestes' self.

ATTENDANT

This plague is worse than passion.

ATREUS

I do confess it. A frantic tumult shakes and heaves deep my heart. I am hurried I know not whither, but I am hurried on. The ground rumbles from its lowest depths, the clear sky thunders, the whole house crashes as though 'twere rent asunder, and the trembling Lares turn away their faces—let it be done, let a deed of guilt be done whereat, O gods, ye are affrighted.

ATTENDANT

What, pray, wouldst do?

ATREUS

Some greater thing, larger than the common and beyond the bounds of human use is swelling in my soul, and it urges on my sluggish hands—I know not

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

sed grande quiddam est. ita sit. hoc, anime,  
occupa. 270

dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo;  
uterque faciat. vidit infandas domus  
Odrysia mensas—fateor, immane est scelus,  
sed occupatum; maius hoc aliquid dolor  
inveniat. animum Daulis inspira parens  
sororque; causa est similis; assiste et manum  
impelle nostram. liberos avidus pater  
gaudensque laceret et suos artus edat.  
bene est, abunde est. hic placet poenae modus.

Tantisper<sup>1</sup> ubinam est? tam diu cur innocens 280  
versatur Atreus? tota iam ante oculos meos  
imago caedis errat, ingesta orbitas  
in ora patris—anime, quid rursus times  
et ante rem subsidis? audendum est, age!  
quod est in isto scelere praecipuum nefas,  
hoc ipse faciet.

### SATELLES

Sed quibus captus dolis  
nostros dabit perductus in laqueos pedem?  
inimica credit cuncta.

### ATREVS

Non poterat capi,  
nisi capere vellet. regna nunc sperat mea;  
hac spe minanti fulmen occurret Iovi, 290  
hac spe subibit gurgitis tumidi minas  
dubiumque Libycae Syrtis intrabit fretum,  
hac spe, quod esse maximum retur malum,  
fratrem videbit.

<sup>1</sup> *All editors punctuate* modus | tantisper. ubinam est?

## THYESTES

what it is, but 'tis some mighty thing. So let it be. Haste, thou, my soul, and do it. 'Tis a deed worthy of Thyestes, and of Atreus worthy; let each perform it. The Odrysian<sup>1</sup> house once saw a feast unspeakable—'tis a monstrous crime, I grant, but it has been done before; let my smart find something worse than this. Inspire my soul, O Daulian<sup>2</sup> mother, aye and sister,<sup>3</sup> too; my case is like to yours; help me and urge on my hand. Let the father with joyous greed rend his sons, and his own flesh devour. 'Tis well, more than enough. This way of punishment is pleasing.

<sup>280</sup> Meanwhile, where is he? Why does Atreus so long live harmless? Already before mine eyes flits the whole picture of the slaughter; his lost children heaped up before their father's face—O soul, why dost shrink back in fear and halt before the deed? Come! thou must dare it! What is the crowning outrage in this crime he himself shall do.

### ATTENDANT

But with what wiles caught will he be led to set foot within our snares? He counts us all enemies.

### ATREUS

He could not be caught were he not bent on catching. Even now he hopes to gain my kingdom; in this hope he will face Jove as he brandishes his thunder-bolt, in this hope will brave the whirlpool's rage and enter the treacherous waters of the Libyan sands; in this hope (what he deems the greatest curse of all), he will see his brother.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Thracian. See Index.    <sup>2</sup> Procne.    <sup>3</sup> Philomela.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SATELLES

Quis fidem pacis dabit?  
cui tanta credet?

ATREVS

Credula est spes improba.  
natis tamen mandata quae patruo ferant  
dabimus : relictis exul hospitiiis vagus  
regno ut miserias mutet atque Argos regat  
ex parte dominus. si nimis durus preces  
spernet Thyestes, liberos eius rudes 300  
malisque fessos gravibus et faciles capi  
prece commovebunt. hinc vetus regni furor,  
illinc egestas tristis ac durus labor  
quamvis rigentem tot malis subigent virum.

SATELLES

Iam tempus illi fecit aerumnas leves.

ATREVS

Erras ; malorum sensus accrescit die.  
leve est miserias ferre, perferre est grave.

SATELLES

Alios ministros consili tristis lege.

ATREVS

Peiora iuvenes facile praecepta audiunt.

SATELLES

In patre facient quidquid in patruo doces ; 310  
saepe in magistrum scelera redierunt sua.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* other than Atreus' own sons.



## THYESTES

ATTENDANT

Who will give him confidence in peace? Whose word will he so greatly trust?

ATREUS

Base hope is credulous. Still to my sons will I give a message to carry to their uncle: let the exiled wanderer quit strangers' homes, for a throne exchange his wretched state and rule at Argos, a partner of my sway. If too stubbornly Thyestes spurns my prayer, his sons, guileless and spent with hard misfortunes and easy to be entreated, will be moved. On this side, his old mad thirst for power, on that, grim want and unfeeling toil by their many woes will force the man, however stiff, to yield.

ATTENDANT

By now time has made his troubles light.

ATREUS

Not so; a sense of wrongs increases day by day. 'Tis easy to bear misfortune; to keep on bearing it a heavy task.

ATTENDANT

Choose other<sup>1</sup> agents of thy grim design.

ATREUS

To the worse schooling youth lends ready ear.

ATTENDANT

Toward their father they will act as toward their uncle thou instructest them; often upon the teacher have his bad teachings turned.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ATREVS

Vt nemo doceat fraudis et sceleris vias,  
regnum docebit. ne mali fiant times?  
nascuntur. istud quod vocas saevum asperum  
agique dure credis et nimium impie,  
fortasse et illic agitur.

SATELLES

Hanc fraudem scient  
nati parari?

ATREVS

Tacita tam rudibus fides  
non est in annis; detegent forsán dolos;  
tacere multis discitur vitae malis.

SATELLES

Ipsosque per quos fallere alium cogitas  
falles?

320

ATREVS

Vt ipsi crimine et culpa vacent.  
quid enim necesse est liberos sceleri meos  
inserere? per nos odia se nostra explicent.—  
male agis, recedis, anime: si parcis tuis,  
parces et illis. consili Agamemnon mei  
sciens minister fiat et patri sciens  
Menelaus assit. prolis incertae fides  
ex hoc petatur scelere: si bella abnuunt  
et gerere nolunt odia, si patrum vocant,  
pater est. eatur.—multa sed trepidus solet  
detegere vultus, magna nolentem quoque  
consilia produnt: nesciant quantae rei  
fiant ministri. nostra tu coepta occules.

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<sup>1</sup> By Thyestes against Atreus.

## THYESTES

ATREUS

Though none should teach them the ways of treachery and crime, the throne will teach them. Lest they become evil, fearest thou? They were born evil. What thou callest savage, cruel, thinkest is done ruthlessly, with no regard for heaven's law, perchance even there <sup>1</sup> is being done.

ATTENDANT

Shall thy sons know that this snare is being laid?

ATREUS

Silent discretion is not found in years so inexperienced; perchance they will disclose the plot; the art of silence is taught by life's many ills.

ATTENDANT

Even those by whom thou plannest to deceive another, wilt thou deceive?

ATREUS

That they themselves may be free even from blame of crime. What need to entangle my sons in guilt? By my own self let my hatred be wrought out.—Thou doest ill, thou shrinkest back, my soul. Let Agamemnon be the witting agent of my plan, and Menelaus wittingly assist his father. By this deed let their uncertain birth be put to proof: if they refuse the combat, if they will not wage the war of hate, if they plead he is their uncle, he is their sire. Let them set forth.—But a troubled countenance oft discloses much; great plans betray their bearer even against his will; let them not know of how great a matter they are the ministers. And do thou conceal my plans.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## SATELLES

Haud sum monendus ; ista nostro in pectore  
fides timorque, sed magis claudet fides.

## CHORVS

Tandem regia nobilis,  
antiqui genus Inachi,  
fratrum composuit minas.<sup>1</sup>

Quis vos exagitat furor,  
alternis dare sanguinem 340  
et sceptrum scelere aggredi ?

nescitis, cupidi arcium,  
regnum quo iaceat loco.  
regem non faciunt opes,  
non vestis Tyriae color,  
non frontis nota regiae,  
non auro nitidae fores<sup>2</sup> ;  
rex est qui posuit metus  
et diri mala pectoris,  
quem non ambitio inpotens 350  
et numquam stabilis favor

vulgi praecipitis movet,  
non quidquid fodit Occidens  
aut unda Tagus aurea  
claro devehit alveo,  
non quidquid Libycis terit  
fervens area messibus,  
quem non concutiet cadens  
obliqui via fulminis,

non Eurvs rapiens mare 360  
aut saevo rabidus freto  
ventosi tumor Hadriae,  
quem non lancea militis,

<sup>1</sup> Richter deletes 336-338.

<sup>2</sup> trabes A.

## THYESTES

### ATTENDANT

No need to admonish me ; both fear and loyalty shall shut them in my heart, but rather loyalty.

### CHORUS

At last our noble house, the race of ancient Inachus, hath quelled the brother's threats.

<sup>339</sup> What madness pricks you on to shed by turns each others' blood, and by crime to gain the throne? Ye know not, for high place greedy, wherein true kingship lies. A king neither riches make, nor robes of Tyrian hue, nor crown upon the royal brow, nor doors with gold bright-gleaming ; a king is he who has laid fear aside and the base longings of an evil heart ; whom ambition unrestrained and the fickle favour of the reckless mob move not, neither all the mined treasures of the West nor the golden sands which Tagus sweeps along in his shining bed, nor all the grain trod out on burning Libya's threshing-floors ; whom no hurtling path of the slanting thunderbolt will shake, nor Eurus, harrying the sea, nor wind-swept Adriatic's swell, raging with cruel wave ; whom no warrior's lance nor bare steel ever

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

non strictus domuit chalybs,  
 qui tuto positus loco  
 infra se videt omnia  
 occurritque suo libens  
 fato nec queritur mori.

Reges convenient licet  
 qui sparsos agitant Dahas, 370  
 qui rubri vada litoris

et gemmis mare lucidis  
 late sanguineum tenent,  
 aut qui Caspia fortibus  
 recludunt iuga Sarmatis,  
 certet Danuvii vadum  
 audet qui pedes ingredi  
 et (quocumque loco iacent)  
 Seres vellere nobiles—

mens regnum bona possidet. 380

nil ullis opus est equis,  
 nil armis et inertibus  
 telis quae procul ingerit  
 Parthus, cum simulat fugas,  
 admotis nihil est opus  
 urbes sternere machinis,  
 longe saxa rotantibus.

rex est qui metuit nihil,  
 rex est qui cupiet nihil.<sup>1</sup>  
 hoc regnum sibi quisque dat. 390

Stet quicumque volet potens  
 aulae culmine lubrico ;  
 me dulcis saturet quies ;  
 obscuro positus loco  
 leni perfruar otio,  
 nullis nota Quiritibus  
 aetas per tacitum fluat.

<sup>1</sup> *Leo deletes lines 388, 389.*

## THYESTES

mastered ; who, in safety 'stablished, sees all things  
beneath his feet, goes gladly to meet his fate nor  
grieves to die.

<sup>369</sup> Though kings should gather themselves together, both they who vex the scattered Scythians and they who dwell upon the Red Sea's marge, who hold wide sway o'er the blood-red main with its gleaming pearls, they who leave unguarded<sup>1</sup> the Caspian heights to the bold Sarmatians ; though he strive against him, who dares on foot to tread the Danube's waves<sup>2</sup> and (wheresoe'er they dwell) to despoil the famous Serians<sup>3</sup>—'tis the upright mind that holds true sovereignty. He has no need of horses, none of arms and the coward weapons which the Parthian hurls from far when he feigns flight, no need of engines hurling rocks, stationed to batter cities to the ground. A king is he who has no fear ; a king is he who shall naught desire. Such kingdom on himself each man bestows.

<sup>391</sup> Let him stand who will, in pride of power, on empire's slippery height ; let me be filled with sweet repose ; in humble station fixed, let me enjoy untroubled ease, and, to my fellow citizens<sup>4</sup> unknown, let my life's stream flow in silence. So when my

<sup>1</sup> Because they do not fear these enemies.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the frozen surface.

<sup>3</sup> The poet here conceives of the Serians as near by Scythia.

<sup>4</sup> *Quirites* must be taken in a general sense. Specifically, it would be impossible, since it applies only to Roman citizens, who at this time had not come into existence.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

sic cum transierint mei  
 nullo cum strepitu dies,  
 plebeius moriar senex. 400  
 illi mors gravis incubat  
 qui, notus nimis omnibus,  
 ignotus moritur sibi.

### THYESTES

Optata patriae tecta et Argolicas opes  
 miserisque summum ac maximum exulibus bonum,  
 tractum soli natalis et patrios deos  
 (si sunt tamen di) cerno, Cyclosum sacras  
 turrets, labore maius humano decus,  
 celebrata iuveni stadia, per quae nobilis  
 palmam paterno non semel curru tuli 410  
 occurret Argos, populus occurret frequens—  
 sed nempe et Atreus. repete silvestres fugas  
 saltusque densos potius et mixtam feris  
 similemque vitam; clarus hic regni nitor  
 fulgore non est quod oculos falso auferat;  
 cum quod datur spectabis, et dantem aspice.  
 modo inter illa, quae putant cuncti aspera,  
 fortis fui laetusque; nunc contra in metus  
 revolvor; animus haeret ac retro cupit  
 corpus referre, moveo nolentem gradum. 420

### TANTALVS

Pigro (quid hoc est?) genitor incesso stupet  
 vultumque versat seque in incerto tenet.



## THYESTES

days have passed noiselessly away, lowly may I die and full of years. On him does death lie heavily, who, but too well known to all, dies to himself unknown.

[*Enter THYESTES, returning from banishment, accompanied by his three sons.*]

### THYESTES

At last I see the welcome dwellings\* of my fatherland, the wealth of Argolis, and, the greatest and best of sights to wretched exiles, a stretch of native soil and my ancestral gods (if after all gods there are), the sacred towers reared by the Cyclopes, in beauty far excelling human effort, the race-course thronged with youth, where more than once, lifted to fame, have I in my father's chariot won the palm. Argos will come to meet me, the thronging populace will come—but surely Atreus too! Rather seek again thy retreats in the forest depths, the impenetrable glades, and life shared with beasts and like to theirs; this gleaming splendour of the throne is naught that should blind my eyes with its false tinsel show; when thou lookest on the gift, scan well the giver, too. Of late midst such fortune as all count hard, I was brave and joyous; but now I am returned to fears; my courage falters and, eager to go back, I move unwilling feet along.

### TANTALUS [*aside*]

My father (what can it mean?) with faltering pace goes as if dazed, keeps turning his face away, and holds uncertain course.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## THYESTES

Quid, anime, pendes quidve consilium diu  
tam facile torques? rebus incertissimis,  
fratri atque regno, credis ac metuis mala  
iam victa, iam mansueta et aerumnas fugis  
bene collocatas? esse iam miserum iuvat.  
reflecte gressum, dum licet, teque eripe.

## TANTALVS

Quae causa cogit, genitor, a patria gradum  
referre visa? cur bonis tantis sinum 430  
subducis? ira frater abiecta redit  
partemque regni reddit et lacerae domus  
componit artus teque restituit tibi.

## THYESTES

Causam timoris ipse quam ignoro exigis.  
nihil timendum video, sed timeo tamen.  
placet ire, pigris membra sed genibus labant  
alioque quam quo nitor abductus feror.  
sic concitatam remige et velo ratem  
aestus resistens remigi et velo refert.

## TANTALVS

Evince quidquid obstat et mentem impedit 440  
reducemque quanta praemia expectent vide.  
pater, potes regnare.

## THYESTES

Cum possim mori.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* made the best of by learning how to bear them.

<sup>2</sup> Blessings are being poured into his bosom and he will not receive them.

## THYESTES

THYESTES [*in soliloquy*]

Why O soul, dost hesitate, or why dost so long turn o'er and o'er a plan so simple? Dost thou trust to things most unsure, to a brother and to kingship? Dost fear hardships already mastered, already easier to bear, and dost flee from distresses well employed? <sup>1</sup>'Tis sweet now to be wretched. Turn back, while still thou mayest, and save thyself.

TANTALUS

What cause compels thee, father, to turn thee back from sight of thy native land? Why from so great blessings dost withhold thy bosom? <sup>2</sup> Thy brother returns to thee with wrath given o'er, gives thee back half the realm, unites the members of thy sundered house, and to thyself restores thee.

THYESTES

My cause of fear, which I myself know not, thou demandest of me. Naught to be feared I see, but still I fear. Fain would I go, but my limbs totter with faltering knees, and other-whither than I strive to go am I borne away in thrall. Just so a ship, urged on by oar and sail, the tide, resisting both oar and sail, bears back.

TANTALUS

O'ercome thou whate'er opposes and thwarts thy will, and see how great rewards await thee on thy return. Father, thou canst be king.

THYESTES

Yea, since I can die.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The power to die is more precious than the power of kings; since, therefore, he *can* die, Thyestes has indeed regal power.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

TANTALVS

Summa est potestas—

THYESTES

Nulla, si cupias nihil.

TANTALVS

Natis relinques.

THYESTES

Non capit regnum duos.

TANTALVS

Miser esse mavult esse qui felix potest ?

THYESTES

Mihi crede, falsis magna nominibus placent,  
frustra timentur dura. dum excelsus steti,  
numquam pavere destiti atque ipsum mei  
ferrum timere lateris. o quantum bonum est  
obstare nulli, capere securas dapes 450  
humi iacentem ! scelera non intrant casas,  
tutusque mensa capitur angusta cibus ;  
venenum in auro bibitur. expertus loquor :  
malam bonae praeferre fortunam licet.  
non vertice alti montis impositam domum  
et eminentem civitas humilis tremit  
nec fulget altis splendidum tectis ebur  
somnosque non defendit excubitor meos ;  
non classibus piscamur et retro mare  
iacta fugamus mole nec ventrem improbum 460  
alimus tributo gentium, nullus mihi

## THYESTES

TANTALUS

The height of power is—

THYESTES

Naught, if nothing thou desirest.

TANTALUS

To thy sons wilt thou bequeath it.

THYESTES

The throne admits not two.

TANTALUS

Would he wish wretchedness who can be blest?

THYESTES

False, believe me, are the titles that give greatness charm; idle our fears of hardship. While I stood high in power, never did I cease to dread, yea, to fear the very sword upon my thigh. Oh, how good it is to stand in no man's road, care-free to eat one's bread, on the ground reclining! Crime enters not lowly homes, and in safety is food taken at a slender board; poison is drunk from cups of gold. I speak that I do know: evil fortune is to be preferred to good.<sup>1</sup> The lowly citizen fears no house of mine set high and threatening on a mountain top; my towering roofs flash not with gleaming ivory, no guard watches o'er my slumbers; with no fleet of boats I fish, with no piled break-water do I drive back the sea; I gorge not my vile belly at the world's expense; for me no fields are harvested beyond the Getae and

<sup>1</sup> Having tried both, he comes to this conclusion.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ultra Getas metatur et Parthos ager ;  
 non ture colimur nec meae excluso Iove  
 ornantur arae ; nulla culminibus meis  
 imposita nutat silva nec fumant manu  
 succensa multa stagna nec somno dies  
 Bacchoque nox iungenda pervigili datur :  
 sed non timemur, tuta sine telo est domus  
 rebusque parvis magna praestatur quies.  
 immane regnum est posse sine regno pati. 470

TANTALVS

Nec abnuendum, si dat imperium deus,  
 nec appetendum est ; frater ut regnes rogat.

THYESTES

Rogat ? timendum est. errat hic aliquis dolus.

TANTALVS

Redire pietas unde submota est solet  
 reparatque vires iustus amissas amor.

THYESTES

Amat Thyesten frater ? aetherias prius  
 perfundet Arcetos pontus et Siculi rapax  
 consistet aestus unda et Ionio seges  
 matura pelago surget et lucem dabit  
 nox atra terris, ante cum flammis aquae,  
 cum morte vita, cum mari ventus fidem  
 foedusque iungent. 480

TANTALVS

Quam tamen fraudem times ?

THYESTES

Omnem ; timori quem meo statuam modum ?  
 tantum potest quantum odit.

## THYESTES

the Parthians; no incense burns for me, nor are my shrines adorned in neglect of Jove; no planted grove waves on my battlements, nor does many a pool heated by art steam for me; my days are not given to sleep nor are my nights linked with wakeful revelry: but I am not feared, safe without weapons is my house and to my small estate great peace is granted. 'Tis a boundless kingdom,—the power without kingdoms to be content.

TANTALUS

Neither is empire to be refused if a god bestows it, nor needst thou seek it; thy brother invites thee to be king.

THYESTES

Invites? Then must I fear. Some trick strays hereabouts.

TANTALUS

Brotherly regard ofttimes returns unto the heart whence it was driven, and true love regains the vigour it has lost.

THYESTES

His brother love Thyestes? Sooner shall ocean bathe the heavenly Bears, and the devouring waves of the Sicilian tides stand still; sooner shall ripening grain spring from the Ionian sea, and dark night illumine the world; sooner shall fire with water, life with death commingle, and winds join faith and treaty with the sea.

TANTALUS

And yet what treachery dost thou fear?

THYESTES

All treachery; to my fear what limit shall I set? His power is boundless as his hate.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

TANTALVS

In te quid potest?

THYESTES

Pro me nihil iam metuo ; vos facitis mihi  
Atrea timendum.

TANTALVS

Decipi cautus times?

THYESTES

Serum est cavendi tempus in mediis malis ;  
eatur. unum genitor hoc testor tamen :  
ego vos sequor, non duco.

TANTALVS

Respiciet deus  
bene cogitata. perge non dubio gradu.

490

ATREVS

Plagis tenetur clausa dispositis fera ;  
et ipsum et una generis invisi indolem  
iunctam parenti cerno. iam tuto in loco  
versantur odia. venit in nostras manus  
tandem Thyestes, venit, et totus quidem !  
vix tempero animo, vix dolor frenos capit.  
sic, cum feras vestigat et longo sagax  
loro tenetur Vmber ac presso vias  
scrutatur ore, dum procul lento suem  
odore sentit, paret et tacito locum

500



## THYESTES

TANTALUS

What power has he against thee ?

THYESTES

For myself I have now no fear ; 'tis you, my sons,  
who make Atreus cause of dread to me.

TANTALUS

Dost fear to be entrapped if on thy guard ?

THYESTES

'Tis too late to guard when in the midst of  
dangers ; but let us on. Yet in this one thing I  
prove my fatherhood : I follow you, not lead.

TANTALUS

God will protect us if we heed well our ways.  
With assured step haste thou on.

[*Enter* ATREUS. *Seeing* THYESTES *and his sons, he gloats  
over the fact that his brother is at last in his power.*]

ATREUS [*aside*]

The prey is fast caught in the toils I spread ; both  
the sire himself and, together with the sire, the  
offspring of his hated race I see. Now on safe  
footing does my hatred fare. At last has Thyestes  
come into my power ; he has come, and the whole<sup>1</sup>  
of him ! Scarce can I control my spirit, scarce does  
my rage admit restraint. So when the keen Umbrian  
hound tracks out the prey and, held on a long leash,  
with lowered muzzle snuffs out the trail, while with  
faint scent he perceives the boar afar, obediently and

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* sons and all.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

rostro pererrat ; praeda cum propior fuit,  
 cervice tota pugnât et gemitu vocat  
 dominum morantem seque retinenti eripit.  
 cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi ;  
 tamen tegatur. aspice, ut multo gravis  
 squalore vultus obruat maestos coma.  
 quam foeda iaceat barba. praestetur fides—  
 fratrem iuvat videre. complexus mihi  
 redde expetitos. quidquid irarum fuit  
 transierit ; ex hoc sanguis ac pietas die  
 colantur, animis odia damnata excidant.

510

THYESTES

Diluere possem cuncta, nisi talis fores.  
 sed fateor, Atreu, fateor, admisi omnia  
 quae credidisti. pessimam causam meam  
 hodierna pietas fecit. est prorsus nocens  
 quicumque visus tam bono fratri est nocens.  
 lacrimis agendum est ; supplicem primus vides ;  
 hae te precantur pedibus intactae manus ;  
 ponatur omnis ira et ex animo tumor  
 erasus abeat. obsides fidei accipe  
 hos innocentes, frater.

520

ATREVS

A genibus manum  
 aufer meosque potius amplexus pete.  
 vos quoque, senum praesidia, tot iuvenes, meo  
 pendete collo. squalidam vestem exue  
 oculisque nostris parce et ornatus cape  
 pares meis laetusque fraterni imperi

## THYESTES

with silent tongue he scours the field; but when the game is nearer, with his whole strength of neck he struggles, loudly protests against his master's loitering, and breaks away from his restraint. When rage scents blood, it cannot be concealed; yet let it be concealed. See how his thick hair, all unkempt, covers his woeful face, how foul his beard hangs down. [*In bitter irony.*] Now let me keep my promise.<sup>1</sup> [*To THYESTES.*] 'Tis sweet to see my brother once again. Give me the embrace that I have longed for. Let all our angry feelings pass away; from this day let ties of blood and love be cherished and let accursed hatred vanish from our hearts.

## THYESTES

I might excuse all my deeds wert thou not such as this. But I confess, Atreus, I confess that I have done all that thou believedst of me. Most foul has thy love to-day made my case appear. Sinful indeed is he who has been proved sinful toward so good a brother. My tears must plead for me; thou art the first to see me suppliant. These hands, which have never touched man's feet, beseech thee: put away all thy wrath and let swollen anger pass from thy heart and be forgot. As pledge of my faith, O brother, take these guiltless boys.

## ATREUS

From my knees remove thy hand and come rather into my embrace. And you, too, boys, all of you, comforters of age, come cling about my neck. Thy foul garments put off, spare my eyes, and put on royal trappings equal to my own, and with glad

<sup>1</sup> Which he had made through his sons. See i. 296.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

capesse partem. maior haec laus est mea,  
fratri paternum reddere incolumi decus ;  
habere regnum casus est, virtus dare.

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.

ATREVS

Recipit hoc regnum duos.

THYESTES

Meum esse credo quidquid est, frater, tuum.

ATREVS

Quis influentis dona fortunae abnuit ?

THYESTES

Expertus est quicumque quam facile effluent.

ATREVS

Fratrem potiri gloria ingenti vetas ?

THYESTES

Tua iam peracta gloria est, restat mea ; 540  
respuere certum est regna consilium mihi.

ATREVS

Meam relinquam, nisi tuam partem accipis.

## THYESTES

heart share a brother's kingdom. Mine is the greater glory, to restore to a brother all unharmed ancestral dignity; wielding of power is the work of chance, bestowing of it, virtue's.

THYESTES

May the gods, my brother, fitly repay thee for so great deserts. The kingly crown my wretched state refuses, and the sceptre my ill-omened hand rejects. Let it be mine to hide amidst the throng.

ATREUS

Our throne has room for two.

THYESTES

I count, my brother, all of thine as mine.<sup>1</sup>

ATREUS

Who puts aside inflowing fortune's gifts?

THYESTES

Whoso has found how easily they ebb.

ATREUS

Dost forbid thy brother to gain great glory?

THYESTES

Thy glory is won already; mine is still to win: to refuse the throne is my fixed intent.

ATREUS

My glory must I abandon, unless thou accept thy share.

<sup>1</sup> But I will not take possession of it.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## THYESTES

Accipio; regni nomen impositi feram,  
sed iura et arma servient mecum tibi.

## ATREVS

Imposita capiti vincla venerando gere;  
ego destinatas victimas superis dabo.

## CHORVS

Credat hoc quisquam? ferus ille et acer  
nec potens mentis truculentus Atreus  
fratris aspectu stupefactus haesit.  
nulla vis maior pietate vera est;  
iurgia externis inimica durant, 550  
quos amor verus tenuit tenebit.  
ira cum magnis agitata causis  
gratiam rupit cecinitque bellum,  
cum leves frenis sonuere turmae,  
fulsit hinc illinc agitatus ensis  
quem movet crebro furibundus ictu  
sanguinem Mavors cupiens recentem—  
opprimet ferrum manibusque iunctis  
ducet ad Pacem Pietas negantes.

Otium tanto subitum e tumultu 560  
quis deus fecit? modo per Mycenas  
arma civilis crepuere belli;  
pallidae natos tenuere matres,  
uxor armato timuit marito,  
cum manum invitus sequeretur ensis,  
sordidus pacis vitio quietae;  
ille labentes renovare muros,  
hic situ quassas stabilire turres,  
ferreis portas cohibere claustris  
ille certabat, pavidusque pinnis 570  
anxiae noctis vigil incubabat—

## THYESTES

### THYESTES

I do accept; the name of king set on me will I wear; but unto thee shall laws and arms along with myself be subject.

ATREUS [*placing the crown upon his brother's head*]

This crown, set on thy reverend head, wear thou; but I the destined victims to the gods will pay. [*Exit.*]

### CHORUS

Such things are past belief. Atreus, there, the fierce and savage, reckless of soul and cruel, at sight of his brother stood as one amazed. There is no power stronger than true love; angry strife 'twixt strangers doth endure, but whom true love has bound 'twill bind for ever. When wrath, by great causes roused, has burst friendship's bonds and sounded alarms of war; when fleet squadrons with ringing bridles come; when the brandished sword gleams now here, now there, which the mad god of war, thirsting for fresh-flowing blood, wields with a rain of blows,—then will Love stay the steel, and lead men, even against their will, to the clasped hands of Peace.

<sup>560</sup> This sudden lull out of so great uproar what god has wrought? But now throughout Mycenae the arms of civil strife resounded; pale mothers held fast their sons, the wife feared for her lord full armed, when to his hand came the reluctant sword, foul with the rust of peace; one strove to repair tottering walls, one to strengthen towers, crumbling with long neglect; another strove to shut gates tight with iron bars, while on the battlements the trembling guard kept watch o'er the troubled night—for worse

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

peior est bello timor ipse belli.  
 iam minae saevi cecidere ferri,  
 iam silet murmur grave classicorum,  
 iam tacet stridor litui strepentis ;  
 alta pax urbi revocata laetae est.  
 sic, ubi ex alto tumuere fluctus  
 Bruttium Coro feriente pontum,  
 Scylla pulsatis resonat cavernis  
 ac mare in portu timuere nautae 580  
 quod rapax haustum revomit Charybdis,  
 et ferus Cyclops metuit parentem  
 rupe ferventis residens in Aetnae,  
 ne superfusus violetur undis  
 ignis aeternis resonans caminis,  
 et putat mergi sua posse pauper  
 regna Laertes Ithaca tremente—  
 si suae ventis cecidere vires,  
 mitius stagno pelagus recumbit ;  
 alta, quae navis timuit secare, 590  
 hinc et hinc fuis speciosa velis  
 strata ludenti patuere cumbae,  
 et vacat mersos numerare pisces  
 hic ubi ingenti modo sub procella  
 Cyclades pontum timuere motae.

Nulla sors longa est ; dolor ac voluptas  
 invicem cedunt ; brevior voluptas.  
 ima permutat levis hora summis.  
 ille qui donat diadema fronti,  
 quem genu nixae tremuere gentes, 600  
 cuius ad nutum posuere bella  
 Medus et Phoebi propioris Indus  
 et Dahae Parthis equitem minati,  
 anxius sceptrum tenet et moventes  
 cuncta divinat metuitque casus  
 mobiles rerum dubiumque tempus.



## THYESTES

than war is the very fear of war. Now the sword's dire threats have fallen; now still is the deep trumpet-blare; now silent the shrill clarion's blast; deep peace to a glad city is restored. So, when the floods heave up from ocean's depths and Corus<sup>1</sup> lashes the Bruttian waters; when Scylla roars in her disturbed cavern, and mariners in harbour tremble at the sea which greedy Charybdis drains and vomits forth again; when the wild Cyclops, sitting on burning Aetna's crag, dreads his sire's<sup>2</sup> rage, lest the o'erwhelming waves put out the fires that roar in immemorial furnaces; and when beggared Laërtes thinks, while Ithaca reels beneath the shock, that his kingdom may be submerged—then, if their strength has failed the winds, the sea sinks back more peaceful than a pool; and the deep waters which the ship feared to cleave, now far and wide, studded with bellying sails, a beauteous sight, to pleasure-boats spread out their waves; and you may now count the fish swimming far below, where but lately beneath the mighty hurricane the tossed Cyclads trembled at the sea.

<sup>596</sup> No lot endureth long; pain and pleasure, each in turn, give place; more quickly, pleasure. Lowest with highest the fickle hour exchanges. He who wears crown on brow, before whom trembling nations bend the knee, at whose nod the Medes lay down their arms, and the Indians of the nearer sun,<sup>3</sup> and the Dahae who hurl their horse upon the Parthians,—he with anxious hand holds the sceptre, and both foresees and fears fickle chance and shifting time that change all things.

<sup>1</sup> The North-west wind.

<sup>2</sup> Neptune.

<sup>3</sup> The sun was supposed to be nearer to the oriental nations.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Vos quibus rector maris atque terrae  
 ius dedit magnum necis atque vitae,  
 ponite inflatos tumidosque vultus ;  
 quidquid a vobis minor expavescit. 610  
 maior hoc vobis dominus minatur ;  
 omne sub regno graviore regnum est.  
 quem dies vidit veniens superbum,  
 hunc dies vidit fugiens iacentem.  
 nemo confidat nimium secundis,  
 nemo desperet meliora lapsis :  
 miscet haec illis prohibetque Clotho  
 stare fortunam, rotat omne fatum.  
 nemo tam divos habuit faventes,  
 crastinum ut posset sibi polliceri : 620  
 res deus nostras celeri citatas  
 turbine versat.

### NVNTIVS

Quis me per auras turbo praecipitem vehet  
 atraque nube involvet, ut tantum nefas  
 eripiat oculis? o domus Pelopi quoque  
 et Tantalos pudenda !

### CHORVS

Quid portas novi ?

### NVNTIVS

Quaenam ista regio est? Argos et Sparte, pios  
 sortita fratres, et maris gemini premens  
 fauces Corinthos, an feris Hister fugam  
 praebens Alanis, an sub aeterna nive 630  
 Hyrcana tellus an vagi passim Scythae?  
 quis hic nefandi est conscius monstri locus?

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Castor and Pollux. See *Phoenissae*, 128.

## THYESTES

<sup>607</sup> O you, to whom the ruler of sea and land has given unbounded right o'er life and death, abate your inflated, swelling pride; all that a lesser subject fears from you, 'gainst you a greater lord shall threaten; all power is subject to a weightier power. Whom the rising sun hath seen high in pride, him the setting sun hath seen laid low. Let none be over-confident when fortune smiles; let none despair of better things when fortune fails. Clotho blends weal and woe, lets no lot stand, keeps every fate a-turning. No one has found the gods so kind that he may promise to-morrow to himself. God keeps all mortal things in swift whirl turning.

[*Enter MESSENGER breathlessly announcing the horror which has just been enacted behind the scenes.*]

### MESSENGER

What whirlwind will headlong bear me through the air and in murky cloud enfold me, that it may snatch this awful horror from my sight? O house, to Pelops even and to Tantalus a thing of shame!

### CHORUS

What news bringst thou?

### MESSENGER

What place is this? Is it Argos? Is it Sparta, to which fate gave loving brothers?<sup>1</sup> Corinth, resting on the narrow boundary of two seas? Or the Ister, giving chance of flight to the barbarous Alani? Or the Hyrcanian land 'neath its everlasting snows? Or the wide-wandering Scythians? What place is this that knows such hideous crime?

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## CHORVS

Effare et istud pande, quodcumque est, malum.

## NVNTIVS

Si steterit animus, si metu corpus rigens  
remittet artus. haeret in vultu trucidis  
imago facti! ferte me insanae procul,  
illo, procellae, ferte quo fertur dies  
hinc raptus.

## CHORVS

Animos gravius incertos tenes.  
quid sit quod horres ede et auctorem indica.  
non quaero quis sit, sed uter. effare ocius.

640

## NVNTIVS

In arce summa Pelopiae pars est domus  
conversa ad austros, cuius extremum latus  
aequale monti crescit atque urbem premit  
et contumacem regibus populum suis  
habet sub ictu; fulget hic turbae capax  
immane tectum, cuius auratas trabes  
variis columnae nobiles maculis ferunt.  
post ista vulgo nota, quae populi colunt,  
in multa dives spatia discedit domus;  
arcana in imo regio secessu iacet,  
alta vetustum valle compescens nemus,  
penetrabile regni, nulla qua laetos solet  
praebere ramos arbor aut ferro coli,  
sed taxus et cupressus et nigra ilice  
obscura nutat silva, quam supra eminens  
despectat alte quercus et vincit nemus.

650

## THYESTES

### CHORUS

Speak out and tell this evil, whate'er it is.

### MESSENGER

When my spirit is composed, when numbing fear lets go its hold upon my limbs. Oh, but I see it still, the picture of that ghastly deed! Bear me far hence, wild winds, oh, thither bear me whither<sup>1</sup> the vanished day is borne.

### CHORUS

More grievously dost thou hold our minds in doubt. Tell thou what is this thing which makes thee shudder, and point out the doer of it. I ask not who it is, but which.<sup>2</sup> Speak out and quickly.

### MESSENGER

On the summit of the citadel a part of Pelops' palace faces south; its farthest side rises to mountainous height, and o'erlooks the city, having beneath its menace the people, insolent to their kings. Here gleams the great hall that could contain a multitude, whose gilded architraves columns glorious with varied hues upbear. Behind this general hall, which nations throng, the gorgeous palace stretches out o'er many a space; and, deep withdrawn, there lies a secret spot containing in a deep vale an ancient grove, the kingdom's innermost retreat. Here no tree ever affords cheerful shade or is pruned by any knife; but the yew-tree and the cypress and woods of gloomy ilex-trees wave obscure, above which, towering high, an oak looks down and overtops the grove. From

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* to the other side of the world.

<sup>2</sup> It must be one of the two brothers.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

hinc auspicari regna Tantalidae solent,  
 hinc petere lapsis rebus ac dubiis opem.  
 affixa inhaerent dona ; vocales tubae  
 fractique currus, spolia Myrtoi maris, 660  
 victaeque falsis axibus pendent rotae  
 et omne gentis facinus ; hoc Phrygius loco  
 fixus tiaras Pelopis, hic praeda hostium  
 et de triumpho picta barbarico chlamys.

Fons stat sub umbra tristis et nigra piger  
 haeret palude ; talis est dirae Stygis  
 deformis unda quae facit caelo fidem.  
 hinc nocte caeca gemere ferales deos  
 fama est, catenis lucus excussis sonat  
 ululantque manes. quidquid audire est metus 670  
 illic videtur ; errat antiquis vetus  
 emissa bustis turba et insultant loco  
 maiora notis monstra ; quin tota solet  
 micare silva flamma, et excelsae trabes  
 ardent sine igne. saepe latratu nemus  
 trino remugit, saepe simulacris domus  
 attonita magnis. nec dies sedat metum ;  
 nox propria luco est et superstitio inferum  
 in luce media regnat. hinc orantibus  
 responsa dantur certa, cum ingenti sono 680  
 laxantur adyto fata et inmugit specus  
 vocem deo solvente.

Quo postquam furens  
 intravit Atreus liberos fratris trahens,  
 ornantur arae—quis queat digne eloqui ?  
 post terga iuvenum nobiles religat manus

## THYESTES

this spot the sons of Tantalus are wont to enter on their reign, here to seek aid midst calamity and doubt. Here hang their votive gifts; resounding trumpets and broken chariots, spoils of the Myrtoan Sea,<sup>1</sup> and wheels o'ercome by treacherous axle-trees hang there, and memorials of the race's every crime; in this place is Pelops' Phrygian turban hung, here spoil of the enemy, and the embroidered robe, token of triumph o'er barbaric foes.

<sup>665</sup> A dismal spring starts forth beneath the shadow, and sluggish in a black pool creeps along; such are the ugly waters of dread Styx, on which the gods take oath. 'Tis said that from this place in the dark night the gods of death make moan; with clanking chains the grove resounds, and the ghosts howl mournfully. Whatever is dreadful but to hear of, there is seen; throngs of the long-since dead come forth from their ancient tombs and walk abroad, and creatures more monstrous than men have known spring from the place; nay more, through all the wood flames go flickering, and the lofty beams glow without help of fire. Oft-times the grove re-echoes with three-throated bayings; oft-times the house is affrighted with huge, ghostly shapes. Nor is terror allayed by day; the grove is a night unto itself, and the horror of the underworld reigns even at midday. From this spot sure responses are given to those who seek oracles; with thundering noise the fates are uttered from the shrine, and the cavern roars when the god sends forth his voice.

<sup>682</sup> When to this place maddened Atreus came, dragging his brother's sons, the altars were decked—but who could worthily describe the deed? Behind their backs he fetters the youths' princely

<sup>1</sup> See Index *s.v.* "Myrtilus."

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

et maesta vitta capita purpurea ligat ;  
 non tura desunt, non sacer Bacchi liquor  
 tangensque salsa victimam culter mola.  
 servatur omnis ordo, ne tantum nefas  
 non rite fiat.

CHORVS

Quis manum ferro admovet ? 690

EVNTIVS

Ipse est sacerdos, ipse funesta prece  
 letale carmen ore violento canit,  
 stat ipse ad aras, ipse devotos neci  
 contrectat et componit et ferro admovet<sup>1</sup> ;  
 attendit ipse—nulla pars sacri perit.  
 lucus tremescit, tota succusso solo  
 nutavit aula, dubia quo pondus daret  
 ac fluctuanti similis ; e laevo aethere  
 atrum cucurrit limitem sidus trahens.  
 libata in ignes vina mutato fluunt 700  
 cruenta Baccho, regium capiti decus  
 bis terque lapsum est, flevit in templis ebur.

Movere cunctos monstra, sed solus sibi  
 immotus Atreus constat atque ultro deos  
 terret minantes. iamque dimissa mora  
 adsistit aris, torvum et obliquum intuens.  
 ieiuna silvis qualis in Gangeticis  
 inter iuencos tigris erravit duos,  
 utriusque praedae cupida quo primum ferat  
 incerta morsus (flectit huc rictus suos, 710  
 illo reflectit et famem dubiam tenet),  
 sic durus Atreus capita devota impiae  
 speculatur irae. quem prius mactet sibi

<sup>1</sup> *The full form of this technical phrase is seen in line 690.*



## THYESTES

hands and their sad brows he binds with purple fillets. Nothing is lacking, neither incense, nor sacrificial wine, the knife, the salted meal to sprinkle on the victims. The accustomed ritual is all observed, lest so great a crime be not duly wrought.

### CHORUS

Who lays his hand unto the knife ?

### MESSENGER

Himself is priest ; himself with baleful prayer chants the death-song with boisterous utterance ; himself stands by the altar ; himself handles those doomed to death, sets them in order and lays hand upon the knife ; himself attends to all—no part of the sacred rite is left undone. The grove begins to tremble ; the whole palace sways with the quaking earth, uncertain whither to fling its ponderous mass, and seems to waver. From the left quarter of the sky rushes a star, dragging a murky trail. The wine, poured upon the fire, changes from wine and flows as blood ; from the king's head falls the crown twice and again, and the ivory statues in the temples weep.

<sup>703</sup> These portents moved all, but Atreus alone, true to his purpose, stands, and e'en appals the threatening gods. And now, delay at end, he stands before the altar with lowering, sidelong glance. As in the jungle by the Ganges river a hungry tigress wavers between two bulls, eager for each prey, but doubtful where first to set her fangs (to the one she turns her jaws, then to the other turns, and keeps her hunger waiting), so does cruel Atreus eye the victims doomed by his impious wrath. He hesitates

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dubitat, secunda deinde quem caede immolet.  
nec interest, sed dubitat et saevum scelus  
iuvat ordinare.

CHORVS

Quem tamen ferro occupat?

NVNTIVS

Primus locus (ne desse pietatem putes)  
avo dicatur : Tantalus prima hostia est.

CHORVS

Quo iuvenis animo, quo tulit vultu necem?

NVNTIVS

Stetit sui securus et non est preces 720  
perire frustra passus ; ast illi ferus  
in vulnere ensem abscondit et penitus premens  
iugulo manum commisit : educto stetit  
ferro cadaver, cumque dubitasset diu,  
hac parte an illa caderet, in patrum cadit.  
tunc ille ad aras Plisthenem saevus trahit  
adicitque fratri ; colla percussa amputat ;  
cervice caesa truncus in pronum ruit,  
querulum cucurrit murmure incerto caput.

CHORVS

Quid deinde gemina caede perfunctus facit ? 730  
puerone parcit an scelus sceleri ingerit ?

## THYESTES

within himself whom first to slay, whom next to sacrifice by the second stroke. It matters not, but still he hesitates, and gloats over the ordering of his savage crime.

### CHORUS

Whom, for all that, does he first attack with the steel?

### MESSENGER

The place of honour (lest you deem him lacking in reverence) to his grandsire<sup>1</sup> is allotted—Tantalus is the first victim.

### CHORUS

With what spirit, with what countenance bore the lad his death?

### MESSENGER

Careless of self he stood, nor did he plead, knowing such prayer were vain; but in his wound the savage buried the sword and, deep thrusting, joined hand with throat. The sword withdrawn, the corpse still stood erect, and when it had wavered long whether here or there to fall, it fell upon the uncle. Then Plisthenes to the altar did that butcher drag and set him near his brother. His head with a blow he severed; down fell the body when the neck was smitten, and the head rolled away, grieving with murmur inarticulate.

### CHORUS

What did he then after the double murder? Did he spare one boy, or did he heap crime on crime?

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the boy, Tantalus, is named after his grandfather. This "place of honour" is a ghastly jest.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVNTIVS

Silva iubatus qualis Armenia leo  
in caede multa victor armento incubat  
(cruore rictus madidus et pulsa fame  
non ponit iras ; hinc et hinc tauros premens  
vitulis minatur dente iam lasso piger)—  
non aliter Atreus saevit atque ira tumet,  
ferrumque gemina caede perfusum tenens,  
oblitus in quem fureret, infesta manu  
exegit ultra corpus ; ac pueri statim  
pectore receptus ensis in tergo exstitit.  
cedit ille et aras sanguine extinguens suo  
per utrumque vulnus moritur.

740

CHORVS

O saevum scelus !

NVNTIVS

Exhorruistis ? hactenus si stat nefas,  
pius est.

CHORVS

An ultra maius aut atrocius  
natura recipit ?

NVNTIVS

Sceleris hunc finem putas ?  
gradus est.

CHORVS

Quid ultra potuit ? obiecit feris  
lanianda fors corpora atque igne arcuit ?

NVNTIVS

Vtinam arcuisset ! ne tegat functos humus  
nec solvat ignis ! avibus epulandos licet

750

## THYESTES

MESSENGER

E'en as a maned lion in the Armenian woods with much slaughter falls victorious on the herd (his jaws reek with gore, and still, though hunger is appeased, he rages on; now here, now there charging the bulls, he threatens the calves, sluggishly now and with weary fangs)—not otherwise Atreus raves and swells with wrath and, still grasping his sword drenched with double slaughter, scarce knowing 'gainst whom he rages, with deadly hand he drives clean through the body; and the sword, entering the boy's breast, straightway stood out upon his back. He falls and, staining the altar with his blood, dies by a double wound.

CHORUS

Oh, savage crime!

MESSENGER

Are you so horror-stricken? If only the crime stops there, 'tis piety.

CHORUS

Does nature admit crime still greater or more dread?

MESSENGER

Crime's limit deemst thou this? 'Tis the first step of crime.

CHORUS

What further could he do? Did he perchance throw the bodies to the beasts to tear, and refuse them fire?

MESSENGER

Would that he had refused! I pray not that earth cover or fire consume the dead! He may give them to the birds to feast upon, may drag them out as a

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ferisque triste pabulum saevis trahat—  
 votum est sub hoc quod esse supplicium solet—  
 pater insepultos spectet! o nullo scelus  
 credibile in aevo quodque posteritas neget—  
 erepta vivis exta pectoribus tremunt  
 spirantque venae corque adhuc pavidum salit.  
 at ille fibras tractat ac fata inspicit  
 et adhuc calentes viscerum venas notat.

Postquam hostiae placuere, securus vacat  
 iam fratris epulis. ipse divisum secat 760  
 in membra corpus, amputat trunco tenus  
 umeros patentes et lacertorum moras,  
 denudat artus durus atque ossa amputat;  
 tantum ora servat et datas fidei manus.  
 haec veribus haerent viscera et lentis data  
 stillant caminis, illa flammatus latex  
 candente aeno iactat. impositas dapes  
 transiluit ignis inque trepidantes focos  
 bis ter regestus et pati iussus moram  
 invitus ardet. stridet in veribus iecur; 770  
 nec facile dicam corpora an flammae magis  
 gemuere. piceos ignis in fumos abit;  
 et ipse fumus, tristis ac nebula gravis,  
 non rectus exit seque in excelsum levat—  
 ipsos penates nube deformi obsidet.

O Phoebe patiens, fugeris retro licet  
 medioque ruptum merseris caelo diem,  
 sero occidisti. lancinat natos pater  
 artusque mandit ore funesto suos;  
 nitet fluente madidus unguento comam 780  
 gravisque vino; saepe praeclusae cibum  
 tenere fauces. in malis unum hoc tuis  
 154

## THYESTES

ghastly meal for ravenous beasts—oh, after what befell, one might pray for what is oft held punishment—unburied may the father gaze upon his sons! O crime incredible to any age, which coming generations will deny—torn from the still living breasts the vitals quiver; the lungs still breathe and the fluttering heart still beats. But he handles the organs and enquires the fates, and notes the markings of the still warm entrails.

<sup>759</sup> When with the victims he has satisfied himself, he is now free to prepare his brother's banquet. With his own hands he cuts the body into parts, severs the broad shoulders at the trunk, and the retarding arms, heartlessly strips off the flesh and severs the bones; the heads only he saves, and the hands that had been given to him in pledge of faith. Some of the flesh is fixed on spits and, set before slow fires, hangs dripping; other parts boiling water tosses in heated kettles. The fire overleaps the feast that is set before it and, twice and again thrown back upon the shuddering hearth and forced to tarry there, burns grudgingly. The liver sputters on the spits; nor could I well say whether the bodies or the flames made more complaint. The fire dies down in pitchy smoke; and the smoke itself, a gloomy and heavy smudge, does not rise straight up and lift itself in air—upon the household gods themselves in disfiguring cloud it settles.

<sup>776</sup> O all-enduring Phoebus, though thou didst shrink afar, and in mid-sky didst bury the darkened day, still thou didst set too late. The father rends his sons and with baleful jaws chews his own flesh; with hair dripping with liquid nard he sits resplendent, heavy with wine; oft-times the food sticks in his choking gullet. In the midst of these thy woes,

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

bonum est, Thyesta, quod mala ignoras tua.  
 sed et hoc peribit. verterit currus licet  
 sibi ipse Titan obvium ducens iter  
 tenebrisque facinus obruat tetrum novis  
 nox missa ab ortu tempore alieno gravis,  
 tamen videndum est. tota patefient mala.

CHORVS

Quo terrarum superumque parens,  
 cuius ad ortus noctis opacae 790  
 decus omne fugit, quo vertis iter  
 medioque diem perdis Olympo?  
 cur, Phoebe, tuos rapis aspectus?  
 nondum serae nuntius horae  
 nocturna vocat lumina Vesper;  
 nondum Hesperiae flexura rotae  
 iubet emeritos solvere currus;  
 nondum in noctem vergente die  
 tertia misit bucina signum;  
 stupet ad subitae tempora cenae 800  
 nondum fessis bubus arator.  
 quid te aethereo pepulit cursu?  
 quae causa tuos limite certo  
 deiecit equos? numquid aperto  
 carcere Ditis victi temptant  
 bella Gigantes? numquid Tityos  
 pectore fesso renovat veteres  
 saucius iras? num reiecto  
 latus explicuit monte Typhoeus?  
 numquid struitur via Phlegraeos 810  
 alta per hostes et Thessalicum  
 Thessa premitur Pelion Ossa?

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the day's.      <sup>2</sup> *i.e.* in mid-heaven, at noon.



## THYESTES

Thyestes, this only good remains, that thou knowest not thy woes. But even this will perish. Though Titan himself should turn his chariot back, taking the opposite course; though heavy night, rising at dawn and at another's<sup>1</sup> time, with strange shadows should bury this ghastly deed, still it must out. There is no sin but it shall be revealed.

[*Unnatural darkness has settled over the world.*]

### CHORUS

Whither, O father of the lands and skies, before whose rising thick night with all her glories flees, whither dost turn thy course and why dost blot out the day in mid-Olympus?<sup>2</sup> Why, O Phoebus, dost snatch away thy face? Not yet does Vesper, twilight's messenger, summon the fires of night; not yet does thy wheel, turning its western goal, bid free thy steeds from their completed task; not yet as day fades into night has the third trump sounded;<sup>3</sup> the ploughman with oxen yet unwearied stands amazed at his supper-hour's quick coming. What has driven thee from thy heavenly course? What cause from their fixed track has turned aside thy horses? Is the prison-house of Dis thrown wide and are the conquered Giants again essaying war? Doth sore-wounded Tityos renew in his weary breast his ancient wrath? Has Typhoeus thrown off the mountainous mass and set his body free? Is a highway being built by the Phlegraean<sup>4</sup> foe, and does Thessalian Pelion press on Thracian Ossa?

<sup>3</sup> The Greek day was divided into three parts of four hours each. The third trump sounding would indicate the beginning of day's last third.

<sup>4</sup> *i. e.* the Giants, so called from Phlegra, a valley in Thrace, where started their battle against the gods.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Solitae mundi periere vices ;  
 nihil occasus, nihil ortus erit.  
 stupet Eoos, assueta deo  
 tradere frenos genetrix primae  
 roscida lucis, perversa sui  
 limina regni ; nescit fessos  
 tinguere currus nec fumantes  
 sudore iubas mergere ponto. 820  
 ipse insueto novus hospitio  
 Sol Auroram videt occiduus,  
 tenebrasque iubet surgere nondum  
 nocte parata. non succedunt  
 astra nec ullo micat igne polus,  
 non Luna graves digerit umbras.  
 Sed quidquid id est, utinam nox sit !  
 trepidant, trepidant pectora magno  
 percussa metu :  
 ne fatali cuncta ruina 830  
 quassata labent iterumque deos  
 hominesque premat deforme chaos,  
 iterum terras et mare cingens  
 et vaga picti sidera mundi  
 natura tegat. non aeternae  
 facis exortu dux astrorum  
 saecula ducens dabit aetatis  
 brumaeque notas, non Phoebis  
 obvia flammis demet nocti  
 Luna timores vincetque sui 840  
 fratris habenas, curvo brevius  
 limite currens. ibit in unum  
 congesta sinum turba deorum.  
 hic qui sacris pervius astris  
 secat obliquo tramite zonas  
 flectens longos signifer annos,  
 lapsa videbit sidera labens ;

## THYESTES

<sup>813</sup> Heaven's accustomed alternations are no more; no setting, no rising shall there be again. The dewy mother <sup>1</sup> of the early dawn, wont to hand o'er to the god his morning reins, looks in amaze upon the disordered threshold of her kingdom; she is not skilled <sup>2</sup> to bathe his weary chariot, nor to plunge his steeds, reeking with sweat, beneath the sea. Startled himself at such unwonted welcoming, the sinking sun beholds Aurora, and bids the shadows arise, though night is not yet ready. No stars come out; the heavens gleam not with any fires: no moon dispels the darkness' heavy pall.

<sup>827</sup> But whatever this may be, would that night were here! Trembling, trembling are our hearts, sore smit with fear, lest all things fall shattered in fatal ruin and once more gods and men be o'erwhelmed by formless chaos; lest the lands, the encircling sea, and the stars that wander in the spangled sky, nature blot out once more. No more by the rising of his quenchless torch shall the leader of the stars, guiding the procession of the years, mark off the summer and the winter times; no more shall Luna, reflecting Phoebus' rays, dispel night's terrors, and outstrip her brother's reins, as in scantier space <sup>3</sup> she speeds on her circling path. Into one abyss shall fall the heaped-up throng of gods. The Zodiac, which, making passage through the sacred stars, crosses the zones obliquely, guide and sign-bearer for the slow-moving years, falling itself, shall see the fallen

<sup>1</sup> Aurora.

<sup>2</sup> As is Tethys of the western sea.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. her monthly orbit.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

hic qui nondum vere benigno  
 reddit Zephyro vela tepenti,  
 Ariens praeceps ibit in undas, 850  
 per quas pavidam vexerat Hellen ;  
 hic qui nitido Taurus cornu  
 praefert Hyadas, secum Geminos  
 trahet et curvi bracchia Cancri ;  
 Leo flammiferis aestibus ardens  
 iterum e caelo cadet Herculeus,  
 cadet in terras Virgo relictas  
 iustaeque cadent pondera Librae  
 secumque trahent Scorpion acrem ;  
 et qui nervo tenet Haemonio 860  
 pinnata senex spicula Chiron,  
 rupto perdet spicula nervo ;  
 pigram referens hiemem gelidus  
 cadet Aegoceros frangetque tuam,  
 quisquis es, urnam ; tecum excedent  
 ultima caeli sidera Pisces,  
 Plostraque numquam perfusa mari  
 merget condens omnia gurges ;  
 et qui medias dividit Vrsas, 870  
 fluminis instar lubricus Anguis,  
 magnoque minor iuncta Draconi  
 frigida duro Cynosura gelu,  
 custosque sui tardus plaustrum  
 iam non stabilis ruet Arctophylax.

<sup>1</sup> This lion and other monsters were said to have fallen from the moon.

<sup>2</sup> Astraea. See Index.

<sup>3</sup> Chiron is Sagittarius in the constellations of the Zodiac.

<sup>4</sup> Capricornus.

<sup>5</sup> A reference to the Zodiacal sign, Aquarius, the "Water-man," concerning whose identity ancient authorities have not agreed.

## THYESTES

constellations; the Ram, who, ere kindly spring has come, gives back the sails to the warm West-wind, headlong shall plunge into the waves o'er which he had borne the trembling Helle; the Bull, who before him on bright horns bears the Hyades, shall drag the Twins down with him and the Crab's wide-curving claws; Alcides' Lion, with burning heat inflamed, once more<sup>1</sup> shall fall down from the sky; the Virgin<sup>2</sup> shall fall to the earth she once abandoned, and the Scales of justice with their weights shall fall and with them shall drag the fierce Scorpion down; old Chiron,<sup>3</sup> who sets the feathered shafts upon Haemonian chord, shall lose his shafts from the snapped bowstring; the frigid Goat<sup>4</sup> who brings back sluggish winter, shall fall and break thy urn, whoe'er thou<sup>5</sup> art; with thee shall fall the Fish, last of the stars of heaven, and the Wain,<sup>6</sup> which was ne'er bathed by the sea, shall be plunged beneath the all-engulfing waves; the slippery Serpent which, gliding like a river, separates the Bears, shall fall, and icy Cynosura, the Lesser Bear, together with the Dragon vast, congealed with cold; and that slow-moving driver of his wain, Arctophylax,<sup>7</sup> no longer fixed in place, shall fall.

<sup>6</sup> Otherwise known as the "Bear." The constellation is unfortunately named here, since there was no mythological reason why the Wain should not be bathed in the Ocean, as was the case with the Bear.

<sup>7</sup> Seneca badly mixes his mythology here. Arctophylax, the "bear-keeper," is appropriate only if the Bear is mentioned in his connection; he should be Boötes if the companion constellation is thought of as the Wain.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Nos e tanto visi populo  
 digni premeret quos everso  
 cardine mundus?  
 in nos aetas ultima venit?  
 o nos dura sorte creatos,  
 seu perdidimus solem miseri, 880  
 sive expulimus!  
 abeant questus, discede, timor!  
 vitae est avidus quisquis non vult  
 mundo secum pereunte mori.

ATREVS

Aequalis astris gradior et cunctos super  
 altum superbo vertice attingens polum.  
 nunc decora regni teneo, nunc solium patris.  
 dimitto superos; summa votorum attigi.  
 bene est, abunde est, iam sat est etiam mihi.  
 sed cur satis sit? pergam et impleto patre<sup>1</sup> 890  
 funere suorum.<sup>2</sup> ne quid obstaret pudor,  
 dies recessit. perge dum caelum vacat.  
 utinam quidem tenere fugientes deos  
 possem et coactos trahere, ut ultricem dapem  
 omnes viderent! quod sat est, videat pater.  
 etiam die nolente discutiam tibi  
 tenebras, miseriae sub quibus latitant tuae.  
 nimis diu conviva securo iaces  
 hilarique vultu, iam satis mensis datum est  
 satisque Baccho; somnio tanta ad mala 900  
 opus est Thyeste.

Turba famularis, fores  
 templi relaxa, festa patefiat domus.

<sup>1</sup> So *L. Müller*, followed by *Richter*: MSS. implebo patrem

<sup>2</sup> *Leo* deletes lines 890<sup>b</sup>, 891<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Probably referring to the golden ram. See ll. 223 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* I need make no more prayers to them.

## THYESTES

<sup>875</sup> Have we of all mankind been deemed deserving that heaven, its poles upturn, should overwhelm us? In our time has the last day come? Alas for us, by bitter fate begotten, to misery doomed, whether we have lost the sun or banished it! Away with lamentations, begone, O fear! Greedy indeed for life is he who would not die when the world is perishing in his company.

[Enter ATREUS, exulting.]

### ATREUS

Peer of the stars I move, and, towering over all, touch with proud head the lofty heavens. Now the glory<sup>1</sup> of the realm I hold, now my father's throne. I release the gods,<sup>2</sup> for the utmost of my prayers have I attained. 'Tis well, 'tis more than well, now 'tis enough even for me. But why enough? Nay, I will go forward, e'en though the father is full-fed with his dead sons.<sup>3</sup> That shame might not hold me back, day has departed. On! while heaven is tenantless. O that I might stay the fleeing deities,<sup>4</sup> might force and draw them hither that they all might see the avenging feast! But 'tis enough if but the father see. Even though daylight refuse me aid, I'll dispel the darkness from thee, beneath which thy woes are lurking. Too long thou liest at feast with care-free and cheerful countenance; now enough time has been given to tables, enough to wine; for such monstrous ills there needs Thyestes sober. [To the slaves.] Ye menial throng, open the temple doors, let the banquet-hall be disclosed. 'Tis

<sup>3</sup> The horror of the draught of blood and wine is still to follow.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* the stars which have fled in horror from the sky.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

libet videre, capita natorum intuens  
 quos det colores, verba quae primus dolor  
 effundat aut ut spiritu expulso stupens  
 corpus rigescat. fructus hic operis mei est.  
 miserum videre nolo, sed dum fit miser.

Aperta multa tecta conlucent face.  
 resupinus ipse purpurae atque auro incubat,  
 vino gravatum fulciens laeva caput. 910  
 eructat. o me caelitum excelsissimum,  
 regum atque regem! vota transcendendi mea.  
 satur est, capaci ducit argento merum—  
 ne parce potu; restat etiamnunc cruor  
 tot hostiarum; veteris hunc Bacchi color  
 abscondet. hoc, hoc mensa cludatur scypho.  
 mixtum suorum sanguinem genitor bibat:  
 meum bibisset. ecce, iam cantus ciet  
 festasque voces nec satis menti imperat.

THYESTES

Pectora longis hebetata malis, 920  
 iam sollicitas ponite curas.  
 fugiat maeror fugiatque pavor,  
 fugiat trepidi comes exilii  
 tristis egestas rebusque gravis  
 pudor afflictis; magis unde cadas  
 quam quo refert. magnum, ex alto  
 culmine lapsum stabilem in plano  
 figere gressum; magnum, ingenti



## THYESTES

sweet to note, when he sees his children's heads, what hue his cheeks display, what words his first grief pours forth, how his body, breathless with the shock, grows stiff. This is the fruit of all my toil. To see him wretched I care not, but to see the wretchedness come upon him.

[*The doors are thrown open, showing THYESTES at the banquet-table.*]

<sup>908</sup> The open hall with many a torch is gleaming. There he himself reclines at full length on gold and purple, propping his wine-heavy head on his left hand. He belches with content. Oh, most exalted of the gods am I, and king of kings! I have o'er-topped my hopes. His meal is done; from the great silver cup he quaffs the wine—spare not thy drinking; there still remains the blood of all the victims, and this the colour of old wine will well disguise. With this, this goblet let the meal be done. His sons' mingled blood let the father drink; he would have drunk my own. Lo, now he raises his joyous voice in song, nor well controls his spirit.

[*THYESTES sits alone at the banquet-table, half overcome with wine; he tries to sing and be gay, but, in spite of this, some vague premonition of evil weighs upon his spirits.*]

### THYESTES

O heart, dulled with long miseries, now put aside anxious cares. Away with grief, away with terror, away with bitter want, the companion of hunted exiles, and shame that weighs heavy on misfortune; more matters it whence thou fallest, than to what. 'Tis a great thing, when fall'n from a lofty pinnacle, to set foot firmly on the plain; great, midst the

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

strage malorum pressum fracti  
 pondera regni non inflexa 930  
 cervice pati nec degenerem  
 victumque malis rectum impositas  
 ferre ruinas. sed iam saevi  
 nubila fati pelle ac miseri  
 temporis omnes dimitte notas ;  
 redeant vultus ad laeta boni,  
 veterem ex animo mitte Thyesten.

Proprium hoc miseros sequitur vitium,  
 numquam rebus credere laetis ;  
 redeat felix fortuna licet, 940  
 tamen afflictos gaudere piget.  
 quid me revocas festumque vetas  
 celebrare diem, quid flere iubes,  
 nulla surgens dolor ex causa ?  
 quid me prohibes flore decenti  
 vincere comam ? prohibet, prohibet  
 verna capiti fluxere rosae,  
 pingui madidus crinis amomo  
 inter subitos stetit horrores,  
 imber vultu nolente cadit, 950  
 venit in medias voces gemitus.  
 maeror lacrimas amat assuetas,  
 flendi miseris dira cupido est.  
 libet infaustos mittere questus,  
 libet et Tyrio saturas ostro  
 rumpere vestes, ululare libet.  
 mittit luctus signa futuri  
 mens, ante sui praesaga mali ;  
 instat nautis fera tempestas,  
 cum sine vento tranquilla tument. 960  
 quos tibi luctus quosve tumultus  
 fingis, demens ? credula praesta  
 pectora fratri. iam, quidquid id est,

## THYESTES

ruins of huge and crushing woes, with unbending neck to endure a wrecked kingdom's weight, and with soul heroic, by woes unconquered, erect to bear the burden of misfortune. But now, banish the clouds of bitter fate, and remove all marks of those unhappy days; greet present happiness with joyful countenance, and dismiss the old Thyestes from thy thoughts.

<sup>938</sup> But this peculiar failing dogs the wretched, never to believe that happiness is here; though lucky fortune come again, still they who have suffered find it hard to smile. Why dost restrain me and oppose my celebration of this joyful day? Why dost bid me weep, O grief, that rises from no cause? Why dost forbid with beauteous flowers to wreath my hair? It forbids, it does forbid! The spring roses have fallen from my head; my hair, dripping with precious nard, has started up in sudden horror, a rain of tears falls down my unwilling cheeks, and in the midst of speech comes groaning. Grief loves her accustomed tears, and to the wretched comes an ominous desire for weeping. Even so, I long to utter ill-omened lamentation, I long to rend these garments, rich dyed with Tyrian purple, I long to shriek aloud. My mind gives warnings of distress at hand, presaging its own woe; oft does a fierce storm draw nigh to mariners, when without wind the tranquil waters heave. What distresses, what upheavals dost thou imagine for thyself, thou fool? Let thy heart trust thy brother. Already, whate'er it be, either

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

vel sine causa vel sero times.  
nolo infelix, sed vagus intra  
terror oberrat, subitos fundunt  
oculi fletus, nec causa subest.  
dolor an metus est? an habet lacrimas  
magna voluptas?

ATREVS

Festum diem, germane, consensu pari 970  
celebremus; hic est, sceptrum qui firmet mea  
solidamque pacis alliget certae fidem.

THYESTES

Satias dapibus me nec minus Bacchi tenet.  
augere cumulus hic voluptatem potest,  
si cum meis gaudere felici datur.

ATREVS

Hic esse natos crede in amplexu patris;  
hic sunt eruntque; nulla pars proles tuae  
tibi subtrahetur. ora; quae exoptas dabo  
totumque turba iam sua implebo patrem.  
satiaberis, ne metue. nunc mixti meis 980  
iucunda mensae sacra iuvenilis colunt;  
sed accientur. poculum infuso cape  
gentile Baccho.

THYESTES

Capio fraternae dapibus  
donum; paternis vina libentur deis,  
tunc hauriantur.—sed quid hoc? nolunt manus  
parere, crescit pondus et dextram gravat;  
admotus ipsis Bacchus a labris fugit

## THYESTES

causelessly or too late thou fearest. I would fain not be unhappy, but within me vague terror wanders, sudden tears pour from mine eyes, and all for naught. Is it from grief or fear? Or doth great joy hold tears?

ATREUS

[*advancing to his brother with show of effusive affection*]

With mutual accord, brother, let us keep this festal day; this is the day which shall make strong my sceptre and bind firm the bonds of peace assured.

THYESTES [*pushing the remains of the feast from him*]

I have had my fill of food, and no less of wine. My pleasure by this crowning joy can be increased, if with my sons I may share my happiness.

ATREUS

Be sure that here, in their father's bosom, are thy sons;—here now, and here shall be; no one of thy children shall be taken from thee. Make request; what thou desirest will I give, and wholly with his family will I fill the sire. Thou shalt be satisfied, have no fear of that. Just now, in company with my own, at the children's table, they are sharing the joyful feast; but I will summon them. Take thou this cup, an heirloom, filled with wine.

THYESTES

I accept this bounty of my brother's feast; let wine be poured to our ancestral gods, and then be quaffed.—But what is this? My hands refuse their service, and the cup grows heavy and weighs down my hand; the lifted wine recoils from my very lips; around my

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

circaque rictus ore decepto fluit  
 et ipsa trepido mensa subsiluit solo.  
 vix lucet ignis ; ipse quin aether gravis 990  
 inter diem noctemque desertus stupet.  
 quid hoc ? magis magisque concussi labant  
 convexa caeli ; spissior densis coit  
 caligo tenebris noxque se in noctem addidit ;  
 fugit omne sidus. quidquid est, fratri precor  
 natisque parcat, omnis in vile hoc caput  
 abeat procella. redde iam natos mihi !

ATREVS

Reddam, et tibi illos nullus eripiet dies.

THYESTES

Quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea ?  
 quid tremuit intus ? sentio impatiens onus 1000  
 meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit.  
 adeste, nati, genitor infelix vocat,  
 adeste. visis fugiet hic vobis dolor—  
 unde oblocuntur ?

ATREVS

Expedi amplexus, pater ;  
 venere.—natos ecquid agnoscis tuos ?

THYESTES

Agnosco fratrem. sustines tantum nefas  
 gestare, Tellus ? non ad infernam Styga  
 tenebrasque mergis rupta et ingenti via

<sup>1</sup> Time itself, as indicated by the heavens, is in suspense.

## THYESTES

gaping jaws, cheating my mouth, it flows, and the very table leaps up from the trembling floor. The lights burn dim; nay, the very heavens, grown heavy, stand in amaze 'twixt day and night,<sup>1</sup> deserted.<sup>2</sup> What next? Now more, still more the vault of the shattered sky is tottering; a thicker gloom with dense shades is gathering, and night has hidden away in a blacker night; every star is in full flight. Whate'er it is, I beg it may spare my brother and my sons, and may the storm break with all its force on this vile head. Give back now my sons to me!

### ATREUS

I will give them back, and no day shall tear them from thee. [Exit.]

### THYESTES

What is this tumult that disturbs my vitals? What trembles in me? I feel a load that will not suffer me, and my breast groans with a groaning that is not mine. O come, my sons, your unhappy father calls you, come; this pain will pass away at the sight of you—whence come their reproachful voices?

[*Re-enter ATREUS with a covered platter in his hands.*]

### ATREUS

Now, father, spread out thine arms; they are here. [*He uncovers the platter, revealing the severed heads of THYESTES' sons.*] Dost recognize thy sons?

### THYESTES

I recognize my brother. Canst thou endure, O Earth, to bear a crime so monstrous? Why dost not burst asunder and plunge thee down to the infernal

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* by sun, moon, and stars.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ad chaos inane regna cum rege abripis?  
 non tota ab imo tecta convellens solo 1010  
 vertis Mycenae? stare circa Tantalum  
 uterque iam debuimus. hinc compagibus  
 et hinc revulsis, si quid infra Tartara est  
 avosque nostros, huc tuam inmani sinu  
 demitte vallem nosque defossos tege  
 Acheronte toto. noxiae supra caput  
 animae vagentur nostrum et ardenti freto  
 Phlegethon harenas igneus totas agens  
 exilia supra nostra violentus fluat—  
 immota tellus pondus ignavum iacet, 1020  
 fugere superi.

ATREVS

Iam accipe hos potius libens  
 diu expetitos. nulla per fratrem est mora;  
 fruire, osculare, divide amplexus tribus.

THYESTES

Hoc foedus? haec est gratia, haec fratris fides?  
 sic odia ponis? non peto, incolumes pater  
 natos ut habeam; scelere quod salvo dari  
 odioque possit, frater hoc fratrem rogo:  
 sepelire liceat. redde quod cernas statim  
 uri; nihil te genitor habiturus rogo,  
 sed perditurus.

ATREVS

Quidquid e natis tuis 1030  
 superest habes, quodcumque non superest habes.



## THYESTES

Stygian shades and, by a huge opening to void chaos, snatch this kingdom with its king away? Why dost not raze this whole palace to the very ground, and overturn Mycenae? We should both of us long since have been with Tantalus. Rend asunder thy prison-bars on every side, and if there is any place 'neath Tartarus and our grandsires,<sup>1</sup> thither with huge abyss let down thy chasm and hide us buried beneath all Acheron. Let guilty souls wander above our head, and let fiery Phlegethon, with glowing flood down-pouring all his sands, flow tempestuous above our place of exile—but the earth lies all unmoved, an insensate mass; the gods have fled away.

### ATREUS

Now, rather, take these with joy, whom thou hast so long desired. Thy brother delays thee not; enjoy them, kiss them, divide thy embraces 'mongst the three.

### THYESTES

Is this thy bond? Is this thy grace, this thy fraternal pledge? Thus puttest thou hate away? I do not ask that I, a father, may have my sons unharmed; what can be granted with crime and hate intact, this I, a brother, of a brother ask: that I may bury them. Give me back what thou mayst see burned at once. The father asks naught of thee with hopes of having, but of losing it.

### ATREUS

Whatever of thy sons is left, thou hast; whatever is not left, thou hast.

<sup>1</sup> He means Tantalus alone, using the plural for the singular by *enallage*.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

THYESTES

Vtrumne saevis pabulum alitibus iacent,  
an beluis servantur, an pascunt feras?

ATREVS

*Epulatus ipse es impia natos dape.*

THYESTES

Hoc est deos quod puduit, hoc egit diem  
aversum in ortus. quas miser voces dabo  
questusque quos? quae verba sufficient mihi?  
abscisa cerno capita et avulsas manus  
et rupta fractis cruribus vestigia—  
hoc est quod avidus capere non potuit pater. 1040  
volvuntur intus viscera et clusum nefas  
sine exitu luctatur et quaerit fugam.  
da, frater, ensem (sanguinis multum mei  
habet ille); ferro liberis detur via.  
negatur ensis? pectora inliso sonent  
contusa planctu—sustine, infelix, manum,  
parcamus umbris. tale quis vidit nefas?  
quis inhospitalis Caucasi rupem asperam  
Heniochus habitans quisve Cecropiis metus  
terris Procrustes? genitor en natos premo 1050  
premorque natis—sceleris est aliquis modus?

ATREVS

Sceleri modus debetur ubi facias scelus,  
non ubi reponas. hoc quoque exiguum est mihi.  
ex vulnere ipso sanguinem calidum in tua  
defundere ora debui, ut viventium  
biberes cruorem—verba sunt irae data

## THYESTES

THYESTES

Do they lie a prey for the wild birds? Are they reserved for monsters? Are they food for beasts?

ATREUS

*Thyself hast feasted on thy sons, an impious meal.*

THYESTES

'Twas this that shamed the gods; this drove the day back against its dawning. What cries in my misery shall I utter, what complaints? What words will suffice for me? I see the severed heads, the torn-off hands, the feet wrenched from the broken legs—this much the father, for all his greed, could not devour. Their flesh is turning round within me, and my imprisoned crime struggles vainly to come forth and seeks way of escape. Give me thy sword, O brother, the sword reeking with my blood; by the steel let deliverance be given to my sons. Dost refuse the sword? Then let my breast resound, bruised by crushing blows—hold thy hand, unhappy man, let us spare the shades. Who ever beheld such crime? What Heniochian, dwelling on wild Caucasus' rough rocks, or what Procrustes, terror of the Cæcropsian land? Lo, I, the father, overwhelm my sons, and by my sons am overwhelmed—of crime is there no limit?

ATREUS

Crime should have limit, when the crime is wrought, not when repaid. E'en this is not enough for me. Straight from the very wound I should have poured the hot blood down thy throat, that thou mightst drink gore of thy living sons—my wrath was cheated

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dum propero. ferro vulnera impresso dedi,  
 cecidi ad aras, caede votiva focos  
 placavi et artus, corpora exanima amputans,  
 in parva carpsi frusta et haec ferventibus 1060  
 demersi aenis, illa lentis ignibus  
 stillare iussi. membra nervosque abscidi  
 viventibus, gracilique traiectas veru  
 mugire fibras vidi et aggressi manu  
 mea ipse flammās. omnia haec melius pater  
 fecisse potuit, cecidit in cassum dolor :  
 scidit ore natos impio, sed nesciens,  
 sed nescientes !

THYESTES

Clausa litoribus vagis  
 audite maria, vos quoque audite hoc scelus,  
 quocumque, di, fugistis ; audite inferi, 1070  
 audite terrae, Noxque Tartarea gravis  
 et atra nube, vocibus nostris vaca  
 (tibi sum relictus, sola tu miserum vides,  
 tu quoque sine astris), vota non faciam improba,  
 pro me nihil precabor—et quid iam potest  
 pro me esse ? vobis vota prospicient mea.  
 tu, summe caeli rector, aetheriae potens  
 dominator aulae, nubibus totum horridis  
 convolve mundum, bella ventorum undique  
 committe et omni parte violentum intona, 1080  
 manuque<sup>1</sup> non qua tecta et immeritas domos  
 telo petis minore, sed qua montium  
 tergemina moles cecidit et qui montibus  
 stabant pares Gigantes,—haec arma expedi

<sup>1</sup> So A : Leo, with E, manumque.

## THYESTES

by my haste. With the deep-driven sword I smote them; I slew them at the altars; with their offered blood I appeased the sacred fires; hewing their lifeless bodies, into small scraps I tore them, and some into boiling cauldrons did I plunge, and some before slow fires I set to drip. Their limbs and sinews I rent asunder while still they lived, and their livers, transfix'd on slender spits and sputtering I saw, and with my own hand I fed the flames. All these things better the father might have done; my grief has fallen fruitless; with impious teeth he tore his sons, but unwittingly, but them unwitting.<sup>1</sup>

### THYESTES

Hear, O ye seas, by shifting shores imprisoned, and ye, too, hear this crime, whithersoever you have fled, ye gods; hear, lords of the underworld; hear, lands, and Night, heavy with black, Tartarean fogs, give ear unto my cries; (to thee am I abandoned, thou only lookest on my woe, thou also forsaken of the stars;) no wicked pleas will I make, naught for myself implore—and what now can I ask in my own behalf? For you<sup>2</sup> shall my prayers be offered. O thou, exalted ruler of the sky, who sittest in majesty upon the throne of heaven, enwrap the whole universe in awful clouds, set the winds warring on every hand, and from every quarter of the sky let the loud thunders roll; not with what hand thou seekest houses and undeserving homes, using thy lesser bolts, but with that hand by which the threefold mass of mountains fell, and the Giants, who stood level with

<sup>1</sup> Atreus would have had both father and sons conscious of what they did and suffered.

<sup>2</sup> *i. e.* the gods of heaven, who have fled from the sight of crime, and whom he now addresses.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ignesque torque. vindica amissum diem,  
 iaculare flammam, lumen ereptum polo  
 fulminibus exple. causa, ne dubites diu,  
 utriusque mala sit; si minus, mala sit mea:  
 me pete, trisulco flammeam telo facem  
 per pectus hoc trans mitte. si natos pater 1090  
 humare et igni tradere extremo volo,  
 ego sum cremandus. si nihil superos movet  
 nullumque telis impios numen petit,  
 aeterna nox permaneat et tenebris tegat  
 immensa longis scelera. nil, Titan, queror,  
 si perseveras.

ATREVS

Nunc meas laudo manus,  
 nunc parta vera est palma. perdideram scelus,  
 nisi sic doleres. liberos nasci mihi  
 nunc credo, castis nunc fidem reddi toris.

THYESTES

Quid liberi meruere?

ATREVS

Quod fuerant tui. 1100

THYESTES

Natos parenti——

ATREVS

Fateor et, quod me iuvat,  
 certos.

## THYESTES

the mountains—these arms let loose and hurl thy fires. Make compensation for the banished day, brandish thy flames, and the light that was snatched from heaven with thy lightning's flash supply. Let the cause, lest long thou hesitate, of each one of us be evil; if not, let mine be evil; aim thou at me, through this heart send thy three-forked flaming bolt. If I their father would give his sons to burial and commit them to the funeral flames, I must myself be burned. But if naught moves the gods, and no divinity hurls darts against the impious, may night stay on for ever, and cover with endless darkness boundless crimes. No protest do I make, O sun, if thou continue steadfast.<sup>1</sup>

ATREUS

Now do I praise my handiwork, now is the true palm won. I had wasted my crime, didst thou not suffer thus. Now do I believe my children are my own, now may I trust once more that my marriage-bed is pure.

THYESTES

What was my children's sin?

ATREUS

That they were thine.

THYESTES

Sons to the father——<sup>2</sup>

ATREUS

Yea, and what gives me joy, surely thy sons.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* in hiding thy face, as at present.

<sup>2</sup> ——thou didst give to be devoured.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

THYESTES

Piorum praesides testor deos.

ATREVS

Quin coniugales?

THYESTES

Scelere quis pensat scelus?

ATREVS

Scio quid queraris: scelere praerepto doles,  
nec quod nefandas hauseris angit dapes;  
quod non pararis. fuerat hic animus tibi  
instruere similes inscio fratri cibos  
et adiuuante liberos matre aggredi  
similique leto sternere. hoc unum obstitit—  
tuos putasti.

THYESTES

Vindices aderunt dei;  
his puniendum vota te tradunt mea.

1110

ATREVS

Te puniendum liberis trado tuis.



## THYESTES

THYESTES

I call on the gods who guard the innocent.

ATREUS

Why not the marriage-gods ?

THYESTES

Who punishes crime with crime ?

ATREUS

I know what thou complainst of: thou grievest that I have forestalled thee in the crime, and art distressed, not because thou hast consumed the ghastly feast, but because thou didst not offer it to me. This had been thy purpose, to prepare for thine unwitting brother a like feast, and with their mother's aid to assail his sons and lay them low in like destruction. This one thing stayed thee—thou didst think them thine.

THYESTES

The gods will be present to avenge; to them for punishment my prayers deliver thee.

ATREUS

To thy sons for punishment do I deliver thee.



HERCULES OETAEVS

# HERCVLES OETAEVS

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

HERCULES, *son of Jupiter and Alcmena.*

HYLLUS, *son of Hercules and Deïanira.*

ALCMENA, *daughter of Electryon, king of Mycenae.*

DEÏANIRA, *daughter of Oeneus, king of Aetolia, and wife of Hercules.*

IOLE, *daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia.*

NURSE *of Deïanira.*

PHILOCTETES, *a prince of Thessaly, son of Poeas, and the faithful friend of Hercules.*

LICHAS, *the messenger (persona muta) of Deïanira to Hercules.*

CHORUS *of Aetolian women, faithful to Deïanira.*

CHORUS *of Oechalian maidens, suffering captivity in company with Iole.*

THE SCENE is laid, first in Euboea, and later at the home of Hercules in Trachin.

## ARGUMENT

THE long, heroic life of Hercules has neared its end. His twelve great tasks, assigned him by Eurystheus through Juno's hatred, have been done. His latest victory was over Eurytus, king of Oechalia. Him he slew and overthrew his house, because the monarch would not give him Iole to wife.

And now the hero, having overcome the world, and Pluto's realm beneath the earth, aspires to heaven. He sacrifices to Cœnean Jove, and prays at last to be received into his proper home.

## HERCVLES OETA·EVS

### HERCVLES

SATOR deorum, cuius excussum manu  
utraeque Phoebi sentiunt fulmen domus,  
secure regna ; protuli pacem tibi,  
quacumque Nereus porrigi terras vetat.  
non est tonandum ; perfidi reges iacent,  
saevi tyranni. fregimus quidquid fuit  
tibi fulminandum. sed mihi caelum, parens,  
adhuc negatur ? parui certe Iove  
ubique dignus teque testata est meum  
patrem noverca. quid tamen nectis moras ? 10  
numquid timemur ? numquid impositum sibi  
non poterit Atlas ferre cum caelo Herculem ?  
quid astra, genitor, quid negas ? mors me tibi  
certe remisit, omne concessit malum  
quod terra genuit, pontus aer inferi.  
nullus per urbes errat Arcadias Ieo,  
Stymphalis icta est, Maenali nulla est fera ;  
sparsit peremptus aureum serpens nemus  
et hydra vires posuit et notos Hebro  
cruore pingues hospitem fregi greges 20

<sup>1</sup> East and West, or both hemispheres.

<sup>2</sup> The Arcadian stag. Its capture was the third labour of Hercules.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

[*In Euboea, near Oechalia, after the overthrow of Eurytus, king of that city.*]

### HERCULES

O SIRE of gods, hurled by whose hand both homes<sup>1</sup> of Phoebus feel the thunderbolt, reign thou untroubled; peace have I 'stablished for thee wherever Nereus forbids the land to extend its bounds. Thou needst not thunder now; false kings lie low, and cruel tyrants. I have crushed all who merited thy bolts. But to me, father, is heaven still denied? Of a surety have I everywhere proved worthy Jove; and that thou art sire of mine my stepdame testifies. Yet why dost still contrive delays? Am I cause of fear? Will Atlas not avail to bear up Hercules placed upon him together with the sky? Why, O father, why dost thou deny the stars to me? Verily hath death given me back to thee; and every evil thing which earth, sea, air, the lower world, produced, hath yielded to my might. No lion prowls amidst Arcadia's towns; the Stymphalian bird is smitten; the beast of Maenalus<sup>2</sup> is no more; the dragon,<sup>3</sup> slain, hath sprinkled the golden orchard with his blood; the hydra's<sup>4</sup> strength is gone; the herds,<sup>5</sup> well known to Hebrus, fat with strangers' blood, have

<sup>3</sup> Which guarded the apples of the Hesperides. See Index s. v. "Hesperides."

<sup>4</sup> See Index.      <sup>5</sup> i. e. of Diomedes.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

hostisque traxi spolia Thermodontiae.  
vidi silentum fata nec tantum redi,  
sed trepidus atrum Cerberum vidit dies  
et ille solem. nullus Antaeus Libys  
animam resumit, cecidit ante aras suas  
Busiris, una est Geryon sparsus manu  
taurusque populis horridus centum pavor.  
quodcumque tellus genuit infesta occidit  
meaque fusum est dextera; iratis deis  
non licuit esse.

Si negat mundus feras 30  
animum noverca,<sup>1</sup> redde nunc nato patrem  
vel astra forti. nec peto ut monstres iter;  
permittite tantum, genitor; inveniam viam.  
vel si times ne terra concipiat feras,  
properet malum quodcumque, dum terra Herculem  
habet videtque; nam quis invadet mala  
aut quis per urbes rursus Argolicas erit  
Iunonis odio dignus? in tutum meas  
laudes redegit, nulla me tellus silet.  
me sensit ursae frigidum Scythicae genus 40  
Indusque Phoebos subditus, cancro Libys.  
te, clare Titan, testor: occurri tibi  
quacumque fulges, nec meos lux prosequi  
potuit triumphos, solis excessi vices  
intraque nostras substitit metas dies.  
natura cessit, terra defecit gradum:  
lassata prior est. nox et extremum chaos

<sup>1</sup> *So Richter, with A: Leo* † animum novercam, conjecturing tandem novercae.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the golden girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons.

<sup>2</sup> The gods, in wrath, were supposed to have sent monsters on the earth, and by slaying these Hercules has frustrated that wrath.



## HERCULES OETAEUS

I destroyed, and have brought away Thermodon's spoils<sup>1</sup> of war. The lot of the silent throng have I beheld; and not alone have I returned, but shuddering day hath seen black Cerberus, and he the sun. No longer doth the Libyan Antaeus renew his strength; before his own altars hath Busiris fallen; by my sole hand hath Geryon been o'erthrown, and the bull, dread terror of a hundred tribes. Whatever hostile earth hath 'gendered is fallen, by my right hand laid low; the anger of the gods hath been set at naught.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>30</sup> If the earth is done with monsters, if my step-dame is done with wrath, give back now the father to his son, yea, the stars unto the hero. I ask thee not to show the way to me; but grant thy permission, father, and the way I'll find. Or, if thou fearest that earth shall yet give birth to monsters, let the ill make haste, whate'er it be, while yet the earth doth hold and look on Hercules; for who else will attack evil things, or who, throughout the Argive cities, will be worthy Juno's hate? I have my honours safe bestowed; there is no land but sings my praise. The race that shivers 'neath the Scythian Bear<sup>3</sup> hath known me; the sun-scorched Indian and the tropic African. O glowing Sun, bear witness: I have encountered thee where'er thou shinest, nor could thy beams keep pace with my triumphant course; I have gone beyond the changes of the sun, and day hath halted far within my bounds. Nature hath yielded to me, and earth hath failed my feet; she hath been weary first.<sup>4</sup> Night and utter chaos have

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* the Scythians, dwelling far north beneath the Bear.

<sup>4</sup> It is as if the whole earth, trying to keep pace with Hercules, and to give him new land to travel over, has become weary of the attempt.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

in me incucurrit; inde ad hunc orbem redi,  
 nemo unde retro est. tulimus Oceani minas,  
 nec ulla valuit quaterne tempestas ratem 50  
 quamcumque pressi. pars quota est Perseus mei?  
 iam vacuus aether non potest odio tuae  
 sufficere nuptae quasque devincam feras  
 tellus timet concipere nec monstra invenit.  
 ferae negantur; Hercules monstri loco  
 iam coepit esse. quanta enim fregi mala,  
 quot scelera nudus! quidquid immane obstitit,  
 solae manus stravere; nec iuvenis feras  
 timui nec infans. quidquid est iussum leve est,  
 nec ulla nobis segnis illuxit dies. 60  
 o quanta fudi monstra quae nullus mihi  
 rex imperavit! institit virtus mihi  
 Iunone peior.

Sed quid inpavidum genus

fecisse prodest? non habent pacem dei;  
 purgata tellus omnis in caelo videt  
 quodcumque timuit; transtulit Iuno feras.  
 ambit peremptus cancer ardentem plagam  
 Libyaeque sidus fertur et messes alit;  
 annum fugacem tradit Astraetae leo,  
 at ille, iactans fervidam collo iubam, 70  
 austrum madentem siccatur et nimbos rapit.  
 invasit omnis ecce iam caelum fera  
 meque antecessit; victor e terris meos  
 specto labores, astra portentis prius

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* he is the only unconquered creature left on earth—a marvel, past the bounds of nature.

<sup>2</sup> On the very day of his birth he killed two huge snakes which Juno sent against him. <sup>3</sup> *i.e.* Eurystheus.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

assailed me, and thence to this world have I come again whence none e'er returns. I have borne Ocean's threats, and no storm of his has availed to wreck the ship which I have weighted down. How trivial Perseus' deeds compared with mine! Now can the empty air no more suffice the hatred of thy wife, and earth fears to produce beasts for me to conquer, nor can she find monsters more. Beasts are at end; 'tis Hercules now begins to hold the place of monster.<sup>1</sup> For how great evils have I crushed, how many crimes, and all unarmed! Whatever monstrous thing opposed me, with but my hands I laid it low; nor was there ever savage thing which as youth or babe<sup>2</sup> I feared. All my commanded toils seem light, and no inactive day has ever dawned for me. Oh, how great monsters have I overthrown, which no king<sup>3</sup> bade me meet! My courage, more relentless than Juno's self, has urged me on.

<sup>63</sup> But what avails it to have freed the race of men from fear? Now have the gods no peace; the freed earth sees in the sky all creatures which she feared; for there hath Juno set them.<sup>4</sup> The crab I slew goes round the torrid zone, is known as Libya's constellation,<sup>5</sup> and matures her grain; the lion to Astraea gives the flying year;<sup>6</sup> but he, his burning mane upon his neck back tossing, dries up the dripping south-wind and devours the clouds. Behold, now has every beast invaded heaven, forestalling me; though victor, I gaze upon my labours from the earth; for to monsters first and to wild beasts has

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* she has changed them to constellations in the sky.

<sup>5</sup> The zodiacal constellation of the Crab, in which the sun attains his summer solstice.

<sup>6</sup> *i.e.* the sun passes from Leo into Virgo. For Astrea see Index, *s.v.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ferisque Iuno tribuit, ut caelum mihi  
 faceret timendum. sparserit mundum licet  
 caelumque terris peius ac peius Styge  
 irata faciat, dabitur Alcidae locus.  
 si post feras, post bella, post Stygium canem  
 haud dum astra merui, Siculus Hesperium latus 80  
 tangat Pelorus, una iam tellus erit ;  
 illinc fugabo maria. si iungi iubes,  
 committat undas Isthmos, et iuncto salo  
 nova ferantur Atticae puppes via.  
 mutetur orbis : vallibus currat novis  
 Hister novasque Tanais accipiat vias.  
 da, da tuendos, Iuppiter, saltem deos ;  
 illa licebit fulmen a parte auferas,  
 ego quam tuebor. sive glaciale polum,  
 seu me tueri fervidam partem iubes, 90  
 hac esse superos parte securos puta.  
 Cirrhaea Paeon templa et aetheriam domum  
 serpente caeso meruit—o quotiens iacet  
 Python in hydra ! Bacchus et Perseus deis  
 iam se intulere ; sed quota est mundi plaga  
 oriens subactus aut quota est Gorgon fera !  
 quis astra natus laudibus meruit suis  
 ex te et noverca ? quem tuli mundum peto.  
 Sed tu, comes laboris Herculei, Licha,  
 perfer triumphos, Euryti victos lares 100  
 stratumque regnum. vos pecus rapite ocus

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Italian.

<sup>2</sup> The Isthmus of Corinth.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

Juno given stars, that to me she might make the sky a place of dread. Yet, though in her rage she scatter them o'er the sky, though she make heaven worse than earth, yea, worse than Styx, to Alcides shall room be given. If after beasts, after wars, after the Stygian dog, I have not yet earned the stars, let Sicilian Pelorus touch the Hesperian<sup>1</sup> shore, and they both shall become one land; thence will I put seas to flight. If thou bidst seas be joined, let Isthmus<sup>2</sup> give passage to the waves and on their united waters let Attic ships along a new way be borne. Let earth be changed; along new valleys let Ister run and Tanaïs receive new channels. Give, give me, O Jupiter, at least the gods to guard; there mayst thou put aside thy thunderbolts where I shall be on guard. Whether thou bidst me guard the icy pole, whether the torrid zone, there count the gods secure. Cirrha's shrine<sup>3</sup> and a place in heaven did Pean<sup>4</sup> earn by one serpent's<sup>5</sup> slaughter—oh, how many Pythons in the hydra lie o'erthrown! Already have Bacchus and Perseus reached the gods; but how small a tract of earth was the conquered east,<sup>6</sup> or how meagre a spoil was Gorgon!<sup>7</sup> what son of thine and of my stepdame has by his praises merited the stars? I seek the skies which I myself have borne.<sup>8</sup>

[*He turns to LICHAS*]

<sup>99</sup> But do thou, Lichas, comrade of the toils of Hercules, proclaim his triumphs—the conquered house of Eurytus, his kingdom overthrown. [*To the other attendants.*] Do you with speed drive the

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* Delphi.    <sup>4</sup> Apollo.    <sup>5</sup> The Python.

<sup>6</sup> *i.e.* India, the scene of Bacchus' conquests.

<sup>7</sup> Slain by Perseus.

<sup>8</sup> *i.e.* when he relieved Atlas of his burden.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

qua templa tollens acta Cenaei Iovis  
austro timendum spectat Euboicum mare.

### CHORVS

Par ille est superis cui pariter dies  
et fortuna fuit ; mortis habet vices  
lente cum trahitur vita gementibus.  
quisquis sub pedibus fata rapacia  
et puppem posuit fluminis ultimi,  
non captiva dabit bracchia vinculis  
nec pompae veniet nobile ferculum ; 110  
numquam est ille miser cui facile est mori.  
illum si medio decipiat ratis  
ponto, cum Borean expulit Africus  
aut Eurus Zephyrum, cum mare dividunt,  
non puppis lacerae fragmina conligit,  
ut litus medio speret in aequore ;  
vitam qui poterit reddere protinus,  
solus non poterit naufragium pati.

Nos turpis macies et lacrimae tenent  
et crinis patrio pulvere sordidus ; 120  
nos non flamma rapax, non fragor obruit.  
felices sequeris, mors, miseros fugis.  
stamus, nec patriae <sup>1</sup> messibus <sup>2</sup> heu locus  
at<sup>3</sup> silvis dabitur, lapsaque sordidae  
fient templa casae ; iam gelidus Dolops  
haec ducet pecudes qua tepet obrutus  
stratae qui superest Oechaliae cinis.

<sup>1</sup> *So Richter, with A : patriis E.*

<sup>2</sup> *messibus N. Heinsius : moenibus A : Leo marks the line corrupt, and conjectures stamus nec patria est : messibus h. l.*

<sup>3</sup> *Leo et, with w, corrected by Scaliger.*

## HERCULES OETAEUS

herds to where the shore, lifting on high the shrine of Cenean Jove,<sup>1</sup> looks out upon the Euboic sea, fearsome with southern gales.

[*Exit HERCULES on his way to the Cenean Promontory, intending there to sacrifice to Jove.*]

### CHORUS OF CAPTIVE OECHALIAN MAIDENS IN COMPANY WITH IOLE

Mate of the gods is he whose life and fortune have gone side by side; but when 'tis slowly dragged out midst lamentations, life has the lot of death. Whoe'er has set beneath his feet the greedy fates, and the last river's barque,<sup>2</sup> he will not give his captive arms to bonds nor fare in the victor's train a noble spoil; ne'er is he wretched for whom to die is easy. Should his boat be wrecked far out upon the deep, where South with North-wind strives, and East with West, rending the sea asunder, he does not gather up the wreckage of his broken ship, that in mid-ocean he may hope for land; he who can straightway render up his life, he only from a wreck can suffer naught.

<sup>119</sup> But us, foul wasting claims, and tears, and hair defiled by the dust of fatherland; us nor greedy flame nor crashing wall has overwhelmed. The happy dost thou pursue, O Death, the wretched thou fleest. Here we stand, yet alas! the spot shall no more be given to our country's crops, but to forests wild, and squalid hovels shall our fallen shrines become. Here soon shall the chill Dolopian lead his flocks where the buried ashes, sole remnant of Oechalia's ruins, still are warm. Here in our very

<sup>1</sup> So called because his temple stood at Ceneum, a lofty promontory on the north-west point of the island of Euboea.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* he who does not fear death.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ipso Thessalicus pastor in oppido indocta referens carmina fistula cantu nostra canet tempora flebili ;	130
et dum pauca deus saecula contrahet, quaeretur patriae quis fuerit locus. felix incolui non steriles focos nec ieiuna soli iugera Thessali ; ad Trachina vocor, saxa rigentia et dumeta iugis horrida torridis, vix gratum pecori montivago nemus. at si quas melior sors famulas vocat, illas aut volucer transferet Inachus aut Dircaea colent moenia, qua fluit	140
Ismenos tenui flumine languidus ; hic mater tumidi nupserat Herculis.	142
Falsa est de geminis fabula noctibus, <sup>1</sup> aether cum tenuit sidera longius commisitque vices Lucifer Hespero et Solem vetuit Delia tardior.	147 150
quae cautes Scythiae, quis genuit lapis ? num Titana ferum te Rhodope tulit, te praeruptus Athos, te fera Caspia, <sup>2</sup> quae virgata tibi praebuit ubera ?	143 146
nullis vulneribus pervia membra sunt ; ferrum sentit hebes, lentior est chalybs ; in nudo gladius corpore frangitur et saxum resilit, fataque negligit et mortem indomito corpore provocat. non illum poterant figere cuspides, non arcus Scythica tensus harundine, non quae tela gerit Sarmata frigidus aut qui soliferae suppositus plagae vicino Nabatae vulnera dirigit	151 160

<sup>1</sup> *The transposition of ll. 147-150 after l. 142 is Leo's.*

<sup>2</sup> *So Avantius, with a : caseta A : Leo Caspias, with E.*



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

city a Thessalian shepherd, on rude pipe going o'er his songs, shall sing of our story with doleful notes; and ere God shall bring a few more generations to an end, men will be asking where our country lay. Once I was blest; not barren the hearth nor hungry the acres of Thessalian soil whereon I dwelt; but now to Trachin am I called, to a rough and stony land, to brambles bristling on her parched hills, to woods which e'en the wandering goats disdain. But if some captives by a milder fate are called, then either swift Inachus will bear them o'er,<sup>1</sup> or within Dircaean<sup>2</sup> walls shall they abide, where flows slow Ismenus with scanty stream, where the mother<sup>3</sup> of haughty Hercules once was wed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>147</sup> False is the story<sup>5</sup> of the double night, when the stars lingered in the sky o'erlong, when Lucifer changed place with Hesperus, and Delia,<sup>6</sup> too slow, kept back the sun. What Scythian crag, what rocky cliff begot thee? As some fierce Titan, did Rhodope bring thee forth, or Athos rough? Did some wild Caspian beast, some striped tigress give thee suck? By no wounds may his limbs be assailed; iron he feels blunt, steel is too dull; upon his naked body swords are broken, and stones rebound; and so he scorns the fates, and with body all invincible defies mortality. Sharp spear-points could not pierce him, nor Scythian arrows shot from bended bow, nor darts which cold Sarmatians wield, or the Parthians who, in the land of the rising sun, with surer aim than ever Cretan's was, direct their shafts against the

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* either to Argos or Mycenae.

<sup>2</sup> Theban, so called from the neighbouring fountain of Dirce.    <sup>3</sup> Alcmena.    <sup>4</sup> *i.e.* to Amphitryon.

<sup>5</sup> See Index *s.v.* "Hercules," first part. The chorus means to say that Hercules is not the son of Jove and Alcmena.

<sup>6</sup> The moon.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Parthus Cnosiatis certior ictibus,  
 muros Oechaliae corpore propulit,  
 nil obstare valet; vincere quod parat  
 iam victum est. quota pars vulnere concidit!  
 pro fato patuit vultus iniquior  
 et vidisse sat est Herculeas minas.  
 quis vastus Briareus, quis tumidus Gyas,  
 supra Thessalicum cum stetit aggerem  
 caeloque inseruit vipereas manus,  
 hoc vultu riguit? commoda cladibus 170  
 magnis magna patent: nil superest mali—  
 iratum miseræ vidimus Herculem.

IOLE

At ego infelix non templa suis  
 conlapsa deis sparsosve focos,  
 natis mixtos arsisse patres  
 hominique deos, templa sepulchris,  
 nullum querimur commune malum;  
 alio nostras fortuna vocat  
 lacrimas, alias flere ruinas  
 me fata iubent. quæ prima querar? 180  
 quæ summa gemam? pariter cuncta  
 deflere iuvat—<sup>1</sup> nec plura dedit  
 pectora Tellus, ut digna sonent  
 verbera fatis.

Me vel Sipylum flebile saxum  
 fingite, superi, vel in Eridani  
 ponite ripis, ubi maesta sonat  
 Phaetontiadum silva sororum;

<sup>1</sup> After iuvat D. Heinsius recognized a lacuna, which Gronovius thought should be filled as follows: cur non oculos plures nobis.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

neighbouring Arabians. With his bare hands did he o'erthrow Oechalia's walls, and naught can make stand against him; for whate'er he plans to overcome is overcome already. How few the foes who by his wounds have fallen! His angry countenance was death in open view, and but to have seen the threats of Hercules is enough.<sup>1</sup> What huge Briareus, what Gyas, puffed with pride, when upon Thessalia's mountain-heap<sup>2</sup> they stood and clutched at heaven with snaky hands, had countenance inflexible as his? But mighty ills have mighty recompense. No more is left to suffer—we have seen, oh, woe! the angry Hercules.

### IOLE

But I, unhappy one, bewail not temples fallen on their gods, or hearth-fires scattered, or fathers burned in mingled heaps with sons, and gods with men, temples with tombs,—nay, no common misfortune do I mourn; elsewhither doth fortune call my tears, for other ruins the fates bid me weep. What lament shall I make first? What last shall I bewail? Equally all things is it meet to mourn. Oh me, that Mother Earth hath not given me more eyes for tears,<sup>3</sup> more breasts, that blows worthy of my losses might resound.

<sup>185</sup> Me to a weeping rock<sup>4</sup> on Sipylus, ye heavenly gods, transform, or set me on the banks of Po, where the woods give back the grief of Phaëthon's sad

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* was enough to kill his opponent.

<sup>2</sup> The giants piled up Ossa, Pelion, and Olympus in their effort to reach the skies.

<sup>3</sup> Translating the suggested insertion of Gronovius.

<sup>4</sup> She is thinking of the fate of Niobe.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

me vel Siculis addite saxis,  
 ubi fata gemam Thessala Siren, 190  
 vel in Edonas tollite silvas  
 qualis natum Daulias ales  
 solet Ismaria flere sub umbra ;  
 formam lacrimis aptate meis  
 resonetque malis aspera Trachin.  
 Cyprias lacrimas Myrrha tuetur,  
 raptum coniunx Ceyca gemit,  
 sibi Tantalus est facta superstes ;  
 fugit vultus Philomela suos  
 natumque sonat flebilis Atthis : 200  
 cur mea nondum capiunt volucres  
 brachia plumas ? felix, felix,  
 cum silva domus nostra feretur  
 patrioque sedens ales in agro  
 referam querulo murmure casus  
 volucremque Iolen fama loquetur.  
 Vidi, vidi miseranda mei  
 fata parentis, cum letifero  
 stipite pulsus tota iacuit  
 sparsus in aula. 210  
 a si tumulum fata dedissent,  
 quotiens, genitor, quaerendus eras !  
 potuine tuam spectare necem,  
 nondum teneras vestite genas  
 necdum forti sanguine, Toxeu ?  
 quid vestra queror fata, parentes,  
 quos in tutum mors aequa tulit ?  
 mea me lacrimas fortuna rogat.  
 iam iam dominae captiva colus  
 fusosque legam. pro saeve decor

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* make me one of the number of the Sirens who haunt those rocks.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* Thracian

<sup>3</sup> Procne. See Index *s.v.*

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

sisters; or add<sup>1</sup> me to the rocks of Sicily, where as a Siren I may weep Thessalia's fate; or bear me to Edonia's<sup>2</sup> woods where I may mourn as, beneath Ismarian shade, the Daulian bird<sup>3</sup> ever mourns her son. Give me a form to fit my tears, and let rough Trachin reëcho with my woes. Myrrha, the Cyprian maid, yet guards her tears;<sup>4</sup> the wife<sup>5</sup> of Ceyx mourns his taking off; and Niobe lives on, surviving e'en herself; her human form has Philomel escaped, and still the Attic maid bewails her son.<sup>6</sup> Why not yet do my arms become swift wings? Happy, ah, happy shall I be when the woods shall be called my home, and, in my native meadows resting, with plaintive strains I shall recall my fate, and fame shall tell of winged Iole.

<sup>207</sup> I saw, I saw my father's wretched fate, when, beaten down by the death-dealing club, he lay in scattered fragments throughout the hall. Ah me, if fate had given him burial, how often, father, must thou have been sought! How could I have looked upon thy death, O Toxeus,<sup>7</sup> with thy boyish cheeks as yet unbearded, and thy veins not yet filled with manly vigour? But why do I lament your fates, my parents, whom kindly death has to a place of safety borne? 'Tis my own fortune that requires my tears. Soon, soon in captive state shall I whirl the distaff and the spindle of my mistress. O cruel beauty,

<sup>4</sup> The exuding gum of the myrrh tree into which the maid was changed.

<sup>5</sup> Alcyone, still alive in feathered form.

<sup>6</sup> Itys was not the son of Philomela, but of her sister, Procne.      <sup>7</sup> Her brother.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

formaque mortem paritura mihi, 220  
 tibi cuncta domus concidit uni,  
 dum me genitor negat Alcidae  
 atque Hercules socer esse timet.  
 sed iam dominae tecta petantur.

CHORUS

Quid regna tui clara parentis  
 casusque tuos respicis amens?  
 fugiat vultus fortuna prior.  
 felix quisquis novit famulum  
 regemque pati vultusque suos  
 variare potest. rapuit vires 230  
 pondusque malis casus animo  
 qui tulit aequo.

NVTRIX

O quam cruentus feminas stimulat furor,  
 cum patuit una paelici et nuptae domus!  
 Scylla et Charybdis Sicula contorquens freta  
 minus timendae, nulla non melior fera est.  
 namque ut reluxit paelicis captae decus  
 et fulsit Iole qualis innubis dies  
 purisve clarum noctibus sidus micat,  
 stetit furenti similis ac torvum intuens 240  
 Herculea coniunx; feta ut Armenia iacens  
 sub rupe tigris hoste conspecto exilit  
 aut iussa thyrsus quatere conceptum ferens  
 Maenas Lyaeum, dubia quo gressus ferat  
 haesit parumper; tum per Herculeos lares  
 attonita fertur, tota vix satis est domus.  
 incurrit, errat, sistit, in vultus dolor  
 processit omnis, pectori paene intimo

<sup>1</sup> Lyaeus.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

and form doomed to bring death to me, for thee alone is all my house undone, for that my sire refused me to Alcides and feared to have Hercules for son-in-law. But now must I betake me to a mistress' home.

### CHORUS

Why dost thou, foolish one, ever look back upon thy sire's illustrious kingdom and thine own misfortunes? Banish from thy face thy former fortune. Happy is he whoever knows how to bear the estate of slave or king and can match his countenance with either lot. For he who bears his ills with even soul has robbed misfortune of its strength and heaviness.

[*The scene changes to the space before the palace of Hercules and Deïanira at Trachin. Enter NURSE OF DEÏANIRA.*]

### NURSE

O how bloody is the rage that goads women on, when to mistress and to wife one house has opened! Scylla and Charybdis, whirling Sicilia's waves, are not more fearful, nor is any wild beast worse. For when her captive rival's beauty was revealed, and Iole shone like the unclouded day or a bright star in the clear night glittering, even as one distraught the wife of Hercules stood there with lowering gaze (as a tigress, lying big with young 'neath some Armenian rock, at sight of an enemy leaps forth; or as a maenad, bidden to toss the thyrsus, what time she bears the god<sup>1</sup> within her breast, in doubt where she shall take her way, stands still a while); then through the house of Hercules she madly dashed and scarce did all the house give space enough. Forward she rushes, wanders aimlessly, stands still. All her passion has come forth into her face; in her heart's

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nihil est relictum ; fletus insequitur minas.  
 nec unus habitus durat aut uno furit 250  
 contenta voltu ; nunc inardescunt genae,  
 pallor ruborem pellit et formas dolor  
 errat per omnes ; queritur, implorat, gemit.  
 Sonuere postes—ecce praecipiti gradu  
 secreta mentis ore confuso exerit.

### DEĪANIRA

Quamcumque partem sedis aetheriae premis,  
 coniunx Tonantis, mitte in Alciden feram  
 quae mihi satis sit. si qua fecundum caput  
 palude tota vastior serpens movet,  
 ignara vinci, si quid excessit feras 260  
 immane dirum horribile, quo viso Hercules  
 avertat oculos, hoc specu immenso exeat.  
 vel si ferae negantur, hanc animam precor  
 converte in aliquod—quodlibet possum malum  
 hac mente fieri. commoda effigiem mihi  
 parem dolori ; non capit pectus minas.  
 quid excutis telluris extremae sinus  
 orbemque versas ? quid rogas Ditem mala ?  
 omnes in isto pectore invenies feras  
 quas timeat ; odiis accipe hoc telum tuis. 270  
 ego sim noverca. perdere Alciden potes ;  
 perfer manus quocumque. quid cessas, dea ?  
 utere furente—quod iubes fieri nefas ?

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the Hydra.



## HERCULES OETAEUS

depths almost naught is left; tears follow hard on threats. Nor does one posture last, nor can one countenance contain her rage; now do her cheeks flame with wrath, now pallor drives the flush away, and from form to form her smarting anguish wanders; she wails, she begs, she groans.

<sup>254</sup> The doors have sounded—behold, at headlong pace she comes, with confused words revealing all the secrets of her soul.

[*Enter DEIANIRA from within the palace.*]

### DEIANIRA

Wife of the Thunderer, whatever portion of thy heavenly home thou treadest, send 'gainst Alcides a wild beast which shall suffice for me. If any serpent,<sup>1</sup> vaster than all the marsh, rears up its head, to conquest all unknown; if anything is worse than other beasts, monstrous, dire, horrible, from sight of which Hercules would turn away his eyes, let this from its huge den come forth. Or, if beasts be denied, change, I pray thee, this heart of mine into some—any evil thing there is can I with this present mind become. Give me a form to match my smarting grief; my breast cannot contain its rage. Why dost thou search out the folds of farthest earth, and overturn the world? Why dost ask ills of Dis? In such a breast thou'lt find all beasts to cause him dread; take thou this weapon for thy hate—let me be step-dame.<sup>2</sup> Thou canst destroy Alcides; use but these hands for any end thou wilt. Why dost thou hesitate, O goddess? Use me, the mad one—what

<sup>2</sup> She thinks of the possible children of Hercules by Iole and her chance for vengeance on them.



## HERCULES OETAEUS

crime dost bid me do? Decide. Why dost thou falter? Though now thou dost thyself shrink back, this rage of mine suffices.

### NURSE

Dear child, thy mad heart's plaints restrain, quench passion's fire and curb thy grief. Show thyself wife of Hercules.

### DEIANIRA

Shall captive Iole give brothers to my sons? Shall a slave become daughter-in-law of Jove? Together will flame and torrent never run, and the thirsty Bear<sup>1</sup> from the blue sea ne'er will drink—nor will I go unavenged. Though thou didst bear the heavens up, though the whole world owes its peace to thee, a worse pest than Hydra waits thee—the wrath of an angered wife. What fire as hot as this rages to heaven from burning Aetna? Whate'er has been conquered by thy might, this passion of mine shall conquer.—And shall a slave seize on my marriage bed? Till now did I fear monsters, but now is no evil more; the pests have vanished and in the place of beasts has come the hated harlot. O most high ruler of the gods, O lustrous Sun, I have been wife to Hercules but in his perils; the prayers which to the heavenly ones I raised have been granted to a slave; for a harlot have I been fortunate; for her have ye heard my prayers, O gods, for her is he safe returned.—O grief that can be satisfied with no revenge, seek thee some dreadful punishment, unthought, unspeakable; teach Juno's self what hate can do; she knows not to rage enough. For me didst thou do battle; on my account did Acheloüs dye his wandering waves with his own blood, when now he became a

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

cum lenta serpens fieret, in taurum truce  
 nunc flecteret serpente deposita minas,  
 et mille in hoste vinceres uno feras.  
 iam displicemus, capta praelata est mihi—  
 non praeferetur; qui dies thalami ultimus  
 nostri est futurus, hic erit vitae tuae.

Quid hoc? recedit animus et ponit minas.  
 iam cessat ira; quid miser langues dolor?  
 perdis furorem, coniugis tacitae fidem  
 mihi reddis iterum.—quid vetas flammam ali? 310  
 quid frangis ignes? hunc mihi serva impetum,  
 pares eamus<sup>1</sup>—non erit votis opus;  
 aderit noverca quae manus nostras regat  
 nec invocata.

### NVTRIX

Quod paras demens scelus?  
 perimes maritum cuius extremus dies  
 primusque laudes novit et caelo tenus  
 erecta terras fama suppositas habet?  
 Graiorum in istos terra consurget lares  
 domusque soceri prima et Aetolum genus  
 sternetur omne; saxa iam dudum ac faces 320  
 in te ferentur, vindicem tellus suum  
 defendet omnis. una quot poenas dabis!  
 effugere terras crede et humanum genus  
 te posse—fulmen genitor Alcidae gerit.  
 iam iam minaces ire per caelum faces  
 specta et tonantem fulmine excusso diem.  
 mortem quoque ipsam, quam putas tutam, time;

<sup>1</sup> So *Leo and Richter*, following an emendation of *Madvig*:  
 patres erimus *E*: pares eramus *A*.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

stubborn serpent, now to a fierce bull changed his threats, the serpent form discarded, and thou in that one foe didst conquer a thousand beasts. But now I please thee not; a captive is preferred to me—but she shall not be preferred; for that day which shall end our marriage joys shall end thy life.

<sup>307</sup> But what is this? My passion dies away and abates its threats. Now anger ceases; why dost thou languish, O wretched grief? Thou givest o'er thy madness, makest me again the faithful, uncomplaining wife.—Why dost forbid the feeding of the flames? Why checkest the fire? Keep but this passion in me; hand in hand let us go on—there will be no need of prayers; a step-dame<sup>1</sup> will be near to direct my hands and unbesought.

### NURSE

What crime, distraught one, dost thou purpose? Wilt slay thy husband whose praises the evening and the morning<sup>2</sup> know full well, whose fame, towering to the sky, holds all the world beneath? The land of Greece will rise to defend that home, and this thy father's<sup>3</sup> house and the whole Aetolian race will be the first to be o'erthrown; soon rocks and firebrands will be hurled against thee, since every land will rally to its defender. How many penalties wilt thou, one woman, pay! Suppose thou canst escape the world and the race of men—the father of Alcides wields the thunder-bolt. Now, even now behold his threat'ning fires flashing athwart the sky, and the heavens thundering with the lightning shock. Even death itself, which thou deemest a place of safety,

<sup>1</sup> Juno.           <sup>2</sup> *i.e.* East and West.

<sup>3</sup> Deianira's father, the father-in-law (*socer*) of Hercules.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dominatur illic patruus Alcidae tui.  
quocumque perges, misera, cognatos deos  
illic videbis.

DEIANIRA

Maximum fieri scelus 330  
et ipsa fateor, sed dolor fieri iubet.

NVTRIX

Moriere.

DEIANIRA

Moriar Herculis nempe incluti  
coniunx nec ullus nocte discussa dies  
viduam notabit nec meos paelix toros  
captiva capiet. ante ab occasu dies  
nascetur, Indos ante glacialis polus  
Scythasve tepida Phoebus inficiet rota,  
quam me relictam Thessalae aspiciant nurus.  
meo iugales sanguine extinguiam faces.  
aut pereat aut me perimat; elisis feris 340  
et coniugem addat, inter Herculeos licet  
me quoque labores numeret; Alcidae toros  
moritura certe corpore amplectar meo.  
ire, ire ad umbras Herculis nuptam libet,  
sed non inultam. si quid ex nostro Hercule  
concepit Iole, manibus evellam meis  
ante et per ipsas paelicem invadam faces.  
me nuptiali victimam feriat die  
infestus, Iolen dum supra exanimem ruam—  
felix iacet quicumque quos odit premit. 350

NVTRIX

Quid ipsa flammis pascis et vastum foves  
ultro dolorem? misera, quid cassum times?

<sup>1</sup> Pluto, the brother of Jove.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Iole's.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

fear ; for there the uncle<sup>1</sup> of thine Alcides reigns.  
Turn where thou wilt, poor woman, there wilt thou  
see his kindred gods.

DEIANIRA

That I am doing a fearful crime, e'en I myself confess ; but passion bids me do it.

NURSE

Thou'lt die.

DEIANIRA

Yea, truly, will I die, but the wife of glorious Hercules ; neither shall any dawn, banishing night, brand me as widow ; nor shall captive creature make capture of my bed. Sooner shall day be born in the western sky, sooner shall Indians grow pale 'neath the icy pole, or Scythians tan 'neath Phoebus' burning car, than shall the dames of Thessaly see me abandoned. With my own blood will I quench her<sup>2</sup> marriage torches. Either let him die or do me to death. To slaughtered beasts let him add wife as well, and let him count me, too, 'mongst the toils of Hercules ; to Alcides' couch, aye with my dying body, will I cling. Ah, sweet, 'tis sweet to go to the shades as bride of Hercules,—but not without my vengeance. If Iole from my Hercules has conceived a child, with mine own hands will I tear it forth untimely, and by her very wedding torches' glare will I face the harlot. Let him in wrath slay me as victim on his nuptial day, so I but fall on the corpse of Iole. Happy he lies who crushes those he hates.

NURSE

Why dost thyself feed thy flames and wantonly foster an unmeasured grief? Poor soul, why dost thou cherish a needless fear? He did love Iole ;

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dilexit Iolen; nempe cum staret parens  
regisque natam peteret. in famulae locum  
regina cecidit; perdidit vires amor  
multumque ab illa traxit infelix status.  
illicita amantur, excidit quidquid licet.

DEIANIRA

Fortuna amorem peior inflammat magis;  
amat vel ipsum quod caret patrio lare,  
quod nudus auro crinis et gemma iacet, 360  
ipsas misericors fors an aerumnas amat;  
hoc usitatum est Herculi, captas amat.

NVTRIX

Dilecta Priami nempe Dardanii soror  
concessa famula est; adice quot nuptas prius,  
quot virgines dilexit. erravit vagus.  
Arcadia nempe virgo, Palladios choros  
dum nectit, Auge, vim stupri passa excidit,  
nullamque amoris Hercules retinet notam.  
referam quid alias? nempe Thespiades vacant 370  
brevique in illas arsit Alcides face.  
hospes Timoli Lydiam fovit nurum  
et amore captus ad leves sedit colus,  
udum feroci stamen intorquens manu.  
nempe illa cervix spolia deposuit ferae  
crinemque mitra pressit et famulus stetit,  
hirtam Sabaea marcidus myrrha comam.  
ubique caluit, sed levi caluit face.

<sup>1</sup> Hesione.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

but 'twas while yet her father reigned secure, and  
'twas a king's daughter that he sought. The  
princess has now fallen to the place of slave; love  
has lost its power, and much from her charm her  
unhappy lot has stolen. What is forbidden we love;  
if granted it falls from our desire.

### DEIANIRA

Nay, but fallen fortunes fan hotter the flames of  
love; for this very cause he loves her, that she hath  
lost her father's house, that her hair lies stripped of  
gold and gems; out of pity, perchance, he loves her  
very woes; 'tis the wont of Hercules to love captive  
maids.

### NURSE

'Tis true he loved the captive sister<sup>1</sup> of Dardanian  
Priam, but he gave her to another;<sup>2</sup> add all the  
dames, all the maids he loved before. A wanderer  
on earth, a wanderer in love was he. Why, the  
Arcadian maiden, Auge, while leading Pallas' sacred  
dance, suffered his lust's violence, but fell from his  
regard, and Hercules retains no trace of his love for  
her. Why mention others? The Thespiades are  
forgotten; for them with but a passing flame Alcides  
burned. When a guest on Timolus, he caressed the  
Lydian woman<sup>3</sup> and, daft with love, sat beside her  
swift distaff, twisting the moistened thread with  
doughty fingers. His shoulders, indeed, had laid  
aside the famous lion's-skin, a turban confined his  
hair, and there he stood like any slave, his shaggy  
locks dripping with Sabaean myrrh. Everywhere has  
he burned with love, but burned with feeble flame.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* to Telamon, who assisted him in the capture of Troy.

<sup>3</sup> Omphale, queen of Lydia.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

DEIANIRA

Haerere amantes post vagos ignes solent.

NUTRIX

Famulamne et hostis praeferet natam tibi?

DEIANIRA

Vt laeta <sup>1</sup> silvas forma vernantes habet,	380
cum nemora nuda primus investit tepor,	
at cum solutos expulit Boreas Notos	
et saeva totas bruma discussit comas,	
deforme solis aspicias truncis nemus;	
sic nostra longum forma percurrens iter	
deperdit aliquid semper et fulget minus,	
nec illa vetus <sup>2</sup> est. quidquid in nobis fuit	
olim petatum cecidit, aut pariter labat. <sup>3</sup>	
aetas citato senior eripuit gradu, <sup>4</sup>	390
materque multum rapuit ex illo mihi,	389
vides ut altum famula non perdat decus?	391
cessere cultus penitus et paedor sedet;	
tamen per ipsas fulget aerumnas decor	
nihilque ab illa casus et fatum grave	
nisi regna traxit. hic meum pectus timor,	
altrix, lacessit, hic rapit somnos pavor.	
praeclara totis gentibus coniunx eram	
thalamosque nostros invido voto nurus	
optabat omnis; quaeve mens quicquam deos	
orabat ullos, nuribus Argolicis fui	400
mensura voti. quem Iovi socerum parem,	
altrix, habebō? quis sub hoc mundo mihi	

<sup>1</sup> alta MSS., corrected by Madvig.

<sup>2</sup> So Richter: nec illa Venus E: haec illa Venus Kiessling, followed by Leo.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

DEIANIRA

Oft after wandering fires lovers have clung to one.

NURSE

A slave and daughter of his foe shall he prefer to thee?

DEIANIRA

As a gladsome beauty covers the budding groves when the first warmth of spring clothes the bare forest trees, but, when the North-wind has put the mild South to flight, and savage winter has shaken off all the leaves, thou seest but a shapeless grove of trunks alone; so does my beauty, pursuing a lengthening way, lose something ever, and less brightly gleams, nor is it as of yore. Whate'er in me was sought in former days has vanished or is failing along with me. Old age with hastening steps hath taken much, and much of it hath motherhood stolen from me. But seest thou how this slave hath not lost her glorious charm? Gone are her adornings and squalor clings close upon her; and yet through her very distresses beauty shines and naught have misfortune and this hard stroke of fate stolen from her save her realm. O nurse, this fear of her racks my heart; this dread doth destroy my slumbers. I was a wife celebrated in every land, and for marriage such as mine all women prayed with envious prayer; or whatever soul asked aught of any gods, for the prayers of Grecian dames I was the measure. What father-in-law like to Jove, O Nurse, shall I e'er have? Who beneath these heavens will be given me as husband?

<sup>3</sup> So Richter: et . . . labat *E*: et partu labat *A*: Leo conjectures labor.

<sup>4</sup> Leo deletes this line.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dabitur maritus? ipse qui Alcidae imperat  
facibus suis me iungat Eurystheus licet,  
minus est. toris caruisse regnantis leve est:  
alte illa cecidit quae viro caret Hercule.

NVTRIX

Conciliat animos coniugum partus fere.

DEIANIRA

Hic<sup>1</sup> ipse forsan dividet partus toros.

NVTRIX

Famula illa trahitur interim donum tibi.

DEIANIRA

Hic quem per urbes ire praeclarum vides 410  
et fulva tergo spolia gestantem ferae,  
qui regna miseris donat et celsis rapit,  
vasta gravatus horridam clava manum,  
cuius triumphos ultimi Seres canunt  
et quisquis alius orbe concepto<sup>2</sup> iacet,—  
levis est nec illum gloriae stimulat decor;  
errat per orbem, non ut aequetur Iovi  
nec ut per urbes magnus Argolicas eat:  
quod amet requirit, virginum thalamos petit. 420  
si qua est negata, rapitur; in populos furit,  
nuptas ruinis quaerit et vitium impotens  
virtus vocatur. cecidit Oechalia inclita  
unusque Titan vidit atque unus dies  
stantem et cadentem; causa bellandi est amor.

<sup>1</sup> So Richter after emendation of N. Heinsius: sic MSS. and Leo.

<sup>2</sup> Leo †concepto, with SA: consepcto ζ: Grotius conjectures consumpto: Gronovius conpacto.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

Though Eurystheus' self, who rules Alcides, should wed me with his own torches, 'tis not enough. 'Tis a trivial thing to have lost a royal couch; but from a far height has she fallen who loses Hercules.

NURSE

Children ofttimes win back the love of husbands.

DEIANIRA

These children themselves perchance will dissolve the bond.<sup>1</sup>

NURSE

Meanwhile that slave is brought as gift to thee.

DEIANIRA

He whom thou seest going, big with fame, from town to town, wearing the spoil of a tawny lion on his back; who gives kingdoms to the lowly and takes them from the proud, his dread hand laden with a massive club; whose triumphs the far off Seres sing, and whoe'er besides dwells in the whole known world,—he is a trifle, nor does the charm of glory urge him on. He goes wandering o'er the earth, not in the hope that he may rival Jove, nor that he may fare illustrious through Grecian cities. Some one to love he seeks; his quest is maidens' chambers. If any is refused him, she is ravished; against nations doth he rage, midst ruins seeks his brides, and unrestrained excess is called heroic. Oechalia, the illustrious, fell; one sun, one day beheld her stand and fall; and passion was the

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* if one woman's child holds her husband to her, another's child (Iole's) will turn him from the old to his new love.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

totiens timebit Herculi natam parens  
 quotiens negabit, hostis est quotiens socer  
 fieri recusat; si gener non fit, ferit.  
 post haec quid istas innocens servo manus,  
 donec furentem simulet ac saeva manu  
 intendat arcus meque natumque opprimat? 430  
 sic coniuges expellit Alcides suas,  
 haec sunt repudia. nec potest fieri nocens;  
 terris videri sceleribus causam suis  
 fecit novercam. quid stupes, segnis furor?  
 scelus occupandum est; perage dum fervet manus.

NVTRIX

Perimes maritum?

DEIANIRA

Paelicis certe meae.

NVTRIX

At Iove creatum.

DEIANIRA

Nempe et Alcmena satum.

NVTRIX

Ferrone?

DEIANIRA

Ferro.

NVTRIX

Si nequis?

DEIANIRA

Perimam dolo.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

mother of that strife. As oft as a father shall deny his child to Hercules, and refuse to be the father of his foe, so oft shall he have cause to fear; if he is not accepted as a son, he smites. After all this, why do I harmlessly keep back these hands until he feign another fit of madness,<sup>1</sup> with deadly hand bend his bow, and slay me and my son?<sup>2</sup> Thus does Alcides put away his wives; such is his manner of divorce. Yet naught can make him guilty! He has made the world believe his step-dame answerable for his crimes. Why art inactive then, thou sluggish rage? His crime must be forestalled; act while thy hand is hot!

NURSE

Wilt slay thy husband?

DEIANIRA

Truly, my rival's husband.

NURSE

But the son of Jove?

DEIANIRA

Yes, but the son of Alcmena, too.

NURSE

With the sword?

DEIANIRA

The sword.

NURSE

If thou canst not?

DEIANIRA

I'll slay with guile.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the death of Megara and her sons at the hands of mad Hercules.

<sup>2</sup> Hyllus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVTRIX

Quis iste furor est ?

DEIANIRA

Quem meus coniunx docet.

NVTRIX

Quem nec noverca potuit, hunc perimes virum? 440

DEIANIRA

Caelestis ira quos premit, miseros facit ;  
humana nullos.

NVTRIX

Parce, miseranda, et time.

DEIANIRA

Contempsit omnes ille qui mortem prius ;  
libet ire in enses.

NVTRIX

Maior admissio tuus,  
alumna, dolor est ; culpa par odium exigat.  
cur saeva modicis statuis ? ut laesa es dole.

DEIANIRA

Leve esse credis paelicem nuptae malum ?  
quidquid dolorem pascit, hoc nimium puta.

NVTRIX

Amorne clari fugit Alcidae tibi ?

---

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* whatever else.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

NURSE

What madness that?

DEIANIRA

That which my husband teaches me.

NURSE

Whom e'en his step-dame could not slay—wilt thou slay him?

DEIANIRA

Celestial wrath but makes wretched those on whom it falls; man's wrath makes them naught.

NURSE

Spare him, O wretched one, and fear.

DEIANIRA

He has scorned all men, who first has scorn of death; 'tis sweet to go against the sword.

NURSE

Thy smart is too great for the offence, my child; let his fault claim but equal hate. Why dost so fiercely judge a light offence? According as thou hast been injured, grieve.

DEIANIRA

Thinkst thou a mistress is light evil for a wife? Whatever<sup>1</sup> fosters anguish, count this<sup>2</sup> beyond all bounds.

NURSE

Has thy love for glorious Alcides fled away?

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the situation described in the preceding line.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

### DEIANIRA

450

Non fugit, altrix, remanet et penitus sedet  
 fixus medullis, crede ; sed magnus dolor  
 iratus amor est.

### NYTRIX

460

462

461

460

462

461

Artibus magicis fere  
 coniugia nuptae precibus admixtis ligant.  
 vernare iussi frigore in medio nemus  
 missumque fulmen stare ; concussi fretum  
 cessante vento, turbidum explicui mare  
 et sicca tellus fontibus patuit novis ;  
 habuere motum saxa, discussi fores <sup>1</sup>  
 umbrasque Ditis,<sup>2</sup> et mea iussi prece  
 manes locuntur, tacuit infernus canis ;  
 nox media solem vidit et noctem dies <sup>3</sup> ;  
 mare terra caelum et Tartarus servit mihi  
 nihilque leges ad meos cantus tenet.  
 flectemus illum, carmina invenient iter.

### DEIANIRA

470

Quas Pontus herbas generat aut quas Thessala  
 sub rupe Pindus alit <sup>4</sup> ubi inveniam malum  
 cui cedat ille ? carmine in terras mago  
 descendat astris Luna desertis licet  
 et bruma messes videat et cantu fugax  
 stet deprehensum fulmen et versa vice  
 medius coactis ferveat stellis dies :  
 non flectet illum.

<sup>1</sup> fores  $\omega$  : regarded as corrupt by Leo, who conjectures inferos : arbores Birt.

<sup>2</sup> So Richter : Leo umbrae stetistis, with  $\omega$ .

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

DEIANIRA

Not fled, dear Nurse ; it still remains, believe me, deep-seated and fixed in my heart's core ; but outraged love is poignant misery.

NURSE

By magic arts and prayers commingled do wives oft hold fast their husbands. I have bidden the trees grow green in the midst of winter's frost, and the hurtling lightning stand ; I have stirred up the deep, though the winds were still, and have calmed the heaving sea ; the parched earth has opened with fresh fountains ; rocks have found motion ; the gates have I rent asunder and the shades of Dis, and at my prayer's demand the spirits talk, the infernal dog is still ; midnight has seen the sun, and day, the night ; the sea, land, heaven and Tartarus yield to my will, and naught holds to law against my incantations. Bend him we will ; my charms will find the way.

DEIANIRA

What herbs does Pontus grow, or what does Pindus nourish 'neath the rocks of Thessaly,<sup>1</sup> wherein I may find a bane to conquer him ? Though Luna should leave the stars and come down to earth, obedient to magic ; though winter should see ripe grain ; though the swift bolt should stand still, arrested by thy charm ; though times be changed, and midday burn amid the crowding stars : 'twill not bend him.

<sup>1</sup> Where Medea, the famous witch, gathered magic herbs.

<sup>3</sup> *Lines 461, 462 transposed by Bothe.*

<sup>4</sup> Leo, †aluit, with *E*: corrected by Peiper, followed by Richter.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVTRIX

Vicit et superos Amor.

DEIANIRA

Vincetur uni forsā et spoliū dabit  
Amorque summus fiet Alcidae labor.—  
sed te per omne caelitum numen precor,  
per hunc timorem : quidquid arcani apparo  
penitus recondas et fide tacita premas.

NVTRIX

Quid istud est quod esse secretum petis?

DEIANIRA

Non tela sunt, non arma, non ignis minax.

NVTRIX

Praestare fateor posse me tacitam fidem, 480  
si scelere careat ; interim scelus est fides.

DEIANIRA

Circumspice agedum, ne quis arcana occupet,  
partemque in omnem vultus inquirens eat.

NVTRIX

En locus ab omni tutus arbitrio vacat.

DEIANIRA

Est in remoto regiae sedis loco  
arcana tacitus nostra defendens specus,  
non ille primos accipit soles locus,

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

NURSE

But love has conquered e'en heavenly gods.

DEIANIRA

By one<sup>1</sup> alone, perchance, will he be conquered and yield his spoils, and Love become Alcides' crowning toil.—But thee by all the deities of heaven I pray, by this my fear: whatever secret thing I am preparing, hide it deep, and in faithful silence hold it fast.

NURSE

What is it that thou seekst to keep in secret?

DEIANIRA

It is not spears, not arms, not threatening fire.

NURSE

That I can keep faithful silence I confess, if it be free from crime; but silence itself sometimes is criminal.

DEIANIRA

Come, look about, lest someone grasp my secret, and in all directions turn thy questful glance.

NURSE

Behold the place is safe and free from all observers.

DEIANIRA

In a remote corner of the royal dwelling is a recess that silently guards my secret. Neither the first rays of the sun can reach that spot, nor yet his

<sup>1</sup> Hercules.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

non ille seros, cum ferens Titan diem<sup>1</sup>  
 lassum rubenti mergit Oceano iugum<sup>2</sup>  
 illic amoris pignus Herculei latet. 490  
 altrix, fatebor : auctor est Nessus mali  
 quem gravida Nephele Thessalo genuit duci,  
 qua celsus<sup>3</sup> astris inserit Pindus caput  
 ultraque nubes Othrys eductus riget.  
 namque ut subactus Herculis clava horridi  
 Achelous omnes facilis in species dari  
 tandem peractis omnibus patuit feris  
 unoque turpe subdidit cornu caput,  
 me coniugem dum victor Alcides habet,  
 repetebat Argos.

Forte per campos vagus 500  
 Euenos altum gurgitem in pontum ferens  
 iam paene summis turbidus silvis erat.  
 transire Nessus verticem solitus vadis  
 pretium poposcit. meque iam dorso ferens  
 qua iungit hominem spina deficiens equo,  
 frangebat ipsas fluminis tumidi minas.  
 iam totus undis Nessus exierat ferox  
 medioque adhuc errabat Alcides vado,  
 vasto rapacem verticem scindens gradu,  
 at ille ut esse vidit Alciden procul : 510  
 " tu praeda nobis " inquit " et coniunx eris ;  
 prohibetur undis," meque complexus ferens  
 gressum citabat.

Non tenent undae Herculem :  
 " infide vector " inquit " immixti licet  
 Ganges et Hister vallibus iunctis eant,

<sup>1</sup> *Leo* thinks there is a lacuna after line 488 and fills it thus :  
 exurgit undis, cumque germanam vocans.

<sup>2</sup> *So Richter* : diem *Leo* with *E*.

<sup>3</sup> *So A* : †trepidus *Leo*, with *E*, conjecturing aetherius :  
 rigidus *O. Rossbach*.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

last, when Titan, bringing the day to rest, plunges his weary yoke in the ruddy sea. There lurks the surety of Alcides' love. Nurse, I'll confess to thee: the giver of the baleful thing was Nessus, whom Nephele, heavy with child, to the Thessalian chieftain<sup>1</sup> bore, where lofty Pindus to the stars lifts up his head and Othrys stands stiff, towering above the clouds. For when Achelöus, forced by the club of dread Hercules to shift with ready ease from form to form, his beast-shapes all exhausted, at last stood forth and bowed his head, marred and with single horn,<sup>2</sup> victorious Hercules, with me, his bride, set out for Argos.

<sup>500</sup> It chanced that Evenus, wandering through the plains, rolling his deep eddies to the sea, was now in flood almost to the tree-tops' level. Nessus, accustomed to ford the whirling stream, offered to take me over for a price; and, bearing me on his back, where the backbone, leaving the equine enters the human form, soon was stemming even the threatening waves of the swollen flood. Now had wild Nessus entirely left the waters and Alcides was still wandering in mid-stream, cleaving the down-sweeping flood with his mighty strides; but when the centaur saw Alcides still afar, "Thou shalt be spoil of mine," he cried, "and wife; he is kept from thee by the waves"; and, clasping me in his arms as he bore me on, was galloping away.

<sup>513</sup> But the waves did not hold Hercules; "O faithless ferryman," he cried, "though Ganges and Hister commingled in united beds should flow, I

<sup>1</sup> Ixion.

<sup>2</sup> Hercules had wrenched away one horn from Achelöus while the latter was fighting in bull-form.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

vincemus ambos, consequar telo fugam." praecessit arcus verba ; tum longum ferens harundo vulnus tenuit haerentem fugam mortemque fixit. ille, iam quaerens diem, tabum fluentem<sup>1</sup> volneris dextra excipit 520 traditque nobis unguulae insertum suae, quam forte saeva sciderat avolsam manu. tunc verba moriens addit ; " hoc " inquit " magae dixere amorem posse defigi malo ; hoc docta Mycale Thessalas docuit nurus, unam inter omnes Luna quam sequitur magas astris relictis. inlitas vestes dabis hac " inquit " ipsa tabe, si paelex tuos invisita thalamos tulerit et coniunx levis aliam parenti dederit altisono nurum. 530 hoc nulla lux conspiciat, hoc tenebrae tegant tantum remotae ; sic potens vires suas sanguis tenebit." verba deprenidit quies mortemque lassis intulit membris sopor.

Tu, quam meis admittit arcanis fides, perge ut nitentem virus in vestem datum mentem per artus adeat et tacitum means<sup>2</sup> intret medullas

### NVTRIX

Ocius iussa exsequar,  
alumna, precibus tu deum invictum advoca,  
qui certa tenera tela dimittit manu. 540

<sup>1</sup> So *E*: *Leo* fluente : tabem fluentis *A*.

<sup>2</sup> So *Richter* : tactus sinus *A* : tacitus mas *E*: *Leo* tactu sinus.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

shall o'ercome them both and with my shaft o'ertake thy flight." His bow was swifter than his words. Then the reedy shaft, wounding from afar, stayed his hampered flight and implanted death. The Centaur, now groping for light, in his right hand caught the poison<sup>1</sup> flowing from the wound, and this he gave me, pouring it into his hoof, which with mad hand he had chanced to wrench away. Then with his dying words he spoke: "By this charm magicians have said love can be firmly fixed; so were Thessalian wives by the wise Mycale instructed, whom only, midst all wonder-working crones, Luna will forsake the stars and follow. A garment, smeared with this very gore, shalt thou give to him, if ever a hated mistress should usurp thy chamber, and thy fickle husband should give another daughter to his high-thundering sire. This let no light behold; let darkness only, thick and hidden, cover it; so shall the potent blood retain its powers." Silence seized on his words and to his weary limbs came the sleep of death.

<sup>585</sup> Now do thou, whom loyalty makes sharer of my secret, haste thee that the poison, upon a glittering robe besmeared, go through his heart and limbs and, stealing silently, enter his very marrow.

### NURSE

With speed will I do thy bidding, dearest child; and do thou pray to the god<sup>2</sup> invincible, who with tender hand doth send unerring shafts. [*Exit* NURSE.]

<sup>1</sup> Communicated to the blood by the Hydra-poisoned arrow of Hercules.

<sup>2</sup> Cupid.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## DEIANIRA

Te deprecor, quem mundus et superi timent  
 et aequor et qui fulmen Aetnaeum quatit,  
 timende matri te aliger saevae puer:  
 intende certa spiculum velox manu,  
 non ex sagittis levibus. e numero precor  
 graviore prome quod tuae nondum manus  
 misere in aliquem; non levi telo est opus,  
 ut amare possit Hercules. rigidas manus  
 intende et arcum cornibus iunctis para.  
 nunc, nunc sagittam prome qua quondam hor-  
 ridum

550

Iovem petisti, fulmine abiecto deus  
 cum fronte subita tumuit et rabidum mare  
 taurus puellae vector Assyriae scidit;  
 immitte amorem, vincat exempla omnia—  
 amare discat coniugem. si quas decor  
 Ioles inussit pectori Herculeo faces,  
 extingue totas, perbibat formam mei.  
 tu fulminantem saepe domuisti Iovem,  
 tu furva nigri sceptrum gestantem poli,  
 turbae ducem maioris et dominum Stygis;  
 tuque o noverca gravior irata deus,  
 cape hunc triumphum solus et vince Herculem.

560

## NVTRIX

Prolata vis est quaeque Palladia colu  
 lassavit omnem texta famularum manum.  
 nunc congeratur virus et vestis bibat

<sup>1</sup> The bolts of Jove were forged in Vulcan's smithy under Aetna.      <sup>2</sup> Europa.

## HERCULES OETAEBUS

DEIANIRA

Thee do I pray, by earth and heaven-dwellers held in fear, by sea, by him who wields Aetnaean<sup>1</sup> thunderbolts, and by thy ruthless mother to be feared, O winged boy; with unerring hand aim a swift shaft, and not of thy lighter arrows. Choose thee, I pray, one of thy heavier shafts, which thy hands have ne'er yet shot at any; for no light weapon must thou use that Hercules may feel the power of love. Stretch thy hands stiffly forth, and bend thy bow until the tips shall meet. Now, now that shaft let loose with which once thou aimedst at Jove the terrible, what time the god threw down his thunderbolt and as a bull, with horns quick-sprouting on his brow, clove through the boisterous sea, bearing the Assyrian maid.<sup>2</sup> Fill him with love; let him outstrip all precedents,—let him learn to love his wife. If Iole's beauty hath kindled fires in the breast of Hercules, extinguish them every one, and of my beauty let him deeply drink. Oft hast thou conquered Jove, the thunderer, oft him who wields the dark sceptre of the dusky world, king of the greater throng, and lord of Styx; and now, O god more dreadful than a step-dame's wrath, win thou this triumph all alone, and conquer Hercules.

[*Re-enter NURSE, with robe and charm.*]

NURSE

The charm has been brought out and a robe from Pallas'<sup>3</sup> distaff, at whose weaving thy maidens all have wrought with weary hands. Now let the poison be prepared and let the robe of Hercules

<sup>3</sup> The arts of spinning and weaving were of Pallas' invention.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Herculea pestem ; precibus augebo malum.

In tempore ipso navus occurrit Lichas ;  
celanda vis est dira, ne pateant doli.

### DEÏANIRA

O quod superbae non habent umquam domus,  
fidele semper regibus nomen Licha, 570  
cape hos amictus, nostra quos nevit manus,  
dum vagus in orbe fertur et victus mero  
tenet feroci Lydiam gremio nurum,  
dum poscit Iolen. sed iecur fors horridum  
flectam merendo ; merita vicerunt malos.  
non ante coniunx induat vestes iube  
quam ture flammam pascat et placet deos,  
cana rigentem populo cinctus comam.

Ipsa in penates regios gressus feram  
precibusque Amoris horridi matrem colam. 580  
vos, quas paternis extuli comites focus,  
Calydoniae lugete deflendam vicem.

### CHORVS

Flemus casus, Oenei, tuos  
comitum primos turba per annos,

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

soak up its magic power; and by my incantations will I increase the charm.

[*While they are occupying themselves with the robe, LICHAS is seen approaching.*]

<sup>567</sup> But in the nick of time the zealous Lichas comes; the dire potency of the robe must be concealed lest our wiles be punished.

[*Enter LICHAS.*]

### DEIANIRA

O Lichas, name ever loyal to thy lords, though loyalty proud houses ne'er possess, take thou this garment which my hands have woven while he was wandering o'er the earth, or, spent with wine, was holding in his doughty arms the Lydian queen, or seeking Iole. And yet, perchance, I may turn his rough heart to me again by my deserving; for deserts oft conquer those who work us ill. Before my husband puts this garment on, bid him burn incense and appease the gods, his stiff locks wreathed the while with hoary poplar.

[*LICHAS takes the robe and departs upon his mission.*]

<sup>579</sup> I will myself pass within the royal palace and with prayers worship the mother of relentless Love.

[*To her Aetolian attendants.*]

Do ye, whom I have brought as comrades from my father's house, ye Calydonian maids, bewail the fortune that demands your tears. [*Exit.*]

### CHORUS OF AETOLIAN WOMEN

O child of Oeneus, truly do we weep for thy misfortunes, the band of thy companions through thy childhood years, we weep thy couch dishonoured,

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

flemus dubios, veneranda, toros.  
 nos Acheloi tecum solitae  
 pulsare vadum, cum iam tumidas  
 vere peracto poneret undas  
 gracilisque gradu serperet aequo,  
 nec praecipitem volveret amnem 590  
 flavus rupto fonte Lycormas;  
 nos Palladias ire per aras  
 et virgineos celebrare choros,  
 nos Cadmeis orgia ferre  
 tecum solitae condita cistis,  
 cum iam pulso sidere brumae  
 tertia soles evocat aestas  
 et spiciferae concessa deae  
 Attica mystas cludit Eleusin.  
 nunc quoque casum quemcumque times, 600  
 fidas comites accipe fati;  
 nam rara fides ubi iam melior  
 fortuna ruit.

Tu quicumque es qui scepra tenes,  
 licet omne tua vulgus in aula  
 centum pariter limina pulset;  
 cum tot populis stipatus eas,  
 in tot populis vix una fides.  
 tenet auratum limen Erinys,  
 et cum magnae patuere fores, 610  
 intrant fraudes cautique doli  
 ferrumque latens; cumque in populos  
 prodire paras, comes invidia est.

<sup>1</sup> Identified by Strabo with the Evenus, a neighbouring river of Aetolia.

<sup>2</sup> The sacred objects used in the orgiastic worship of Bacchus.

<sup>3</sup> Called in the text Cadmaean from Cadmus, founder of Thebes.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

lady whom we revere. Often with thee have we splashed in Acheloüs' shallows, when now, the springtime passed, he allayed his swollen waters and, a slender stream, crept on with quiet course, and Lycormas<sup>1</sup> no longer rolled his headlong waters on, dark-hued with bursting fountains. Together were we wont to fare to Pallas' shrines and join in virgin dances, to bear the mysteries<sup>2</sup> in Theban<sup>3</sup> baskets hidden, when now the wintry star had fled, and each third summer<sup>4</sup> called forth the sun, and when the grain-giving goddess'<sup>5</sup> sacred seat, Attic Eleusis, shut in her mystic worshippers. Now too, whatever lot thou fearest, take us as trusted comrades of thy fates; for rare is loyalty when now better fortune fails.

<sup>604</sup> O thou,<sup>6</sup> whoe'er thou art who the sceptre holdest, though all the people throng within thy hall, pressing together through its thousand doors; though when thou walkst abroad whole nations hem thee round; in all those nations scarce one man is true. Erinys keeps the gilded gate, and when the great doors have opened wide, there come in treacheries and cunning wiles and the lurking dagger; and when amongst the people thou wouldst walk, envy walks by thy side. As often as dawn

<sup>4</sup> The festival of Bacchus was celebrated every third year in honour of his conquest of India.

<sup>5</sup> Ceres. The reference is to the Eleusinian mysteries. All these festivals these women had been wont to attend together in childhood.

<sup>6</sup> Addressed to kings in general.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

noctem quotiens summovet Eos,  
 regem totiens credite nasci.  
 pauci reges, non regna colunt ;  
 plures fulgor concitat aulae.  
 cupit hic regi proximus ipsi  
 clarus latas ire per urbes ;  
 urit miserum gloria pectus. 620  
 cupit hic gazis implere famem ;  
 nec tamen omnis plaga gemmiferi  
 sufficit Histri nec tota sitim  
 Lydia vincit nec quae Zephyro  
 subdita tellus stupet aurato  
 flumine clarum radiare Tagum ;  
 nec si totus serviat Hebrus  
 ruraque dives iungat Hydaspes  
 intraque suos currere fines  
 spectet toto flumine Gangen. 630  
 avidis, avidis natura parum est.

Colit hic reges regumque lares,  
 non ut presso vomere semper  
 numquam cesset curvus arator  
 vel mille secent arva coloni ;  
 solas optat quas ponat opes.  
 colit hic reges, calcet ut omnes  
 perdatque aliquos nullumque levet ;  
 tantum ut noceat, cupit esse potens. 640  
 Quota pars moritur tempore fati !  
 quos felices Cynthia vidit,  
 vidit miseros enata dies.  
 rarum est felix idemque senex.  
 caespes Tyrio mollior ostro  
 solet inpavidos ducere somnos ;

---

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* so many dangers to the king's life lurk in the night that if he survives these it is as if he were born anew in the morning.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

drives out the night, so often believe a king is born.<sup>1</sup> Few worship kings and not their thrones; for 'tis the glitter of the royal hall that stirs the most. One man is eager to fare illustrious through broad towns next to the king himself; for greed of glory burns his wretched breast. Another longs with treasure to appease his hunger; and yet not all gem-bearing Hister's tract would satisfy, nor would the whole of Lydia sate his thirst, nor the land<sup>2</sup> which, lying 'neath the west-wind, marvels to see bright Tagus gleam with golden water; nor if all Hebrus were his own, and rich Hydaspes should be added to his fields, and he should gaze on Ganges flowing with all its stream within his boundaries. For greed, for greed all nature is too little.

<sup>632</sup> One man courts kings and homes of kings, not that his ploughman, forever stooping o'er the deep-driven share, may never cease his toil, or that the peasantry may till his thousand fields; but wealth alone, which he may hoard away, he seeks. Another man courts kings that he may trample all, may ruin many and establish none; he covets power only to harm therewith.

<sup>640</sup> How few live out their allotted span! Whom Cynthia<sup>3</sup> saw in happiness, the new-born day sees wretched. 'Tis rare to find old age and happiness in one. The couch of turf, softer than Tyrian purple, oft soothes to fearless slumber; but gilded

<sup>2</sup> Spain.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* the moon of the previous night.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

aurea rumpunt tecta quietem  
 vigilesque trahit purpura noctes  
 o si pateant pectora ditum !  
 quantos intus sublimis agit  
 fortuna metus ! Bruttia Coro 650  
 pulsante fretum lenior unda est.  
 pectora pauper segura gerit ;  
 tenet e patula pocula fago,  
 sed non trepida tenet illa manu ;  
 carpit faciles vilesque cibos,  
 sed non strictos respicit enses.  
 aurea miscet pocula sanguis.

Coniunx modico nupta marito  
 non disposito clara monili  
 gestat pelagi dona rubentis, 660  
 nec gemmiferas detrahit aures  
 lapis Eoa lectus in unda,  
 nec Sidonio mollis aeno  
 repetita bibit lana rubores,  
 nec Maeonia distinguit acu  
 quae Phoebis subditus euris  
 legit Eois Ser arboribus.  
 quaelibet herbae tinxere colus  
 quas indoctae nevere manus ;  
 sed non dubios fovet illa toros. 670  
 sequitur dira lampade Erinys  
 quarum populi coluere diem ;  
 nec sibi felix pauper habetur  
 nisi felices cecidisse videt.

Quisquis medium defugit iter  
 stabili numquam tramite currit.  
 dum petit unum praebere diem

<sup>1</sup> The north-west wind.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the story of the sword of Damocles.  
 See Index.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

ceilings break our rest, and purple coverlets drag out wakeful nights. Oh, if the hearts of rich men were laid bare! What fears does lofty fortune stir within! The waves of Bruttium, when Corus<sup>1</sup> lashes up the sea, are calmer far. The poor man's heart is free from care; he holds cups carved from the wide-spreading beech, but holds them with hand untrembling; he eats but cheap and common food, yet sees no drawn sword<sup>2</sup> hanging o'er his head! 'Tis in golden cups that blood is mixed with wine.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>658</sup> The wife who is wed to one of modest means is not bedecked with necklaces of pearl, the red sea's gift, nor do stones gathered on Orient shores weigh down her gem-laden ears; for her no soft wool twice dipped in Sidonian cauldrons drinks scarlet dyes; not hers with Maeonian<sup>4</sup> needle to embroider stuffs which Serians under sunlit skies gather<sup>5</sup> from eastern trees. 'Tis but common herbs that dye the webs which her unskilled hands have woven; but she cherishes a marriage-couch all undisturbed. With cruel torch doth Fury pursue the bride whose wedding-day great throngs have celebrated; nor does the poor man count himself full blest, unless he sees the blessed fallen from their height.

<sup>675</sup> Whoever has left the middle course fares never in path secure. While for one day the youth<sup>6</sup> sought

<sup>3</sup> The author may have the story of Atreus and Thyestes in mind.

<sup>4</sup> The Lydian (Maeonian) women were famous for their skill in embroidery.

<sup>5</sup> The reference is to silk-culture, for which the Seres (the Chinese) were well known among the ancients.

<sup>6</sup> Phaethon.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

patrioque puer constitit axe  
 nec per solitum decurrit iter,  
 sed Phoebeis ignota petens 680  
 sidera flammis errante rota,  
 secum pariter perdidit orbem.  
 medium caeli dum sulcat iter,  
 tenuit placitas Daedalus oras  
 nullique dedit nomina ponto;  
 sed dum volucres vincere veras  
 Icarus audet patriasque puer  
 despicit alas Phoeboque volat  
 proxumus ipsi, dedit ignoto  
 nomina ponto. male pensantur 690  
 magna ruinis.

Felix alius magnusque sonet;  
 me nulla vocet turba potentem.  
 stringat tenuis litora puppis  
 nec magna meas aura phaselos  
 iubeat medium scindere pontum;  
 transit tutos Fortuna sinus  
 medioque rates quaerit in alto,  
 quarum feriunt sipara nubes.

Sed quid pavido territa vultu, 700  
 qualis Baccho saucia maenas,  
 fertur dubio<sup>1</sup> regina gradu?  
 quae te rursus fortuna rotat?  
 miseranda, refer: licet ipsa neges,  
 vultus loquitur quodcumque tegis.

DEIANIRA

Vagus per artus errat excussos tremor,  
 erectus horret crinis, impulsis adhuc

<sup>1</sup> So Gronovius: † medio Leo, with E: rapido A: trepido  
 Rapheling: fert in medium . . . gradum Richter.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

to furnish light and took his stand within his father's car, and while he passed not o'er the accustomed track, but sought the stars unknown to Phoebus' rays with wandering wheel, himself he ruined and the world, as well. Daedalus, cleaving his path midway the heavens, reached peaceful shores and to no sea gave his name; but while young Icarus dared rival true birds in flight, looked down upon his father's wings and soared aloft close to the sun itself, to an unknown sea<sup>1</sup> he gave his name. To our undoing, high fortunes are by ruin balanced.

<sup>692</sup> Let another be noised abroad as blest and great; but let no throng hail me as powerful. Let my frail craft keep close to shore, and let no strong wind compel my bark to plough the mighty deep; misfortune passes by quiet ports, and seeks for ships sailing the open sea, whose topsails smite the clouds.

[DEIANIRA *appears hurrying distractedly from the palace.*]

<sup>700</sup> But why in terror and with face of fear, like some rage-smit Bacchante, comes the queen with step uncertain?

[*Enter DEIANIRA*]

What new reverse of fortune whirls thee about? Poor lady, tell us. Though thou thyself sayst naught, thy face speaks out whate'er thou hidest.

DEIANIRA

Vague shivers steal through my trembling limbs, my hair starts up in horror; fear sticks in my soul

<sup>1</sup> The Icarian sea.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

stat terror animis et cor attonitum salit  
 pavidumque trepidis palpitat venis iecur.  
 ut fractus austro pontus etiamnum tumet, 710  
 quamvis quiescat languidis ventis dies,  
 ita mens adhuc vexatur excusso metu.  
 semel profecto premere felices deus  
 cum coepit, urget. hos habent magna exitus.

NVTRIX

Quis tam impotens, miseranda, te casus rotat ?

DEIANIRA

Vt missa palla est tabe Nessea inlita  
 thalamisque maerens intuli gressum meis,  
 nescio quid animus timuit<sup>1</sup> et fraudem struit ?  
 libet experiri. solibus dirus ferum  
 flammisque Nessus sanguinem ostendi arcuit ; 720  
 hic ipse fraudes esse praemonuit dolus.

Et forte, nulla nube respersus iubar,  
 laxabat ardens fervidum Titan diem.—  
 vix ora solvi patitur etiam nunc timor.—  
 medios in ignes solis eiceram facem<sup>2</sup>  
 quo tincta fuerat palla vestisque inlita.  
 abiectus horret sanguis et Phoebi coma<sup>3</sup>  
 tepefactus ardet—vix queo monstrum eloqui.<sup>4</sup>  
 nives ut Euris solvit aut tepidus Notus,  
 quas vere primo lucidus perdit Mimas, 730

<sup>1</sup> *Leo conjectures a lacuna here and suggests an moriens viro | poenas parat Centaurus : Richter reads timuit. an fraudem struit ?*

<sup>2</sup> †eiceram facem *Leo, with E, conjecturing medios in ignes vellus eieci madens : solis et claram facem A.*

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

till now so passion-tossed; my heart leaps wildly and my quaking liver throbs with pulsing veins. As when the storm-tossed sea still heaves, though the skies are clear and the winds have died away, so is my soul still troubled, though my fear has been allayed. Surely when God has once begun to oppress the fortunate, he bears down hard. To such an end do mighty fortunes come.

### NURSE

What headstrong fate, poor soul, whirls thee about?

### DEIANIRA

When I had sent away the robe anointed with Nessus' blood, and, sad at heart, betook me to my chamber, my soul feared I know not what—did the dying centaur 'gainst my husband plan revenge,<sup>1</sup> and plot some treachery? I was pleased to make the test. Dread Nessus forbade me to expose the wild blood to the sun's rays and to fire; and this artifice itself forewarned me of treachery.

<sup>722</sup> It chanced the burning sun, its radiance by no cloud dimmed, was setting free the day's fervid heat.—Even now my fear scarce suffers me to speak.—Right into the hot sunlight I had thrown the blood-soaked fleece<sup>1</sup> with which the robe had been moistened and the garment smeared. The bloody fleece I flung writhed horribly and, warmed with the sun's rays, burst aflame—I have scarce words to tell of the awful thing. As the East or the warm South-wind melts the snows which glistening Mimas

<sup>1</sup> Translating Leo's conjecture.

<sup>3</sup> *So* ζ; *Leo* †comam.

<sup>4</sup> *So A*: *Leo* †astris vix quoque est. m. elocor.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

utque evolutos frangit Ionio salo  
 opposita fluctus Leucas et lassus tumor  
 in litore ipso spumat, aut caelestibus  
 aspersa tepidis tura laxantur focis,  
 sic languet omne vellus et perdit comas.  
 dumque ista miror, causa mirandi perit ;  
 quin ipsa tellus spumeos motus agit  
 et quidquid illa tabe contactum est labat.<sup>1</sup>

Natum paventem cerno et ardenti pede 740  
 gressus ferentem. prome quid portes novi.<sup>2</sup>

HYLLVS

I, profuge, quaere si quid ulterius patet  
 terris freto sideribus Oceano inferis,—  
 ultra labores, mater, Alcidae fuge !

DEIANIRA

Nescio quod animus grande praesagit malum.

HYLLVS

Regnat, triumphat<sup>3</sup> ; templa Iunonis pete.  
 haec tibi patent ; delubra praeclusa omnia.

DEIANIRA

Effare quis me casus insontem premat.

<sup>1</sup> *Following line 738 in A stands the unintelligible line tumensque tacita sequitur et quassat caput.*

<sup>2</sup> *Leo deletes lines 740, 741, assuming a considerable lacuna between 738 and 742.*



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

loses in early spring; as 'gainst Leucadia's crags, breasting the Ionian sea, the up-flung waves are broken and with spent fury foam upon the shore, or as incense sprinkled on holy shrines is melted in the hot altar-fires; so all the wool withered and lost its fleece. And while I stood wondering at it, the object of my wonder disappears; nay, even the very ground begins to foam, and whatever that poison touched begins to shrink.

[HYLLUS *is seen approaching*]

740 But I see my son approaching with face of fear and hurrying feet.

[*To* HYLLUS]

Speak out—what tidings dost thou bear?

HYLLUS [*hurrying upon the scene*]

Go! flee! seek out whatever place lies far away on land, on sea, 'mongst stars, in Ocean, underworld—far beyond the labours of Alcides, mother, flee!

DEIANIRA

Some great disaster doth my mind presage.

HYLLUS

She<sup>1</sup> reigns, she triumphs; Juno's temple seek. This sanctuary waits thee; closed is all refuge else.

DEIANIRA

Tell what disaster my guiltless self o'erwhelms.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Juno.

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<sup>3</sup> *Leo's conjecture for regna triumphi of MSS.*

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

HYLLVS

Decus illud orbis atque praesidium unicum,  
 quem fata terris in locum dederant Iovis, 750  
 o mater, abiit. membra et Herculeos toros  
 urit lues nescio qua; qui domuit feras,  
 ille ille victor vincitur maeret dolet.  
 quid quaeris ultra?

DEIANIRA

Miserias properant suas  
 audire miseri. fare, quo posita in statu  
 iam nostra domus est? o lares, miseri lares!  
 nunc vidua, nunc expulsa, nunc ferar obruta.

HYLLVS

Non sola maeres Herculem, toto iacet  
 mundo gemendus. fata nec, mater, tua  
 privata credas: iam genus totum obstrepit. 760  
 hunc ecce luctu quem gemis cuncti gemunt,  
 commune terris omnibus pateris malum.  
 luctum occupasti: prima, non sola Herculem,  
 miseranda, maeres.

DEIANIRA

Quam prope a leto tamen  
 ede, ede quaeso iaceat Alcides meus.

HYLLVS

Mors refugit illum victa quae in regno suo  
 semel est nec audent fata tam vastum nefas  
 admittere. ipsas forsitan trepida colus  
 Clotho manu proiecit et fata Herculis

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

HYLLUS

That glory and sole guardian of the world, whom the fates had given to the lands in the place of Jove, O mother, is no more. The limbs and thews of Hercules a mysterious plague is wasting; and he who conquered monsters, he, he, the victor, is vanquished, is in grief, in agony. What more dost ask?

DEIANIRA

The wretched are in haste to hear their wretchedness. Tell me: in what condition now stands our house? O home, O wretched home! Now truly am I widowed, exiled, overwhelmed.

HYLLUS

Not thou alone dost lament Hercules; low he lies for the whole world to mourn. And think not, mother, thine is a private loss; now the whole race is clamorous with woe. Lo, all men utter thy self-same groans of grief; common to all lands is the ill thou sufferest. Thou hast forestalled their grief; first, but not all alone, poor soul, dost thou mourn Hercules.

DEIANIRA

Yet tell me, tell, I beg, how near to death does my Alcides lie.

HYLLUS

Death, who once in his own realm was overcome,<sup>1</sup> flees from him; nor do the fates dare countenance so great a crime. Perchance Clotho has thrown aside her very distaff from her trembling hand, and

<sup>1</sup> A probable reference to the struggle of Hercules with Death for the recovery of Alcestis.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

timet peragere. pro diem, infandum diem! 770  
hocne ille summo magnus Alcides erit?

DEIANIRA

Ad fata et umbras adque peiorem polum  
praecedere illum dicis? an possum prior  
mortem occupare? fare, si nondum occidit.

HYLLVS

Euhoica tellus vertice immenso tumens  
pulsatur omni latere. Phrixum mare  
scindit Caphereus, servit hoc Austro latus;  
at qua nivosi patitur Aquilonis minas,  
Euripus undas flectit instabilis vagas  
septemque cursus volvit et totidem refert, 780  
dum lassa Titan mergat Oceano iuga.  
hic rupe celsa, multa quam nubes ferit,  
annosa fulgent templa Cenaei Iovis.

Ut stetit ad aras omne votivum pecus  
totumque tauris gemit auratis nemus,  
spolium leonis sordidum tabo exiit  
posuitque clavae pondus et pharetra graves  
laxavit umeros. veste tum fulgens tua,  
cana revinctus populo horrentem comam,  
succendit aras; "accipe has" inquit "focis 790  
non false messes genitor et largo sacer  
splendescat ignis ture, quod Phoebum colens  
dives Sabaeis colligit truncis Arabs.  
pacata tellus" inquit "et caelum et freta,

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the Aegaeon. See Index *s.v.* "Phrixus."

<sup>2</sup> Seneca's description in this passage of the topography of Euboea is not correct. The Cenaean Promontory is at the far north-western point of the island, while the Strait of

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

is afraid to complete the fates of Hercules. O day, O awful day! And shall this for the great Alcides be the last?

### DEIANIRA

To the shades of death and to that darker world dost say he has gone already? Can I not go before and anticipate his death? Speak, if he is not yet fallen.

### HYLLUS

Euboea's shore, swelling with mighty headland, on every side is beaten by the waves. Caphereus cleaves the Phrixean<sup>1</sup> Sea, on this side the south-wind blows; but on the side which feels the blasts of snowy Aquilo, restless Euripus turns his wandering waves, whose currents seven times flow and seven times ebb again, till Titan plunges his weary horses in the sea. Here on a lofty cliff, by many a storm-cloud beaten, an ancient temple of Cenean Jove stands gleaming.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>784</sup> When all the votive herd stood at the altars, and the whole grove was filled with the bellowing of the gilded bulls, he<sup>3</sup> put off his lion's skin, all stained with gore, laid down his heavy club and freed his shoulders of the quiver's weight. Then radiant in thy robe, his rough hair wreathed with hoary poplar, he lit the altar-fires. "Accept these gifts," he said, "upon thy shrine, O father, not falsely claimed, and let thy sacred fire blaze brightly with copious incense which the rich Arab gathers from Sabaeen trees, in worship of the Sun. Peace has been given to earth, to sky, to sea; all monsters Euripus is very nearly off the middle point. Caphereus, moreover, is exposed not to the south but almost directly to the east wind. <sup>3</sup> *i.e.* Hercules.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

feris subactis omnibus victor redi.  
depone fulmen."

Gemitus in medias preces  
stupente et ipso cecidit; hinc caelum horrido  
clamore complet. qualis impressa fugax  
taurus bipenni volnus et telum ferens  
delubra vasto trepida mugitu replet, 800  
aut quale mundo fulmen emissum tonat,  
sic ille gemitu sidera et pontum ferit,  
et vasta Chalcis sonuit et voces Cyclas  
exceptit omnis; hinc petrae Capherides,  
hinc omne voces reddit Herculeas nemus.  
flentem videmus. volgus antiquam putat  
rabiem redisse; tum fugam famuli petunt.

At ille voltus ignea torquens face  
unum inter omnes sequitur et quaerit Lichan.  
complexus aras ille tremibunda manu 810  
mortem metu consumpsit et parvum sui  
poenae reliquit. dumque<sup>1</sup> tremibundum manu  
tenuit cadaver: "hac manu, hac" inquit "ferar,  
o fata, victus? Herculem vicit Lichas?  
ecce alia clades: Hercules perimit Lichan.  
facta inquinentur; fiat hic summus labor."  
in astra missus fertur et nubes vago  
spargit cruore. talis in caelum exilit  
harundo Getica visa dimitti manu  
aut quam Cydon excussit: inferius tamen 820  
et tela fugient. truncus in pontum cadit,  
in saxa vertex; unus ambobus iacet.

<sup>1</sup> *Leo conjectures semianimum parens.*

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

have I subdued and in triumph come again. Lay down thy thunderbolt."

<sup>736</sup> As he thus prayed a groan fell from his lips, even he standing aghast; then with dreadful cries he filled the air. As when a bull, fleeing the deep-driven axe, bearing both wound and weapon, fills with his huge bellowings the affrighted shrine, or as the launched thunder crashes in the sky; so did he with his roarings smite the stars and sea; towering Chalcis reëchoed and all the Cyclades heard his cries; then all Caphereus' crags and the whole forest resounded with the cries of Hercules. We saw him weep. The commons thought his ancient madness had returned; then his attendants fled.

<sup>808</sup> But he, his face writhing with pain of the burning heat, pursued and sought out Lichas alone among them all. The boy, embracing the altar with trembling hands, through sheer terror tasted the pangs of death, and left small part of his life for punishment. Then Hercules, by his hand seizing the quivering corpse, exclaimed: "By such a hand, by such a hand as this, ye fates, shall I be said to have been undone? Has Lichas conquered Hercules? Behold another slaughter; Hercules in turn slays Lichas. Be my deeds dishonoured; be this my crowning task." To the stars the boy went hurtling and sprinkled the clouds with his scattered blood. So does a Getan arrow, from the hand let fly, go speeding skyward, or the shaft a Cydonian has shot; but far below<sup>1</sup> even these weapons will wing their flight. His body falls into the sea, his head upon the rocks; one youth lies slain in both.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* below the height reached by Lichas.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* both head and body.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

"Resistite" inquit "non furor mentem abstulit,  
 furore gravius istud atque ira malum est :  
 in me iuvat saevire." vix pestem indicat  
 et saevit ; artus ipse dilacerat suos  
 et membra vasta carpit avellens manu.  
 exuere amictus quaerit ; hoc solum Herculem  
 non posse vidi. trahere conatus tamen  
 et membra traxit ; corporis palla horridi 830  
 pars est et ipsa ; pestis immiscet cuti.<sup>1</sup>  
 nec causa dirae cladis in medio patet,  
 sed causa tamen est ; vixque sufficiens malo  
 nunc ore terram languidus prono premit,  
 nunc poscit undas—unda non vincit malum ;  
 fluctisona quaerit litora et pontum occupat ;  
 famularis illum retinet errantem manus—  
 o sortem acerbam ! fuimus Alcidae pares !  
 Nunc puppis illum litore Euboico refert  
 Austerque lenis pondus Herculeum rapit ; 840  
 destituit animus membra, nox oculos premit.

### DEĪANIRA

Quid, anime, cessas? quid stupes? factum est scelus.  
 natum reposcit Iuppiter, Iuno aemulum ;  
 reddendus orbi est. quod potes redde exhibe :  
 eat per artus ensis exactus meos.  
 sic, sic agendum est. tam levis poenas manus  
 tantas reposcit? perde fulminibus, socer,

<sup>1</sup> *Following Richter's reconstruction: pars (parum B) est et ipsam (ipsa A) MSS., for which Leo conjectures ipsam pestis immiscet cutem (scil. pallae).*

<sup>1</sup> And not against others as heretofore.



## HERCULES OETAEUS

<sup>828</sup> "But hold!" said Hercules; "'tis not madness has robbed me of my wits; this bane is worse than madness and than rage; I am fain to rave against myself."<sup>1</sup> Scarce has he named the plague when lo, he raves, he tears his own flesh apart, with his own hand wounding and rending his huge limbs. He seeks to throw aside the robe; in this alone have I seen Alcides fail. Yet striving to tear the robe, he tears his limbs as well. The robe is part and parcel of his rugged body; the pest blends it with the skin. The cause of his dire suffering is hid, but still there is a cause; and, scarce able to endure his pain, now he lies spent, face down upon the ground, now calls for water—water checks not his pain; he seeks the wave-resounding shore and plunges in the sea, but a slave's hand restrains him wandering aimless there—oh, bitter lot! we were Alcides' equals!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>839</sup> And now a vessel is bringing him from Euboea's shore, and a gentle south wind wafts his huge bulk along; his spirit has left his body; night seals his eyes.

### DEIANIRA

Why, soul, dost hesitate? Why art amazed? The crime is done. Jupiter demands back his son of thee, Juno, her rival; yea, to the world must he be restored.<sup>3</sup> What still thou canst, give back, make restitution; let the sword, deep driven, through my body pass. So, so must it be done. But does so frail hand as this exact punishment so great? With thy thunderbolts, O sire, destroy thy guilty daughter.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* in the hero's present weakness, common men were able to control him.

<sup>3</sup> She has robbed the world of Hercules, and now must make such restitution as she may.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nurum scelestam. nec levi telo manus  
 armetur; illud fulmen exiliat polo,  
 quo, nisi fuisset genitus Alcides tibi, 850  
 hydram cremasses. pestem ut insolitam feri  
 et ut noverca potius irata malum.  
 emitte telum quale in errantem prius  
 Phaethonta missum est: perdidisti in solo Hercule  
 et ipsa populos.

Quid rogas telum deos?  
 iam parce socero; coniugem Alcidae necem  
 optare pudeat; haec erit voto manus,  
 a me petatur; occupa ferrum ocius.  
 cur deinde ferrum? quidquid ad mortem trahit  
 telum est abunde—rupe ab aethera ferar. 860  
 haec, haec renatum prima quae poscit diem,  
 Octa eligatur, corpus hinc mitti placet.  
 abrupta cautes scindat et partem mei  
 ferat omne saxum, pendeant lacerae manus  
 totumque rubeat asperi montis latus.  
 levis una mors est—levis? at extendi potest.  
 eligere nescis, anime, cui telo incubes;  
 utinam esset, utinam fixus in thalamis meis  
 Hercules ensis! huic decet ferro in mori.  
 una perire dextera nobis sat est? 870  
 coite, gentes, saxa et immensas faces  
 iaculetur orbis, nulla nunc cesset manus,  
 corripite tela, vindicem vestrum abstuli.  
 impune saevi sceptrum iam reges gerent,  
 impune iam nascetur indomitum malum;  
 repetentur arae cernere assuetae hostiam  
 similem colenti. sceleribus feci viam;

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

And with no common weapon let thy hand be armed ;  
 let that bolt leap from heaven with which, had  
 Alcides not sprung from thee, thou wouldst have  
 scorched the Hydra. Destroy me as some strange  
 pest, as a scourge far worse than step-dame's wrath.  
 Launch such a bolt as once thou didst hurl at stray-  
 ing Phaëthon ; for I, e'en I myself, in Hercules alone  
 have ruined nations.

<sup>855</sup> But why dost ask weapons of the gods? At  
 last spare thy father.<sup>1</sup> The wife of Hercules should  
 be ashamed to pray for death ; this hand shall grant  
 my prayer ; from myself let death be sought. Then  
 quickly seize the sword.—Why then the sword?  
 Whatever brings to death is weapon all-sufficient—  
 from a sky-piercing cliff I'll cast me down. Let this,  
 this crag of Oeta, which is the first to greet the new-  
 born day, be chosen ; from this 'tis well to fling me.  
 May its broken crags rend asunder, and every rock  
 take its share of me ; may my mangled hands hang  
 there, and may the whole rough mountain-side run  
 red. One death is all too light—light? but still it  
 can be prolonged. Thou canst not choose, O soul,  
 on what weapon thou shalt fall. Oh, would that the  
 sword of Hercules were hanging in my chamber!  
 Upon that steel 'twere well for me to die. But is it  
 enough that by one right hand I perish? Come all  
 ye nations ; let the world cast rocks and huge fire-  
 brands on me ; let no hand shrink its task ; seize  
 weapons, for your avenger have I done to death.  
 Now with impunity shall cruel kings wield sceptres ;  
 yea, with impunity now fierce monsters shall be born ;  
 again shall altars be found wont to behold victim  
 like to worshipper.<sup>2</sup> A highway to crime have I

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* do not impose thy punishment on Jove.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* where human sacrifices are offered up.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ego vos tyrannis regibus monstris feris  
 saevisque raptō vindice opposui deis.  
 cessas, Tonantis socia? non spargis facem 880  
 imitata fratrem et mittis ereptam Iovi  
 meque ipsa perdis? laus tibi erepta incluta est,  
 ingens triumphus; aemuli, Iuno, tui  
 mortem occupavi.

HYLLVS

Quid domum impulsam trahis?  
 erroris est hic omne quodcumque est nefas.  
 haut est nocens quicumque non sponte est nocens.

DEIANIRA

Quicumque fato ignoscit et parcit sibi,  
 errare meruit. morte damnari placet.

HYLLVS

Nocens videri qui mori quaerit cupit.

DEIANIRA

Mors innocentes sola deceptos facit. 890

HYLLVS

Titana fugiens—

DEIANIRA

Iipse me Titan fugit.

HYLLVS

Vitam relinques?

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the "nation" addressed in line 871.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

prepared; I have exposed you<sup>1</sup> to tyrants, kings, monsters, wild beasts and cruel gods, by slaying your avenger. Dost shirk thy task, wife<sup>2</sup> of the thunderer? Why dost thou not, in imitation of thy brother,<sup>2</sup> scatter fire, snatch from Jove's hand his bolt, hurl it, and thyself destroy me? Illustrious praise and mighty triumph have been snatched from thee; I have forestalled thee, Juno, in thy rival's death.

HYLLUS

Why dost drag down a house already shaken?  
From error springs wholly whatever crime is here.  
He does no sin who sins without intent.

DEIANIRA

Who casts the blame on fate and spares himself,  
has deserved to err. My sentence is for death.

HYLLUS

Fain would he seem guilty who seeks to die.

DEIANIRA

'Tis death alone can make the beguiled<sup>3</sup> innocent.

HYLLUS

Fleeing the sun—

DEIANIRA

The sun himself flees me.

HYLLUS

Wilt abandon life?

<sup>2</sup> Juno was both sister and wife of Jove.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* those who have been ensnared into sin.

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

DEIANIRA

Miseram, ut Alciden sequar.

HYLLVS

Superest et auras ille caelestes trahit.

DEIANIRA

Vinci Hercules cum potuit, hinc coepit mori.

HYLLVS

Natum relinques fataque abrumpes tua?

DEIANIRA

Quaecumque natus sepelit haec vixit diu.

HYLLVS

Virum sequeris.

DEIANIRA

Praegredi castae solent.

HYLLVS

Si te ipsa damnas, scelere te misera arguis.

DEIANIRA

Nemo nocens sibi ipse poenas abrogat.

HYLLVS

Multis remissa est vita quorum error nocens, 900  
non dextra fuerat. fata quis damnat sua?

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

DEIANIRA

Ay! a wretched life—that Alcides I may follow.

HYLLUS

But he still lives and breathes the air of heaven.

DEIANIRA

When Hercules could be conquered, then he began to die.

HYLLUS

Wilt leave thy son? Wilt break thy thread of life?

DEIANIRA

She whom her son has buried has lived long.

HYLLUS

Follow thy husband.<sup>1</sup>

DEIANIRA

Faithful wives go before.

HYLLUS

It thou thyself dost doom thee, thou convictest thyself, unhappy one, of sin.

DEIANIRA

No guilty one himself annuls his punishment.

HYLLUS

Life has been granted many whose guilt lay in wrong judgment, not in act. Who blames his own destiny?

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* do not die until he is dead.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

DEIANIRA

Quicumque fata iniqua sortitus fuit.

HYLLVS

Hic ipse Megaram nempe confixam suis  
stravit sagittis atque natorum indolem  
Lernaea figens tela furibunda manu ;  
ter parricida factus ignovit tamen  
sibi, non furori. fonte Cinyphio scelus  
sub axe Libyco tersit et dextram abluit.  
quo, misera, pergis ? cur tuas damnas manus ?

DEIANIRA

Damnat meas devictus Alcides manus. 910  
placet scelus punire.

HYLLVS

Si novi Herculem,  
aderit cruenti forsitan victor mali  
dolorque fractus cedit Alcidae tuo.

DEIANIRA

Exedit artus virus ut fama est hydrae ;  
immensa pestis coniugis membra abstulit.

HYLLVS

Serpentis illi virus enectae autumas  
haut posse vinci qui malum vivum tulit ?  
elisit hydram, dente cum infixo stetit<sup>1</sup>  
media palude victor, effuso obrutus  
artus veneno. sanguis hunc Nessi opprimet, 920  
qui vicit ipsas horridi Nessi manus ?

<sup>1</sup> So Peiper, with A : †cum fixo tenens Leo, with E, and conjectures dum infecto tumet : Richter conjectures iam infixo tumens.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

DEIANIRA

Whoever has fallen on unkind fates.

HYLLUS

But Hercules himself slew Megara, pierced by his arrows, and his own sons as well, shooting Lernaean shafts with furious hand; still, though thrice murderer, he forgave himself, but not his madness. At the source of Cinyps 'neath Libyan skies he washed away his guilt and cleansed his hands. Whither, poor soul, dost haste thee? Why dost condemn thy hands?

DEIANIRA

'Tis Alcides' overthrow that doth condemn my hands. 'Tis well to punish crime.

HYLLUS

If I know Hercules, he will soon be here, perchance victorious o'er the cruel plague; and pain, subdued, will yield to thy Alcides.

DEIANIRA

The hydra's poison, as report declares, hath consumed his frame; the deadly plague hath wasted his giant limbs.

HYLLUS

Thinkst thou the poison of a serpent, slain, cannot be overcome by him who met and overcame the monster, living? He crushed the hydra, and deep in the marsh, with the fangs fixed in his flesh, he stood victorious, while his limbs were bathed in venom. Shall Nessus' blood destroy the man who overcame e'en the hands of savage Nessus?

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

DEIANIRA

Frustra tenetur ille qui statuit mori ;  
proinde lucem fugere decretum est mihi.  
vixit satis quicumque cum Alcide occidit.

NVTRIX

Per has aniles ecce te supplex comas  
atque ubera ista paene materna obsecro :  
depone tumidas pectoris laesi minas  
mortisque dirae expelle decretum horridum.

DEIANIRA

Quicumque misero forte dissuadet mori,  
crudelis ille est ; interim poena est mori, 930  
sed saepe donum ; pluribus veniae fuit.

NVTRIX

Defende saltem dexteram, infelix, tuam  
fraudisque facinus esse, non nuptae, sciat.

DEIANIRA

Defendar illic ; inferi absolvent ream,  
a me ipsa damnor ; purget has Pluton manus.  
stabo ante ripas immemor, Lethe, tuas  
et umbra tristis coniugem excipiam meum.

Sed tu, nigrantis regna qui torques poli,  
para laborem (scelera quae quisquam ausus est,  
hic vincet error ; Iuno non ausa Herculem est 940  
eripere terris) horridam poenam para.  
Sisyphia cervix cesset et nostros lapis

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

DEIANIRA

Vainly is he restrained who is bent on death; my will is fixed straightway to flee the light. Whoever has died with Hercules has lived enough.

NURSE

Lo, by these aged locks and by these breasts which were almost as a mother's to thee, I humbly pray; put by the wild threatenings of thy wounded heart, and banish thy dread resolve of cruel death.

DEIANIRA

Whoever, perchance, dissuades the wretched from death, he is the cruel one; sometimes death is a punishment, but often 'tis a boon, and to many a way of pardon has it proved.

NURSE

At least absolve thy hand, unhappy one, that he may know that the deed was a treacherous foeman's, not his wife's.

DEIANIRA

There<sup>1</sup> shall I be absolved; the lower gods will acquit the criminal, though I condemn myself. Let Pluto cleanse these hands. Upon thy banks, O Lethe, shall I stand, the past forgotten, and my grieving shade will welcome its lord again.

<sup>988</sup> But do thou, who torturest the realms of the dark under-world, prepare a toil—for this fault of mine outweighs all sins that man has ever dared; Juno was never bold enough to rob the world of Hercules—some dreadful toil prepare. Let Sisyphus' neck

<sup>1</sup> In the lower world.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

impellat umeros ; me vagus fugiat latex  
 meamque fallax unda deludat sitim.  
 merui manus praeberere turbinibus tuis,  
 quaecumque regem Thessalum torques rota ;  
 effodiat avidus hinc et hinc vultur fibras.  
 vacat<sup>1</sup> una Danais, has ego explebo vices—  
 laxate manes. recipe me comitem tibi,  
 Phasiaca coniunx ; peior haec, peior tuo 950  
 utroque dextra est scelere, seu mater nocens  
 seu dira soror es ; adde me comitem tuis,  
 Threicia coniunx, sceleribus ; natam tuam,  
 Althaea mater, recipe, nunc veram tui  
 agnosce prolem—quid tamen tantum manus  
 vestrae abstulerunt ? claudite Elysium mihi  
 quaecumque fidae coniuges nemoris sacri  
 lucos tenetis ; si qua respersit manus  
 viri eruore nec memor castae facis  
 stricto cruenta Belias ferro stetit, 960  
 in me suas agnoscat et laudet manus.  
 in hanc abire coniugum turbam libet—  
 sed et illa fugiet turba tam diras manus.  
 Invicte coniunx, innocens animus mihi,  
 scelesta manus est. pro nimis mens credula !  
 pro Nesse fallax atque semiferi doli !  
 auferre cupiens paelici eripui mihi.  
 recede, Titan, tuque quae blanda tenes  
 in luce miseros vita ; caritura Hercule  
 lux vilis ista est. exigam poenas tibi 970  
 reddamque vitam—fata an extendo mea  
 mortemque, coniunx, ad tuas servo manus ?

<sup>1</sup> So Richter : *Leo vacet, with ω, corrected by Raphcling.*

<sup>1</sup> The punishment of Tantalus.

<sup>2</sup> Ixion. <sup>3</sup> Hypermnestra.

<sup>4</sup> Medea. <sup>5</sup> Procne.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

be eased and let his rock press hard upon my shoulders; let the inconstant water fly my lips, my thirst let the elusive waves deceive.<sup>1</sup> Unto thy whirlings have I deserved to give my hands, whatsoever wheel thou art which rackest Thessalia's king;<sup>2</sup> from every side let the greedy vulture tear my entrails out. There still lacks one<sup>3</sup> from the Danaïdes; I will fill up their number—ye ghosts make room for me. Take me as thy companion, O Phasian wife;<sup>4</sup> my deed is worse, far worse than both thy crimes, whether as mother or as cruel sister thou hast sinned; let me be comrade also to thy crimes, thou Thracian wife;<sup>5</sup> Althea, mother,<sup>6</sup> welcome thy daughter, now recognize in me thine own true child—yet what crime so great have your hands ever done? Shut Elysium against me, O all ye faithful wives who have your dwelling in its sacred grove; but if any has bespattered her hands with her husband's blood and her chaste marriage torch forgot, has stood with drawn sword like Belus' bloody child, in me let her recognize and praise her own handiwork. To such a company of wives 'tis well to pass—but e'en that company will shun hands so accursed.

<sup>964</sup> O my unconquered husband, my soul is innocent, though my hands have sinned. O mind too credulous! O Nessus, false and of half-bestial guile! Striving to snatch him from a concubine, I have snatched him from myself. Away! thou sun, and life, who by thy cozening arts dost keep the unhappy in the light of day; worthless that light without my Hercules. I will exact penalty for thee,<sup>7</sup> will give up my life—or shall I put off my fate, O husband, and save myself for death at thine own

<sup>6</sup> For Althaea's crime see Index.

<sup>7</sup> *i.e.* will see that he is avenged.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

virtusne superest aliqua et armatae manus  
intendere arcum tela missurum valent?  
an arma cessant teque languenti manu  
non audit arcus? si potes letum dare,  
animose coniunx, dexteram expecto tuam.  
mors differatur; frange ut insontem Lichan,  
alias in urbes sparge et ignotum tibi  
inmitte in orbem. perde ut Arcadiae nefas 980  
et quidquid aliud cessit<sup>1</sup>; ab illis tamen,  
coniunx, redisti.

HYLLVS

Parce iam, mater, precor,  
ignosce fatis; error a culpa vacat.

DEIANIRA

Si vera pietas, Hylle, quaerenda est tibi,  
iam perime matrem—trepida quid tremuit manus?  
quid ora flectis? hoc erit pietas scelus.  
ignave dubitas? Herculem eripuit tibi  
haec, haec peremit dextra cui debes patri  
avum Tonantem. maius eripui decus,  
quam in luce tribui. si tibi ignotum est nefas, 990  
a matre disce. seu tibi iugulo placet  
mersisse ferrum sive maternum libet  
invadere uterum, mater intrepidum tibi  
praebebit animum. non erit tantum scelus  
a te peractum; dextera sternar tua,  
sed mente nostra. natus Alcidae, times?  
ita nulla perages iussa nec franges mala<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> †cessit *Leo*, with *E*: restitit *A*.

<sup>2</sup> *Line 998, omitted by E, deleted by Leo: erres per orbem.*  
si qua nascetur fera.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

hands? Hast still some strength, and can thy armed hands still bend the bow and send the arrow darting? Or do thy weapons fail thee, and does thy bow no more heed thy enfeebled hand? If thou canst deal destruction, O undaunted husband, I await thy stroke. Let death be stayed awhile<sup>1</sup>; crush me as thou didst the unoffending Lichas; to other cities scatter me, yea, hurl me to a world to thee unknown. Destroy me as thou didst the Arcadian monster,<sup>2</sup> and whatever else succumbed to thee; yet from them, my husband, thou didst return.

### HYLLUS

Give o'er now, mother, I beseech thee, pardon thy fate; an error is not counted as a crime.

### DEIANIRA

If, Hyllus, thou wouldst be truly filial, come, slay thy mother—why does thy hand quake and tremble? Why turnst thy face away? This crime will be filial piety. Tamely dost hesitate? This hand robbed thee of Hercules, yea, this right hand destroyed him to whom as father thou owest descent from Jove. Of greater glory have I robbed thee than I gave thee at thy birth. If thou art unskilled in monstrous crime, learn from thy mother. Whether in my throat it pleases thee to plunge the sword, or 'tis thy will to assail thy mother's womb, thy mother herself will give thee unshrinking courage. Not by thee will this dreadful crime be done; by thy hand, truly, shall I fall, but by my will. Son of Alcides, art afraid? Wilt thou not do as bidden, wilt not crush monsters, and so be like

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* until she may die at her husband's hands.

<sup>2</sup> The Erymanthian boar, Hercules' fourth labour.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

referens parentem? dexteram intrepidam para. 999  
 patet ecce plenum pectus aerumnis: feri; 1000  
 scelus remitto, dexteræ parent tuæ  
 Eumenides ipsæ—verberum crepuit sonus.

Quaenam ista torquens angue vipereo<sup>1</sup> comam  
 temporibus atras<sup>2</sup> squalidis pinnas quatit?  
 quid me flagranti dira persequeris face,  
 Megaera? poenas poenis Alcidae? dabo.  
 iamne inferorum, dira, sedere arbitri?  
 sedent. reclusas<sup>3</sup> carceris video fores.  
 quis iste saxum immane detritis gerit  
 iam senior umeris? ecce iam victus lapis 1010  
 quaerit relabi? membra quis quatitur rota?  
 hic ecce pallens dira Tisiphone stetit,  
 causam reposcit. parce verberibus precor,  
 Megaera, parce, sustine Stygias faces;  
 scelus est amoris.

Sed quid hoc? tellus labat  
 et aula tectis crepuit excussis—minax  
 unde iste coetus? totus in voltus meos  
 decurrit orbis, hinc et hinc populi fremunt  
 totusque poscit vindicem mundus suum.  
 iam parcite, urbes. quo fugam praeceps agam? 1020  
 mors sola portus dabitur aerumnis meis.  
 testor nitentis flammæam Phoebi rotam  
 superosque testor: Herculem in terris adhuc  
 moritura linquo.

<sup>1</sup> † angue vipereo *Leo*: angui *E*: igne *N. Heinsius*: angue vibrato *Peiper*.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

thy sire? Thy dauntless hand make ready. Behold my breast, so full of cares, lies open: smite; I forgive the deed, the Eumenides themselves will acquit thy hand—but I hear their scourges hissing.

<sup>1008</sup> Oh, who is that in whose locks viperous serpents coil, who brandishes deadly shafts at her foul temples? Why dost pursue me, awful Megaera, with blazing torch? Penalty for Alcides' murder dost demand? I'll pay. Already, dread one, have the arbiters of hell passed judgment on me? They have. I see the prison doors opened wide. Who is that ancient<sup>1</sup> who bears a huge stone on his toil-worn back? But see! already does the mastered stone seek to roll back again? Whose<sup>2</sup> limbs on the wheel are racked? Look! here has Tisiphone taken her stand, ghastly and dread; she demands revenge. Oh, spare thy scourge, I pray thee, Megaera, spare! Keep back the Stygian torches; mine was the crime of love.

<sup>1015</sup> But what is this? The earth quakes, the palace resounds with the noise of crashing roofs—whence comes that threatening throng? The whole world comes rushing 'gainst me, on every side the nations rage and the whole universe demands of me its saviour. Oh, spare me now, ye cities. Whither shall I rush in headlong flight? Death alone will be granted as a haven for my cares. By gleaming Phoebus' flaming car I swear, I swear by the heavenly gods: though to my death I go, I leave Alcides still upon the earth.

[*She rushes wildly from the scene.*]

<sup>1</sup> Sisyphus.

<sup>2</sup> Ixion.

<sup>2</sup> So *A*: *Leo* †hastas, with *E*: *Madvig* aptas.

<sup>3</sup> So *Richter*: *Leo*, with *A*, †sed ecce diras.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

HYLLVS

Fugit attonita, ei mihi.

peracta iam pars matris est—statuit mori ;  
 nunc nostra superest, mortis auferre impetum.  
 o misera pietas ! si mori matrem vetas,  
 patri es scelestus ; si mori pateris, tamen  
 in matre peccas. urget hinc illinc scelus.  
 inhibenda tamen est, verum ut eripiam scelus. 1030

CHORVS

Verum est quod cecinit sacer  
 Thressae sub Rhodopes iugis  
 aptans Pieriam chelyn  
 Orpheus Calliopae genus,  
 aeternum fieri nihil.  
 illius stetit ad modos  
 torrentis rapidi fragor,  
 oblitusque sequi fugam  
 amisit liquor impetum ;  
 et dum fluminibus mora est, 1040  
 defecisse putant Getae  
 Hebrum Bistones ultimi.  
 advexit volucrem nemus  
 et silva residens venit ;  
 aut si qua aera pervolat,  
 auditis vaga cantibus  
 ales deficiens cadit.  
 abrumpit scopulos Athos  
 Centauros obiter ferens  
 et iuxta Rhodopen stetit 1050  
 laxata nive cantibus ;  
 et quercum fugiens suam  
 ad vatem properat Dryas.  
 ad cantus veniunt tuos

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

### HYLLUS

Ah me! in frenzy has she fled. Already has my mother played her part—she has resolved on death; now does my part remain, to thwart her deadly purpose. O wretched plight of love! if thou forbidst thy mother's death, thou wrongst thy father; if thou sufferest her to die, still 'gainst thy mother dost thou sin. Crime drives from either hand; still must I check her, that from true<sup>1</sup> crime she may be saved. [Exit after his mother.]

### CHORUS

True sang the bard beneath the heights of Thracian Rhodope, fitting the word to his Pierian lyre, e'en Orpheus, Calliope's blest son, that naught for endless life is made. At his sweet strains the rushing torrents' roar was stilled, and, forgetful of their eager flight, the waters ceased their flow; and, while the river stayed to hear, the far Bistonians thought their Hebrus had failed the Getan. The woods came with their birds to him, yea, perched among the trees they came; or if, in the high air soaring, some wandering bird caught sound of the charming song, his drooping wings sank earthward. Athos broke off his crags, bringing the Centaurs as he came, and next to Rhodope he stood, his snows melted by the music; the Dryad, leaving her oaken haunts, sped to the singer's side. To hear thy song, with their very lairs the

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the true crime of her own death as contrasted with the fancied crime of her act against Hercules.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ipsis cum latebris ferae,  
iuxtaque inpavidum pecus  
sedit Marmaricus leo  
nec dammae trepidant lupos  
et serpens latebras fugit,  
tunc oblita veneni.

1060

Quin per Taenarias fores  
manes cum tacitos adit  
maerentem feriens chelyn,  
cantu Tartara flebili  
et tristes Erebi deos  
vicit nec timuit Stygis  
iuratos superis lacus.  
haesit non stabilis rota  
victo languida turbine ;  
increvit Tityi iecur, 1070  
dum cantu volucres tenet ; 1071  
et vinci lapis improbus 1081  
et vatem potuit sequi.<sup>1</sup> 1082  
tunc primum Phrygius senex 1075  
undis stantibus immemor  
excussit rabidam sitim  
nec pomis adhibet manus. 1078  
audis tu<sup>2</sup> quoque, navita ; 1072  
infernî ratis aequoris 1073  
nullò remigio venit. 1074  
sic cum vinceret inferos 1079  
Orpheus carmine funditus, 1080  
consumptos iterum deae 1083  
supplent Eurydices colus. 1084  
sed dum respicit immemor

<sup>1</sup> The arrangement of lines 1070-1084 as they stand in Leo following the MSS. is more or less illogical, besides presenting syntactic difficulties. The re-arrangement of Richter has been adopted here.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

wild beasts came, and close to the fearless herds the Marmaric lion crouched; does felt no fear of wolves, and the serpent fled her gloomy den, her venom at last forgot.

<sup>1061</sup> Nay, when through the gates Taenarian to the silent ghosts he came, smiting his mournful lyre, with his sad song he conquered Tartarus and the sullen gods of Erebus; nor was he daunted by the pools of Styx, by which the high gods swear. The never staying wheel<sup>1</sup> stood still, listless, with conquered whirling; the liver of Tityus grew, undevoured, while spell-bound the singer held the birds. The impish stone<sup>2</sup> allowed defeat and attended on the bard. Then first the aged Phrygian,<sup>3</sup> though the waves stood still, banished his raging thirst, forgetful quite, nor to the apples stretched his hand. Thou also, ferryman,<sup>4</sup> didst hear, and thy boat that plies the infernal sea came oarless on. So when by his song Orpheus had utterly o'ercome the infernal gods, then did the goddesses<sup>5</sup> renew again Eurydice's exhausted thread. But while Orpheus thoughtlessly looked back, all unbelieving

<sup>1</sup> On which Ixion was bound.

<sup>2</sup> Which Sisyphus was rolling.

<sup>3</sup> Tantalus.                      <sup>4</sup> Charon.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. the fatal sisters, the Parcae.

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<sup>2</sup> So *Birt's emendation of the impossible MSS. reading* *audito quoque*: *Richter's* *auditum quoque* *is also impossible.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nec credens sibi redditam  
Orpheus Eurydicen sequi,  
cantus praemia perdidit ;  
quae nata est iterum perit.

Tunc, solamina cantibus  
quaerens, flebilibus modis  
<sup>1</sup>haec Orpheus cecinit Getis :

leges in superos datas,  
et qui tempora digerit  
quattuor praecipites deus  
anni disposuit vices  
nulli non avidi colus  
Parcas stamina nectere,  
quod natum est, quod erit, mori.<sup>2</sup>

Vati credere Thracio  
devictus iubet Hercules.

iam, iam legibus obrutis  
mundo cum veniet dies,  
australis polus obruet  
quidquid per Libyam iacet  
et sparsus Garamas tenet ;  
arctous polus obruet  
quidquid subiacet axibus  
et siccus Boreas ferit.

amisso trepidus polo  
Titan excutiet diem.

caeli regia concidens  
ortus atque obitus trahet  
atque omnes pariter deos  
perdet mors aliqua et chaos,  
et mors fata novissima  
in se constituet sibi.  
quis mundum capiet locus ?

<sup>1</sup> *Leo is of the opinion that the beginning and the end of Orpheus' song have fallen out, and that lines 1097-1099 are to*

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

his Eurydice restored to him and following, he lost his singing's recompense; and she had come to the verge of life only to die once more.

<sup>1090</sup> Then, solace in song still seeking, in mournful measures Orpheus thus to the Getans sang: that the gods are under law, e'en he who rules the seasons, who has arranged the four changes of the flying year; that for no one the Parcae spin again the threads of the greedy distaff, and that all which has been and shall be born shall die.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1100</sup> The overthrow of Hercules bids us believe the Thracian bard. Soon, soon, when to the universe shall come the day that law shall be o'erwhelmed, the southern skies shall fall upon Libya's plains and all that the scattered Garamantians possess; the northern heavens shall overwhelm all that lies beneath the pole and that Boreas smites with withering blasts. Then from the lost sky the affrighted sun shall fall and banish day. The palace of heaven shall sink, dragging down East and West, and death in some form and chaos shall o'erwhelm all gods in one destruction; and death shall at last bring doom upon itself. What place will then receive the world? Will the gates of Tartarus

<sup>1</sup> Reading according to the arrangement of Richter. See critical note <sup>2</sup>.

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*be joined with the following lines. Richter reads 1093-1099 as Orpheus' song.*

<sup>2</sup> *Richter proposes quod natum est, poterit mori.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

discedet via Tartari,  
 fractis ut pateat polis? 1120  
 an quod dividit aethera  
 a terris spatium sat est  
 et mundi nimium malis?  
 quis tantum capiet (nefas)  
 fatum, quis superos locus?  
 pontum Tartara sidera  
 regna unus capiet tria.  
 Sed quis non modicus fragor  
 aures attonitas movet?  
 est est Herculeus sonus. 1130

HERCVLES

Converte, Titan clare, anhelantes equos,  
 emitte noctem; pereat hic mundo dies  
 quo morior, atra nube inhorrescat polus;  
 obsta novercae. nunc, pater, caecum chaos  
 reddi decebat, hinc et hinc compagibus  
 ruptis uterque debuit frangi polus.  
 quid parcis astris? Herculem amittis, pater.  
 nunc partem in omnem, Iuppiter, specta poli,  
 ne quis Gyas Thessalica iaculetur iuga  
 et fiat Othrys pondus Encelado leve. 1140  
 laxabit atri carceris iam iam fores  
 Pluton superbus, vincula excutiet patri  
 caelumque reddet. ille qui pro fulmine  
 tuisque facibus natus in terris eram,  
 ad Styga revertor; surget Enceladus ferox  
 mittetque quo nunc premitur in superos onus;  
 regnum omne, genitor, aetheris dubium tibi

<sup>1</sup> Let the world be shrouded in darkness, that Juno may not see the death of Hercules.



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

spread wide, that room for the shattered heavens may be found? Or is the space 'twixt heaven and earth great enough (perchance too great) for the evils of the world? What place will be great enough to hold (oh, horrible!) a death so vast, what place, the gods? Sea, Tartarus and heaven—three kingdoms shall one place contain.

<sup>1128</sup> But what outrageous clamour this that assails our startled ears? It is, it is the sound of Hercules.

[*Enter HERCULES in the extremity of suffering.*]

### HERCULES

Turn back, O shining Sun, thy panting steeds, and let loose the night; let this day wherein I die perish for the world, and let heaven shudder in the pitchy dark. So thwart<sup>1</sup> my stepdame. Now, father, were it fitting to restore blind chaos; now this side and that should heaven's frame be burst and both poles rent asunder. Why dost thou spare the stars? Thou art losing Hercules, O father. Now, Jupiter, look well to every part of heaven, lest any Gyas hurl Thessalian crags and Othrys become a slight missile for Enceladus.<sup>2</sup> Now, now will haughty Pluto open his dark prison gates, strike off his father's<sup>3</sup> chains and give him back to heaven. Since I thy son, who on earth have been in place of thy bolt and lightning flash, am turning me back to Styx, Enceladus, the fierce, will rise, and the mass 'neath which he now is crushed will he hurl against the gods; yea, father, thy whole realm of air will my death put to hazard. Then ere thou art utterly

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the former battle of the Giants against Jupiter. See Index *s.v.* "Giants."

<sup>3</sup> Saturn.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

mors nostra faciet. antequam spolium tui<sup>1</sup>  
 caelum omne fiat, conde me tota, pater,  
 mundi ruina, frange quem perdis polum. 1150

### CHORVS

Non vana times, nate Tonantis.  
 nunc Thessalicam Pelion Ossam  
 premet et Pindo congestus Athos  
 nemus aetheriis inseret astris ;  
 vincet scopulos inde Typhoeus  
 et Tyrrhenam feret Inarimen ;  
 feret Aetnaeos inde caminos  
 scindetque latus montis aperti  
 nondum Enceladus fulmine victus.  
 iam te caeli regna secuntur.<sup>2</sup> 1160

### HERCVLES

Ego qui relicta morte, contempta Styge  
 per media Lethes stagna cum spolio redi  
 quo paene lapsis excidit Titan equis,  
 ego quem deorum regna senserunt tria,  
 morior ; nec ullus per meum stridet latus  
 transmissus ensis, haut meae telum necis<sup>3</sup>  
 est totus Othrys, non truci rictu gigans 1168  
 Pindo cadaver obruit toto meum :  
 sine hoste vincor, quodque me torquet magis 1170  
 (o misera virtus !) summus Alcidae dies  
 nullum malum prosternit ; inpendo, ei mihi,  
 in nulla vitam facta.

Pro mundi arbiter  
 superique quondam dexteræ testes meae,  
 pro cuncta tellus, Herculem vestrum placet

<sup>1</sup> tibi *E.*                      <sup>2</sup> signa sequentur *A.*

<sup>3</sup> *Leo deletes line 1167, saxum est nec instar montis abrupti*  
 latus.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

despoiled of heaven, bury me, father, 'neath the whole ruined world; shatter the skies which thou art doomed to lose.

### CHORUS

Not vain thy fears, son of the Thunderer. Soon now shall Pelion weigh down Thessalian Ossa, and Athos, on Pindus heaped, shall thrust his forests midst the heavenly stars; then shall Typhoeus overcome the crags<sup>1</sup> and upheave Tuscan Inarime; the Aetnean furnaces then shall Enceladus upheave, not yet by thy bolt o'ercome, and rend the gaping mountain's side. E'en now the kingdoms of the sky are following thee.<sup>2</sup>

### HERCULES

Lo I, who have escaped from death, who scorned the Styx, who through the midst of Lethe's pool have returned with spoil,<sup>3</sup> at sight whereof Titan was almost flung from his falling car, I, whose presence three realms of gods have felt, am perishing. No deep-thrust sword grates through my side, nor is all Othrys the instrument of my death; no giant with fierce and gaping jaws has buried my body beneath the whole of Pindus; no, without enemy am I overcome and, thought which racks me more, (shame to my manhood!) the last day of Alcides has seen no monster slain. Ah, woe is me! I am squandering my life for no return.

<sup>1173</sup> O thou ruler of the world, ye gods, once witnesses of my deeds, O earth entire, is it resolved

<sup>1</sup> Beneath which he is buried.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* Jupiter is falling and his kingdom with him.

<sup>3</sup> Cerberus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

morte hac perire?<sup>1</sup> dirus o nobis pudor,  
 o turpe fatum—femina Herculeae necis  
 auctor feretur! morior Alcides quibus?  
 invicta si me cadere feminea manu  
 voluere fata perque tam turpes colus 1180  
 mea mors cucurrit, cadere potuissem, ei mihi,  
 Iunonis odio. feminae caderem manu,  
 sed caelum habentis. si nimis, superi, fuit,  
 Scythico sub axe genita domuisset meas  
 vires Amazon. feminae cuius manu  
 Iunonis hostis vincor? hinc gravior tibi,  
 noverca, pudor est. quid diem hunc laetum vocas?  
 quid tale tellus genuit iratae tibi?  
 mortalis odia femina excessit tua.  
 adhuc ferebas esse te Alcidae imparem; 1190  
 victa es duobus—pudeat irarum deos!  
 utinam meo cruore satiasset suos  
 Nemeaea rictus pestis aut centum anguibus  
 vallatus hydram tabe pavissem mea!  
 utinam fuissem praeda Centauris datus  
 aut inter umbras vinctus aeterno miser  
 saxo sederem! spolia nunc traxi ultima  
 Fato stupente, nunc ab inferna Styge  
 lucem recepi, Ditis evici moras—  
 ubique mors me fugit, ut leto inclitae 1200  
 sortis carerem. pro ferae, victae ferae!  
 non me triformis sole conspecto canis  
 ad Styga revexit, non sub Hesperio polo  
 Hibera vicit turba pastoris feri,

<sup>1</sup> So *N. Heinsius*; †morte ferire *Leo*, with *E*, conjecturing inertem obire: mortem perire *A*: perire inertem *L. Müller*.

<sup>1</sup> He is thinking of the many monsters, beasts, tyrants, whom he has slain, he who must now die by a woman's hand.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. than for me.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

your Hercules should perish by such death as this? Oh, cruel shame to me, oh, end most foul—a woman will be called author of Alcides' death! And for whom<sup>1</sup> is Alcides dying? If the fates unchanging have willed that by a woman's hand I fall, if through distaff so base the thread of my death has run, ah me! that I might have fallen by Juno's hate! 'Twould be by woman's hand, but of one who holds the heavens. If, O ye gods, that were too much to ask, the Amazon, born 'neath Scythian skies, might have o'ercome my strength. But by what woman's hand is Juno's foe o'ercome? This is for thee, my stepdame, heavier<sup>2</sup> shame. Why callest thou this day joyful? What monster such as this has earth produced to sate thy wrath<sup>3</sup>? A mortal woman has outdone thy hate. Till now thou deemdst thyself by Alcides alone outmatched; by two hast thou<sup>4</sup> been surpassed—of such wrath let heaven be ashamed! Oh, that the Nemean lion with my blood had sated his gaping jaws, or that, hedged by a hundred snakes, I had fed the hydra with my gore! O that I had been given to the Centaurs as a prey, or that midst the shades I, bound to an everlasting rock, in wretchedness were sitting! But now have I dragged here my latest spoil<sup>4</sup> while Death looked on amazed; now from infernal Styx have I regained the light, the bars of Dis I've conquered—on every hand death shunned me, that I might lack at last a glorious end. O beasts, O conquered beasts! Neither did the three-formed dog, when he saw the sun, drag me back to Styx, nor 'neath western skies did the Spanish rout of the wild shepherd<sup>5</sup> conquer

<sup>3</sup> He counts Deianira as worse than all monsters Juno has sent against him. She has outdone even Juno's hate. Hence Juno is put to shame.      <sup>4</sup> Cerberus.      <sup>5</sup> Geryon.

## THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

non gemina serpens—perdidi mortem, ei mihi,  
totiens honestam! titulus extremus quis est?

### CHORVS

Viden ut laudis conscia virtus  
non Lethaeos horreat amnes?  
pudet auctoris, non morte dolet;  
cupit extremum finire diem 1210  
vasta tumidi mole gigantis  
et montiferum Titana pati  
rabidaeque necem debere ferae.  
sed tua causa est, miserande, manus,  
quod nulla fera est nullusque gigas;  
nam quis dignus necis Herculeae  
superest auctor nisi dextra tui?

### HERCVLES

Heu qualis intus scorpios, quis fervida  
plaga revulsus cancer infixus meas  
urit medullas? sanguinis quondam capax 1220  
tumidi igne cor<sup>1</sup> pulmonis arentes fibras  
distendit, ardet felle siccato iecur  
totumque lentus sanguinem avexit vapor.  
primam cutem consumpsit, hinc aditum nefas  
in membra fecit, abstulit pestis latus,  
exedit artus penitus et costas malum,  
hausit medullas. ossibus vacuis sedet;  
nec ossa durant ipsa, sed compagibus  
discussa ruptis mole conlapsa fluunt.  
defecit ingens corpus et pesti satis 1230  
Herculea non sunt membra—pro quantum est malum  
quod esse vastum fateor, o dirum nefas!

<sup>1</sup> So Richter: *Leo*, tumidi †iecur, with  $\omega$ , conjecturing  
tumet igne cor: tumidi cor en *N. Heinsius*.

## HERCULES OETAEUS

me, nor the twain serpents<sup>1</sup>—ah, woe is me! how often have I missed a glorious death! My final claim to glory—what is it?

### CHORUS

Seest thou how virtue, conscious of its fame, shrinks not from Lethe's stream? He grieves not at death but blushes for its cause; he longs 'neath some towering giant's vasty bulk to end the last day of life, to suffer some mountain-heaving Titan's weight, to owe his death to some wild, raging beast. But no, poor soul, because of thine own hand, there is no beast, no giant; for what worthy author of the death of Hercules is left save thy right hand?

### HERCULES

Alas, what scorpion,<sup>2</sup> what crab,<sup>2</sup> torn from the torrid zone, burns deep fixed in my marrow? My heart, once filled with pulsing streams of blood, hotly distends the parched fibres of my lungs; my liver glows, its bile dried quite away, and a slow fire has exhausted all my blood. First did the dread plague feed upon my skin, next to my limbs it passed, devoured my sides, then deep in my joints and ribs the pest ate its way, and drank my very marrow. In my hollow bones it lurks; nor do my bones themselves retain their hardness, but, shattered with broken structure, fall in a crumbling mass. My huge frame has shrivelled, and even the limbs of Hercules sate not the pest.—Oh, how mighty the ill which I admit is great! Oh, cruel curse! Behold,

<sup>1</sup> Which Juno sent against him in his infancy.

<sup>2</sup> Pestilent creatures from among the constellations of the zodiac (*fervida plaga*).

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

en cernite, urbes, cernite ex illo Hercule  
 quid iam supersit. Herculem agnoscis, pater?  
 hisne ego lacertis colla Nemeaei mali  
 elisa pressi? tensus hac arcus manu  
 astris ab ipsis detulit Stympthalidas?  
 his ego citatam gressibus vici feram  
 radiante clarum fronte gestantem caput?  
 his fracta Calpe manibus emisit fretum? 1240  
 his tot ferae, tot scelera, tot reges iacent?  
 his mundus umeris sedit? haec moles mea est,  
 haecne illa cervix? hasne ego opposui manus  
 caelo ruenti? quis mea custos manu  
 trahetur ultra Stygius? ubi vires prius  
 memet sepultae? quid patrem appello Iovem?  
 quid per Tonantem vindico caelum miser?  
 iam, iam meus credetur Amphitryon pater.

Quaecumque pestis viscere in nostro lates,  
 procede—quid me vulnere occulto petis? 1250  
 quis te sub axe frigido pontus Scythes,  
 quae pigra Tethys genuit aut Maurum premens  
 Hibera Calpe litus? o dirum malum!  
 utrumne serpens squalidum crista caput  
 vibrans an aliquod et mihi ignotum malum,  
 numquid cruore es genita Lernaeae ferae  
 an te reliquit Stygius in terris canis?  
 omne es malum nullumque—quis voltus tibi est?  
 concede saltem scire quo peream malo.  
 quaecumque pestis sive quaecumque es fera, 1260



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

ye cities, behold what now remains of that great Hercules. Dost recognize thy Hercules, my father? Was it with these arms I crushed and overwhelmed the Nemean plague? Was it with this hand I stretched the bow that brought down the Stymphalian birds from the very stars? With these feet did I o'ertake the swift-fleeing beast<sup>1</sup> with golden antlers gleaming on his head? By these hands shattered, did Calpe<sup>2</sup> let out the sea? So many beasts, so many monstrous things, so many kings, have these hands of mine brought low? Upon these shoulders did the heavens rest? Is this my massive frame, is this my neck? These hands did I oppose to the falling sky? What Stygian watch-dog will hereafter be dragged forth by my hand? Where are my powers, buried before my burial? Why on Jove as father do I call? Why, wretched man, by right of the Thunderer do I claim heaven? Now, now will Amphitryon be deemed my sire.

<sup>1249</sup> O pest, whate'er thou art that lurkest in my vitals, come forth—why dost attack me with a hidden smart? What Scythian Sea beneath the icy pole, what sluggish Tethys, what Spanish Calpe, crowding the Moorish coast, begot thee? O cursed bane! Art thou some serpent, brandishing his foul, full-crested head, or some evil thing even to me unknown? Art thou begotten of the Lernaean monster's<sup>3</sup> gore, or did the Stygian dog leave thee here on earth? Every ill thou art and yet no ill—what form hast thou? Grant me at least to know by what ill I am perishing. Whatever pest or what-

<sup>1</sup> The Arcadian stag.

<sup>2</sup> When Hercules rent the cliffs of Calpe and Abyla (the pillars of Hercules) asunder and gave outlet to the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>3</sup> The hydra.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

palam timere! quis tibi in medias locum  
fecit medullas? ecce direpta cute  
viscera manus detexit; ulterior tamen  
inventata latebra est—o malum simile Herculi!

Unde iste fletus? unde in has lacrimae genas?  
invictus olim voltus et numquam malis  
lacrimas suis praebere consuetus (pudet)  
iam flere didicit. quis dies fletum Herculis,  
quae terra vidit? siccus aerumnas tuli.  
tibi illa virtus, quae tot elisit mala, 1270  
tibi cessit uni; prima et ante omnes mihi  
fletum abstulisti; durior saxo horrido  
et chalybe voltus et vaga Symplegade  
rietus meos infregit et lacrimam<sup>1</sup> expulit.<sup>2</sup>  
flentem gementem, summe pro rector poli,  
me terra vidit, quodque me torquet magis,  
noverca vidit. urit ecce iterum fibras,  
incaluit ardor—unde nunc fulmen mihi?

CHORVS

Quid non possit superare dolor?  
quondam Getico durior Haemo 1280  
nec Parrhasio lenior axe  
saevo cessit membra dolori  
fessumque movens per colla caput  
latus alterno pondere flectit,  
fletum virtus saepe resorbet.  
sic arctos laxare nives  
quamvis tepido sidere Titan  
non tamen audet vincitque faces  
solis adusti glaciale iubar.

<sup>1</sup> lacrimas *E.*      <sup>2</sup> extulit *A.*

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

ever beast thou be, oppose me openly! Who gave thee place within my inmost marrow? See, my hand has ripped away the skin and the flesh uncovered; yet deeper still must its lurking place be found—O woe, invincible as Hercules!

<sup>1265</sup> But whence this lamentation? Whence tears upon these cheeks? My face, before unmoved, and never wont to express its woes in tears, at last (oh, shame!) has learned to weep. What day, what country has seen the tears of Hercules? Dry-eyed have I borne my cares. To thee<sup>1</sup> that strength, which has crushed so many monsters, to thee alone has yielded; thou first of all hast forced tears from mine eyes; my face, harder than rough rock, harder than steel and the wandering Symplegades, has relaxed my visage and driven forth my tears. Me, weeping and groaning, O most high ruler of the heaven, the earth has seen and, thought which racks me more, my step-dame has seen. But lo, again the scorching heat flames up and burns my vitals. Oh, where is the lightning flash to bring me death?

### CHORUS

What may not suffering overcome? But now, harder than Thracian Haemus' crags, than Parthasian skies more calm, to dire agony has he yielded him; his head drops wearily upon his neck, from side to side he turns his mighty bulk and oft does his fortitude drain back his tears. So, with however fervent beam he shine, Titan avails not to melt the arctic snows, whose icy splendour defies the torches of the burning sun.

<sup>1</sup> Addressed to the hidden pest.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

HERCVLES

Convertē voltus ad meas clades, pater. 1290  
 numquam ad tuas confugit Alcides manus,  
 non cum per artus hydra fecundum meos  
 caput explicaret; inter infernos lacus  
 possessus atra nocte cum Fato steti  
 nec invocavi; tot feras vici horridas,  
 reges, tyrannos, nec tamen voltus meos  
 in astra torsi—semper haec nobis manus  
 votum spondit; nulla propter me sacro  
 micuere caelo fulmina—hic aliquid dies  
 optare iussit. primus audierit preces 1300  
 idemque summus. unicum fulmen peto;  
 giganta crede. non minus caelum mihi  
 asserere potui; dum patrem verum puto,  
 caelo pepercit. sive crudelis, pater,  
 sive es misericors, commoda nato manum  
 properante morte et occupa hanc laudem tibi.  
 Vel si piget manusque detrectat nefas,  
 emitte Siculo vertice ardentē, pater,  
 Titanas in me, qui manu Pindon ferant  
 aut te, Ossa, qui me monte proiecto opprimant.<sup>1</sup> 1310  
 abrupat Erebi claustra, me stricto petat  
 Bellona ferro; mitte Gradivum trucem,  
 armetur in me dirus. est frater quidem,  
 sed ex noverca. tu quoque, Alcidae soror  
 tantum ex parente, cuspidem in fratrem tuum  
 iaculare, Pallas. supplices tendo manus  
 ad te, noverca: sparge tu saltem, precor,

<sup>1</sup> So A: *Madvig* aut te, Ossa, quae me . . . opprimat: *Leo* f aut Ossa qui . . . opprimat with E, conjecturing Ossa que ut in me . . . opprimar.

# HERCULES OETAÆUS

## HERCULES

O father, turn thou thine eyes on my calamity. Never till now has Alcides fled to thee for aid, not even when around my limbs the hydra entwined its fertile heads. Midst the infernal pools, by the black pall of night enfolded, I stood with Death nor did I call upon thee. So many dreadful beasts have I o'ercome, yea kings and tyrants; yet have I ne'er lifted my face unto the stars. This hand of mine has ever been surety for my prayers; no bolts for my sake have flashed from the sacred sky—but this day has bidden me ask somewhat of thee. 'Tis the first to hear my prayers, 'twill be the last. Just one thunderbolt I ask; count me a giant.<sup>1</sup> I could have laid hands on heaven no less than they; but while I thought thee my sire in very truth, I spared the skies. Oh, whether thou be harsh, my sire, or merciful, lay hands on thy son with speedy death and claim thee this great renown.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1307</sup> Or, if thy hand shrinks reluctant from the impious task, 'gainst me release from Aetna's mount the burning Titans, who in their hands may heave Pindus up, or, Ossa, thee, and by the hurled mountain overwhelm me quite. Let Bellona burst the bars of Erebus and with drawn sword rush upon me; or send fierce Mars; let the dread god 'gainst me be armed. He is my brother, true, but of my step-dame born. Thou too, Alcides' sister, but by our sire alone, hurl thy spear, O Pallas, against thy brother hurl. And to thee, my step-dame, do I stretch suppliant hands; do thou at least, I pray, let

<sup>1</sup> Think of me as one of the old giants storming heaven, and hurl a bolt at me.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* of killing Hercules ere Juno can do so.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

telum (perire feminae possum manu)  
 iam fracta, iam satiata, quid pascis minas?  
 quid quaeris ultra? supplicem Alciden vides, 1320  
 et nulla tellus, nulla me vidit fera  
 te deprecantem. nunc mihi irata quidem<sup>1</sup>  
 opus est noverca—nunc tuus cessat dolor?  
 nunc odia ponis? parcis ubi votum est mori.  
 o terra et urbes, non facem quisquam Herculi,  
 non arma tradet? tela subtrahitis mihi?  
 ita nulla saevas terra concipiat feras  
 post me sepultum nec meas umquam manus  
 imploret orbis; si qua nascentur mala,  
 nascatur ultor.<sup>2</sup> undique infelix caput 1330  
 mactate saxi, vincite aerumnas meas.  
 ingrata cessas orbis? excidimus tibi?  
 adhuc malis ferisque suppositus fores,  
 ni me tulisses. vindicem vestrum malis  
 eripite, populi; tempus hoc vobis datur  
 pensare merita—mors erit pretium omnium.

ALCMENA

Quas misera terras mater Alcidae petam?  
 ubi natus, ubinam? certa si visus notat,  
 reclinis ecce corde anhelante aestuat;  
 gemit; peractum est. membra conplecti ultima, 1340  
 o nate, liceat, spiritus fugiens meo  
 legatur ore; bracchia, amplexus cape—  
 ubi membra sunt? ubi illa quae mundum tulit  
 stelligera cervix? quis tibi exiguam tui  
 partem reliquit?

<sup>1</sup> So *A*: †pater *Leo* with *E*, conjecturing ac fera.

<sup>2</sup> So *Richter*: nascatur alius *A*: nascetur odium *E*: *Leo* conjectures nascatur opifer.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

fly thy bolt (I brook to perish by a woman's hand); oh, at last yielding, at last glutted, why still feed thy vengeance? What seekest thou further? Thou seest Alcides suppliant; whereas no land, no monster has ever seen me begging thee for quarter. Now have I need of a wrathful, raging step-dame—now has thy passion cooled? Now dost lay by thy hate? Thou sparest me when my prayer is all for death. O earth and cities of the earth, have ye none to bring torches 'gainst your Hercules, none to bring arms? Do ye withhold weapons from me? So<sup>1</sup> may no land produce savage monsters more when I am dead, and let the world ne'er ask for aid of mine; if any evils rise, let avenger rise as well. From every side crush out my luckless life with stones, o'erwhelm my woes. O ungrateful world, dost falter? Hast quite forgotten me? E'en now wouldst thou be prey to ills and savage beasts hadst thou not borne me. Then, O ye peoples, rescue your champion from his woes. This chance is given you to requite my services—death will be reward for all.

[Enter ALCMENA.]

### ALCMENA

What lands shall Alcides' wretched mother seek? Where is my son, oh, where? If mine eyes see aright, yonder he lies, panting and fever-tossed; he groans, his life is at an end. In a last embrace let me enfold thee, O my son, and gather thy parting spirit in my mouth; take my embracing arms to thine—but where are thy limbs? Where is that star-bearing neck which propped the heavens up? Who is it has, left to thee but a shadow of thyself?

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* according as ye grant my prayer.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

HERCVLES

Herculem spectas quidem,  
mater, sed umbram et vile nescio quid mei.  
agnosce, mater—ora quid flectis retro  
voltumque mergis? Herculem dici tuum  
partum erubescis?

ALCMENA

Quis feram mundus novam,  
quae terra genuit? quodve tam dirum nefas 1350  
de te triumphant? victor Herculeus quis est?

HERCVLES

Nuptae iacentem cernis Alciden dolis.

ALCMENA

Quis tantus est qui vincat Alciden dolus?

HERCVLES

Quicumque, mater, feminae iratae sat est.

ALCMENA

Et unde in artus pestis aut ossa incidit?

HERCVLES

Aditum venenis palla femineis dedit.

ALCMENA

Vbinam ista palla est? membra nudata intuo.

HERCVLES

Consumpta mecum est.

ALCMENA

Tantane inventa est lues?



## HERCULES OETAÆUS

HERCULES

Hercules thou seest indeed, my mother, but 'tis the shadow and the vile somewhat of myself. Behold me, mother—why dost thou turn thine eyes away and hide thy face? Art ashamed to have Hercules called thy son?

ALCMENA

What world, what land has given birth to a fresh monster? What so dread horror is triumphing over thee? Who is a victor over Hercules?

HERCULES

By his wife's wiles thou seest Alcides low.

ALCMENA

What wile is great enough to worst Alcides?

HERCULES

Whatever, mother, suffices a woman's wrath.

ALCMENA

And how gained the pest entrance to thy joints and bones?

HERCULES

A robe, poisoned by woman's hands, gave entrance to it.

ALCMENA

Where is that robe? I see but naked limbs.

HERCULES

'Twas consumed with me.

ALCMENA

Was so destructive pestilence ever found?

# THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

## HERCVLES

Errare mediis crede visceribus meis,  
 o mater, hydram et mille cum Lerna feras. 1360  
 quae tanta nubes flamma Sicaniâ secat,  
 quae Lemnos ardens, quae plaga igniferi poli  
 vetans flagranti currere in zona diem?  
 in ipsa me iactate, pro comites, freta  
 mediosque in annes—quis sat est Hister mihi?  
 non ipse terris maior Oceanus meos  
 franget vapores, omnis in nostris malis  
 deficiet umor, omnis arescet latex.  
 quid, rector Erebi, me remittebas Iovi?  
 decuit tenere; redde me tenebris tuis, 1370  
 talem subactis Herculem ostende inferis.  
 nil inde ducam, quid times iterum Herculem?  
 invade, mors, non trepida; iam possum mori.

## ALCMENA

Compesce lacrimas saltem et aerumnas doma  
 malisque tantis Herculem indomitum refer  
 mortemque differ; quos soles vince inferos.

## HERCVLES

Si me catenis horridus vinctum suis  
 praeberet avidae Caucasus volucris dapem,  
 Scythia gemente flebilis gemitus mihi  
 non exitisset; si vagae Symplegades 1380  
 utraque premerent rupe, redeuntis minax<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So Richter: redeuntis †minas Leo with E, suggesting silens.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. the hydra.

<sup>2</sup> He compares these flames with the fires of Aetna.

# HERCULES OETAÆUS

## HERCULES

Believe me, mother, through my inmost parts the hydra is wandering and with the Lernaean one<sup>1</sup> a thousand savage beasts. What flames<sup>2</sup> as hot as these pierce the Sicilian clouds, what Lemnian fires, or heaven's burning tract, within whose scorching zone<sup>3</sup> the sun's path may not lie? O comrades, throw me into the sea itself, into the river's midst—alas! what Hister is enough for me? Though greater than all lands, the Ocean itself will not cool my burning pains; to ease my woe all water will dry up, all moisture fail. Why, ruler of Erebus, didst send me back to Jove? 'Twere more seemly to have held me fast. To thy glooms restore me, and show such Hercules as this to the ghosts<sup>4</sup> I conquered. Naught will I take away; why dost fear Hercules a second time? Assail me, Death, and fear not; now do I brook to die.

## ALCMENA

Restrain thy tears, at least, master thy pains; even to such woes show Hercules invincible; put death away; conquer the lords of hell as is thy wont.

## HERCULES

If rugged Caucasus should offer me, bound by its chains, as a feast to greedy birds,<sup>5</sup> while Scythia mourned around, no doleful cry would issue from my lips; should the wandering Symplegades crush me 'twixt both their cliffs, their returning rushes would

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* the space between the ecliptic and the celestial equator.

<sup>4</sup> All the creatures he conquered on earth are now ghosts in the lower world.

<sup>5</sup> He is thinking of the sufferings of Prometheus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ferrem ruinas; Pindus incumbat mihi  
 atque Haemus et qui Thracios fluctus Athos  
 frangit Iovisque fulmen excipiens Mimas;  
 non ipse si in me, mater, hic mundus ruat  
 superque nostros flagret incensus toros  
 Phoebus axis, degener mentem Herculis  
 clamor domaret. mille decurrant ferae  
 pariterque lacerent, hinc feris clangoribus  
 aetheria me Stymphalis, hinc taurus minax 1390  
 cervice tota pulset et quidquid fuit  
 solum quoque ingens; surgat hinc illinc nemus  
 artusque nostros durus immittat Sinis:  
 sparsus silebo—non ferae excutient mihi,  
 non arma gemitus, nil quod impelli potest.

ALCMENA

Non virus artus, nate, femineum coquit,  
 sed dura series operis et longus tibi  
 pavit cruentos forsitan morbos labor.

HERCVLES

Vbi morbus, ubinam est? estne adhuc aliquid mali  
 in orbe mecum? veniat; huc aliquis mihi 1400  
 intendat arcus—nuda sufficiet manus.  
 procedat agedum huc.

ALCMENA

Ei mihi, sensum quoque  
 excussit ille nimius impulsans dolor.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

I bear, defiant; were Pindus lying on me, and Haemus, and Athos which resists the Thracian waves, and Mimas which welcomes the bolts of Jupiter; mother, if even this sky should fall upon my head, and over my shoulders the fiery car of Phoebus should go flaming, no coward cry would subdue Alcides' soul. Though a thousand beasts at once should rush against me and rend me sore; though here from the skies Stymphalus' bird, swooping with clangour wild, and there with full strength the threatening bull should push upon me, and whatever huge monster has sprung from earth; though Sinis' groves should arise this side and that, and the rough giant shoot my limbs<sup>1</sup> afar; rent limb from limb, still will I hold my peace—no beasts, no arms, naught that can be met and vanquished shall extort one groan from me.

### ALCMENA

Son, 'tis no woman's poison melts thy frame; but thy hard round of labours, thine unceasing toil, perchance has fed some deadly disease in thee.

### HERCULES

Disease? Where is it? Where is it, pray? Is there still aught of evil in the world with me alive? Let it come on; let some one reach hither my bow to me—nay, my bare hands will be enough. Let it come on, I say. [*He sinks into a deep, swoon-like slumber.*]

### ALCMENA

Alas! the too great shock of agony hath reft e'en his sense away. [*To attendants.*] Remove his weapons,

<sup>1</sup> See Index *s.v.* "Sinis."

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

removete quaeso tela et infestas precor  
 rapite hinc sagittas : igne suffuso genae  
 scelus minantur. quas petam latebras anus ?  
 dolor iste furor est : Herculem solus domat.  
 cur deinde latebras aut fugam vaecors petam ?  
 obire forti meruit Alcmene manu :  
 vel scelere pereat, antequam letum mihi  
 ignavus aliquis mandet<sup>1</sup> ac turpis manus  
 de me triumphet.

1410

Ecce lassatus malis  
 sopore fessas alligat venas dolor  
 gravique anhelum pectus impulsu quatit.  
 favete, superi. si mihi natum inclutum  
 miserae negastis, vindicem saltem precor  
 servate terris. abeat excussus dolor  
 corpusque vires reparat Herculeum suas.

HYLLVS

Pro lux acerba, pro capax scelerum dies !  
 nurus Tonantis occidit, natus iacet,  
 nepos supersum ; scelere materno hic perit,  
 fraude illa capta est. quis per annorum vices  
 totoque in aevo poterit aerumnas senex  
 referre tantas ? unus eripuit dies  
 parentem utrumque ; cetera ut sileam mala  
 parcamque fatis, Herculem amitto patrem.

1420

ALCMENA

Compesce voces, inclutum Alcidae genus  
 miseraeque fato similis Alcmeneae nepos :  
 longus dolorem forsitan vincet sopor.

<sup>1</sup> So *A* : mandat . . . triumphat *Leo with E*.

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

take these deadly shafts out of his reach, I pray you ; his burning cheeks portend some violence. Where shall an old woman hide herself? That is the smart of madness ; it alone masters Hercules. But why should I, foolish that I am, seek flight or hiding? By a brave hand Alcmena deserves to die ; so let me perish even impiously, before some craven decree my death, or a base hand triumph over me.

<sup>1412</sup> But see, all spent with woe, his pain holds his worn heart fast bound in slumber, and his panting chest heaves with laboured breathing. Help him, ye gods! If to my misery ye have denied my glorious son, at least spare to the world, I pray, its champion. May his smart be driven quite away, and the body of Hercules renew its strength.

[*Enter* HYLLUS.]

### HYLLUS

O bitter light, O crime-filled day! Dead is the Thunderer's daughter,<sup>1</sup> his son lies dying, and I, his grandson, still survive. By my mother's crime is he perishing, but she was by guile ensnared. What aged man, throughout his round of years, in his whole life, will be able to recount woes so great? Both parents has one day taken off; to say naught of other ills and to spare the fates,<sup>2</sup> Hercules, my father, am I losing.

### ALCMENA

Restrain thy words, child of illustrious sire, wretched Alcmena's grandson, like her in fate; perchance long slumber will o'ercome his pains. But

<sup>1</sup> Dejanira, who has just killed herself off stage.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* not to speak too hardly of them by recounting all their cruelty.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

sed ecce, lassam deserit mentem quies 1430  
redditque morbo corpus et luctum mihi.

HERCVLES

Quid hoc? rigenti cernitur Trachin iugo  
aut inter astra positus evasi genus  
mortale tandem? quis mihi caelum parat?  
te te, pater, iam video, placatam quoque  
specto novercam. quis sonus nostras ferit  
caelestis aures? Iuno me generum vocat!  
video nitentem regiam clari aetheris  
Phoebique tritam flammae zonam rota.  
cubile video Noctis; hinc tenebrae vocant.<sup>1</sup> 1440

Quid hoc? quis arcem cludit et ab ipsis, pater,  
deducit astris? ora Phoebus modo  
afflabat axis, iam prope a caelo fui—  
Trachina video. quis mihi terras dedit?  
Oete modo infra steterat ac totus fuit  
suppositus orbis. quam bene excideras, dolor!  
cogis fateri—parce et hanc vocem occupa.

Hoc, Hylle, dona matris hoc munus parant.  
utinam liceret stipite ingesto impiam  
effringere animam quale Amazonium malum 1450  
circa nivalis Caucasi domui latus,  
o cara Megara, tune cum furerem mihi  
coniunx fuisti? stipitem atque arcus date,

<sup>1</sup> So Richter with MSS. order: Leo reads this line after 1444.