FLUCTIBUS VARIIS AGOR: AN ASPECT OF SENECAS CLYTEMESTRA PORTRAIT*

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§1. What impels Clytemestra to murder Agamemnon in Seneca's tragedy of that name? In the same way that a study of Clytemestra's motivation in Aeschylus is intermeshed with the underlying theological problem of the workings of Dike — a particular case to illustrate a general principle — the reader who comes to Seneca from Aeschylus could expect that to ask this same question of the Roman drama might equally throw some light on that writer's philosophical and intellectual concerns; I believe that this is in fact the case — though of course the focal point of Seneca's interest is vastly different from Aeschylus'. Clytemestra herself names diverse impulses that activate her (131ff); the resulting uncertainty (fluctibus variis agar 138, hinc . . . hinc 139, incerta dubitat 140) seems to defy rigid and schematic hierarchic ordering. Nevertheless, critics have been tempted to assign priority to one or other of these impulses. For example, 'Agamemnon's infidelities and not the sacrifice of Iphigenia [are] the most important cause for Clytemestra's resolve to kill her husband' (R.J. Tarrant). 1 This accentuation is exactly reversed in another study: 'Falsa e pretestuosa invece mi sembra la gelosia ostentata per Cassandra e le altre amanti del marito. Essa serve piuttosto a mascherare l'altro sentimento, quello vero, della maternità ferita' (E. Pettine). 2 This same view reappears in another recent monograph: 'Clytemnestra's impulse was to avenge her sacrificed daughter and her own injured pride. Tarrant believes that Seneca wished to make Agamemnon's infidelities the chief motive for Clytemestra's hatred . . ., but early in the play her first thought is of Iphigenia's cruel death and her own humiliation' (D. & E. Henry). 3 The words I have italicized above deserve comment. 'Her first thought' implies that the first motive mentioned must also be the most significant; but to regard this as the first motive is, quite simply, incorrect: a study of Clytemestra's motivation must begin with her monologue 108ff. By ignoring the sequence in which the various impulses are presented, D. & E. Henry have created a distorted picture. The present paper aims to analyse Clytemestra's complex motivation in the Ag. in an attempt to discover Seneca's purpose in creating this figure which differs substantially from the Greek prototypes. To concentrate on Clytemestra, and in particular on the psychological factors which drive her, is not to suggest that this exhausts the drama's philosophical complexity, still less that such psychological probing was the philosopher-poet's sole interest in writing the play; important questions not discussed in this paper are the themes of revenge and the significance of the
parallelism Mycenae-Troy. But these fall outside the ambit of my limited and primarily psychological study. This interpretation attempts no more than to scrutinize a single aspect of the drama’s complexity, surrounding which there still remains a degree of critical controversy.

§2. The figure of Clytemestra had evolved and been variously interpreted in the course of a long tradition. Consequently it will be useful, before proceeding further, to survey briefly how the question of her motivation is handled in the major Greek accounts in order to determine both Seneca’s dependence on and—more important—his departures from the literary tradition: in this way the specifically Senecan ponderation may be identified, and this will then be the subject of further analysis.

In Homer (esp. Od. 3.253–321 and 11.405–34) Clytemestra’s role is, by and large, overshadowed by that of Aegisthus: the impetus comes from him, he wins over an initially reluctant queen, and it is he who finally performs the actual deed. Clytemestra herself kills Cassandra (Od. 11.421–2) — possibly an oblique allusion to her jealousy (cf. Il. 1.113–4). Of Iphigenia’s death as a possible motive nothing is said. Notwithstanding, and in apparent contradiction of the earlier prominence of Aegisthus, Agamemnon at Od. 24.97 names both Aegisthus and Clytemestra as his murderers.6

Pindar (P. 11.22ff) advances two possibilities, without committing himself: the slaughter of Iphigenia, and the seduction of Clytemestra by Aegisthus. These explanations appear regularly in the dramatic accounts.

Aeschylus in his Ag. explains Clytemestra’s motives at both human and divine levels: the queen herself names the immolation of Iphigenia as her principal motivation (1415–8, 1521–8, 1555–9) while at the same time claiming to have acted as the agent of a higher justice (1432–3), as a personification of the curse on the house of Atreus (1497–1504). In addition to this, the adultery motif is hinted at: at 606–10 her insistence on her own chastity during Agamemnon’s absence is an attempt to pre-empt criticism from the chorus; her contemptuous reference to Agamemnon’s affairs at Troy and to Cassandra (1438–43) suggests also that jealousy played some part. But notwithstanding these secondary motifs, Aeschylus’ overriding concern with the operation of reciprocal Dike is such that he pays little attention to penetrating psychological analysis.7

The question of real and alleged motives becomes more pronounced in Sophocles and Euripides. In Sophocles’ Electra Clytemestra’s alleged motive is the death of Iphigenia, and in avenging this she claims to have been acting in concert with Justice (525–33); but this is refuted by Electra, who points to seduction by Aegisthus as the real cause (560–2); and lust as the ultimate motive is mentioned also by the chorus (197, with Jebb’s note; 491–2). No mention is made of Agamemnon’s illicit affairs as supplying an additional motive.

In Euripides’ Electra the death of Iphigenia again provides the excuse (29, 1011–2, 1020–3); Electra again refutes this by pointing to the real reason, Clytemestra’s passion for Aegisthus (1069–75, esp. 1074–5, 1090). Of particular interest in Euripides is the queen’s own admission that she was less provoked by
the death of her daughter than by Agamemnon's bringing back Cassandra as a rival to herself (1030–4): the psychological motive of jealousy takes precedence over one which might most clearly have provided absolute justification.

Finally, mention should at least be made of two references to Clytemestra in Latin poetry. Propertius cites her as an example of unrestrained feminine passion (the adultery motif),

\[ \text{quidve Clytaemestrae, propter quam tota Mycenis infamis stupro stat Pelopea domus? (3.19.19/20).} \]

In Ovid A.A. 2.399–408 she becomes an adulteress and exacts revenge not indeed on the basis of mere *rumours* about Agamemnon's affairs, but only after she has *seen* Cassandra: the jealousy motif is here coupled with Ovid's didactic aim of showing that amatory *furta* should be kept concealed. 8

The above examples show how, by shifting the accents, the poet can alter the complexion of his account, emphasizing now the slighted mother, now the scheming adulteress. Both these dimensions appear in Seneca (above, §1), and a further factor is the queen's guilty conscience. In the complexity of her motivation, Seneca's Clytemestra surpasses all the Greek prototypes. This notable concentration of motives requires explanation and analysis, and in addition it will be necessary to examine how these diverse strands are made to cohere dramatically.

§3.

\[ \text{Quid, segnis anime, tuta consilia expetis? quid fluctuaris? clausa iam melior via est. licuit pudicos coniugis quondam toros et sceptra casta vidua tutari fide; periere mores ius decus pietas fides et qui redire cum perit nescit pudor; da frena et omnem prona nequitiam incita: per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter (108–115).} \]

The opening monologue 108–124 shows Clytemestra oscillating between a return to her former virtue and committing a *crime passionnel*; but in fact she has no option at all, for since the *via melior* is irrevocably closed, she is committed to the course of *scelera.* 9 What launches her on this road? The first section of her monologue* offers an explanation at 110–113. The central idea in these lines is structurally emphasized through the ring *licuit pudicos—nescit pudor*, enclosing *fide—fides*: all stress falls on Clytemestra's violation of *pudor* and *coniugis fides*, that is, on her adulterous liaison with Aegisthus. The list of virtues, now gone, as well as the morally evaluative terminology (*melior via, nequitiam, scelera*) show that she analyses her situation in terms of ethical norms and is keenly aware of her own guilt and failing. Conspicuous is the absence of any *external factors* which could kindle the criminal impulse, a circumstance whose significance has been noted by K. Heldmann:

Atreus sah die Ursache für die Auflösung und Umkehrung aller sittlichen Werte zuallererst in dem Verbrechen seines Bruders. In Clytämnestras Worten dagegen fehlt jeder Schuldvorwurf. . . . Aber nicht nur, dass
Clytemnestra ihrem Gatten keine Vorwürfe macht, nichts von den Liebschaften Agamemnons und der Opferung Iphigenias sagt, um sich zu rechtfertigen: sie beschreibt die Situation mit Begriffen, die vor allem ihr eigenes schuldhaftes Verhalten charakterisieren.11

The initial criminal impulse has been entirely internalized and has its locus in a guilty conscience:12 here is a decisive innovation vis-à-vis all the Greek accounts. This sense of guilt activates the proclivity to crime (114–5),13 which is then the subject of the amplificatio 116ff:

Tecum ipsa nunc evolve femineos dolos,
quod uila coniunx perfida atque impos sui
amore caeco, quod novercales manus
ausae, quod ardens impia virgo face
Phasiae fugiens regna Thessalica trabe:
ferrum, venena — vel Mycenaes domos
coniuncta socio profuge furtiva rate.

Quid timida loqueris furta et exilium et fugas?

The line of thought from 108–115 to 116–124 (= cause : result) shows that the resolve to commit a crime has already been taken — before the issue is debated with either the nutrix or Aegisthus.14 In these subsequent debates, it is true, additional motives are introduced; but initially Seneca concentrates exclusively on Clytemestra’s adultery and resulting guilt. To accentuate the importance of this motive, the adultery had already been foreshadowed in the first choral ode (iura pudorque/ et coniugii sacrata fiides/ fugiunt aulas, 79–81). Whether and to what extent this element continues to play a determinant role remains to be seen.

The reader knows — both from the prologue (43) and from acquaintance with the myth — that Agamemnon will be murdered by his wife; but there is no specific mention of this in the monologue, where references to her intentions are very vague (ommem15 prona nequitiam incita, scelera). Nor is there clarification in lines 116ff: the notions nequitia and scelera are there indeed narrowed down to femineos dolos, and this headline is in turn expanded in a triad — but concerning Clytemestra’s precise intentions we are still in the dark.

What is the purpose of the parallels in 116ff? The first item, though not readily identifiable with any well-known figure from mythology (see Tarrant ad 117ff), has nevertheless a clear relevance to Clytemestra’s situation (as opposed to her intended crime) in that coniunx perfida recalls the loss of fides, while amore caeco has its counterpart in the affair with Aegisthus (both times the adultery motif). There is no explicit mention of a victim here — although the obvious candidate would be her husband. Less obvious is the relevance of the references to Phaedra (novercales manus)16 and Medea (impia virgo), neither of whom were husband slayers. The element of child slaughter may be relevant: this is not to suggest that Clytemestra is consciously contemplating this step at this point, but the reference to Medea nonetheless anticipates the direction her anger will take later (cf. 971!). The parallels provide a framework of reference against which her subsequent
development may be gauged.

But their significance goes further. The accumulation is in itself noteworthy, for it suggests the intensity of the aggressive impulse. Since the examples encompass coniunx, noverca and virgo, the implication is that Clytemestra — combining these three aspects — is an archetypal example of intense feminine wrath. In terms of the respective victims of the three figures, there is no uniformity: the sequence is (husband) — stepson — children. This, I suggest, is intentional, implying that Clytemestra’s anger is still unfocused, i.e. the will to crime exists before the crime itself is clearly defined, feeling is more powerful than rationality. Finally, the three items form a climactic gradatio, a crescendo curve in which is mirrored Clytemestra’s own rising anger.

The speech culminates in a self-assertive apex, soror ista fecit: te decret maius nefas (124), which serves to steel Clytemestra’s resolve. Te decret is here an inversion of the argument ‘noblesse oblige’: her crime must be worthy of her lineage — and of herself. The desire to surpass — not just to imitate — her sister Helen (maius nefas) by committing an act of unparalleled magnitude, is an attitude typical of Seneca’s creations: in these cases the crime is to be an act of self-expression and self-definition, an outward manifestation of the perpetrator’s individuality. The section of the speech (116ff) which had begun with mythological parallels as points of general orientation, and continued with a reference to Helen, ends with Clytemestra herself stepping into prominence and detaching herself from the ‘generic’ background: the apex of the argument (124) represents Clytemestra’s awareness of the uniqueness of her particular case. The will to crime has become individualized.

The queen is lucid enough to subject her situation to a close analysis; the criminal impulse is a conscious act of will (that is, it is not imposed externally, as in H.F.); the sequence of her argument, in which her own crime sets her on the course of further criminality, a situation corresponding closely to that outlined in De Ira 1.16.3, is evidence of a pathological condition. The opening monologue, in sum, identifies the interrelated questions of Clytemestra’s motivation and her state of mind — questions whose subsequent development needs to be kept in mind.

§4. The nurse enters and attempts to allay Clytemestra’s rising emotion (125–30): this prompts the queen to analyse more closely her own condition. The crucial lines are 131–8:

Maiora cruciant quam ut moras possim pati;  
flammas medulas et cor exurant meum;  
mixtas dolori subdidit stimulos timor;  
invidia pulsat pectus, hinc animunt iugo  
premit cupido turpis et vinci vetat;  
et inter istas mentis obsessae faces  
ussus quidem et deiectus et pessumdatu  
pudor rebellat (131–138).

The well-known erotic metaphor in 132 must refer to her passion for Aegisthus,
which reappears as *cupido turpis* (135; note the self-censure), and is finally shown as beleaguered the residual *pudor* (136–138a). This conflict between *cupido* and *pudor* develops the polarity outlined in 108–115. In addition, Clytemestra here mentions also *dolor, timor* and *invidia* as raging within her. These have been glossed as follows: 'Anger, that Agamemnon deceived her and treacherously slaughtered their daughter, and that Agamemnon was sexually unfaithful; jealousy, of Cassandra . . . and fear, that Agamemnon will punish her sexual infidelity, and that Cassandra will replace her as queen of Argos'. With this interpretation I am in substantial agreement. What is notable here is that the motivating nexus is expanded, that the symptoms of resentment, fear and jealousy presuppose external causes, and that these factors are all related in some way to Agamemnon: Clytemestra's impulse, in other words, is here more clearly focused than it was in 116ff above. The coexistence of this multiplicity of conflicting causes chiefly distinguishes Seneca's queen from her Greek antecedents. The cluster of motives with which Seneca operates poses a structural-dramatic problem in that these diverse strands need to be developed and woven into a coherent whole, but on the other hand the coexistence of so many facets makes possible profounder psychological analysis than was found in the Greek versions. I shall argue for an interrelationship between the structural and the psychological in the sense that the deployment of the various motives is always such as to analyse and illuminate the underlying state of mind.

§5. Clytemestra had alluded to an element of irrationality in her condition in the words *impos sui amore caeco* (117–8), and the nurse had been quick to perceive the outward symptoms of one *consilii impotens* (126); this dimension is expanded in 131ff. There are several indications that there is more to these lines than just evocative description — although the poetic qualities should not be overlooked. On the sequence *medullas – cor – pectus – animus – mens* it has been remarked, 'man beachte hier die Linie von unten nach oben . . . ; die Affekte stürmen von allen Seiten auf sie ein'. One might question, however, whether Seneca intended the series to indicate simply the *local* advance of *affectus*; I suspect that further differentiation is possible. *Medullas*, typically the seat of love, is chosen to indicate the extent to which passion for Aegisthus as a feeling has permeated Clytemestra's whole being. *Cor* and *pectus* are the seats of both emotion and rationality, *animus* and *mens* more exclusively the locus of the intellectual faculties. The sequence of terms charts not merely the local advance of *affectus*, but also suggests how passion develops from an embryonic physical sensation (*flammae medullas . . . exurunt*) to a force which assails also the intellectual faculties; passion, in other words, is represented as a psychosomatic phenomenon.

The philosophical significance of these lines is further hinted at by the choice of metaphors. Fire imagery (*flammae . . . exurunt*) is typically used in descriptions of intense passion, whether love or anger. *Flammae medullas et cor exurunt meum* (132), where the flames refer to love, is in the tradition of *sermo amatorius*; but when the image reappears in 136 as *faces*, it is surrounded by war
metaphors (*obsessae, deiectus, rebellat*), i.e. its focus has shifted somewhat. The metaphor of the siege (*mentis obsessae*, 136) is the exact counterpart to the image of the prose works where *ratio* is described as an *arx* immune to assault. The complementary images suggest that the character of Clytemestra was conceived, in part at least, to illustrate the disastrous inversion of a principle propounded by Seneca in the prose works: the dramatist continues, by other means, the work of the philosopher.

The flames are followed by an extended sea metaphor (138b–144), this polar contrast itself suggesting extremes and intensity of passion. *Fluctus* here symbolizes the notion *ferri* and *rapi*, of a person who is swept along without being able to offer resistance; again cross-reference with the prose works brings out the underlying philosophical-psychological dimension. In this emotional tempest Clytemestra has abandoned the *regimen* — symbolic of guiding and controlling reason — and surrendered to *ira, dolor* and *spes*; and this idea is restated in

> ubi animus errat, optatum est casum sequi (143–4)

where *sequi* effectively implies the subservience of reason. Here is identified and articulated the essence of her psychological condition. The three specific emotions named are *ira, dolor* and *spes* (142). *Ira* and *dolor* belong together insofar as this hysteron proteron pairing (effect—cause) represents the aggressive impulse which will manifest itself in the desire for revenge; *spes* on the other hand represents the non-aggressive side of *affectus*. It will be argued that the identification of these three emotions is of structural and thematic importance to the extent that the debate with the nurse analyses the evolution of *dolor* and *ira*, while the development of *spes* is studied in the exchange with Aegisthus. The two types of emotion are, in different ways, equally antagonistic to *ratio*.

§6. Verbal sparring with the nurse begins at 145; she urges restraint and pragmatism, but each of her statements is rebutted by Clytemestra. As far as 154 the stichomythia is characterized by its gnomic complexion, significant in revealing how the queen evades specifics and takes refuge behind generalizations. In spite of the *sententiae*, however, there are clear thematic links with what has preceded. The *affectus* motif is sustained in *caeca* . . . *temeritas* (145), *rapienda* . . . *paceps via est* (154), and in the characteristic disregard for *modus* (159); *nequitiae modus* itself recalls *omnia pronae nequitiam incita* (114). The crucial adultery motif reappears as *culpa* (147) and *prioris criminis* (149) — in such a way that the moralizing terminology takes the crime itself for granted, the only question being whether it can be concealed or not. And finally *quod metuit auget* (151) harks back to Clytemestra’s fears (cf. 133), while the self-perpetuation of crime (*res . . . stulta nequitiae modus* and *qui scelus scelere obruit*) recalls 115.

At 115 the nurse changes her tactics (*at te . . .*), abandoning general arguments in favour of the more specific issues of Clytemestra’s obligations as wife and mother. She thereby provides the impetus to a process which culminates in the queen’s rhesis 162–202, a speech which is central to understanding the character of Clytemestra. This rhesis, I propose, is structured as a tripartite sequence to
illustrate the genesis and evolution, in three phases, of the dolor and ira mentioned at 142, and this evolution itself is consistent with Seneca’s conception of the origin and growth of anger as detailed in the De Ira. If one can demonstrate a correlation between the inherent dynamics of the rhesis on the one hand and the psychological progression of ira on the other, then this hypothesis is worth considering as one way of interpreting the text under scrutiny. It might perhaps appear as a slight inconsistency that Seneca should first represent Clytemestra as being already in the grip of affectus (131ff), and then in 162ff go back to trace in greater detail the evolution, from its origin, of this same affectus: the Senecan analysis of Clytemestra does not follow an uninterrupted linear sequence. But this apparent inconsistency is no more than a thematic hysteron proteron: the drastic initial symptoms of an advanced state of affectus articulate, in the manner of an exposition, what is to be the crucial element in the queen’s disposition, and only later — when the reader has thus been alerted to this central theme — is the ‘theoretical’ background filled in (162ff). I do not claim that the Senecan Clytemestra in her totality was intended as a paradigm of the three phases of affectus, but propose simply that the logical structure of the rhesis 162–202 is controlled and may be explained by reference to this scheme. Since, further, this rhesis is the fullest exposition of Clytemestra’s condition, it is appropriate that Seneca should have applied these criteria at this point: this amounts to a clear signal from the writer of the drama’s proximity to the philosophical issues of the prose works.

§7. Two passages in the De Ira analyse the evolution of that emotion:

Iræ quin species oblata iniuriae moveat non est dubium; sed utrum speciem ipsa statim sequatur et non accedente animo excurrat, an illo adsentiente moveatur quaerimus. Nobis placet nihil illam per se audere sed animo approbante; nam speciem capere acceptae iniuriae et ultionem eius concupiscere et utrumque coniungere, nec laedi se debuisse et vindicari debere, non est eius impetus, qui sine voluntate nostra concitatur. Ille simplex est, hic compositus et plura continens; intellexit aliquid, indignatus est, damnavit, ulciscitur: haec non possunt fieri, nisi animus eis quibus tangebatur adsensus est (2.1.3–5).

The issue could be summarized schematically as follows: is the process culminating in ira two-phase (species oblata iniuriae – ira) or three-phase (species oblata iniuriae – approbatio mentis – ira)? Seneca argues for the latter, attaching a decisive importance to the middle stage, the assent of the mind. A similar evolution over three steps is postulated a little later:

Et ut scias quemadmodum incipiant affectus aut crescant aut efferantur, est primus motus non voluntarius, quasi praeparatio affectus et quaedam comminatio; alter cum voluntate non contumaci, tamquam oporteat me vindicari, cum laesus sim, aut oporteat hunc poenas dare, cum scelus fecerit; tertius motus est iam impotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci vult, sed uteique, qui rationem evicit (2.4.1).

Here the first phase, the praeparatio affectus, is not defined in exactly the same
way as in the first passage, but the second and third phases correspond precisely. I suggest that the theory here sketched forms the conceptual basis upon which is structured the speech 162–202.

§8. The nurse’s appeal to contugi nomen sacrum (155) fails to strike a responsive chord in one decem per annos vidua (156)—and so this line of argumentation is dropped. When the nurse says meminisse debes sobolis ex illo tuae (157), sobolis must refer to Electra and Orestes, whose future Clytemestra’s proposed crime would be jeopardizing. The queen, however, deliberately gives sobolis a meaning other than that intended, making it refer to Iphigenia, and so uses the word to redirect the discussion towards the murder of her daughter and the guilt of Agamemnon. Her anger comes out plainly in the ironic praestitit matri fidem (159). The nurse, representing pragmatism and reason, parries: redemit illa classis. . . . (160) is her attempt to justify the incident by placing it in the broader context of the expedition against Troy. The underlying assumption is that since the sacrifice served the Greek cause, it was excusable. For her, this is not an emotional but a pragmatic issue.

Clytemestra’s reply makes it clear that Seneca is at pains to stress how the same incident can be interpreted differently from opposing perspectives. To this initial emphasis on the dissonant perspectives I attach no small significance, the more so since this technique reappears at the end of the speech. The juxtaposition of viewpoints at the ‘seams’ of the thesis signals a basic dislocation in Clytemestra’s ratio; the intervening speech charts in greater detail this process of dislocation.

The indignant outburst pudet doletque (162) is the headline to the first section of the speech (162–173), each word identifying a central motif. Pudet refers to the outward or ‘social’ nature of the outrage committed by Agamemnon: the sacrifice was a slight to Clytemestra’s dignity and to her divine lineage—an idea brought out in the opposition Tyndaris, caeli genus—classis Doricae (162–3), and in peperit caput (163) where the metonymy degrades Iphigenia to a mere sacrificial victim. Doletque, complementing pudet, refers to the pain which the sacrifice caused the mother. This dimension is poignantly emphasized in the line cum stetit ad aras ore sacrifico pater (166), where the full force of the reproach is concentrated in the ironic pater (syntactically strictly unnecessary after ille, and so more conspicuous). Finally, the queen’s words

non est soluta prospero classis deo: eiecit Aulis impias portu rates (172–3)

are her answer to and reinterpretation of the nurse’s attempt to justify the sacrifice: in addition to the slight, she here represents Agamemnon’s act as an unnatural crime in itself, a notion foreshadowed in 167–8. The essence of 162–173 is thus the injury done to Clytemestra by Agamemnon. The identification of this idea is structurally and psychologically significant since this is the starting point in the process that eventually culminates in ira (§7 above, first passage).

§9. The second section of the rhesis (174–191) continues the indictment of Agamemnon, shifting the emphasis now onto his conduct of the war (bella . . . gerit). According to Clytemestra his generalship was so scandalous because he
subordinated the national interest to his own amorous affairs. A few words are needed here. By comparison with the Greek accounts Seneca has greatly amplified the motif of the general as adulterer, mentioning Chryseis, Briseis and Cassandra; this emphasis is a noteworthy departure from Aeschylus. Struebel has remarked, 'Clytaemnestras Ehebruch und Agamemnons Untreue halten einander die Waage'. I would go a step further and postulate a causal connexion between these balancing motifs. When the queen dwells so emphatically on Agamemnon's affairs, this is not only a concrete illustration of the invidia mentioned at 134 (i.e. thematic continuity), but is also evidence for the phenomenon referred to in modern psychology as 'projection' or 'transference', that is, Clytemnestra is so vehement in her attack of Agamemnon's adulteries because she herself is guilty on this same score (110–3, 132, 134–5). The adultery motif of 108ff has conditioned her judgment and interpretation of Agamemnon's actions; this involves a sharp psychological insight on the part of Seneca.

Her criticism of Agamemnon's misconduct in his capacity as general is a more objective issue than the adultery: mention is made here of his lack of self-control, his implicit violation of pietas and religio by taking Chryseis, and above all of his neglect of the Greek cause. The focus of the indictment has shifted, the antagonist is here delineated not as adulterer but as sacrilega. This also entails an implicit redefinition of Clytemestra's own position: her principal motive for action here is not a personal feud, but rather she has embarked on a bellum iustum against the violator of religio. Why has the thrust of the indictment shifted to pietas/religio, from the subjective to the objective? Through this redirection, and by showing that in terms of religio, too, Agamemnon was at fault, the queen finds additional justification for her intended scelus and so steels her resolve. This tendency towards self-justification, I suggest, may be equated with the second phase in the evolution of anger to the extent that it represents a deliberate attempt to rationalize and reinforce the initial impulse. Alter cum voluntate contumaci, tamquam aportet me vindicari, cum laesus sim, aut aportet hunc poenas dare, cum scelus fecerit (De Ira 2.4.1): this passage is relevant to lines 174–191 both in respect of the injury done to Clytemestra (= Agamemnon's adulteries) and of Agamemnon's misconduct as general, a failing which increases his guilt and so, by implication, also the necessity of punishment.

§10. In the third phase (192–202) the thesis reaches its apex. The motif of self-justification is developed still further in a way which illustrates the psychological subtlety and insight of Seneca. The passage commences with a war metaphor, accingere, anime: bella non levia appare (192) — a dramatic amplification of the queen's intentions. But in addition to the question of stylistic level, bella is notable in that it refers to the same intention which had been described earlier as nequitiam (114) and crimen (149), and which the nurse calls caedes impia (219): within the apologetic context this makes sense, for bella is without the nuance of self-criticism, is more objective. Similarly scelus occupandum est (193). By attributing to Agamemnon — rightly or wrongly — the intention to commit a scelus (the word itself is a value judgement), Clytemestra implicitly justifies her
right to pre-empt it — and that puts her in the morally stronger position.

Clytemestra’s self-image has undergone a metamorphosis: the initial criminal impulse (108–124) has been transformed into the cause for a bellum iustum against a sacrilega; now, again in line with the tendency to justify her action, she poses as the champion of her children,

pigra, quem expectas diem?
Pelopia Phrygiae sceptra 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 gnatis tuis
furens noverca (193–199).

This however is self-justification pushed ad absurdum, an exaggeration so grotesque that there is plainly a purpose behind it. Furens noverca provides a point of reference: here Clytemestra wants to protect her children from this monster, but earlier (118) she had used this same image to articulate her criminal impulse. This discrepancy between appearance and reality suggests that the outburst of maternal concern is a specious pretext for the planned crime. This is not rational argumentation but a travesty of reason: the crime is ‘justified’ by what the reader recognizes as a patent misrepresentation of reality. The desire for revenge is now so intense that it has harnessed ratio in its service and reduced it to an instrument to legitimate emotion.

The final indication that reason has been vanquished comes in the last lines (199b–202), where the reckless desire to destroy an enemy even at the cost of one’s own destruction betokens a mind firmly in the grip of ira. This corresponds to the third stage in the evolution of anger: tertius motus est iam impotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci vult, sed utique, qui rationem evicit (De Ira 2.4.1). Both the psychological curve and the thesis have reached their apex at the same point. Emphasis on the rhetorical character of the speech alone cannot do justice to the essential idea it conveys. In a recent study, for example, we are informed

It is obvious that Clytemnestra here speaks like a character in declamation. Registering the intensity of emotion via the intensity of language is so important to the rhetorical writer that he is driven to sensationalism close to absurdity. Suicide and murder at one thrust! ... Like most Senecan scenes, this one is concentrated on a separate highlighted effect, the portrayal of Clytemnestra’s aggressive violence. It is not part of a process by which her psychology develops but a static moment. (Italics mine).

My own analysis has led to diametrically opposed conclusion: rhetoric is not an end in itself but a means of revealing psychological progression; the sensationalism and apparent absurdities can all be explained by reference to the scheme outlined in the De Ira. Seneca’s purpose in composing the thesis as he did was to trace the origin, growth and ultimate victory of affectus over ratio. Finally, it is interesting to note that while critics have recognized that this same underlying principle can shape entire dramas — notably Medea and Thyestes — in the Ag. the fuli
process is artistically compressed into a single speech.

§11. Seneca has masterfully developed the motif of Clytemestra’s self-justification in a manner designed to demonstrate how affectus vanquishes and perverts reason; at its apex this motif distorts reality and enters the realm of hallucination. The nurse, as objective observer, is quick to perceive this; her reply again comments on the queen’s condition and puts it into perspective:

Regina, frena temet et siste impetus
et quanta temptes cogita (203–4).

Regina contains an implicit appeal to Clytemestra’s obligations in her capacity as queen. The terminology here employed confirms the above interpretation that, by the end of the speech, Clytemestra is in the grip of violent passion: frena temet, siste impetus (203), comprime affectus truces/ mentemque tibimet ipsa pacifica tuam (224–5). The nurse's emphasis on the idea of restraint and control indicates, as thematic counterfoil, the extent to which Clytemestra has abandoned herself to affectus (cf. 141–4).

The primary purpose of the nurse’s speech 203–225 is to objectify Clytemestra’s passion and so impress upon her the impracticability of her planned revenge. The speech demonstrates how Clytemestra was apt to distort reality, and it may be seen as a corrective rejoinder to the queen’s attack on Agamemnon’s generalship: this thematic balance is underlined by formal parallelism, the anaphora non Achilles . . . non Aiax . . . non Hector echoing Clytemestra’s non Achilles . . . non ille . . . non populus aeger (178ff). While the queen had sarcastically denied Agamemnon’s moral claims to leadership, the nutrix in a priamel-like parainesis exalts his exceptional military virtus. It is notable how this long enumeration culminates in a woman:

non picta pharetras et securigera manu
peltata Amazon (217–8).

This provides a smooth transition back to Clytemestra herself (hunc domo reducem paras/ mactare . . .? Securigera anticipates bipenni 897) and is also an implicit argument a fortiori, that is, if not even an Amazon could kill him, how can you hope to succeed? Clytemestra’s plan is, quite simply, totally unrealistic.

§12. We resume at the point where Aegisthus enters and addresses the queen:

Tu nos pericli socia, tu, Leda sata,
comitare tantum; sanguinem reddet tibi
ignavus iste ducor ac fortis pater (234–6).

His appeal plays on her desire for revenge and on the dolor caused by the death of Iphigenia (the ironic fortis pater recalls Clytemestra’s words in 166). Ignavus iste ducor is not only a counterfoil to illuminate fortis pater, but also presupposes Clytemestra’s contempt for Agamemnon as general (cf. 174–191). Aegisthus’ opening argument is an attempt to further fan the affectus which had flared up in the queen’s speech; it shows that he is thoroughly aware of her emotional condition and plans to manipulate it to his own ends. If the sensitive issue of revenge is the first card he plays, this suggests that he regards it as the most powerful line of argumentation and that most likely to succeed.
Clytemestra’s reaction, however, is surprising: the seducer’s appeal not only fails to elicit the desired response, but throughout the subsequent dialogue the queen argues against the line she had previously embraced with such fervour. Attempts to explain this sudden ‘conversion’ have caused much ink to flow: is this careless dramaturgy, or is the conversion adequately motivated? No convincing explanation can ignore the nurse’s speech (203–225), and I accept the view that it is this highly dramatic passage which succeeds momentarily in curbing the queen’s aggression. But in checking one type of affectus, the speech also has the effect of setting off Clytemestra in the opposite direction. In the same way that the nutrix had earlier, through her observations, served to show how ira and dolor were distorting Clytemestra’s perception of reality, so now Aegisthus, as an analogous point of reference, reveals that illusion and delusion are still at work—though caused now not by ira but by spes (cf. 142–4). The sudden absence of all aggression of Clytemestra’s reply (239–43) suggests that her raging anger has subsided; what we witness now is a manifestation of a different emotion. I take Aegisthus’ words quite literally as a comment on the queen’s psychic condition: quo raperis amens? (244). She is still amens, the passive verb describes the typical condition of one impos sui. Aegisthus continues, credis aut speras... (244b), thereby identifying the new direction Clytemestra’s amentia has taken. The sharp observer and master manipulator has diagnosed the nature of her present condition. Confirmation of this emphasis on spes comes later in his summarizing remark, spe metus falsa levas (283).

§13. The negative characterization of hope as an illusion and a deceiver is an idea with a long and variegated history: beginning with Hesiod, this negative aspect appears in the poets, philosophers and historians, Greek as well as Latin. This notion that hope is apt to distort and falsify reality is not without interest in a Stoic context. Hope is a vitium (Sen. Ep. 13.12), grouped together with other emotions like timor, dolor and cupiditas, and is opposed to virtus (Vit. beat. 15.5; Ep. 95.8; 105.1). It is irrational (Phoen. 631f) and illusory (Ep. 13.12, sperata decipere; 15.11), and affects judgement (Ben. 4.11.5; Ep. 95.8). Hence the exhortation to restrain excessive hopes (De Ira 3.7.2; Tranq. 9.2), to temper hope with fear and vice versa (Ep. 104.12). The wise man, naturally, will not fall prey to hope (Const. 9.2; Ben. 7.2.4). It is to this illusory spes that Clytemestra has succumbed. The nurse’s speech had succeeded in impressing upon her, for a time at least, the dangerous folly of her proposed course, and so in arousing her fears; but this does not mean that the queen has been purged of affectus. The aggressive impulse momentarily subsides, and as an antidote to her fear Clytemestra abandons herself to the opposite emotion, namely excessive and unrealistically optimistic spes: spe metus falsa levas, as Aegisthus says (283).

§14. The seducer, consequently, is faced with the task of destroying the illusion; and the manner in which he does this is both psychologically convincing and structurally significant — for he revives and expands all the motifs (except revenge, cf. 235–6) which Clytemestra herself had earlier identified as driving her on. From the point of view of structural cohesion the debate with Aegisthus
shows how, through thematic continuity, successive scenes are locked together in a way that allows diverse motifs to unfold progressively and be illuminated from various angles.

\[ \text{ut nihil} \]

subesset animo quod graves faceret metus,

tamen . . . (245–7).

Aegisthus begins by alluding to Clytemestra's \textit{culpa} (cf. 110–3, 132, 134b–5, 147) and the resulting fear of punishment (\textit{graves} . . . \textit{metus} \textit{~timor} 133, cf. 151, 283): he undermines her wishful thinking by juxtaposing her own earlier arguments. The speech is calculated to augment her sense of danger: even if she had a clean record, Agamemnon would return puffed up with pride; the irrealis \textit{ut nihil} . . . implies the logical corollary that since she is guilty, she has more to fear. Next (253–9) Aegisthus works on her \textit{invidia} (cf. 134, 174–91). The kernel of this second argument is the sarcastic remark

feresne thalami victa consortem tui?

\[ \text{at illa nolet} (256–7) \]

which attributes to the rival Cassandra the same type of feminine jealousy which had earlier racked Clytemestra herself. The effect of this argument on the queen can be judged from her reply:

\begin{align*}
\text{Aegisthe, quid me rursus in praeceps agis} \\
\text{ira me flammais iam residentem incitas? (260–1).}
\end{align*}

\textit{Ira}, the aggressive impulse, is being rekindled, Aegisthus has found the sensitive spot.

Yet Clytemestra is still prepared to pardon Agamemnon, in order to receive pardon herself (266–7); and she is encouraged by the fact that even Helen was forgiven (273–4). Again Aegisthus counters in a way intended to resuscitate Clytemestra’s earlier emotions:

\begin{align*}
\text{sed nulla Atriden Venere furtiva abstulit} \\
\text{nece cepit animum coniugi abstrictum suae (275–6).}
\end{align*}

Reference to the rival Cassandra is intended to stimulate \textit{invidia} (cf. \textit{spreta}, 281). \textit{Iam crimen ille quaerit et causas parat} (277) articulates Clytemestra’s fears mentioned at 133 and 151; and \textit{nil esse crede turpe commissum tibi} takes for granted the adultery (cf. also \textit{delicta} . . . \textit{mea}, 284) as a constant and undisputed point of reference. Aegisthus’ strategy in routing Clytemestra’s false hopes of reconciliation is thus based, in no small measure, upon his re-animation and precise articulation of the emotions that had earlier played havoc with her — guilt, fear and jealousy. This implies a keen insight on his part into her emotional disposition and weaknesses. It is hard to believe that when she orders him to depart, his readiness to comply is genuine: this is rather a ploy to bring home to Clytemestra that without him as accomplice, her position is untenable.\textsuperscript{41} The ploy works: \textit{cruenta Tyndaris} (306) suggests that the aggressive impulse has reasserted itself, that \textit{spes} has been finally put to rout.

§15. To conclude. Seneca’s Clytemestra differs from her Greek counterparts principally in respect of the diverse factors motivating her. By working with a
multiplicity of causes, Seneca constructs a complex but psychologically coherent portrait broadly consistent with the Stoic analysis of affectus. Clytemestra at her first appearance is presented as abandoning ratio and being tossed about by various conflicting emotions (138ff). The crucial rhesis (162–202) fills in the background and provides the necessary philosophical-psychological perspective: behind the logical structure of the argument may be discerned the controlling influence of the De Ira model. From the point of view of Stoic psychology, the scenes with the nutrix and with Aegisthus are of considerable interest in analysing how reason is vanquished by ira/dolor on the one hand and spes on the other. This highly unusual double expositional scene (queen–nurse, queen–Aegisthus) may be explained by reference to Seneca's psychological design, namely to describe the opposite manifestations of two emotions, irrational anger and irrational hope. We may posit a correlation between the shape of the scene and the philosophical point the dramatist is demonstrating.

The exploration of philosophical themes is enhanced by a tightly controlled structure and orderly unfolding of motifs. Quocumque me ira, quo dolor, quo spes feret,/ hac ire pergant (142–3), it has been argued, is a headline which announces and locks together the two ensuing debates; the diverse impulses of 131ff reappear in the rhesis 162ff; all are picked up again, and exploited, by Aegisthus; and much later (955–6) Electra emphasizes again the adultery motif. There are no loose strands, the significance of each discrete element is made clearer at its reappearance. Individually the motives are introduced at points corresponding to and intended to illuminate Clytemestra's state of mind. Thus the initial impulse, still unfocused and wholly internalized, is linked to her sense of guilt at having violated pudor (108ff). Discussion brings clarity (131ff), an external dimension appears beside the inner motivation. When the dialogue drifts towards Agamemnon, the subjective impulses are objectified: here mention is made of Iphigenia, Agamemnon's adulteries, his violation of pietas and religio, Clytemestra's invidia and her concern for her children — in order to show how the desire for revenge attempts to justify itself and how, in the process, it veers into irrationality. To trace the sequence in which these motives are deployed is to chart Clytemestra's gradual psychic deterioration — and that, I suggest, was Seneca's purpose in choosing to work with a nexus of motives. Consequently, rather than argue for the relative priority of one motive over another — a procedure which will inevitably obfuscate the tragedian's subtlety — I propose that it is more profitable to look at them as constituting, in their collectivity, a dynamic continuum which is a reflector of an underlying psychological condition. That the queen is a complex creation has never been disputed; I have attempted to show that this complexity has for the Stoic a philosophical-psychological relevance. Clytemestra, finally, amply vindicates the high praise which Herrmann 469 has bestowed upon the tragedian: 'Ce que nul n'a contesté sérieusement ... c'est la profondeur et l'exactitude psychologiques. Dans l'étude de la passion pure Sénèque est véritablement un maître'.

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Notes

* My sincere thanks are due to Professors Gregor Maurach (Brüßnischweig) and Wolf-Lüder Liebermann (Bielefeld) for their helpful suggestions and criticism of an earlier, anonymous, draft of this paper.

6. See U. Hölshcher, Lebensläufe in der Odyssee, Winterthur 1976, 9ff, where this discrepancy is noted and explained in terms of the poetic design.
10. The monologue falls into two halves, 108–115 and 116–124; on the very carefully structure of the first panel, see Tarrant’s introductory remark on 108–115 and Brandt 246.
13. On the logical structure of the argument, see Brandt 146ff. The motif, first hinted at in 115, of Clytemnestra’s quest for safety, makes several reappearances: for analysis cf. Bruder 81–91.
14. L. Herrmann, Le Théâtre de Sténèque, Paris 1924, 412 argues that the decision is only taken during the debate with Aegeistus: ‘Puis, par un curieux revirement, elle a pitié de ce soléférat et, croyant qu’il serait lâche de l’abandonner au moment du danger, elle se décide à se concerter avec lui. Alors, mais alors seulement [=306–9], nous sentons qu’elle a opté pour le crime’. In the light of the above interpretation, I cannot agree with this suggestion.
16. Note the formal variation coniunx – nevercales manus – virgo. This shift in accentuation in the second member onto the instrument, as it were, of murder is effective: the evocative pars pro toto gives the lines a lurid and fanatical complexion. Equally effective is the ‘psychic’ nuxae, suggesting the state of mind of the perpetrator (cf. Phaed. 592; Med. 566ff, 909; Thy. 193, 284).

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17. Similarly Medea expresses her resolve before she has decided on a definite course of action:

\[ \text{quodcumque vidit Phasis aut Pontus nefas,} \]
\[ \text{videbit Isthmos. effera ignota horrida,} \]
\[ \text{tremenda caelo pariter ac terris mala} \]
\[ \text{mens intus agitat: vulnera et caedem et vagum} \]
\[ \text{funus per artus (Med. 44–8).} \]

Cf. also Med. 127–9, with the remark of K. Aniker, *Prolog und Akteinteilung in Senecas Tragödien*, Bern/Stuttgart 1969, 37: ‘Wir sehen also, dass der Prolog von Seneca so raffiniert angelegt ist, dass der Hörer zwar ständig auf die ihm bekannten bevorstehenden Verbrechen der Medea hingewiesen wird und dabei den Kitzel der Gefahr verspürt, aber in Medea selbst der Gedanke, geschweige denn der Entschluss zum Kindermord noch keineswegs vorliegt. In dieser bewusst hervorgerufenen Ungewissheit liegt Spannung’. Here, as in Ag. 116–20, the impulse is dramatized in an *amplificatio*; ‘Verstärkungsmittel’ is the apt term used by A. Specka, *Der hohe Stil der Dichtungen Senecas und Lucans*, Diss. Königsberg 1937, 43 note 2.

18. The crime of the *comiax* is not further specified — Phaedra is responsible for the death of her stepson (but does not perform the deed herself) — Medea personally kills her own children. From the vague first item there is intensification, between the second and the third, in degree of relationship, number of victims, and personal involvement of the perpetrator.

19. The dynamics of 116–24 are interesting. The triad reaches its apex in the third member (Medea), but here reference is also made to flight (*profuge*), a motif which then provides a thematic bridge to 121b–22 (*profuge*): the passive option. Mention of this possibility momentarily retards the rising anger (123) — until Clytemestra compares herself with Helen and decides on a more aggressive course (*te decet malus nefas*). This rise and fall of the aggressive impulse is consistent with the initial *fluctuarii*.


22. The coexistence of so many conflicting emotions is remarkable. Two emotions are mingled since Homer (cf. Tarrant *ad Ag*. 132ff) — but such numbers as here? For the inception of this baroque tendency in late Vergil, cf. *Aen.* 10.870f, 12.665ff. The question deserves further study.

23. Shelton (above note 4) 164.

24. Heldmann 113 remarks on this passage, ‘Das Interessante . . . ist, dass ihre Selbstanalyse noch deutlicher als im Eingangsmonolog ausschliesslich auf dem Bewusstsein ihres eigenen Affekts und ihrer eigenen Schuld veruht . . .; der Gedanke, dass fremde Verbrechen gericht werden müssten, der für Atreus von Anfang an zentral ist, wird hier eindeutig ausgespart’. I cannot agree entirely with this: though the idea of revenge is not articulated *expressis verbis*, nevertheless *dolor, timor* und *invidia* *prefigure* the idea that Clytemestra has been slighted — and it is this sense of injury that gives rise to the desire for revenge. So much is clear from the rhesis 162ff, where these same motifs are brought into a clear relationship with the idea of revenge. Similarly in the scene with Aegisthus (above §14).

25. On these outward signs of *affectus*, cf. e.g. *De Ira* 1.1.3–5; 2.35.3–6; 3.4.1–3; Specka 29; K. Trabert, *Studien zur Darstellung des Pathologischen in den Tragödien des Seneca*, Diss. Würzburg 1953, 27f.

26. Note e.g. how acoustic effects bring out the pathos of the passage: *subdidit stimulos, pulsat pectus* (for the dull thudding p-alliteration cf. Hor. C. 1.4.13), *vinci vetat*.

27. Trabert 15.

28. ‘The marble typifies the innermost citadel, the last to be captured, yet itself easily overcome when the outer defences have fallen’ (Pease *ad Vergil Aen*. 4.66, where parallels are collected).

29. On these terms see H. Reis, *Die Vorstellung von den geistig-seelischen Vorgängen und ihrer körperlichen Lokalisation im Antikein*, München 1962.

30. Cf. e.g. Pease *ad Aen*. 4.2; *TLL* VI.1.867.45ff *s.v.* *flamma*; VII.1.295.32ff *s.v.* *ignis*. The metaphor is common in the *De Ira*, e.g. *effervescit* (1.1.5), *exarsit* (2.1.3), *serviäti* (2.19.1), *flamma lumina ardentia* (2.35.5), *hominis ira flagrantis* (3.4.3). Some useful remarks on fire symbolism in N.T. Pratt, ‘Major systems of figurative language in Senecan melodrama’, *TAPhA* 94 (1963)
31. E.g. *Const.* 6.8; *Ep.* 82.4–5; 113.27; cf. *Arrian Epict.* 4.5.25f.
32. Compare the following juxtapositions fire-water, each time to bring out emotional intensity:

\[
\text{muneribus meus est captus puer. at deus ilia in cinerem et liquidas munera vertat aquas (Tib. 1.9.11/12);}
\]

\[
\text{illa velim rapida Vulcans carmina flamma torreat et liquida delet annis aqua (ibid. 49/50);}
\]

cf. further *Propertius* 1.13.21–24. This collocation deserves further study.


34. J. Brandt 274 note 290 observes in passing that 141–3 adumbrate the course which Clytemestra’s emotion will take: ‘Lange Zeit liess sie sich von metus, ira und dolor leiten, bis ihr die Amme die Möglichkeit des Auswegs, spes, zeigte’. Brandt, however, is not concerned with this deployment of motifs as a *philosophical* issue.

35. Note in particular the lines *tua est iutaque culpa, si pateri s, tua (specific)*, parried by *perlucet ornne regiae vitium domus* (147–8), and generalizing *saep* (152). On the gnomic character of 145–54, cf. B. Seidensticker, *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas*, Heidelberg 1969, 181.


\[
\text{the distich implies that a man of Tibullus’ station would not normally deign to assume the role of a rusticus.}
\]

39. With Tarrant (see his note *ad* 163) I read *peperit*: the grandiloquent third person verb (cf. *Nisbet-Hubbard ad* Hor. C. 1.7.27) is more in keeping with the elevated and dignified tone (cf. *Tyndaris, caeli genus: patronymic plus weighting apposition*).


41. Cf. the rather similar effect in *Ovid Amores* 1.10.51/52,

\[
e quibus euerat, traiecit viscera ferro
\]

\[
\text{where note also the enjambement and alliteration; this use of grammatical ‘extras’ is an element of the emphatic style.}
\]


43. In the debate with Aegisthus, when Clytemestra’s anger abates (*iram . . . iam residentem*, 261) and she argues against her earlier stance, she remarks

\[
\text{quid quod severas ferre me leges viro non patitur animus turpis admissi memor? (265–6)}
\]

This is a precise description of what she had done in 174–191: her own *animus turpis admissi memor* had prompted the vehement denunciation of Agamemnon’s adulteries. Aegisthus’ remark *nec regna soium ferre nec taeae sciant* (259) has similarly been interpreted as ‘eine Projektion eigener Beweggründe in eine Situation, die zu der eigenen analog ist’ (H. Opelt, *Der Tyrann als Unmensch in der Tragödie des L.A. Seneca*, Diss. Freiburg 1951, 67); cf. Shelton 166.

44. Cf. the pertinent remarks of J. Brandt 255.

45. The litotes is an effective introduction to the climactic panel since it indicates the enormity of what is to come, but at the same time permits further intensification. Rhetorical self-address similarly reveals a high emotional intensity.

46. On which see further the perceptive observations of J. Brandt 257.
47. My own position is thus diametrically opposed to that of Pettine (above, note 2).

48. If it is accepted that the purpose of these lines is to show how a deranged mind reasons, an opinion may be ventured on a textual matter. O. Zwierlein in his OCT (1986), following Axelson, deletes *en adest gratis tuae/ furens noverca* (198b, 199). 'Der Vers ist eingeschwärzt worden, weil man *horum mala vera* verhältlich auf die zuvor genannten Kinder bezogen hat und diese *mala* verdeutlichen wollte durch die *noverca*. . . . In Wirklichkeit geht *horum* auf Clytaemnestra und Aegisth, wie auch die Fortsetzung durch *turbro quis rerum imminet* zeigt . . . Nicht der Kinder wegen (um ihnen eine Stiefmutter zu ersparen) bringt sie Agamemnon um, sondern im eigenen Interesse . . . ' (O. Zwierlein, *Kritischer Kommentar zu den Tragödien Senecas*, Stuttgart 1986, 265f). Against this view I would urge firstly that the natural antecedent of *horum* is *virgines* and *Orestes*. Secondly, while I do not dispute that there exists a patent discrepancy between the (false) concern here expressed for the children and Clytemestra's later attitude, I would argue that this dissonance is *intentional*, and is more glaring if 198b and 199a are retained. In this discrepancy I see the essence of lines 192ff: Seneca's aim is to show how *affectus* leads to a distortion of reason ([*ira*] ad *dispectum aequi verique inhabilis*, *De Ira* 1.1.1).

49. Such recklessness is 'the attitude typical of the *iraus*' (Tarrant ad 201), and that is why it is introduced at the apex of the thesis. Cf. *De Ira* 1.1.1, *hic* [*affectus*] *tenuis conciscat et in impetu dolores* est, . . . *dum alteri noceas sui negleges, in ipsa irvensi tela et uliones secum utiorem tractae avidus*; 3.3.2, *necessarium est* . . . *ante oculos ponere quantum monstri sit homo in hominem furens quantumque impetu ruat non sine pemicie sua peciciosus et ea deprimens, quae mergi nisi cum mergente non possunt*. This is the attitude of the archetypal *iraus* *Atreus*: *haec ipsa pollens incitati Pelopsis domus* / ruat vel in me, dummodo *in fratem ruat* (Thy. 190f). Cf. further Med. 426ff, *H.O.* 348ff; Hor. C. 1.16.9–12 (with Nisbet-Hubbard ad 9); Prop. 2.8.25–8.


52. Clearly echoing *da frena et omnem prona nequitiam incita* (114).

53. Note how this important idea is given emphasis by the ring composition 203–4–224–5.

54. Apt observations in this regard in Heldmann 115–7; J. Brandt 258f.

55. Aniker 69 has drawn attention to this corresponding use of anaphora.

56. Cf. Tarrant ad 239ff for some of the 'inverted echoes' of this first scene, which serve to underline Clytemestra's complete about-face.

57. See Streubel 70ff for a synopsis of earlier views (esp. 70 note 1). Hervorma 412: 'Elle se laisse pourtant calmer par sa nourrice.' Tarrant ad 239ff: 'The dramatic lacuna between the Clytemestra of the earlier scene and the character who speaks these lines is a powerful argument for regarding the scenes as unconnected'. A particularly extreme explanation is offered by J. M. Croisille, 'Le personnage de Clytemestre dans l’Agamemnon de Seneque', *Latomus* 23 (1964) 464ff, who explains the conversion as simulation: 'Clytemestre va feindre le repentir, elle va pousser Egisthe au desespoir, en lui faisant croire qu'elle l ’abandonne . Ce sera là le meilleur moyen pour lui donner une énergie puissante dans l ’entreprise criminel' (467). In my view the weakness of this interpretation is its failure to take into account the intervening speech of the nurse.


59. Cf. Opelt 64ff, esp. 67.


61. Cf. Tarrant ad 302ff; Opelt 69.

62. Heldmann 117: 'Die domina-nutrix Szene des Ag. ist die einzige, die durch das Hinzutreten einer dritten Person erweitert wird'.

63. E.g. Herrmann 411ff; Streubel 72; Pettine 223ff.
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