

## Dramatic Interpretation

## Boys

OJCL 2016

**Source:** *Claudius the God: And His Wife Messalina* by Robert Graves

**Speaker:** Claudius

**Audience:** Readers of his historic account

**Scene:** Claudius describes an instance of his malice.

Another fault to which I must confess is my tendency to bear malice: I cannot lay blame for this on over-work or ill-health but I can and do say that any malice to which I may from time to time give way is never wholly unjustified of due to an irrational dislike of a man's features of bearing or to jealousy of his property or parts. It is always based on some unprovoked personal injury once done to me for which apology has never been offered or other satisfaction made.

For example, on my first visit to the law-courts- shortly after my accession- to settle the cases of men charged with treason I noticed the same audacious court official who had once done his best to curry favor with my nephew, the late Emperor, at my expense, on the occasion that I was unjustly charged with forgery. He had then exclaimed, pointing at me: 'One can read guilt written all over his face. Why prolong proceedings? Condemn him at once, Caesar.' Was it not natural for me to remember this? I cried to the fellow as he cringed towards me at my entry: 'I can read guilt in your face. Leave this court and never appear in any court of law in Rome again!'

You all know the old patrician saying: *Aquila non captat muscas*. The eagle is the noble soul and does not hawk for flies, which means that he does not pursue petty ends, or go out of his way to revenge himself on mean little men who have provoked him. But let me quote an enlargement made many years ago by my noble brother, Germanicus Caesar:

'Captat non muscas Aquila; at quaeque advolat ultro faucibus augustis, Musca proterva perit.'

Bear all this in mind and we shall have no misunderstandings but remain bound in the mutual affection which we have so often protested to each other. "Farewell"

(The couplet, translated, means: "The eagle does not hawk for flies, but if any impudent fly comes buzzing of its own free will into his august throat, that's the end of the creature.")

**Source:** Adapted from *The Oresteian Trilogy* by Aeschylus translated by Philip Vellacott

**Speaker:** Clytemnestra

**Audience:** Chorus or Elders of Argos

**Scene:** The palace doors open, revealing Clytemnestra, at her feet Agamemnon lies dead, in a silver bath, and wrapped in a voluminous purple robe. On his body lies Cassandra, also dead.

I said, not long since, many things to match the time;  
All which, that time past, without shame I here unsay.  
Who seems a friend- how else net round the deadly trap  
High enough to forestall the victim's highest leap?  
A great while I have pondered o this trial of strength.  
At long last the pitched battle came, a victory:  
Here where I struck I stand and see my task achieved.  
Yes, this is my work, and I claim it. To prevent  
Flight or resistance foiling death, I cast on him,  
As one who catches fish, a vast voluminous net,  
That walled him round with endless wealth of woven folds;  
And then I struck him, twice. Twice he cried out and groaned;  
And then fell limp. And as he lay I gave a third  
And final blow, my thanks for prayers fulfilled, to Zeus,  
Lord of the lower region, Saviour- or dead men!  
So falling he belched forth his life; with cough and retch  
There spurted from him bloody foam in a fierce jet,  
And spreading, spattered me with drops of crimson rain;  
While I exulted as the sown cornfield exults  
Drenched with the dew of heaven when buds burst forth in Spring.  
So stands the case, Elders of Argos. You may be  
As you choose, glad or sorry; I am jubilant.  
This is my husband, Agamemnon, now stone dead;  
His death the work of my right hand, whose craftsmanship  
Justice acknowledges. There lies the simple truth.  
mult me with banishment,  
Award me public curses, roars of civic hate.  
Why, once before, did you dare oppose this man?  
Who with a slight compunction as men butcher sheep,  
When his own fields were white with flocks, must sacrifice  
His child, and my own darling, whom my pain brought forth-  
He killed her for charm to stop the Thracian wind!  
He was the one you should have driven from Argos; he,  
Marked with his daughter's blood, was ripe for punishment.  
But *my* act shocks your ears, whets your judicial wrath!  
Your threats doubtless rely on force- you have your men  
And weapons: try your strength in fair fight against mine.

Win, and you may command me. If- please Heaven- you lose,  
Old as you are, you shall be taught some wisdom yet.