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Duluo Nie*

Blood and Revenge: Animal Metaphors and Nature in *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*

Abstract: Renowned classicist Gilbert Murray has made compelling arguments about the connection between Aeschylus and Shakespeare in his famous essay *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*. Through a close reading of the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, it is not difficult to find that the latter play, to some extent, is an intentioned "translation" and "rewriting" of the great theatrical tradition of the Attic tragedy, especially that represented by Aeschylus. The dramatic elements inviting such a comparative reading, among many other things, include the motif of bloodstained hands, masculine queens, sleeplessness and dream terrors, and most important of all, the mechanism of blood-shedding and revenge. This paper discusses their affinity through the lens of allusions to birds, and animals, inversion of the established order, and its final restoration to reveal *Macbeth* as a play that is fundamentally concerned with the classical theme of blood-shedding and revenge with its borrowing of multiple dramatic techniques.

Keywords: blood-shedding, animal metaphors, violence, Macbeth, the *Oresteia*, tragedy, revenge, human nature.

Introduction

Both Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, especially *Agamemnon*, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* feature spectacular representations of animals, both bestial and avian, in displaying the necessity of violence in human nature. The scholars studying the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth* have already fully recognized and explored the theme of blood-shedding, the perpetual cycle of violence, and the strong presence of animal symbolism in both texts. Barbara Fowler, for instance, concludes that "the power of the juxtaposition of the creatures and the blood throughout the *Oresteia* lies in the fact that it is not completely metaphorical. The human beings

* Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, China. nieduluo@gmail.com

who drink blood do, almost literally, become their own Erinyes. Just as the Erinyes, snake-women, are not entirely human, so the characters of the trilogy are in part animal" (Fowler 99). This discerning observation concerning the representation of the human through representative individuals, in this case, prominent kings and queens in Attic tragedy, is actually echoed in many ways in *Macbeth*, as several sharp-eyed scholars have already shown.

In terms of the common theme of blood revenge, both plays adhere to what is prescribed by Aristotle that "the best tragedies are written about a few families [...] incidents dreadful or rather pitiable must necessarily be the actions of friends to each other or of enemies or of people that are neither [...] when these calamities happen among friends, when for instance brother kills brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother—either kills or intends to kill, or does something of the kind, that is what we must look for" (*Poetics*, 1453a18-19, b12, b19-22). The *Oresteia* certainly serves as a model for the Aristotelian ideal of Attic tragedy that focuses on the conflicts within the household, that is that of Atreus; similarly, *Macbeth* is a play about regicide, like the theme of *Agamemnon*, that happens virtually within a household, if we take all the thanes as members of a single royal family, letting alone the fact that King Duncan calls Macbeth "worthiest cousin" (1.4.17) and "peerless kinsman" (1.4.65), with Macbeth recognizing himself as "his kinsman and his subject" (2.7.13). Even though "cousin" in Shakespeare does not necessarily indicate a blood relation, it shows at least their close relation as a subject and a king within a political community that could be logically considered as a whole. In this sense, both plays share the very same subject of internal conflict within kinship, embodied by the representations of blood-shedding and revenge. This common setting offers archetypal venues for the explorations of human nature and the human condition in the most tragic sense. In light of this, Adrian Poole concludes in *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* that "fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy" (Poole 15).

In this paper, my argument, resting upon such a common setting, will dwell upon the animal metaphors that are seen here and there in both plays and contribute to the consistency of plot development, and seek to significantly deepen the process of revealing the affinity and conflicts between the world of humans and the world beyond it, which could be tantalizingly called nature. Nevertheless, humans are an essential part of nature, if not positioned in the center of the Shakespearean world, and display the propensity to both good and evil, which constitutes human's free will and makes the drama fundamentally possible. In this sense, the natural world functions as a mirror of human activities, and at the same time provides the language and space where collisions may occur. Or, as John J. Peradotto has shrewdly observed, "Nature in the

Oresteia, both actual and as metaphor of internal states, appears in a pattern consonant with and asserting the movement of the entire trilogy. The progress of gods and men through time and suffering toward a more desirable state of being is not played out a static or neutral backdrop of nature, but rather one whose lineaments change in a pattern paralleling the moral development in the drama" (379). What makes humans unique and hence enables the dramatic tension lies in the irreconcilability between the law of nature and the law of humans, between nature as something that is synonymous with structural order and the nature that finds its basis in violence and dynamic chaos that constantly breaks down that order. This very fact leads us to consider both plays as symbolic representations of the condition of the cosmos, in which humans live and act.

Transgression and Inversion in *Macbeth*

Emphasis will be first placed upon Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The callbacks to nature functioning the way it should, and functioning the way it should not are seen throughout the play. A division of the whole world of nature represented in *Macbeth* into categories of beasts and birds, certainly without neglect of other creatures that are positioned in the much lower end of the great chain of beings, such as worms, should to a great extent facilitate out discussion, given the complex web of allusions of animals in the play. As a matter of fact, the division itself is explicitly seen in the classical traditions, such as Homeric epics and Attic tragedy, as we will soon reveal in the case of *Agamemnon*.

The play commences with the frequent paradox of what is both "foul and fair." As with the three witches that show up in the anomalous weather of lightning and rain, which leads Macbeth to proclaim that "so fair and foul a day I have not seen" (1.3.39), soon after victory over the rebels, with the company of thanes, Duncan visited the castle of Macbeth, only to be murdered thereafter by the couple. In retrospect, the old man reminded the audience of the horrifying incidents happening days before the murder, which point to things "unnatural."

OLD MAN
'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.
ROSS
And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain),
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
Make war with mankind.

OLD MAN
'Tis said they eat each
other.
ROSS
They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes
That looked upon't. (2.4.10-19)

The reference to the "unnatural" actually implies the shocking subjugation of the powerful predators by the weaklings that are traditionally understood as the objects of prey. Duncan's well-tended horses, naturally herbivorous, become unruly, escape from their stables, and turn carnivorous. A falcon, which has been domesticated by humans for hunting, is attacked and killed by an owl, a wild animal that is hunted by falcons in the wild. These domesticated animals, which lie in the ambiguous sphere between the wild and the human, as Elspeth Graham shows in her enlightening study concerning animals in Shakespeare, "reveals an early modern notion of the specifically domesticated animal, taken from nature into human culture through its training, housing, breeding, feeding, and use—as occupying a separate domain from that of the fully wild" (Graham 178). Admittedly, these animals embody a hierarchy in their domestication, but their innate wildness is not therefore demolished. Instead, it is evoked in *Macbeth*, which causes the breakdown of the natural order of things: human, animal, and even, as suggested in earlier lines, cosmographical. With the metaphorical blurring and transgression of boundaries of kinds, especially that within animals, the extreme violation of order represented by the murder of a king gets its proper chance to be reported. The "unnaturalness" of the domesticated animals gets echoed in the fifth scene, when a doctor comes into the chamber to observe the nightwalker Lady Macbeth who is deeply agonized by insomnia. His diagnosis points to the similar cosmic principle of "blood for blood" as we have seen in the *Agamemnon* repeatedly.

DOCTOR
Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divine than the physician. (5.1.75-78)

The principle that "unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles" should, as a matter of fact, be seen as a central theme that runs across the whole play, since it offers justification for the use of animal metaphors, both the domesticated and the wild. If we cast aside for a moment the prophesying words of the old Man alluding to the inverse of creatures in the food chain, the constant analogies between the heroic characters and predators may remind us of the ever-present

shadow of nature upon the world of the humans. When asked by Duncan about the morale of Macbeth and Banquo in the battle, for instance, the Captain replies, "As sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion" (1.2.39). And when later in the scene Macbeth confronts defiance against his rule, he cries out the words "they have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, But bear-like I must fight the course" (5.7.1-2). The primacy of lions and eagles over sparrows and hares certainly herein confirms the valour of these two thanes, but on the other hand, the innate propensity for violence of these predators, which is completely "natural," contributes to the "tragic" of the play. If we link this "naturalness" to the "unnaturalness" mentioned earlier, Macbeth, as a tame animal yet preserving to a great extent wildness, functions as a good example of someone who lies within an established order but at the same time shows strong intention and urge of overthrowing it. This symbolic existence, together with usurpation, blood-shedding, and restoration to order, provides a perfect space that leads its audience to mediate upon the cycle of human fortunes and the very nature of humans, even though meekness is deemed as a royal virtue in the play (cf. 2.7.16-19: "this Duncan / Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been So clear in his great office, that his virtues. / Will plead like angels;" 4.3.63-65: "black Macbeth Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state Esteem him as a lamb").

With regard to the double nature seen in Macbeth, Elspeth Graham aptly comments that "as the training relationship between human and nonhuman animals inevitably focuses on domesticated animals who occupy a threshold domain between the wild and the tame, nature and acculturation, the purely human and the purely animal" (Graham 179). In this sense, Man, placed between the God (i.e., what is above him/her) and animals (i.e., what is below him/her) is more explicitly explored through the animal-symbolism, in which creatures incessantly drift in the structured hierarchy, creating from time to time surprises. Birds inhabiting the space above the earth are frequently seen in *Macbeth* as well and possess a meaningful position in the author's representation of the animal world. Jeremy Lopez interprets the recurring presence of birds as a result of the fact that "the play is about attempting to see into the future, and many birds, in particular ravens, owls and magpies, have traditional associations with augury" (Lopez 115). The fact that birds live above humans, send forth signals about the future (ominous of good or evil) and could live either a domesticated or wildlife makes them perfect references of nearly all kinds suitable for the play: prophetic, symbolic, or even allegorical. Furthermore, the fact that a hierarchy exists within the community of birds also leads us back to the question of the double meaning of their existence. Paradoxes regarding birds are seen here and there. Birds can signify hospitality, as Banquo happily describes the castle of Macbeth that attracts the "martlets" to nest, even though it is soon to be revealed as a slaughterhouse.

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here. No jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle.
Where they most breed and haunt, I have
observed,
The air is delicate.(1.6.4-12)

The irony continues when the docile and sweet martlets are replaced by malicious ravens and owls. Upon receiving the message that Duncan shall visit the castle, Lady Macbeth declares "The raven himself is hoarse That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan Under my battlements" (1.5.45-47). On the night when the king gets murdered, Lady Macbeth hears the owl, "the fatal bellman", that shrieks after Duncan's murder (2.2.3), and Lennox hears during the same night the 'obscure bird' that "Clamored the livelong night" (2.3.67-68), together with horrifying events that "Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say, Lamentings heard i'th'air, strange screams of death, And prophesying, with accents terrible, Of dire combustion and confused events New hatched to th'woeful time" (2.2.61-66). Evil acts are always related by Macbeth to the crow that signals the onset of the night as it "Makes wing to th' rooky wood" (3.2.52), since "Augurs and understood relations have By maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth The secret'st man of blood" (3.4.154-157). As the play proceeds, all these allusions of predatory birds, however, like the omen revealed by the Old Man, are to be "unnaturally" inverted. Predators will become their own prey, or as Macbeth himself has prophesied that "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood" (2.4.151).

The dramatic paradox with regard to birds reaches its climax in the scene where Lady Macduff argues with Ross about her husband's much-suspected flight to England. Lady Macduff denounces her husband's lack of "natural" affection for his wife and children, on the ground that even the most "diminutive of birds" will bravely confront the birds of prey for the protection of nestlings.

LADY MACDUFF
Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;
He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear, and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason. (4.2.8-16)

It needs to be noted that the "wren" is actually not what Lady Macbeth refers to as a powerless bird. W. C. Hazlitt's *Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles* states that the wren is known as "little King" or simply "king" by the Greeks and Spaniards, respectively (Hazlitt 665-666). The Latins, Danes, and Italians also referred to the bird as "king," "owl king," and "little king" (Hazlitt 665-666). Macduff is undoubtedly a king or at least a noble figure to be the mate of a wren. The bird is named in Greek and Latin as follows: in Greek τροχίλος (cf. *Historia Animalium* 615a15-20: "the trochilus", i.e., wren), inhabits thickets and holes. It is difficult to catch and fugitive and weak-charactered, but it lives well and is ingenious. It is called "old man" and "king", and that is why, they say, the eagle is at war with it; it is also named as τύραννος ("king", cf *Historia Animalium* 592b23); in Latin regulus, the word itself is a dimunitive of rex, which literally means "little king." Hazlitt also states that the wren, despite its diminutive size, is a formidable opponent to the eagle, which reigns supreme over all other birds. This little bird is also revered as a king in many other cultures and even by the druids, the natives of the Isles, who consider it the "king of all birds." The bird, known for its small size, could pose a threat or even hold sway over other birds. In this sense, "the poor wren" echoes the demarcation drawn between the tame and the wild implied in the old man's formidable description of the bird's behaviour. Noticeably, Macbeth's bird, as with the statement by Lady Macbeth, changes from eagle to the bird of ill-omen owl, which Lady Macduff declares that she and her son will fight against.

Her complaint about the unfavourable use of wren is answered by Ross' emphasis on the instability of human fortunes under extreme circumstances. For him, a person's choice is not completely one's own, and humans as things "float upon a wild and violent sea each way and move" (4.2.35-36). Ironically, the allusion of birds is resumed by her son. The mood-lighting conversations between the mother and the son again point to the inverse.

LADY MACDUFF
Sirrah, your father's dead.
And what will you do now? How will you live?
SON
As birds do, mother.
LADY MACDUFF
What, with worms and flies?
SON
With what I get, I mean; and so do they.
LADY MACDUFF
Poor bird, thou 'dst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin.
SON
Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying. (4.2.35-43)

The son's reply, though brief, is rather meaningful, especially given the inserted episode that does not lie in the main narrative line. He believes that it is not at all a worrisome matter to be fatherless, since small birds will have their food, while the food will have theirs, but such a comforting belief in the natural law of food chain does not prevent him from being slaughtered by stronger forces. The juxtaposition of both weakness and power within the same kind of bird, together with the murder of Lady Macduff and her son and the final revenge by Macduff himself further reveals the tension in the ambiguous nature. The nature, as a mirror of human affairs, works in unpredictable ways as well. In the dialectics of both natural and human politics, ambitious creatures, like Macbeth and his wife, through the natural quest for power may rise against the dominant figure, but the meek ones, like Duncan and Macduff under Macbeth's tyranny, will counteract or even overpower them. In other words, the order is to be disrupted, but will eventually be restored. Such is the working of the cosmic principle stated by Macbeth that "blood will have blood." As Jeremy Lopez observes, "The old man's description of bird behaviour is intended to be read as a sign of the disposition of human events, and what it reveals is a world of ruthless violence where 'naturally' powerful figures (including the soon-to-be-crowned Macbeth) can never be certain of their place at the top of the food chain" (Lopez 116). Therefore, in this sense, *Macbeth* is a play about the order of things that is constantly violated on several levels, and it sees different exchanges between wildness and domestication and between natural and unnatural forms of the wild itself.

"Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair": Animal Nature in the *Agamemnon*

The *Oresteia* by Aeschylus, the classical parallel of *Macbeth* in our current discussion, dwells upon the same subject, that is, blood and revenge. Their resemblance has been noted by scholars decades ago. J. A. K. Thomson in his *Shakespeare and the Classics* concludes that "*Macbeth* is in many respects the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience" (Thomson 119), even though his emphasis lies in Shakespeare's reliance on classical sources like Seneca and Ovid. Kenneth Muir in *Shakespeare Survey Volume 19: Macbeth* writes that "Macbeth has long been considered one of Shakespeare's 'most sublime' plays, if only because of the analogues between it and Greek tragedies" (Muir 5). Lord Campbell notices "the innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and Aeschylus's style" (Campbell qtd. in Furness 480; qtd. in Showerman 206) while rejecting the possibility of direct

dependence on Aeschylus. Adrian Poole in *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* declares explicitly that "Fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy" (Poole 15).

Although no direct evidence has been established to confirm that Shakespeare borrows dramatic techniques from Aeschylus or that he has read extensively the classical dramatic works, and most scholars resort to "instinct" (Collins 87: "We must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy") or "consanguinity of nature" (Campbell, qtd. in Furness 480, qtd. in Showerman 38) for an explanation of the marked similarity between them, the use of animals and the references of their fluidity are what decidedly connect them to the same rein of dramatic tradition. And most importantly, as far as I see it, the same symbolic allusion to the fundamental human existence and cosmic order makes these techniques more pertinent. Earl Showerman's rather useful article "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*" offers a detailed review of the literature concerning this question. The emphasis in the following discussions will be primarily placed upon the *Agamemnon*, which ironically revolves around Clytemnestra, as J. Churton Collins has observed: "Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth" (Collins 73).

Like in *Macbeth*, the blurring of the boundary between the tameness and the inversion of established order features in a prominent way in the *Agamemnon*. Aside from the obvious double nature of Clytemnestra, nearly all characters in the play, including Agamemnon, Helen, Cassandra, and Aegisthus, are attributed with the qualities of both meekness and untamedness. And once again, like in *Macbeth*, the changed nature of creatures comes into display through the most extreme form of violence, that is, murder. The play begins with the loyal watchman who sees himself as the "dog" of the house of Atreus, waiting eagerly for the signal confirming a Greek victory in Troy and the return of the master of the house. Soon when Clytemnestra comes into the scene, she, informed of the recent triumph, responds to the chorus of Argive elders that like them she has always been acting as a faithful wife expecting the return of the noble lord Agamemnon.

> Let him come with all speed, his country's fond desire, come to find at home his wife faithful, even as he left her, a watchdog of his house, loyal to him (δωμάτων κύνα ἐσθλὴν ἐκείνῳ), a foe to those who wish him ill; yes, for the rest, unchanged in every part; in all this length of time never having broken any seal. (*Agamemnon* 605-611)

For the audience fully aware of the myth, these words certainly function as a mask for her long wrath to kill the husband for the sake of avenging the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon. The same image is repeated when Clytemnestra praises Agamemnon upon his return home "a watchdog of a herder's homestead" (*Agamemnon* 896: τῶν σταθμῶν κύνα). The "meek" wife, one of whose essential duties is to guard the house just as that of Agamemnon, is soon seen to embrace the voracious side of her existence as a "hateful bitch" (*Agamemnon* 1228: γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς). The phrase is used in reference to Clytemnestra as a murderer, and also her shamelessness in committing adultery with Aegisthus. The transformation from supposed docility to savageness is much more fully embodied in the well-known parable of the lion cub pronounced by the chorus in *Agamemnon* 717-736.

> Even so a man reared in his house a lion's whelp, robbed of its mother's milk yet still desiring the breast. Gentle it was in the prelude of its life, kindly to children, and a delight to the old. Much did it get, held in arms like a nursling child, with its bright eye turned toward his hand, and fawning under compulsion of its belly's need. But brought to full growth by time it showed the nature it had from its parents. Unbidden, as payment for its fostering, it prepared a feast with ruinous slaughter of the flocks; so that the house was defiled with blood, and whose who lived there could not control their anguish, and great was the carnage far and wide. A priest of ruin, by order of a god, it was reared in the house. (*Agamemnon* 717-736)

The lion is a gentle creature when it is a cub, but when it is fully grown, its feral nature reasserts itself. The parable ends with the lion transformed into "a priest of ruin," having utterly destroyed the household. The erosion of an established order and the transgression of hierarchy seen in *Macbeth* triggered by the prophetic language of unnatural images, in the case of *Agamemnon*, are realized through the same image juxtaposing "watchdog" and "bitch" in the same character. Like the conversations on the "wren" in *Macbeth*, the play *Agamemnon* tellingly uncovers through the constant use of animal metaphors the fact that humans exist as creatures swaying between docility and savagery. The hierarchy represented through the food chain has never been and will never be stable and permanent. Symbolically speaking, the reign of the Scottish royal household and the household of Atreus convey the same story, that is, the one of how nature works. Nature is dynamic, replete with discipline and resistance, both provoked by the creatures' urge for order and desire to rebel against the rulers.

The imagery of the lion cub incomparably incorporates the establishment of order through paternal care as well as the obedience of children and their final outburst of violent nature, which could reasonably be compared to the juxtaposition of both "foul and fair" in the same creature in *Macbeth*. As Bernard Knox notices, "the lion cub parable is equally 'official' in the surface,

Troy which took in Helen has got what it deserved, but below the surface, there is a conscious foreboding and unconscious prophecy of disaster to come" (Knox 18). As with the prophetic use of animals in *Macbeth*, the animal symbolism in *Agamemnon* is equally augural.

Noticeably, the parable of the Lion cub applies to nearly all the major characters in the play who are trapped in the web of revenge, that is the immediate family members of the house of Atreus and Thyestes. Macbeth and Banquo are equally valiant since they are named "eagle and lion" respectively. Likewise, in the context of *Agamemnon*, the lions represent violence and destruction, particularly the one directed against the household. In *Agamemnon*, the three main characters, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus, are all referred to as lions. In 1256-1260, in denouncing treacherous Clytemnestra as a "lioness" and Aegisthus as a "wolf," Cassandra calls Agamemnon "a noble lion". Aegisthus is also called a "lion" in the prophetic vision of the horrifying feast of Atreus and Clytemnestra's adultery with Aegisthus, who himself is a product of Thyestes' incestuous union with his own daughter.

More importantly for our present concern, each character who gets to be called a "lion" displays their once tenderness in the play. In 238-247, the chorus recalls the amiable scene of Iphigenia dining with his father in joy: "for she had often sung where men met at her father's hospitable table, and with her virgin voice would lovingly honour her dear father's prayer for blessing at the third libation." Nevertheless, "yoked by necessity," Agamemnon has no choice but to be iron-hearted, thus showing his cruelty as a lion. Through the link of Iphigenia, Clytemnestra's character is also illustrated in two opposite directions. On the one hand, her deep affection for Iphigenia indicates her motherliness as a lioness; on the other, the passion aroused by Iphigenia's murder transforms her into a predator ready to prey on "the victims stand by the central hearth awaiting the sacrifice" (1056-1057), which refers to Agamemnon. The inversion magnificently matches the previous analysis of the "most diminutive bird" in *Macbeth*. The pattern of domestic violence that has plagued the house of Atreus relies heavily on breaching the existent order by meek animals who transform themselves into revenging monstrosities. The blood-shedding created by powerful beings will soon be revenged by the seemingly less potent ones. This never-ending cycle constitutes the essence of what is "tragic" in the Aristotelian sense, of which *Agamemnon* and *Macbeth* are the most prototypical plays.

Conclusion: "Blood for Blood"

The transformation from docility to savagery demonstrates the ultimate area of interest of both plays, thus framing their comparative basis: the instability of human affairs, and its manifestation and realization through violence, with the

aid of symbolized animal imagery. The destructive nature of the cycle of revenge perpetuated by human's innate impulses of both good and evil brings about the final law that is explicitly endorsed in both plays. In parallel with Macbeth's pronouncement of the ancient law that "It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood" (3.4.120) and the Doctor's diagnosis that "Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles" (5.1.59-60), the chorus enunciates "a venerable utterance proclaimed of old" that "an old Hubris tends to bring forth in evil men, sooner or later, at the fated hour of birth, a young Hubris and that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy spirit, Recklessness, and for the household black Curses, which resemble their parents" (763-771: φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν Ὕβρις μὲν παλαιὰ νεάζουσαν ἐν κακοῖς βροτῶν ὕβριν). The striking resemblance, if not sufficient enough to lead us to the conclusion that *Macbeth* is fundamentally Aeschylean, should offer essential clues on their reliance on the same subject of how nature and the human world work. In this sense, each one of us could be Macbeth; or any character in *Agamemnon*, as Bernard Knox has shown:

> The lion cub is a symbol of reversal to type, of hybris that resembles its parent: and this connects the parable with the house of Pelops, where in each generation the evil strain in the race comes out… the lioncub is not only Helen, but Aegisthus, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra. (Knox 22)

At the end of *Macbeth*, Macduff, who according to Lady Macduff "wants the natural touch" (4.2.9), carries Macbeth's head onstage and thus accomplishes his natural obligation as a husband and a father. In the wake of the victory, Malcolm announces that order has been restored with the law of blood for blood being perfectly fulfilled. We cannot help but wonder that this peace is only temporary, since new transgressions will inevitably occur due to the mixed nature of humanity.

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