

Clytemnestreia:

Reclaiming the Female Narrative in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* through Queer Performance

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Drama

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Introduction

The western canon celebrates Aeschylus's *Oresteia* as the oldest piece of theatre in Europe and the only extant complete Athenian trilogy. Originally scribed in 458 BCE, the trilogy dramatizes the tragedies of the House of Atreus. Despite its prized place in the theatrical canon, the *Oresteia* survives as a remnant of Athenian misogyny and patriarchal values, in which Orestes, Apollo, and Athena work together to vanquish the female Other. Clytemnestra appears as a complex figure in the first play of the trilogy as she combats the geriatric male Chorus and lures her husband into the House. She has a magnetic characterization as a mother who avenges slaughtered young, yet her wild femininity threatens patriarchal social norms. In a contemporary reading, Clytemnestra can represent a revolutionary who combats sexist aggressions, slut shaming, and an abusive husband. Aeschylus's intent in the *Oresteia*, however, differs greatly from this interpretation, as he treats the feminist martyr as a treasonous threat to the established order. Through the deeply encoded and entrenched patriarchal values of Athens, Aeschylus creates a work that damns Clytemnestra to the role of a villain and casts Orestes as the hero who slays the feminine beast. The work becomes a symbol for the evils of femininity, and celebrates the masculine values of Athenian culture. Aeschylus portrays Clytemnestra's grab for power as an offense to the patriarchy that must be suppressed. In an inherently misogynistic work that disregards mother-killers and celebrates the Athenian dreams of the male womb and the male seed, Clytemnestra begins to have a new voice in the modern age.¹ In *Agamemnon*, she fights the Chorus of old men to hear her; a struggle that many women still face to this very day. Clytemnestra has the making of a tragic feminist icon who tries to fight against the patriarchal

¹ Please note that I often use "modern," "contemporary," "current," etc. when referring to culture of 2017. I use these terms as an oversimplified generalization of western, specifically American, society. A more thorough analysis of American society was outside the scope of the project.

system but whose fate only worsens as the patriarchy continues to win. The original trilogy, however, cannot stand as feminist. In the end, the patriarchy wins because over two plays it erodes, destroys, and subverts all of Clytemnestra's power, and relegates her from an avenging mother to a barbaric incubator. Clytemnestra might achieve a new voice in the modern age and ascend beyond the inherently misogynistic work that disregards mother-killers and celebrates the Athenian dreams of masculine conception. Engaging with the past creates a dialogue of how despite changing context and sexism, the patriarchy continues to vilify women for exercising agency. Reclaiming the female narrative and changing the title from the *Oresteia* to the *Clytemnestreia* might change the story from the celebration of masculinity to a tragedy of the patriarchy.

Reimagining and “queering” the story offers a way to repurpose the *Oresteia*'s narrative to engage with the past, but also create a new story. The phrase, “queering the narrative” is often a vacuous and empty phrase, but let it act as an introduction for the approach to reclaiming the female narrative within the *Oresteia*. A queer production of the *Oresteia* means combating historical context to break it down and use the ruins to create a new piece of art that honors the past forgotten heroines. “Queer” takes on many different definitions in order to subvert the work – from corrupting the original text to inserting queer identities into the fabric of the show. Using the literal term to “queer” – spoil, ruin, corrupt – the text must undergo substantial changes to extract the female narrative from the patriarchal context. Yet, a production will undergo further changes as queer identities complicate and subvert cis-normative hetero-patriarchal expectations. As I will continue to unpack, queering the tragedy involves deconstructing the plot and the patriarchal values while also playing with subversive gender and sexual identities.

Arguably, in modernized Western society, a perceived gender binary has a strong hold on mainstream culture and becomes the thesis of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*.² The term "masculine" and its related forms stand for characteristics of the patriarchy, the societal structure that emphasizes the role of cis heterosexual men and how they have maintained power through history by propagating that men are powerful, logical, and human. On the other side of the binary is femme. I use this term loosely as I want it to encompass any characteristic that the patriarchy does not deem masculine. Words such as femme, femininity, female, and women are terms that should lack definition, because they come in many different forms.³ Femme can include women who has masculine qualities or men subscribing to female beauty standards, and much more. The patriarchy has spent millennia enforcing that femininity represents the opposite of masculinity: an otherness. These characteristics range from weakness, exotic, illogical, hysterical, vain, etc. The patriarchal binary relegates femme identities as less than human and a threat to established, therefore, must men dominate femme identities. The gender binary impacts gender roles, characteristics, clothing, and values; the *Oresteia* enforces the binary while the *Clytemnestra* challenges it.

An understanding of Aeschylus's intent in the *Oresteia* and how the work may have originally functioned provides an entrance point to reshape and play with the original structure. Aeschylus's historical context, his other work, and his contemporaries become important factors

² Marinucci, Mimi, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (London: Zed, 2010), 127. The gender of the hegemonic binary refers to a static perception of gender and the dualism between men and women that correlates with "a deeply essentialist account of gender, sex, and sexuality".

³ Thank you to Becca MacLean, the assistant stage manager for the project and close friend, for reminding me that femme identities come in many different representations and forms and should always have loose definition so it never reinforces a standard. MacLean reminded me of my explorative research in the beginning of the project in which I read Mimi Marinucci's *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* and Shelley Budgeon's *Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity*. These scholars discuss the many different representations of femininity and the long history of women attempting to define, exclude, and reaccept the different presentations of femme identities.

for queering the text to alter the narrative. The point of queering the text is not to discard the original text but disassemble it and recreate something new from the ruins.⁴ A translation of Aeschylus's plays becomes a basic framework through which to rearrange and augment text. Borrowing, stealing, and paraphrasing other Aeschylean text, along with those Euripidean and Sophoclean, creates an intertextual work that supplements the dialogue with canonical work, plays with the form of tragedy, and erodes Aeschylus's initial intent. Synthesizing words of patriarchal playwrights into the work allows women more opportunities to speak out against a chorus of misogyny. A collage of text reshapes the trilogy by playing with its. It has the potential to warp traditional structures of tragedy to grant women a more vocal role in the narrative. Piecing together elements of tragedy and words of multiple playwrights engages with the past but make the Greek tragedy uniquely contemporary.

Beyond collaging together new texts, an important part of the adaptation is a consideration of how to integrate queer identity within the work. The Greeks had a very specific concept of homosexuality (I employ this term for lack of a better one). Male same-sex relationships were standard but predicated on masculine ideals placed on the importance of penetration, so their concept of homosexuality differs greatly from that of modern Western society.⁵ The trilogy uses encoded gender performance to degrade femme and bolster masculine ideologies, but queer identities can challenge and dismantle the Greek phallic-obsessed masculinity. Male characters such as Agamemnon and Apollo benefit from their privilege as they

⁴ Cummings, Scott T., *Remaking American Theater: Charles Mee, Anne Bogart and the SITI Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006), 83. The collage text comes from a tradition by playwrights like Charles Mee who engage the past and reconstruct it into something similar but uniquely different. Supplemented with varying source material, the one story takes on a life of its own. Although my work is distinctly different than Mee's, I subscribed to "his dramaturgical model in the Dionysian spirit and Apollonian form of Greek tragedy.

⁵ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 275.

get respect and vindication for their honorable masculine performance, while Aegisthus is called a woman as an insult and Clytemnestra is depicted as a beast because she displays masculine characteristics. Arguably using elements of queer culture can corrupt and complicate Aeschylean gender politics.⁶ Incorporating drag – in both the formal and informal use of the term – can subvert and parody figures like Athena and Agamemnon. For instance, a homosexual relationship can complicate and add depth to the original two-dimensional friendship between Orestes and Pylades. Using queer artists as inspiration, the trilogy can find a new voice by working with femme themes in queer art. When a man wearing skirt is considered revolutionary, queer art makes it possible to play and celebrate femininity, a characteristic that is often considered weak and dangerous.⁷ Femininity is seen as a weakness because in the binary, femme is the lesser of the two. In comparison to masculine features – strong, tough, powerful – femininity often gets categorized as delicate, fragile, and complaisant. The hypothesized weakness of femme, however, still threatens the patriarchal establishment and many fear the chaos of a matriarchy. The musicologist Susan McClary speaks about how people enjoy watching women go mad, especially when there is a rational male nearby.⁸ This trend goes back to Aeschylus and Euripides whose villainesses – Clytemnestra and Medea – go mad in front of their rationale male spectators. The Greeks feared the power of a “gynceocracy” from sexual

⁶ Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), xxxi. Judith Butler’s preface to the original publication of *Gender Trouble* references John Waters’ and Divine’s film, *Female Trouble*, and how it parodies and undermines encoded gender norms. Waters and Divine are hugely influential queer artists known for their filthy movies. Many current drag queens such as Sasha Velour also speak about the power of drag. I will speak more of Velour and her beliefs in my directing concept.

⁷ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 321.

⁸ McClary, Susan, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1991), 81. McClary argues that the theme is all too common in multiple types of media, not just music.

promiscuity to the killing of all men.⁹ In the dichotomy between the rational male and the threatening feminine, queer art can transform the *Oresteia* by bastardizing gender politics to create a work that challenges the concepts of evil femininity and virtuous masculinity.

Queering the *Oresteia* and reclaiming its female identities involves a multistep process that includes research, adapting a text, envisioning a new world for the play, and then producing the work. Each step works to continuously reshape a piece of art that maintains a dialogue with the but also creates a new narrative from deconstructed, fragmented, and rearranged ruins of Greek theatre. The first portion of this project provides research into gender politics of fifth-century BCE Athens and a close examination of Aeschylus's text. Before deconstructing the *Oresteia*, a close examination of the patriarchal work gives insights into how it functioned in its original context and how those elements still resonate in today's society. When male senators silence their female colleagues on the Senate floor, or men treat qualified women condescendingly, or men blame and objectify women, or men make decisions about women's reproductive rights, these actions evoke the ways that the *Oresteia* speaks to themes of misogyny that had a relevance in ancient Athens and continues to have relevance in Trump's America.¹⁰ Over the millennia, the definition and context of misogyny has changed – something that I will unpack during my research and close reading – but there exists a continued pattern of men

⁹ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 323, 325.

¹⁰ Flegenheimer, Matt, "Shutting Down Speech by Elizabeth Warren, G.O.P. Amplifies Her Message," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/08/us/politics/elizabeth-warren-coretta-scott-king.html? r=0>. I refer to the all too common moments within the first few months of the Trump's administration where men have demonstrated sexism and misogynistic acts. For instance, Senator Mitch McConnell silenced Senator Elizabeth Warren from reading a letter from Loretta Scott King during Attorney General Jeff Sessions's confirmation hearing and the Liberty Caucus – a room of white men – debating Planned Parenthood. Unfortunately, there are many too examples to include in a single footnote.

resisting femme power and independence.¹¹ A close reading that connects historical context with modern connections illuminates how the entire work functioned as a whole as patriarchal propaganda in its own time.

Following the close reading and contextual research, the next component of the project involves the adaptation. After a short introduction and explanation of some of the choices made in the collage text, I have included an annotated adaptation to record the decisions I made in cutting, rearranging, and adapting the text from the complete translation of Aeschylus's words to my own ninety-minute trilogy. The annotations cite where and when I use other text, explain my thought process, and show how the text evolved during the workshop process. The adaptation became a collage of texts and queer art, as it synthesized lip syncs of drag queens with additional texts from Euripides and Sophocles, placing them all into the mouths of new characters like a satyr, Dionysus, and the often forgotten daughter of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, Chrysothemis. The text, however, did not become a static piece handed from playwright to actors, but instead represents an elastic text shaped and influenced by the actors through casting, workshops, and rehearsal. As an elastic collage, the adaptation blends Greek playwrights with club remixes of Nina Simone songs, one actor's first language, and a new abrupt, bacchanal ending.

Reflecting the process of the production, a director's concept follows the annotated adaptation. While the adaptation speaks to how Greek playwrights helped rewrite the *Oresteia* and offer some insight into how queer art informed the structure of the play, the director's concept speaks to how queer performers not only supported the collage text but reinforce a found

¹¹ I use the term "misogyny" as a deliberate act of resistance or subversion from a man to a woman predicated on sexist beliefs. In an attempt to create a growing dialogue between Classical Athens and the modern United States, I use the term between time periods to create parallels of the continued patriarchal system's disenfranchisement of femme identities.

object aesthetic. Drawing upon performers such as the queer punk pop band, PWR BTTM, the performance artist/drag queen, Taylor Mac, and the founder of a drag movement Jer Ber Jones, helped create a work that hopes to change a plot line of continued violence into one that end a cycle of violence through a femme revolution.¹² Just as these artists use trash to make something beautiful, this production takes a narrative that could be “trashed” for misogyny, and instead refashions it into a (literally) glittering story. The punk performers threaten the establishment with revolutionary acts of demanding love, respect, and equity. They wear art made out of found objects, which supports the collage adaptation composed of found objects from Aeschylus and his contemporaries. These performers speak for marginalized voices that celebrate the femme and fight against the patriarchy through their genderfucked art, and incorporating their voices into the piece helps strengthen the femme voices in the *Clytemnestreia*.¹³

The last portion of the project involves an actual record and reflection upon the process and production. Theatre challenges a group of people to collectively create art and realize a vision. This piece in particular relied on all those involved to help shape it. Like Frankenstein’s monster, as the project stood on its two feet it took on a new life of its own. The design and the

¹² Hazel Cills, “Member of Queer Punk Band PWR BTTM Accused of Sexual Assault,” Jezebel, May 12, 2017, <http://jezebel.com/member-of-queer-punk-band-pwr-bttm-accused-of-sexual-as-1795132781>. PWR BTTM had a large influence on this project. I will continue to cite their importance in my vision and how they become instrumental in crafting the shape of the work. Since the production and my thesis defense, PWR BTTM made the news with horrific allegations that one of the members, Ben Hopkins, has a history of being a sexual predator and sexual assault. The allegations against Hopkins go against what many of their fans, including myself, believed the band stood for. The band’s quick rise was met with an even quicker fall, as fans felt sick at the band’s hypocrisy. If these allegations had come to light in the midst of this project, I would have redacted and shifted my vision and writing for this project because the band’s actions are quite antithetical to their message and this project. For more information on the allegations and timeline, please see the article cited above since it is the article reporting an anonymous person’s story.

¹³ Marinucci, Mimi, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (London: Zed, 2010), 42. Genderfucking is when someone purposefully experiments with encoded gender norms to create an “ambiguous” gender representation.

rehearsal process helped sculpt the project, and helped give the multiple pieces life where an audience gets to join in the experience. The production reflects how the process went from concept to reality, and how successful the original ideas translated to the theatre. An analysis of the performance can find its strong points and where the project succeeded in reclaiming the female narrative, but also identifying its weak points and how the next iteration could address them.

Close Reading of the *Oresteia* and Historical Context Research

Before deconstructing the *Oresteia* into the *Clytemnestreia*, understanding how and why Aeschylus constructed the *Oresteia* illuminates how it functioned originally and how it can transform into something new. Aeschylus wrote his plays for a very specific venue that held an incredibly important civil role in Athens. The City Dionysia offered playwrights a city's captive audience, and therefore the intent and themes of their shows became an important part of cohesive cultural identity. Aeschylus's success in winning over the hearts of Athens should not be underestimated. For an annual festival that last for centuries, only the works of three tragedians survive. History forgot many of the Athenian playwrights, and entombed Aeschylus as the oldest western playwright. By default, Aeschylus marks the beginning of Athenian tragedy with the only extant trilogy. Sue Ellen Case notes how Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, specifically the *Eumenides*, plays an important role in the fabricated narrative that Athens moved the world from the barbaric to the civilized, all while enforcing strict gender roles.¹⁴ The trilogy celebrates the long tradition of Athenian mythical history of defeating the female other; the *Oresteia* celebrates a son taking revenge against his monstrous mother and brings about the Athenian justice system. Aeschylus's legacy rings throughout Athenian history as he unites Athenian misogyny with the civil structure of the city. His appearance in Aristophanes' *Frogs* speaks to his power as a playwright. Aristophanes characterizes Aeschylus in his Old Comedy as a tragedian who writes simple enough plots to follow but has layers of gendered and political meaning.¹⁵ In the play, Euripides teases Aeschylus for his repetitive and boring choral songs, but Aeschylus mocks

¹⁴ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

¹⁵ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 8.

Euripides of his use of prostitutes and dancers.¹⁶ In the end, however, Aeschylus wins the competition against Euripides for his advice to Athens but also because of his support for the Athenian structures.¹⁷ As one of the few extant playwrights, Aeschylus's success was not only contingent on the excitement and drama of the plot but also its alignment with the masculine agenda that appealed to the patriarchal Athenians and the western patriarchy for 2,500 years.

Today's society, especially within the United States, does not hold theatre in the same esteem as the Classical Athenians who loved their theatre and made it an integral part of the annual festivals.¹⁸ Every year, playwrights competed in front of the entirety of the Athenian population, but the "entirety" may or may not have included women. A continued debate among scholars, Athens may have segregated women to the back of the theatre or disbarred some or all women from attending, as Eva Keuls, a Classicist at the University of Minnesota, suggests.¹⁹ Although Keuls avoids making a clear statement on the distinction of whether women participated in viewing of theatre or were actively excluded from the annual festival, the women were certainly secondary in participating in sixth and fifth century theatre. Therefore the theatre catered to male audience members gathered as the unified audience of Athenian citizens allowed for a platform for "community cohesion."²⁰ Just as any large civic gathering reinforces national identity – say a presidential inauguration or the Super Bowl in American culture – theatre

¹⁶ Aristophanes. *Frogs*, trans. David Barrett (London: Penguin, 2007), 1156, 1249-50, 1301-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1452-3, 1464-7.

¹⁸ Markus, Jim, "Successful Marathon-Length Theatre: Sean Graney's Modern Dionysia," *HowlRound*, October 16, 2015, <http://howlround.com/successful-marathon-length-theatre-sean-graneys-modern-dionysia>.

¹⁹ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 331.

²⁰ Longo, Oddone. "The Theater of the Polis," trans John J. Winkler, 1978, In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 14.

functioned as an opportunity to promote values of the polis and communal culture. Oddone Longo points to how the playwrights themselves came from a high school class and became acclaimed teachers to the city and were honored accordingly so, therefore it was likely the audiences viewed competing plays from homologous erudites.²¹ The citizens gathered to watch theatre and chose a winner from an elite group of playwrights who came from similar social classes, who could afford the education and had the honor to share their work with the city. The playwrights competed to create plays that the Athenians would enjoy and that did not just include exciting plots.²² A play also had to speak to the interest and politics of the polis for an audience to deem it acceptable for the honor of victory. These plays functioned as a circle of reaffirming beliefs in which the playwrights preached values to a captive audience who then validated the values through awarding the victory of the competition. The playwrights were called *didaaskalos*, or teacher, for the values they taught the audience.²³ Specifically in the *Oresteia*, the Athenians found Orestes' rite of passage both captivating and pious since Aeschylus's enforcement of a boy's transition to manhood through battle, vengeance, and pride in the father's home spoke to the Athenian men and became immortalized in the Greek canon for its cultural values.

In codifying Athenian values, Athenian theatre propagated specific gendered beliefs. The plays served to create a standard for "gender behavior, linking it to civic privileges and restrictions."²⁴ Athenian society had strict thoughts on femininity, mostly that men needed to

²¹ Ibid., 14-15.

²² Markovits, Elizabeth. "Birthrights: Freedom, Responsibility, and Democratic Comportment in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2009): 428.

²³ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 34.

²⁴ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11.

control and cloister women. As the Greeks moved further and further to a male-dominated ideology from the traditions of the Bronze Age to the Classical period, women recessed further into the home. Civic institutions reflected the cultural shift to patriarchal dominance. Athens adopted new religious practices, mythical history, and even architecture to enforce gender roles that supported their masculine ideology.²⁵ The theatre at one point allowed both men and women to participate but somewhere in the sixth to the fifth century women disappeared from the stage with no record of a law or even a date of the shift.²⁶ As women left the theatre, playwrights also began to change their work to help enforce the male ideology of the city. Theatre served as a public service announcement for the city through which playwrights reflected and the audience reaffirmed the cultural values of Athens. Playwrights like Aeschylus continued to propagate the city's concept of gender in tandem with the city progression with male ideology.

Sue Ellen Case and other feminist scholars are careful when discussing female characters from Greek plays because in their eyes they are not actual women but conceptualizations of women written and performed by men. Case goes to the extent of putting woman in quotes every time she uses the word in the context of Greek tragedies since they are merely a construction of the male imagination.²⁷ The Greeks are one of many cultures that used female impersonation in theatre, but the men dominated the theatre from its playwrights, to the actors, and even to the audience and could express their identity and opinions through the plays.²⁸ The role of women on

²⁵ Ibid., 9.

²⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁷ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), *Feminism and Theatre*, 7.

²⁸ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 69.

the stage, however, was reduced to conceptualizations and projections of fictional women in the male imagination where even the role of drag not only excluded women from the civic institution but reinforced the male's ideas about women.²⁹ The drag versions of women allowed men to create their ideal, villainous women and further enforced a male perspective through codified gestures and stereotypes.³⁰ Female impersonators played a large role in men subverting female power and projecting their own values and ideals on gender. Froma Zeitlin, one of the premiere feminist scholars of Greek theatre, asserts that tragedy ends with establishment of authority that more often than not is patriarchal.³¹ Men create art that supports their civic and ideological structures, and women become caricatures in theatre and further marginalized within the community. Continuing forward in the analysis of the *Oresteia*, I look at how Aeschylus creates Clytemnestra and the Furies to represent figurative and literal monsters of male imaginations that men like Orestes and Apollo must overcome and dominate. Within a male dominated space, Aeschylus constructs and vilifies his female characters like Clytemnestra and the Furies, and advocates for Orestes and the patriarchal structures of Athens.

²⁹ Ibid., 65.

³⁰ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11. I use drag as an overarching term for when someone performs in something other than their assigned gender role i.e. clothes, makeup, actions, etc. Drag and female impersonation despite having differing contexts, have very similar practices. Both styles are a performance that draws upon exaggerated and codified gendered behavior and styling. Female impersonation comes from a tradition like Greek theatre and kabuki where men attempt to duplicate idealized femme identities on stage as part patriarchal theatre program. Drag, especially as I will use it, involves people deconstructing and confusing the binary by performing in exaggerated gendered expressions. Even in today's culture, however, drag queens are not immune from appropriating, stylizing, and mocking femme figures. I purposefully conflate the terms as a way to create a stronger dialogue between Classical Athens and modern American, but in these parallels the context and purpose of drag changes based on the type of performance, performer, venue, and intention.

³¹ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 87.

The Oresteia won the hearts of the Athenians through its patriarchal values. The tale of Orestes corralling the female other resonated with the male audience to win the competition in 458 BCE. Aeschylus's victory presented patriarchal values for a male dominated audience and won, but it survives through history since the patriarchal themes continued to appeal to new generations. From the pen of the oldest playwrights in the western canon, it also started a tradition of patriarchal theatre. In examining why it was successful and survived by its patriarchal themes, a close reading can identify the anti-femme themes and suggest how one might deconstruct them.

Orestes gives the whole premise of the plot of the trilogy when he calls out at the tomb of his father, "The House of Pelops must survive."³² Before discussing Clytemnestra and other aspects of the *Oresteia*, one must first understand that the play functioned as a patriarchal story about the titular character, Orestes. These male stories and masculine culture bombarded women to the point that they were literally surrounded by phalluses in every type of Athenian space and it "must have been a constant reminder of the phallic powers that governed their lives."³³ Theatre functioned similarly – in addition to the satyrs' comical phalluses – the City Dionysia reaffirmed Athens' military culture and dramatized a man's right to the home. The City Dionysia was part of many festivals that reinforced "themes of proper and improper civic behavior."³⁴ Orestes' journey to save the home of his patrilineal line mimics the rite of passage Athenian boys undertook by entering the army and return as men to start their own *oikos* (home).

³² Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 503-5.

³³ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 30.

³⁴ Winkler, John J. "The Ephebes' Song: Tragoidia and Polis," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 20.

For a moment in comparison, the Greek concept of *oikos* functioned like *Leave it to Beaver*, in which the man sits at the head of the table presiding over home, family, and public life while the wife stays cloistered to keep house. According to Zeitlin, in Athens the home was “the property of the male and his family.”³⁵ The House functioned as part of Athens’ larger civic model since Athenians were granted citizenship if both their parents were citizens and had to own property to participate in the *demos*. The House became a physical and metaphorical link to the patrilineal line, so much so that regulation of the bloodlines inspired Athens to police the sex life of women.³⁶ Zeitlin adds, “The house is extended further as a locus of masculine power to include the sign of sovereignty over the city as a whole.”³⁷ The home’s legal function justified the man’s need to dominate and own his home, and reinforced how offspring saw their home as their access to Athenian citizenship and civic structures. Orestes’ right to his home takes on higher stakes when his father’s home is both his past and future privilege and access to elite structures. Although the 1950s sitcom might be somewhat precious, the function of the home in Athens was nonetheless somewhat similar to the post-war United States culture in which a nuclear family with heterosexual parents became not only the societal norm, but glorified in the twentieth century.

The home meant a lot to the paterfamilias who used it as his gateway to civic involvement; it guaranteed his offspring the same. The home also functioned as a way to cloister women away and separate them from their family. Upon marriage, women moved from their

³⁵ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 76.

³⁶ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8.

³⁷ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 76.

father's home and to their husband's.³⁸ The physical move was part of a woman's rite of passage and the tradition emphasized doorways and thresholds. The tradition of marriage is mirrored in moments in *The Oresteia*: Agamemnon's entrance into the House of Atreus, Cassandra's cross to the doors of the House.³⁹ The home functioned to sequester women away from public life.⁴⁰ Values were placed on the women as producers within the male's home. Women were required to complete domestic labor. Penelope, Clytemnestra's opposing image, weaves while her husband is away. Clytemnestra becomes the nightmare version of the Athenian wife, as she disregards her duty the complacent wife weaving and becomes the authority of the Argos to unseat her husband's dominance in the House. Part of the duties of a dutiful wife were to fulfill subservient obligations of sex and childbirth. As part of the marriage contract, women submitted to "concomitant sexual duties."⁴¹ The home's emphasis on the father's line also placed considerable pressure on women regarding childbirth and the production of heirs. Part of a girl's rite of passage was not only the relocation to her husband's home but also childbirth. The tradition of a girl becoming a woman in the marriage that moves her to her husband's home to have children is not unique to Athenian culture, as it is a tradition that permeates cultures globally to this day. These sexual values permeate the text, as Aeschylus employs Athenian references and allusions to dramatize the horror of Clytemnestra breaking down the marriage bonds that hold the *oikos* together.

³⁸ Carson, Anne. "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 162.

³⁹ I will discuss these moments in more detail shortly.

⁴⁰ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Coming of age rituals in Athens codified gender roles, which the *Oresteia* continuously parallels throughout. A girl's rite of passage was becoming a wife and mother, for boys it was war.⁴² *The Oresteia* not only propagated the importance of the home for the male line, but it also functioned as part of military festival and function. Aristophanes characterizes Aeschylus as "defending his tragedies as a form of martial art" in the *Frogs*.⁴³ Although John Winkler points to *Seven against Thebes* as a play that inspires the male audience to fight, Aeschylus's *Oresteia* mimics Athenian ideals that war was part of male rite of passage. Winkler states that City of Dionysia celebrated "the son's ability to defend himself and his father's *oikos* against challenges, his ability to continue the line by begetting his own children, and (symbolic of both those things) the growth of his beard."⁴⁴ A ceremony during the Festival would honor boys who lost their fathers in war.⁴⁵ Some scholars think that dances involving younger boys acted as early training for the army for the army.⁴⁶ These practices not only reinforced the importance of military service, but brought together the past and future soldiers and glorified the service to the city. Orestes' rite of passage, therefore, was played before a backdrop of militaristic values. Orestes' homecoming is met with the challenge that he must defend his home and reclaim it for himself so he can continue the line of Pelops. Simon Goldhill reiterates the importance of the "father-

⁴² Goldhill, Simon. "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology." 1987. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 107.

⁴³ Winkler, John J. "The Ephebes' Song: Tragoidia and Polis," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 42.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁵ Goldhill, Simon. "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology." 1987. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 105.

⁴⁶ Winkler, John J. "The Ephebes' Song: Tragoidia and Polis," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 56.

land” as “to attack one’s city was like patricide; to reject the laws was to reject that which gave one life and upbringing.”⁴⁷ I will not spend much time looking at every single patronymic and reference to Atreus, Ouranus, and Cronus, but the constant referrals serve the perpetration of the male line in the text. As I continue to examine the *Oresteia*, especially Clytemnestra and her relationship to other characters and goddesses, it is important to remember that the play is about Orestes’ rite of passage reclaiming his father’s home for the continuation of his family. The *Oresteia* is part of a long tradition of male coming of age stories dominating popular culture, from *The Catcher in the Rye*, to the *Harry Potter* series, to the award-winning movie *Boyhood*. Although Orestes fights for different values than twentieth and twenty-first century teenagers, he is part of a tradition of men learning how to fight, stand up for themselves, and vanquish some type of evil (either external or internal).

Orestes’ ascent to adulthood and inheritance of his father’s house must overcome the obstacle of his mother. Clytemnestra falls into the Greek tragedy trope of a woman cast in the role of the radical other.⁴⁸ Aeschylus constructs a nightmarish idea for his Athenian audience of a woman in her husband’s absence becoming a masculine tyrant. Clytemnestra oversteps her bounds as the woman of the household and threatens the social order. Women barely had any authority in the home, and their happiness was dependent on the temperament of their husbands.⁴⁹ Yet, as Keul reminds us, war often brings “an emancipating effect on the female

⁴⁷ Goldhill, Simon. "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology." 1987. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 112.

⁴⁸ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 363.

⁴⁹ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 128.

population until the affairs of a society return, women have to step in and take over tasks from which they are barred in peace time.”⁵⁰ Clytemnestra demonstrates how women gain authority when husbands leave for war. The Chorus even sings to Clytemnestra, “It is just to honor the wife of a ruler when her husband’s throne is vacant.”⁵¹ Clytemnestra, however, does not abdicate her place in the home upon her husband’s return but kills the long awaited patriarch. She continues to subvert the expectations of a woman and gains masculine features that radicalize her and put her in further contrast with the other characters of the trilogy.

As mentioned earlier, Clytemnestra mirrors an opposite to the Penelope of the *Odyssey*. Not only does she not keep her suitors at bay, but she corrupts the picture of a woman weaving while she waits for her husband’s return. In a macabre parallel to Penelope who weaves a funeral shroud for Odysseus; Clytemnestra weaves clothes: the crimson tapestry set before the doors and the net used to trap her husband.⁵² The net imagery is woven throughout the text, and continues into *The Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*. Even the sighting of the beacons, a moment that I will discuss shortly, moves a woman’s duty of manning the hearth to the public sphere and therefore bastardizes a long-standing tradition and even parodies Athenian practices.⁵³ Since Athenian women tended the hearth in the home, Clytemnestra’s act with the beacons brings the wifely duty from the private space of the home to the public world. Clytemnestra is tied to her household duties, but in strange way. Even as she does the “typical” duty, she becomes more masculine and cunning. Elizabeth Markovits discusses how Clytemnestra’s vengeance is not

⁵⁰ Ibid., 402.

⁵¹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 260-1.

⁵² Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 29.

⁵³ Ibid., 29.

what villainizes her to an Athenian audience, but it is how she subverts gender roles to execute her vengeance.⁵⁴ She continues to problematize her role as the female head of the household in *The Libation Bearers* through her disregard and corrupted burial rites for Agamemnon.⁵⁵ Aeschylus's construction of Clytemnestra as a radical other as a woman. She straddles the masculine and feminine with a disregard for her place or duties which indict her as the villain of the piece. In addition, Clytemnestra's duality of feminine and masculinity is underscored by her role as a female impersonation.⁵⁶ Drag female roles had to balance the feminine and masculine features in their performance, but for the original audience characters like Clytemnestra and Medea had an added layer of perversion thanks to the warping of the drag element. The fear of what women do while men are away is not an outdated concept, as the fear of women's infidelity and corruption still permeates contemporary culture. The common trope of the jealous or insecure husband appears in genres that range from sitcoms to serious dramas. The fear of Clytemnestra's schemes while her husband is away may reflect an entire city's fear, but the nightmare often lingers into cultures in which male partners snoop through their female partners' phones or police who they talk to. Aeschylus does construct Clytemnestra's otherness in a vacuum but builds a world around her that alienates her, therefore I will begin to look at how other characters function in the trilogy and how they relate back to Clytemnestra.

The Chorus of *Agamemnon* spends considerable amount of time slandering another woman: Clytemnestra's sister, Helen. They systematically blame Helen for being "a

⁵⁴ Markovits, Elizabeth. "Birthrights: Freedom, Responsibility, and Democratic Comportment in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2009): 435.

⁵⁵ Hame, Kerri J. "All in the Family: Funeral Rites and the Health of the Oikos in Aischylos' *Oresteia*," *American Journal of Philology* 125, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 535.

⁵⁶ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 13.

‘promiscuous’ woman” that caused the war.⁵⁷ Somehow they blame Helen for both pursuing and being pursued by other men. The Chorus’ attention to Helen not only gives a backstory to the Trojan War, which is the preceding event of the play, but also alludes to the dangers of women. In the opening monologue, the Watchman introduces the hatred towards Helen when he says she was “bedded by many.”⁵⁸ Early in the play, the blame shifts to Helen’s dangerous, yet coveted, sexuality. The Chorus continues to attack Helen in their parade. They list the plights of the homeland during the “woman-revenging war.”⁵⁹ Although the Chorus blames Paris for abusing the guest-right system, they blame Helen for “[leaving] behind the din of clashing shields and spears, as the war fleets armed. Taking with her a dowry of destruction.”⁶⁰ Even when they accuse Paris of “rape and theft,” they call Helen the “bride of the spear, a strife-bringer.”⁶¹ The Chorus disregard Paris’ crimes as they blame Helen for the war, the loss of Greek lives, and the destruction of an entire city. Their characterization could potentially confuse a modern audience who might either want it to be Helen’s seduction or Paris’ bravado led to the *casus belli* of the Trojan War, but their argument is actually an issue feminists still fight. The Chorus state a theme that echoes today that women’s sexuality is dangerous, tempting, and distracting. Men police women’s bodies, deciding on what they can wear and whom they can date. Although a modern audience may want a clear reason for the cause of the Trojan War, many of them still participate in a culture that blames women for their sex lives, yet forgives, or even congratulates men on

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 63.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 227.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 399-406.

⁶¹ Ibid., 534, 686.

theirs. Regardless of a man's actions, the woman's sexuality is blamed for his temptation. The Chorus even conflates Helen with Eris, the goddess of strife, right before Agamemnon's entrance. They say Helen arrived in Troy with "a spirit of windless calm, a delicate ornament of luxury, seductive glances darting from the eyes, and passion blossoming in the hearts of men," but that she also destroyed the city.⁶² They say, "She veered her course and brought a bitter end ... an evil escort to the children of Priam, one that brings tears to brides: the Fury."⁶³ Helen's disastrous beauty not only brings an end to Troy, but the Chorus unites her with the mourning of women seen in Argos and the Furies, agents of Justice. Agamemnon even cheers for the end of the war and cries out before the city of Argos, "for their rape of a wife [he] exacted payment, for a woman, the beast of Argos ground their city to dust."⁶⁴ For millennia, Helen has served as a symbol of the power of female sexuality and how its legendary power has brought down cities. The Chorus "slut shames" Helen for her beauty and her relationship to Paris. Agamemnon champions the conflicting duality – it is Paris's fault. Paris raped, defiled, stole Helen from Menelaus, but the Chorus still blames Helen for allowing it all to happen. The echoes of men blaming women for their sexuality and policing their bodies echoes to this day as women face discrimination for what they wear, how they look, and whom they interact with, while male privilege excuses men from this scrutiny.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 738.

⁶³ Ibid., 738-49.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 822-4.

⁶⁵ Every spring as it gets warmer, stories come out about schools sending femme students home for wearing "revealing" clothing that might distract the male students. These countless stories go to serve how from an early age women's bodies are sexualized.

Clytemnestra, however, either allies herself with dangerous female sexuality or defends her sister's victimhood depending on the context at the close of *Agamemnon*. In the Chorus' mourning for their fallen king, they cry out, "He endured so much for the sake of a woman, now a woman's hand has struck him dead. Oh demented Helen, you wasted all those lives, under the walls of Troy, now you are crowned with the final victory."⁶⁶ The Chorus once again blames Helen, but this time for Agamemnon's death. They lament at the irony that Agamemnon spent ten years battling for the sake of one woman, only to be killed by one. The earlier slander against Helen bubbles back up in the audience's minds, but Clytemnestra has a strong rebuttal for the sake of her sister and her own actions. Clytemnestra yells back at the Chorus, "Do not pray for Destiny to bring death bearing the burden of all this. And don't turn your anger on Helen as destroyer of men, she was just one woman, as if she alone killed so many Greek men! She did not cause these incurable wounds."⁶⁷ After the Chorus spent so much time bashing Helen, Clytemnestra not only offers a new perspective but a drastic one. Her defense of her sister stems from blaming men for their actions. Just as she blames Agamemnon for killing Iphigenia, she blames the armies for their losses. Clytemnestra confronts the violence men perpetrate not because of women but because of their own vices. In a modern reading, the rebuttal stands as a battle cry for female agency and against the violence of men. Yet, something more sinister is afoot in the original intent. By defending Helen, Clytemnestra successfully aligns herself with the feminine other. The Chorus spent a considerable time reinforcing the danger of Helen's femininity, and now Clytemnestra, free of her husband, defends dangerous female sexuality. Although there is some merit that in the end of the play Clytemnestra does come out in support

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1453-6.

⁶⁷ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1462-7.

of Iphigenia and Helen, her defense only continues to push Clytemnestra into the portrayal of an evil other. Conversely in my adaptation, Clytemnestra's defense of her sister stands as a direct call to end the shame of, attack on, and blaming of female sexuality.

The Chorus is a constant obstacle for Clytemnestra as she must persuade and negotiate with the old men in *Agamemnon*. The audience sees the female ruler of Argos struggle to keep control and the respect of her populace as the Chorus tries to reinforce gender roles. The old men continually call Clytemnestra's actions manly and characterize her as a masculine woman. Within the first moments of the play, the Watchman bellows at his post, "I take my orders from a woman, my mistress who waits for news, oh she's a woman all right, a woman with a man's heart."⁶⁸ A man, a servant of Clytemnestra, insults her gender representation, implies that her heart has lost its femininity. When Clytemnestra enters with good tidings of the fall of Troy, she struggles to assert her knowledge. The Chorus first rejoices and then asks, "Do you have proof?"⁶⁹ They then ask if the news came to her in the "persuasive power of dreams" or if she "heard a rumor."⁷⁰ The Chorus assumed Clytemnestra would find out through some womanly way, but Clytemnestra asserts, "Don't insult my intelligence. You treat me like a child."⁷¹ The Chorus continues to second guess Clytemnestra even before she can tell them how she knows of Troy's falling. Her catalogue of the beacons' placement not only shows her capability, but her word choices add further subtext to the script. She mentions the "Gorgopus' swamp," the swamp of the she-monsters, the Gorgons.⁷² There might be a connection to Iphigenia when she mentions

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 272.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 274, 276.

⁷¹ Ibid., 287.

⁷² Ibid., 302.

the Aegiplanctus, which Meineck translates as “goat-roaming peak.”⁷³ Iphigenia is said to be slaughtered like a goat earlier in the play. She ends her speech with, “You have heard my words, women’s words, be in doubt, we will see good prevail.”⁷⁴ The Chorus reward Clytemnestra’s speeches with “Lady, you speak wisely like a man of discretion.”⁷⁵ The Chorus gives her the honor of assenting to male qualities of clarity and planning, but after she leaves they choose not to listen to “women’s words.” They revert to questioning Clytemnestra and even damn her news,

Who is so childish and senseless
as to let some burning signal
fire up their heart with hope, only
to be dashed when the real world comes.
Trust a woman to praise a sign
before the truth is clear.
Persuasion is all too quick
to cross a woman’s mind.
Women’s gossip flies fast and quickly dies.⁷⁶

The Chorus, who first introduced male qualities, criticize Clytemnestra for jumping to conclusions and use their preconceptions of female weaknesses to attack and delegitimize her. They are not won over until a male herald enters and tells them of the Greeks’ victory. The unfortunate part of this confrontation between Clytemnestra and the Chorus is that this issue still persists that men will not listen to a qualified a woman speaking facts. Any woman who gives orders with any type of authority risks the chance of getting called “a bitch” by her male colleagues. In the 2016 United States presidential election, a highly qualified woman, Hillary Clinton, lost in part because people continuously questioned her and attacked her for her

⁷³ Ibid., pg. 15.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 348-9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 351.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 479-87.

masculine qualities. For instance, during the primary her opponent, Bernie Sanders, questioned and denounced her qualifications to be president.⁷⁷ Despite Sanders' comments, many defended Clinton's lengthy resume; Boston's National Public Radio station even published commentary titled, "The Most Qualified Candidate For President In Our Lifetime."⁷⁸ Clytemnestra's battles with the Chorus sound all too familiar when compared to Hillary Clinton's campaign during which she negotiated constant attacks for her emails and complaints about her masculine or "bitchy" personality.⁷⁹ While her competitor could get away with insulting veterans and joking about sexual assault, Clinton could not escape skepticism about her health or that she was not likeable enough. Just as Clytemnestra struggles with the Chorus questioning her womanly strength and complaining about her masculine heart, Clinton lost the election after pundits attacked her supposedly femininity and offensive masculine qualifications.

Clytemnestra embraces her masculine qualities following her husband's murder and confronts the Chorus. She no longer stands silently at her husband's side or hides her true intentions from the public, and she proudly says "Finally, I am not ashamed to speak openly."⁸⁰ As the Chorus condemns Agamemnon's murder, Clytemnestra meets them step for step. She yells out, "Now you pass judgement" and indicts the Chorus for not punishing Agamemnon for the sacrifice of Iphigenia. When the Chorus calls her mad, an age old way of way of discounting

⁷⁷ Schleifer, Theodore, "Bernie Sanders: Hillary Clinton is not 'qualified' to be president," *CNN*, April 7, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/06/politics/bernie-sanders-hillary-clinton-qualified/>.

⁷⁸ Payne, Dan, "Commentary: The Most Qualified Candidate For President In Our Lifetime," *wbur 90.9*: Boston's NPR Station, March 19, 2015, <http://www.wbur.org/news/2015/03/19/hillary-clinton-presidential-qualifications>.

⁷⁹ Cottle, Michelle, "The Era of 'The Bitch' Is Coming: A Hillary Clinton Presidential Victory Promises to Usher in a New Age of Public Misogyny," *The Atlantic*, August 17, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/the-era-of-the-bitch-is-coming/496154/>.

⁸⁰ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1373.

women, she yells back that she was inspired by Ruin and Fury. As discussed earlier, Clytemnestra defends Helen when the Chorus whines about her and then accuses the Chorus for putting her “on trial like a senseless woman” and goes to present her case.⁸¹ This moment, however, makes her a stronger masculine woman. When the Chorus calls her Agamemnon’s, she refutes her husband’s dominance and takes ownership over her actions: “So you confidently claim that this was my work but do not call me Agamemnon’s, no! For I am the age-old spirit of vengeance in the guise of this dead man’s wife.”⁸² She declares her independence and distances herself from Agamemnon while citing Atreus’s and Agamemnon’s crimes as just motivation. She denounces the Chorus for their passive role when the father and son committed their violence against the family. At the close of the play, Clytemnestra demands that cycle of violence end there. She even pacifies Aegisthus when he argues with the Chorus. Her speech begs for violence and bloodshed to end, since it has plagued the house for so long. She ends her speech with, “That is the word of a woman if any care to heed it.”⁸³ After a play in which the Chorus continuously underestimates Clytemnestra’s intelligence and power, and then finally learn of her might when it is too late, Clytemnestra asks for people to listen to “the word of a woman.” Her sentiment is lost, as the Chorus prays for Orestes to come home to continue the cycle of violence. Yet, “the word of a woman” demands the violence to end after the completed vengeance for slain children. A feminine voice requests peace, but a masculine voice demands the return of Orestes to continue the cycle. In the final moments of the trilogy's first play,

⁸¹ Ibid., 1401.

⁸² Ibid., 1497-1500.

⁸³ Ibid., 1375-82.

Clytemnestra drops her feminine guise and employs offensive masculine logic to combat the distraught and skeptical Chorus.

Clytemnestra's supposedly masculine features are further exaggerated when countered by feminized husbands: Agamemnon has moments of effeminization that lead to his demise and Aegisthus enters an already effeminate male. Following a feature of Greek tragedy where masculinized women have complementary feminized men, Clytemnestra has two lovers who offend male gender roles.⁸⁴ Zeitlin writes that, women often represent the "positive values and structures of the house and typically defend its interests in response to some masculine violation of its integrity," but it is when a woman violates this image that femme masculinity becomes a threat to male dominance and repercussions are seen throughout the society.⁸⁵ Clytemnestra's lovers exaggerate her masculinity, as she forces Agamemnon to break from his assigned gender roles and chooses a lover charged with femininity. Just as "masculine women" face criticism in today's society, the "feminine male" also faces challenges.⁸⁶ Often considered weaker, feminine men face discrimination for not living up to the prized masculine values of today's society. Since society considers femininity weaker, men who do fit into the ideal concept of masculinity are outcaste from society. Often gay men struggle or become the butt of a joke for their more feminine qualities, and therefore homophobia and internal homophobia persist. The crime of a feminine man both offends the audience and continues to characterize Clytemnestra as a radical other as she surrounds herself with acts of broken gender norms.

⁸⁴ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 66.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸⁶ Padva, Gilad. "Radical Sissies and Stereotyped Fairies in Laurie Lynd's "The Fairy Who Didn't Want to Be a Fairy Anymore," *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, No. 1 (Autumn, 2005), 67.

The hotheaded, stubborn Agamemnon in Homer's *Iliad* has no bearing on the joyous and relieved Agamemnon in his titular play. He arrives in Argos excited to see his homeland, greet his wife, and begin the rest of his life. The homecoming motif was important to the Greeks, as it reinforced the important role of the home in their society.⁸⁷ The concept of the *oikos* becomes an underlying theme in Agamemnon's homecoming since he is supposed to reclaim his seat in the House of Atreus to return Argos to the pre-war traditions and order. Homer's *Odyssey* dramatizes Odysseus' entire homecoming, and just as Clytemnestra stands opposite Penelope, unfortunately for him, Agamemnon serves as an opposite to his antagonist ally, Odysseus.⁸⁸ As soon as Agamemnon returns home, Clytemnestra does not yield the seat of the house to him because in her husband's absence she assumed the feminine and masculine roles in the home (a direct contrast to what occurs with Odysseus and Penelope). Agamemnon succumbs to Clytemnestra's unnatural power and is unable to stop the impending murder.

Agamemnon's entrance is followed first by the Chorus praising their king and then Clytemnestra giving a false heartfelt speech. Her speech introduces net imagery as she talks about her time apart from her husband, but she brings up the threats that arise "when a woman sits at home, parted from her husband."⁸⁹ Clytemnestra uses an attempted suicide as motivation for sending Orestes, "the seal of [their] pledge," to Strophius of Phocis.⁹⁰ She hides her true plans behind an a feigned act of irrational fear and emotions. Her language has double meaning and even when she calls Agamemnon, "the true heir to his father," she foreshadows how

⁸⁷ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 861-2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 878.

Agamemnon must pay for Atreus's crimes against Thyestes.⁹¹ Agamemnon thanks his wife for her speech but in the most condescending way possible, "Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house, your speech was like my absence, too long."⁹² The chauvinistic thank you leads Clytemnestra into unfurling the crimson tapestries, which have multiple meaning. The exorbitant dedication to Agamemnon introduces a symbol for his demise and Clytemnestra's domination. Despite Agamemnon's objections, Clytemnestra persists in making her husband walk on the tapestries. When she asks him if Priam would walk on the expensive tapestries, Agamemnon answers with a yes. Priam was an eastern king and the east has connotations with barbarism and effeminacy.⁹³ Clytemnestra feeds Agamemnon's self-importance, as he chips at hers when he says, "A woman should not be so fond of argument."⁹⁴ Despite his objections, Agamemnon yields the argument to Clytemnestra when she says, "Be persuaded, you have the power, surrender of your own free will, to me"⁹⁵ The dramatic irony is chilling because once he steps on the cloth and enters the house, he completes a trope where men meet their demise when they enter the house.⁹⁶ In comparison to Clytemnestra who gains masculine power and authority, Agamemnon gives up his power to the feminine. Aeschylus's homecoming utilizes motifs that

⁹¹ Ibid., 899.

⁹² Ibid., 914-5.

⁹³ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 327.

⁹⁴ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 940.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 943.

⁹⁶ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 77.

show switching of gender roles in which a character succumbs to the shameful feminine and the other gains monstrous masculine power.

The rest of the trilogy mourns Agamemnon's death, but also the way he died. His children weep not only that he died, but a shameful, emasculating death. Men who die in battle are glorified while other deaths are pitiful and shameful. This standard is made famous in the Spartan saying, "Either come home with your shield or on it." Agamemnon's emasculation in the first play echoes throughout the trilogy and only cements Clytemnestra's crimes. Orestes speaks the most about his father's fate since he is the heir to the throne, the "humiliated and disgraced" throne representing the family line.⁹⁷ In *The Libation Bearers*, Orestes wishes his father had died the death of a hero like Achilles or Hector on the fields of Troy where a "tomb would stand high."⁹⁸ Unlike the heroes remembered by their marvelous and glorified deaths in battle, Agamemnon lies in an unmarked grave from a scandalous murder. In return, The Chorus sings, "He was mutilated of manhood."⁹⁹ Clytemnestra's crime against Agamemnon is only worsened by the fact she did not only kill him, but physically emasculated him with possible castration. The threat to the line becomes even more grave. The same sentiments at the tomb of Agamemnon are repeated in the last play. The audience is reminded of Agamemnon's once distinguished and respected position as the "awe-inspiring man, the First Sea Lord of the fleet."¹⁰⁰ Yet in the trial, Apollo rehashes the disgrace in Agamemnon's death. He goes so far to say that he wished Agamemnon had died "in battle by the furious flight of an Amazon's

⁹⁷ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 434.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 345-52.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 439.

¹⁰⁰ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 636-7.

arrow.”¹⁰¹ Apollo’s wish stands out from that of Orestes’ in *The Libation Bearers* because Apollo cites the female, male-hating Amazon tribe. Apollo reinforces that Agamemnon’s death would have been more honorable if a woman killed him in battle rather than at home. From the moment he enters Agamemnon goes through an emasculating process. Agamemnon’s emasculation echoes throughout the text as people mourn for him and further egg on their hatred for Clytemnestra.

Clytemnestra adds insult to injury following her husband’s murder by revealing Aegisthus as her new lover. The entrance of Agamemnon’s cousin damns Clytemnestra’s characterization and references Athenian laws. Athens had rules regarding women, especially when it came to policing sex and defending the patrilineal line. Laws placed adultery as a high crime against the state and would sentence men to death for committing adultery with a married women.¹⁰² Although the Chorus scorns Clytemnestra for her affair with Aegisthus, the Chorus and the audience find Aegisthus guilty of a deep sin against the state. For when Orestes says, at the close of *The Libation Bearers*, “As for Aegisthus, there is no need to speak of him, he died the adulterer’s death as set down by law,” Aegisthus’s fate reflects Athenian law.¹⁰³ In addition to the adultery, any legal action undertaken by a man was invalid if it could be shown to have been conceived “under the influence of a woman” or “through the persuasion of a woman.”¹⁰⁴ Aegisthus’s support for Clytemnestra during her plan to kill Agamemnon on his behalf is considered cowardly and repulsive. His submission to Clytemnestra becomes more and more

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 627-8.

¹⁰² Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8.

¹⁰³ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 989-90.

¹⁰⁴ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 322.

distasteful to the Chorus and the audience when Aegisthus does not and cannot bury his cousin, which he is legally and religiously obligated to do. Agamemnon's closest heirs – Orestes in Phocis and Menelaus lost at sea – Aegisthus, as Agamemnon's cousin, should perform the burial rites for Agamemnon as his closest male relative. Yet Aegisthus's allegiance with Clytemnestra further removes him from his cousin and offends religious practice. In a matter of moments, Aegisthus becomes a highly detestable character; Athenian law and religion only serve to further villainize him. Aegisthus crime of seeking vengeance through a woman's hands and evading the Trojan War only serve to effeminize him.

Aegisthus adds another perverse homecoming to the *Oresteia*. Instead of the ironic homecoming of Agamemnon, Aegisthus's is long awaited and unwelcomed. He comes to combat the Chorus as they curse his support and role in the murder. Aegisthus says, "The deception was clearly woman's work."¹⁰⁵ The Chorus confirms the womanly work and his effeminizing role in it. They yell back at him, "Woman! You skulked at home, while the other men went to war, all the time you were fouling this man's bed, plotting the death of our commander."¹⁰⁶ Aegisthus does not enter as the new master to the home, but as Clytemnestra's mistress. The two swap roles as master and mistress, as Aegisthus defers to Clytemnestra's actions and orders.¹⁰⁷ The characterization of Aegisthus as the effeminized mistress continues into *The Libation Bearers*. Aegisthus plays less of an active role in the change of Argos as he does later in Euripides' and Sophocles' renditions, but Electra still prays, "Father, help me, help me destroy Aegisthus, help

¹⁰⁵ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1636.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1625-7.

¹⁰⁷ Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 29.

to set me free.”¹⁰⁸ Aegisthus still has power within the home that threatens and imprisons Electra, but Orestes parrots the effeminizing language about Aegisthus when he says, “They should not be ruled by a pair of women! Yes, he’s a woman at heart, we’ll soon see that for ourselves.”¹⁰⁹ Orestes continues to paint Aegisthus as a woman. His connection and position to Clytemnestra ensure this characterization. Later, the Chorus says, “A House dishonored, a stone-cold hearth, ruled by a womanly, cowardly spear.”¹¹⁰ This follows a song in which the women rant about Clytemnestra’s crime, and even though they refer to Clytemnestra’s control over the house they also conflate Aegisthus into the “womanly, cowardly spear.” Once again, femininity appears as insult in Aeschylus’s text. Yet despite his characterization, Aegisthus continues to perpetrate sexist comments about Clytemnestra. Just as he calls deception “womanly work,” he worries that Clytemnestra has become a victim of rumor after Orestes lies about his own death. Aegisthus asks the Chorus, “How can I tell if this really is the living truth or just a fearful rumor spread by women.”¹¹¹ He echoes back the Chorus’s skepticism in *Agamemnon* about the beacons. Coincidentally, Clytemnestra does actually succumb to Orestes’ rumor and becomes enveloped in deception. Just as Agamemnon became emasculated by deception, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are feminized in deception.

Aegisthus secures Clytemnestra’s characterization as wicked and sinful when she takes Aegisthus as a lover, which overshadows her original motivation for killing Agamemnon. Zeitlin

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 479-80.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 304-5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 629-30.

¹¹¹ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 843-4.

sees Iphigenia and Aegisthus embodying “conflicting motivations.”¹¹² In her eyes, Clytemnestra has a muddled characterization from avenging the death of her daughter but also killing Agamemnon for her new lover. Zeitlin, however, overlooks that Clytemnestra yells out, “For I am the age-old spirit of vengeance in the guise of this dead man’s wife. I have repaid the debt of Atreus, the giver of that obscene banquet, and I have sacrificed this full-grown victim in payment for the slaughtered young”¹¹³ Clytemnestra not only seeks out vengeance for Iphigenia, but also Thyestes’ sons. Not once, but twice does Aeschylus describe Atreus’s murder of his brother’s sons. Cassandra saw the murder during her visions alongside Agamemnon’s death. Thyestes’ surviving heir delivers a monologue dramatizing his father’s fate and does not spare gory details of the murder of his brothers and his father’s reaction. The connection between Agamemnon’s death and Atreus’s murders are not only to motivate Aegisthus’s return, but also further motivate Clytemnestra’s actions. Despite the honorable vengeance of slain children, Aegisthus’s arrival damns Clytemnestra to a crazed female other who betrays male trust and becomes a bloodthirsty matriarch. Despite her vengeance for the death of children, she cannot escape her harsh treatment against Electra and Orestes.

The narrative shifts in the trilogy from Clytemnestra’s storyline in *Agamemnon* to Orestes’s in the last two plays where the prodigal son must corral chaotic feminine disruption to the established social order and to “fulfill the debt we owe the parents.”¹¹⁴ As previously discussed, Orestes’ homecoming is part of the story of his rite of passage. Unlike Agamemnon and Aegisthus whose homecomings are defiled and effeminized by Clytemnestra, Orestes

¹¹² Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 95.

¹¹³ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1497-1504.

¹¹⁴ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 385.

transcends his adolescence and becomes a man in his confrontation with his mother and her curse. Goldhill points out the perversity in watching Orestes become a man through deception and matricide, and how morals and myth were somehow both akin yet estranged.¹¹⁵ The deception and violence, however, are not uncalled for in the eyes of Athenian men. Orestes like many other heroes in Greek mythology must slay a monster in their quest and restore order. In *The Libation Bearers*, the Chorus invokes Perseus' name, another hero who slays a monstrous woman as part of his rite of passage. *Agamemnon* creates a horrifying and detested monster in Clytemnestra, which calls upon Orestes' hero quest to destroy her. Even the appearance of Electra further vilifies Clytemnestra, as Electra's virginity contrasts strongly with Clytemnestra's threatening unrestrained sexuality. The children of Clytemnestra cast her as the enemy, and they are backed up by Apollo's prophecy. Apollo's domination of the female – first seen with Cassandra – takes center stage when he takes a more active role in subduing the feminine and preaching the masculine agenda.

Orestes already regains power within the home as soon as he knocks on the doors of the House of Atreus. Porter points out how Clytemnestra appears in the middle of *The Libation Bearers* when Orestes summons her.¹¹⁶ Orestes controls the dramatic action of the scene as he continuously attacks the authority of the feminine. He requests from the doorman to "have someone in authority come out, the mistress in charge, though the man would be more fitting. Feminine delicacy veils words in obscurity, man to man, a conversation is confident, with plain

¹¹⁵ Goldhill, Simon. "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology." 1987. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 125.

¹¹⁶ Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 311.

speaking and straight talk.”¹¹⁷ Orestes requests to talk to his mother, but insists on her weaker position to the male. Clytemnestra, however, does not refute these claims but reinforces them. She ends her greetings to Orestes and Pylades, “If there are other matters, needing more serious consideration, then that is a task that must be shared between men.”¹¹⁸ Clytemnestra’s words may be a tactic to create an illusion of femininity but also uses tropes that place her gender lesser than the male. Both Orestes and Clytemnestra assert the importance of masculinity in which vilifies Clytemnestra and emphasizes Aegisthus’s femininity. Orestes and Clytemnestra even echo and reinforce these sentiments in their short scene together. Orestes ends his fake obituary of himself by saying, “I’ve told you all I heard, but I should really be speaking to the head of the house. I must inform his parents.”¹¹⁹ Clytemnestra exits the scene to “share this news with the head of the house.”¹²⁰ This short scene does not only distorts a reconciliation scene with deception, but it mars it with a reinforcement of the male authority. The Clytemnestra who shouted down the Chorus and asserted her independence from Agamemnon at the end of the first play now lacks the same bite. She no longer has the power of a man-hating matriarch, but defers to Aegisthus’s power. The respect for Aegisthus actually worsens the crime, as it moves Clytemnestra away from her initial motivation to avenge Iphigenia and aligns her more strongly with her affair with Aegisthus. Aegisthus commits a crime when he usurps Agamemnon’s throne and implicates Clytemnestra as an accessory. The power structure reinforced in this scene is the

¹¹⁷ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 663-7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 672-3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 689-90.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 716.

power of the masculine voice in the home, and as the play continues Clytemnestra loses her maternal connection to her children.

Clytemnestra demonstrates in *Agamemnon* her power as an actress in the House of Argos, and Orestes' nurse accuses her of feigning her lamentations for Orestes' death. Cilissa does not only undermine Clytemnestra's sincerity but also Clytemnestra's maternal ties to her children. The Furies later repeatedly claim that Orestes committed a crime against the woman who bore and raised him, but *The Libation Bearers* chips away at Clytemnestra's maternity. She may have given birth to Orestes, but Cilissa was the one who mothered him in his childhood. Trousdell says Aeschylus, "brings an actual mother onto the stage in the realistic guise of old Cilissa, Orestes' former wet nurse. Aristotle tells us that the cathartic effect of tragedy is prepared by a *peripeteia*, a sudden reversal of character status, usually from high fortune to low."¹²¹ Aristotle's opinions should be taken with a grain of salt, but the observation is clear that there is a role reversal with Cilissa. Clytemnestra, the mother, loses her right to her child as Cilissa, a slave, mourns for Orestes like her own son when she says, "My dear Orestes, I spent my soul on him, and I raised him when his mother passed him to me."¹²² Clytemnestra's alienation as a mother serves to continue her vilification, which motivates Orestes' murder and further heightens the suspense in the plot.

Clytemnestra's dream that the Chorus sings about earlier in the play comes to fruition when Clytemnestra and Orestes meet in between Aegisthus's murder and her own. The vision of nursing a snake further perverts the relationship between mother and son. Their confrontation

¹²¹ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 18.

¹²² Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 747-8.

first begins with Clytemnestra mourning Aegisthus death and Orestes damning his mother, in his own words, to “share his grave and never betray him, in death.”¹²³ Aeschylus’s play makes sure that the interaction first starts off with Clytemnestra mourning for her adulterous lover and therefore reinforces her crime against the house. Porter conjectures that Orestes does not turn to Pylades for “moral sensitivity,” but to bolster his confidence in the wake of “Clytemnestra’s bold independence.”¹²⁴ Pylades, a figures I will shortly discuss, must reinforce Orestes to attack the monstrous, independent woman. When Orestes returns to the face off with his mother, the two debate with one another. Clytemnestra tries to exert her maternity, something she lost long ago in the eyes of Orestes and the audience, as Orestes accuses her of her crimes against the House. Porter also observes that Clytemnestra bares “her breast to Orestes ... [as] a reminder of her motherhood but also a sexual gesture, a fact underscored by the echo of how her sister Helen greeted Menelaus at the close of the Trojan War.”¹²⁵ Clytemnestra’s perverse vision of nursing comes to fruition when Orestes literally attacks her while she has her breast exposed. She reminds him that her breast gave him the strength, the role of a mother to make her son strong. Yet, the strength literally comes back to bite her. She yells out before she exits, “Ah! I suckled this serpent, I gave it life!”¹²⁶ Clytemnestra who is accused of being a snake herself is slain by her serpentine offspring. Her connection to Orestes through her maternal history with Orestes falls on deaf ears as her motherly connection has eroded away throughout the play.

¹²³ Ibid., 894-5.

¹²⁴ Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 311.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 311.

¹²⁶ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 928.

Clytemnestra loses the power that she gained in *Agamemnon* and the only thing she can really do in her fight with Orestes is curse him with the Furies, a force only referred to as an abstract idea of familial vengeance previously in the trilogy. Clytemnestra recruits them to fight her fight and calls it them, “the vengeful hellhounds of a mother’s curse.”¹²⁷ Even though Orestes spurns and rejects his mother’s connection to him, Clytemnestra uses that connection to seek her vengeance. Clytemnestra obviously cannot have Electra avenge her murder because her daughter is a woman, so she must rely upon female goddesses to seek out her vengeance. Orestes claims that if he does not kill Clytemnestra that Agamemnon would haunt him instead, and therefore Orestes exerts the power of the masculine over the feminine. The power of Apollo tells Orestes to fear a male’s curse over that of a female’s.

Despite how much one might want to count Clytemnestra as a powerful and righteous maternal heroine, Aeschylus wrote her as a monstrous female other who constantly challenges Athenian masculine ideals. Yet understanding how she functions as an evil matriarch can help recuperate that identity while honoring her flaws and not allowing her to get vilified. In a modern context, Clytemnestra can resonate with women who are often villainized for taking on supposedly masculine qualities and disagreeing with male values. Clytemnestra can find new footing in the modern age to reclaim the narrative of a mother avenging the death of her daughter and casting out an abusive husband. With slight a reinvented contextualization, Clytemnestra’s words can no longer demonize her words to an Athenian audience but inspire a modern one.

Orestes’ character continues to challenge Clytemnestra and damn her as a female other, especially following her death. The formulaic structure allows Orestes to further degrade his mother and lay important groundwork for the trial in the *Eumenides*. Orestes yells out, “She

¹²⁷ Ibid., 924.

plotted this abomination against the man, she, who bore his children, carried them in her womb.”¹²⁸ This statement complicates his relationship to his mother but exerts Apollo’s later explanation of birth. Clytemnestra was only the lucky vessel to bear the children of Agamemnon. Orestes distances himself from his mother, and speaks of her only as the woman who sinned against his father, his true blood. Despite Orestes’ success in avenging his father, he has not succeeded in killing his connection to his mother. The arrival of “the mother’s curse, the hellhounds of hate,” shows that Orestes’ rite of passage is not complete if not completely botched.¹²⁹ Porter argues that part of a male’s rite of passage includes severing ties to the mother and cites when Orestes first attempt to rid himself of his mother “proves abortive and the separation achieved illusory, as Orestes succumbs, before our eyes, to the avenging spirits of that very mother.”¹³⁰ *The Libation Bearers* serves as a prolonged segue from the crimes in *Agamemnon* to the justice of the *Eumenides*, all while undercutting Clytemnestra’s maternal rights and providing Orestes a foundation for his acquittal.

Orestes is not the only one with mother issues, since his sister, Electra, shares his feelings of discontent. Electra does not have the same attention or agency in Aeschylus’s trilogy as later playwrights give her in her titular plays, but she still has an important role in giving Orestes access to the House of Atreus. Men, especially in this trilogy, are often partnered with women, especially in plots involving deception.¹³¹ As soon as the action and deception begin, however,

¹²⁸ Ibid., 992.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 1053-4.

¹³⁰ Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 323.

¹³¹ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 80.

Electra falls away from the narrative. Like many female characters in the western canon (ranging from literary to film), they only exist to further the male narrative. Alison Bechdel refers to this phenomenon in a cartoon strip titled “The Rule” in her series, *Dykes to Watch Out For Despite*.¹³² The 1985 cartoon has two women going to the movies on date when one explains her rule for seeing movies: there must be two women, they must talk to each other, and they must talk about something other than a man.¹³³ Bechdel’s cartoon coined the phrase “The Alison Bechdel Test” or, simply, “The Bechdel Test” as a way to gauge if the movie had adequate female representation. It grew in popularity, and became popular in pointing out how a majority of mainstream media continues to break Bechdel’s rule. In recent years, however, media has done better with female representation but now some critics are calling for an updated and more stringent “Bechdel Test.”¹³⁴ Just like the many women after her, Aeschylus regulates Electra to the status of a secondary character who gets lost in the sprawling story once she satisfies her role in advancing her brother’s plotline.

Electra plays an important role in giving Orestes access to the House. Similarly, to Clytemnestra who acts as the doorkeeper to the House for Agamemnon and Aegisthus, Electra gives Orestes access to the House. In Greek tragedy, women are cast in roles of “catalysts, agents, instruments, blockers, spoilers, destroyers, and sometimes helpers or saviors for the male

¹³² Alison Bechdel is a cartoonist and graphic novelist, known for her work on lesbian culture. Recently, her graphic memoir, *Fun Home*, was adapted into a Tony award winning musical.

¹³³ Bechdel, Alison, “The Rule,” Alison Bechdel, August 16, 2005, <http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/the-rule>.

¹³⁴ Waldman, Katy. “The Bechdel Test Sets the Bar Too Low. Let's Write a New One,” *Slate*, January 7, 2014, http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/01/07/the_bechdel_test_needs_an_update_we_ve_set_the_bar_for_female_representation.html.

characters.”¹³⁵ Although Orestes and Pylades do not literally need Electra to knock on the doors, Electra metaphorically gives Orestes the power to enter the home. Orestes’ coupling with Electra appears in nearly all the rendition of his homecoming, because he needs a woman to gain access to the inner parts of a home, which are considered the women’s domain. The threshold of the home holds the significant and consistent power within the trilogy first when Clytemnestra invites Agamemnon into the House and when Electra helps Orestes approach the door. Electra appears only when her femininity is useful to the male plot, and vanishes when the actual action starts since her presence at Orestes’ homecoming follows the format for male entry in the house and deceptive plots.

The reconciliation scene at the tomb of Agamemnon draws upon earlier themes to introduce order back into the world of Argos. Electra and the Chorus are at Agamemnon’s grave to perform libations to soothe Agamemnon’s soul. Electra and the Chorus are the first to perform libations at the tomb since Agamemnon’s death. Although untraditional, female kin pouring first libations references forgotten customs.¹³⁶ Libations are a standard funeral tradition, and Electra, a refuge of a time before Agamemnon’s murder, brings back the ritual.¹³⁷ Electra provides the tools for Orestes to arrive home and bring piety back to sacrilegious Argos. Electra’s characterization goes further than just representing access to the House, but also as a strong contrast to her mother since she is a cloistered, silent, and cautious woman who performs a

¹³⁵ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 77.

¹³⁶ Hame, Kerri J. "All in the Family: Funeral Rites and the Health of the Oikos in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *American Journal of Philology* 125, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 532.

¹³⁷ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 95.

tradition of the old masculine order. Electra's reluctance to embrace Orestes parallels Agamemnon's hesitation in his conversations with Clytemnestra in the previous play; this homecoming of the male heir shepherds order back into the world.¹³⁸ Aegisthus corrupted the rites when he, a close male relative of Agamemnon, refused to do them. The unification of the father's children at the tomb to conduct the first libations for the dead establish piety and order in the chaotic world.

Orestes and Electra embrace and rejoice at seeing each other, but Orestes does not treat his sister as an equal. He dismisses her and her Chorus, and condescend reminds them of the importance of their role in his plot. He barks out, "Control yourself! Don't lose your mind for joy. Our closest kin are both our cruelest foes."¹³⁹ Orestes limits his joy due to his male sensibilities, but ensures he checks the women who he assumes are careless. Even though Electra is the one who has lived among Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, Orestes gives the marching orders. As he finishes up his plan he recruits Electra to be their lookout and tells the Chorus, "You women, make sure you hold your tongues, keep silent and speak only when you need to."¹⁴⁰ Apollo sends Orestes to subdue the female chaotic other and restore Apollonian patriarchy. Orestes maligns Electra to the background to ensure because his masculine order can use women for plot advancement, but ensures they lack any agency within the plan. Electra, once again, falls into a tradition of playwrights discounting women's involvement in the plot.

Apollo plays an important role in dominating the feminine and exerting masculine power from Cassandra's entrance to the end of the trial. He has raped Cassandra and then punished her

¹³⁸ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 17.

¹³⁹ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 234.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 581-2.

for not bearing his child. Her supposed disregard for her duty as a woman to have a male child, calls for a punishment that completely destroys her. Apollo continues to exert masculine order through the hands of Orestes and through the court of Athena against the Furies. In *The Libation Bearers*, Pylades plays Apollo's surrogate and continuously encourages Orestes.

Pylades accompanies Orestes home to Argos to stand quietly near Orestes until the son of Strophius of Phocis needs to bolster Orestes' confidence. There are not many hints within the trilogy about the type of relationship shared by Orestes and Pylades. Male friendship was honored and highly integrated within Greek culture, and the practice of pederasty was a cornerstone of male relationships. A lost play of Aeschylus, titled *Mymidons*, dramatizes the homoerotic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.¹⁴¹ Although the Athenians concept of homosexuality is not the same as modern day, they accepted same sex male relationships especially in the form of pederasty of an older man could penetrate a younger man. The penetration, however, reinforced the older man's superior position over the younger one. Penetration, homoeroticism, and homosexuality are merely tangents when discussing Orestes and Pylades, because no evidence exists that suggests they are more than traveling companions. The male friendship, in whatever form it might take, plays an important role for establishing male dominance. Within the context of Athenian culture, it is a possibility that Orestes and Pylades had a physical relationship in addition to their friendship. As I exaggerate the sexual relationship in my staging to add more queer representation in the production, I hope to play with the power dynamic; Pylades can use his sexual leverage to supplement his rational voice to motivate Orestes and discriminate against femme figures.

¹⁴¹ Morales, Manuel Sanz, and Gabriel Laguna Mariscal. "The Relationship between Achilles and Patroclus according to Chariton of Aphrodisias," *The Classical Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (May 1, 2003): 292.

Pylades spends a considerable amount of time quiet on stage. Porter conjectures that this ties Pylades and Cassandra together as two characters with considerable stage time, but who do not speak until their stories relate back to Apollo.¹⁴² Pylades stands with Orestes at the reconciliation of Electra and next to him as he meets his mother, but never says a word. He does not need to say anything as he is another male on stage who supports the rightful male heir. Pylades breaks his silence when Orestes turns to him in the confrontation with Clytemnestra. When Orestes asks if he can really kill his mother, Pylades says, “And what becomes of the Oracle of Apollo declared at Delphi, or the unbreakable oaths we took? Better to be hated by every man on earth than hated by the gods.”¹⁴³ When Orestes becomes timid about killing his crazed, evil mother, Pylades is a rational male voice that reminds Orestes of his duty. The Apollonian thinking reminds Orestes of his mission from a god and the fear of torment from the gods if he fails. For a silent partner in the crime, Pylades provides a strong male voice in support of Apollo and the killing of Clytemnestra.

Apollo’s role in the trilogy gets bigger and bigger as the plot progresses. As a god who represents order, he stands in direct opposition to chaotic feminine powers. He goads Orestes into killing his mother for the sake of Agamemnon and stands in direct opposition of the Furies. He upholds “the male interest” and attacks the female.¹⁴⁴ It is ironic, however, that despite being an advocate for the male interest, Apollo inherits his power from his maternal line. He brags in the court of Athena that, “No man, woman, or city has ever heard a word from my seat of

¹⁴² Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 312.

¹⁴³ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 900-3.

¹⁴⁴ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 104.

prophecy that was not ordained by Zeus, the Olympian father,” yet in the opening lines of the *Eumenides*, the priestess lists how the power of prophecy came to him through the women of his family.¹⁴⁵ The Pythia recounts,

First of the gods, foremost in my prayer,
I honor Gaia, the Earth Mother, the first seer,
Then Themis, for it is said that she was the second
To take her mother’s place of prophecy.
The third was Phoebe, a Titan, a daughter of the earth,
Her place bestowed in peace by Themis.
Phoebe bequeathed it to Apollo at his birth,
Hence Phoebus, the name that honored the gift.¹⁴⁶

In spite of Apollo’s beliefs about birth, the priestess speaks of his matrilineal line bequeathing the power of sight onto him. Yet he defends the male at every turn and legitimizes his sight through the authority of his father. Apollo becomes a force of turning the back against the feminine and adhering to the patriarchal power structure.

The unsuccessful rite of passages of *The Libation Bearers* leads Orestes to a new attempt in the last installment of the trilogy in which he seeks out Apollo as a mentor and protector. The claustrophobic environment of the cave temple mixed with the added elements of exposure and endurance reinforce the rite of passage of a boy transition to manhood.¹⁴⁷ Apollo’s role as a mentor reinforces the rite of passage trope since he advises and shelters Orestes. Apollo becomes the older figure to help guide Orestes to manhood, paralleling the connection between pederasty and male mentorship in Athens. Apollo’s purification ritual continues to transition Orestes from

¹⁴⁵ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 616-8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

¹⁴⁷ Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 320.

boyhood and distances him from the feminine.¹⁴⁸ Apollo offers a moment of rest and guidance in the cave to help Orestes through his rite of passage to help him attain his masculine potential and fully subvert femininity.

Apollo constantly appears as a force dominating the feminine; he ruins women's lives through sexual conquest and assault. His sexual violence towards Cassandra does not go unnoticed as an audience watches a young woman weep for the horrible things she experienced, witnessed, and foresees. Mitchell-Boyask points to how the audience sees how rape "disrupts the development of these maidens."¹⁴⁹ Apollo succeeds in dominating the woman and femininity as he punishes Cassandra for not having his child and continues to punish mothers throughout the entire trilogy. Cassandra and Apollo have opposing characterizations because Cassandra wails against Apollo's spite and cruelty, while Apollo becomes the victorious god in the end when he conquers the feminine other. Apollo's sexual assault gets overshadowed by his victory in court and presumably teaches young men of the city who are watching this coming of age tale to become a man that must dominate the feminine. While men scorn Helen for her dangerous sexuality, Apollo is able to transcend his own dangerous sexuality because men can celebrate their sexual conquest.

Apollo's later victory in the court of Athena overshadows Cassandra's earlier plight. The princess of Troy arrives at the doors of the House of Atreus on the coattails of Agamemnon, but she then controls the narrative for a short but powerful scene. Cassandra's lines make up only "14 percent of the whole drama" of *Agamemnon*, yet she plays an important role in constructing

¹⁴⁸ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 104.

¹⁴⁹ Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "The Marriage of Cassandra and the Oresteia: Text, Image, Performance," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 272.

Apollo as a masculine dominant, foreshadows Athena's power, damns Clytemnestra, and parallels Iphigenia.¹⁵⁰ Although the Chorus finds her unintelligible, Cassandra demands an empathy from the audience. To the Chorus she is like a trapped bird whose songs are meaningless and incomprehensible, but Cassandra fights against this characterization. She swears not to be a bird tweeting nonsense but to speak of the imminent future and of the viciousness of the Greeks' war crimes. After Clytemnestra and the Chorus dramatize the fall of Troy and the chaos in the city, Cassandra gives a first-person account of the victims of Troy. Aeschylus crafts a complicated character in Cassandra as she plays both the pitiful female victim but also a strong, powerful voice. Cassandra, however, has no agency since she is a victim unable to control her fate or even communicate with the people around her. Her prophecies alienate her only potential allies and Apollo ensures she loses all independence before her death.

Before Cassandra cries for her fallen city, Clytemnestra and the Chorus paint the picture of war and the pain of a city's collapse. Clytemnestra speaks of the hardships of women in war, which the Chorus echoes in their own songs. In all the anti-female rhetoric, Aeschylus does include an anti-war statement by focusing on the plight of women on the frontline and the home front. When Clytemnestra announces her husband's victory and the fall of Troy, she spends a considerable amount of the speech narrating the events of sacking a city. She does foreshadow her husband's war crimes which provides more motivation to kill him, but also it provides an empathetic perspective on the fate of the Trojan people. She yells out, "Cries, howled over the corpses of husbands, brothers, children, and fathers. A lamenting wail from throats enslaved mourning the death of loved ones, the loss of life."¹⁵¹ Her words are not a typical victory speech

¹⁵⁰ Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "The Marriage of Cassandra and the Oresteia: Text, Image, Performance," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 269.

¹⁵¹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 326-9.

that praises the army and speaks of the spoils of war, but condemns the horrors of war. She also speaks about how women lose their agency by becoming slaves of the Greeks. The Chorus echoes Clytemnestra and sing of Argive women mourning for their fallen husbands. They sing of “Men we all knew, sent out to war, returning home, ashes in urns.”¹⁵² Clytemnestra and the Chorus actually work together to paint an ugly picture and the hardships of war. Against the backdrop of a festival that honored war orphans and the home, their words would resonate with an audience all too familiar with the fifth century Greco-Persian War. When the Chorus sings, “One crack of the lash stings the whole city, but from every home Ares claims a victim,” the audience presumably understands firsthand the loss of loved ones from war.¹⁵³ The reality of war does not escape the Chorus’ prayers since the world of antiquity understood freedom only in juxtaposition to slavery.¹⁵⁴ The ancient world was filled with conquests and pillaging where there were the victors and the losers. Slavery was a fundamental part of societies like Greece and Rome. The Greco-Roman world operated within a binary of citizens, free people, and slaves. The Chorus sings, “I’ve no wish to plunder cities, but I’ll not waste my life away as another man’s slave.”¹⁵⁵ In a world with a binary between freedom and servitude, the Chorus laments for war but also celebrates their freedom. Following this depiction of war, Cassandra enters as an example of the “the agony, the agony of [her] city, utterly destroyed.”¹⁵⁶ The discussion of war introduces themes of liberty and enslavement, while also underscoring the plight of women in

¹⁵² Ibid., 435-6.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 641-2.

¹⁵⁴ The freedom/servitude binary was discussed in multiple lectures and class discussions in past classes: Seminar in Ancient History on the Roman Republic with Professor Bruce Hitchner and in Classics of Greece with Professor Anne Mahoney.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 472-4.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1167.

war. The necessity of war, however, has one masculine culture achieve glory and avoid slavery by destroying another city's men and enslaving their women.

Cassandra speaks more than just of the cruelties of war, but is also the poignant puppet of Apollo. Zeitlin mentions the commonality of a god's power "channeled through the female other."¹⁵⁷ Within the Greek cannon, Cassandra is one of many women taken advantage of by male gods. Aeschylus may have had a tendency to include these female figures in his tragedy, as he includes Io as a similar figure in *Prometheus Bound*.¹⁵⁸ Zeus ruins Io's life just like Apollo to Cassandra. By corrupting these women, the male god demonstrate their domination over young women. Aeschylus includes references to marriage in his construction of Cassandra's story about her by Apollo. In explaining her power, Cassandra calls him "a mighty wrestler, breathing passion."¹⁵⁹ Although Cassandra does not give much detail of the rape, this line speaks volumes. In that moment, however, Cassandra maintains her freedom long enough to ensure she would not bear his child as she says herself, she "cheated him of that."¹⁶⁰ Amidst all the marriage imagery, Cassandra breaks her part of the marriage vow to not have a child and, therefore, Apollo must punish her. When Cassandra tries to exercise her remaining agency, Apollo ensures she is left with nothing.

Apollo deprives Cassandra of her agency by corrupting her ability to communicate. Before offending Apollo, she used her gift to advise and warn Troy and in her own words, as she

¹⁵⁷ Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 79.

¹⁵⁸ Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "The Marriage of Cassandra and the Oresteia: Text, Image, Performance," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 273.

¹⁵⁹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1206.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1208.

says to the Chorus, “I warned my countrymen of the suffering that was coming.”¹⁶¹ In a society in which women had marginalized roles, Cassandra’s gift placed her in a prominent role in her city. Once Apollo cursed her, she “could not persuade no one. They believed nothing.”¹⁶² Apollo turns Cassandra’s useful gift into a curse, so that she falls in rank and prestige in the city.¹⁶³ In addition to her demotion, her language is tainted and unintelligible. She loses her ability to communicate and becomes isolated from everyone. Case observes how Apollo’s curse leaves her without “the privilege of effective public speech because of her prior refusal to be violated by Apollo.”¹⁶⁴ Apollo not only strips Cassandra of her power and prestige, but humiliates her. She becomes useless to Troy and is taken captive to Argos, where her supposed babbling makes her appear dense and crazed. Despite her speaking the truth, the men of the world perceive Cassandra as hysterical. She yells out to Apollo, “He saw me ridiculed, wearing these robes of his, laughed at by friends, turned enemies, for no reason but this.”¹⁶⁵ Apollo’s curse isolates and humiliates her and the robes become a symbol for Apollo’s cruelty. She tears off his garlands, robes, and accessories as a last act of defiance. She curses and damages Apollo’s reputation. Although the audience understands her act of defiance and her prophecies, Apollo ensures that Cassandra appears powerless and merely a talking head to espouse his prophecies.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 1210.

¹⁶² Ibid., 1212.

¹⁶³ Women did not have many opportunities outside of marriage and the home, but priesthoods often were the only prominent role in society a woman could hold. Like the nuns of Medieval Europe, women could actually have some agency as religious role models. Religion provided limited roles for women outside the home, but for the few they had platform for their voice to be heard. Men actually listened to Cassandra when she had the gift of prophecy. Even the first female playwright in the western canon, Hrotsvitha, had her platform because of her position as nun at Gandersheim.

¹⁶⁴ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

¹⁶⁵ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1271-2.

Cassandra becomes the communal bride in *Agamemnon*, since Aeschylus connects Cassandra not only to Apollo but to Agamemnon as well, through marriage imagery. As the bride married to men and death, Cassandra says in response to Apollo's prophecies: "no longer hide behind a veil, like some newly wedded bride."¹⁶⁶ As she approaches the threshold, a marriage tradition, she reels back from the doors in horror. When she looks beyond the doors of the House, she sees her marriage Apollo, Agamemnon, and death. Mitchell-Boyask suggests that when Cassandra approaches the door, she and Apollo parallel the story of Persephone and Hades, another story where a god abuses a woman.¹⁶⁷ Apollo becomes like Hades the personification of death, and Cassandra the virginal girl picked like a flower before her time. Cassandra's twisted marriage to Agamemnon in the House of Atreus ensures her demise and further corrodes Clytemnestra's marriage. When Agamemnon rides to the doors of his father's home, Cassandra accompanies him in the chariot. Red-figure vases depict newlyweds riding a chariot to the groom's house, just as Agamemnon and Cassandra do in the homecoming scene.¹⁶⁸ While the Chorus steeps Agamemnon in forgiveness and acclaim, Cassandra sits and listens. She has to hear the ironic forgiveness of slaughter of Iphigenia as she awaits her own. Agamemnon orders his wife and the Chorus to treat her well, as she is the "choicest flower" of the Trojan ruins.¹⁶⁹ The mythical figure of Agamemnon had a reputation for squabbling over concubines – especially in Homer's *Iliad* – yet here Agamemnon demonstrates pride and, possibly, generosity towards

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 1178-9.

¹⁶⁷ Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "The Marriage of Cassandra and the Oresteia: Text, Image, Performance," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 276.

¹⁶⁸ Himmelhoch, Leah. "Athena's Entrance at *Eumenides* 405 and Hippotrophic Imagery in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*," *Arethusa* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 284.

¹⁶⁹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 955.

Cassandra. He says, “nobody bears the yoke of slavery easily.”¹⁷⁰ Agamemnon echoes the Chorus’s sentiments about the fear of slavery and the fickleness of fortune, but Trousdell argues that Agamemnon may be admitting the wrong he committed when he sacrificed Iphigenia.¹⁷¹ The connection between Iphigenia and Cassandra grows throughout the play. Agamemnon’s connection to Cassandra only connects him further to his daughter’s death and the cruelties of war.

Cassandra mirrors Iphigenia for Agamemnon, but becomes a sore point with Clytemnestra. After her killing spree, she yells out to the Chorus, “And there she lies, his prize won by the spear, his prophetess and prostitute, his faithful fortune-telling bedmate, and how many sailors’ benches she must have lain on.”¹⁷² Agamemnon further corrupts his role as the husband to Clytemnestra since his connection to Cassandra parallels Iphigenia and offends his marriage vows. For Clytemnestra, Cassandra represents everything Clytemnestra hates: a trophy from the war that Iphigenia died for and a new wife to disgrace the marriage vows. Clytemnestra is impatient and rude to Agamemnon’s new concubine when she orders her into the House and invokes the mother of Heracles, Alcmena, to remind her that even greatest heroes have served as slaves. Clytemnestra’s use of Heracles’s mother instead of just Heracles’s name serves to underscore the parallel between Iphigenia and Cassandra. The Chorus tries to goad Cassandra into listening to Clytemnestra, but when she does not move Clytemnestra reinforces the bird imagery. She calls Cassandra’s speech, “not unlike the chattering of a swallow, some unintelligible barbarian speech.”¹⁷³ Clytemnestra casts Cassandra as an uncivilized foreigner

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 953.

¹⁷¹ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 13.

¹⁷² Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1440-3.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 1050-1.

who brings evil with her. Cassandra later refutes this claim that she is “not scared, like some bird startled from a bush” and exerts her civility in contrast to Clytemnestra’s acts against nature.¹⁷⁴ Clytemnestra tries to get Cassandra to go to the hearth for initiation into the house, but Meineck in his footnote reminds the reader that the hearth was put out when the patriarch died.¹⁷⁵ As she goads Cassandra into the house, Clytemnestra continues to use innuendos that further antagonize the prophetic Cassandra.

Clytemnestra and Cassandra are opposing forces that battle to debase the other as they warp themes of marriage, children, and war. In her visions, Cassandra aligns Clytemnestra with animals. Just as Clytemnestra degrades Cassandra by calling her a bird, Cassandra further condemns Clytemnestra by placing her in the role of lions and cows, working alongside wolves, to subdue the honorable bull of the House. She cast Clytemnestra as a monstrous beast when she says, “She is a lioness reared up on two legs. She beds the wolf while the noble lion is away.”¹⁷⁶ The characterization of Clytemnestra as a beast serves to depict her as someone going against human rationale and nature. Cassandra screams, “You wretched woman! How can you do this? Your own husband who shared your bed. You bathe him, cleanse his body, how can I reveal the end? It shall be soon. She stretches her hands out, one after another, drawing him in.”¹⁷⁷ Cassandra’s fate intertwines with Agamemnon’s. When Cassandra yells, “Protect the bull from the cow,” she yells for intervention not to save Agamemnon but to protect herself.¹⁷⁸ Cassandra

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 1315-6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pg. 40.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1259-60.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 1107-1111.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 1125.

plays many roles in her position as the prisoner of war, but above all she adds to the drama and outrage of Clytemnestra's savagery. Agamemnon's two wives sit on opposite ends of a spectrum – a monstrous, powerful beast of a woman and a powerless, abused young woman – that challenges the plot and creates disastrous representations of women.

A brutal character to watch on stage or read in translation, Cassandra's position as a woman raped by a god and then ripped from her the ruins of her home to meet her death in a foreign land makes evokes an immense amount of pathos. She is a helpless victim, but somehow she is able to hold her head high and enter the house embracing death. She requests Helios to send someone to avenge her death, but then enters the House in contrast to everyone else in the trilogy. She knows firsthand of her fate, but she enters the House to meet death and in pure tragic form says, "I do not put myself, I pity mankind."¹⁷⁹ Her fortitude makes her more endearing and her death even more tragic. The tragedy of Cassandra is her lack of agency and how badly she wants it even though but Apollo and Agamemnon have ensured she can never have it. Cassandra can find an even more sympathetic audience in the modern day, as she stands a powerful figure torn down by male violence.¹⁸⁰ Her role in the plot, however, serves to worsen the crimes of Clytemnestra and offer a confusing comparison to Iphigenia. The daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra is the reason behind the entire trilogy (if one is counting the children of Thyestes as secondary). Iphigenia's death mirrors Cassandra as she too was a young girl, married off to death, helpless, and forced there by men and gods.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 1330.

¹⁸⁰ I will continue to discuss Cassandra's characterization and her role in my adaptation in much more detail later in this project.

Apollo's sister, Artemis, demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia ten years before the start of the *Oresteia*. An abstract force of power, Artemis demands the sacrifice that leads to this trilogy. Unlike her brother who plays an active role with Cassandra and Orestes, Artemis is an absent force that appears only in signs from nature. The Chorus illustrates the conundrum Agamemnon faced between killing his daughter or facing the wrath of the entire Greek fleet, and they do not spare in their depictions of Agamemnon's heinous sacrifice. The Chorus sings of Iphigenia's beauty and youth married to death in a helpless and sorrowful tale. While the Chorus does go into horrible detail of young girl's fate, they also cite all of the factors that necessitated Agamemnon's actions. Iphigenia's story parallels Cassandra's as a way to invoke sympathy from the audience, but also to create a backdrop of murder, necessity, and multiple perspectives on femininity.

The Chorus dramatizes Agamemnon's ultimatum when they talk about how the Greek army sat on the shores of Aulis waiting for the winds to change. The men sat on the shore growing more and more restless and the Chorus says, "Time, crawling slowly by, wore them down the flower of Greek manhood began to wither and waste away."¹⁸¹ The Chorus' prologue ensures that Agamemnon is not seen as a cold blooded murderer, but a man goaded into killing his daughter for the sake of the "woman-revenging war."¹⁸² The sacrifice is not treated frivolously but as an event required by the gods for this war over a woman. The Chorus even says, "He strapped himself to the yoke of Necessity, his storm-swept psyche veered on an impious course, impure, unholy, unsanctified."¹⁸³ The crime may seem horrible and the Chorus

¹⁸¹ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 196-8.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 218-20.

still has mixed emotions about the death, but after the sacrifice the tides literally turn. The hatred about the sacrificed is absolved once it becomes successful.¹⁸⁴ Agamemnon's sacrifice yields success and the army is able to make their way to Troy. Although the story of Iphigenia does degrade Agamemnon's heroic character and provides more than enough motivation for Clytemnestra's vengeance, the Chorus reinforces the necessity of the murder. The threat of withering and wasting manhood goads Agamemnon to sacrifice a daughter, placing the masculine need over feminine life.

Although Agamemnon's act has a successful outcome, the Chorus still dramatizes the traumatic and hideous event. When they first introduce the story of Iphigenia they call Agamemnon and Menelaus "like vultures grieving wildly for stolen young kidnapped from their lofty nests."¹⁸⁵ Although the surface meaning refers to the sons of Atreus and Helen, Heath argues that there is double meaning that the vultures actually represent Thyestes and Clytemnestra mourning the loss of their children.¹⁸⁶ A play of double-meaning invokes dual images that both dramatize the need of the war, but also underscore the theme of parents and the loss of children. Calchas augurs a sign of two eagles attacking a rabbit. The sign, however, has an odd connection to birth as the rabbit is pregnant. The Chorus wails, "They perched there clutching a pregnant hare who never had the chance for one last run, and in full view feasted on her unborn young."¹⁸⁷ Calchas reads the sign that Agamemnon and Menelaus are the eagles and

¹⁸⁴ Dolgert, Stefan. "Sacrificing Justice: Suffering Animals, the Oresteia, and the Masks of Consent," *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (June 2012): 280.

¹⁸⁵ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 49-50.

¹⁸⁶ Heath, John. "Disentangling the Beast: Humans and Other Animals in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 119 (1999): 119.

¹⁸⁷ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 118-20.

they must sacrifice the young, but the young is unborn from a mother. This sign ties the mother and her children together; the prenatal death demands the sacrifice a girl before her maturity. The Chorus narrates Iphigenia's "terrified cries of 'Father!'" but then tell of how men gagged her.¹⁸⁸ Once again, men silence a woman from speaking out about her agony. Agamemnon cannot find solace in his fellow officers, as they turn their back on him and force him to fulfill the act. Iphigenia's entrance and sacrifice, however, follows more marriage imagery. Similar to Cassandra's marriage to death, Iphigenia goes through her own marriage with death as her rite of passage to an adult woman. Yet, in a mix of images, Iphigenia is both the bride and the sacrificial animal for the wedding. The sacrificial images hint at the actual sacrifices made to Artemis before a girl's marriage in Athens.¹⁸⁹ In the strophe, the Chorus sings of her "steeped saffron [robes] poured to the ground."¹⁹⁰ The robes hold specific importance since they were the customary wedding gown for Athenian women.¹⁹¹ The gagging of Iphigenia conjures the image of handling an animal at sacrifice, but also reminds the audience of how she used to sing. The sacrifice ends with the pouring of libations, which is both a celebratory gesture at a banquet but also one conducted for the dead. Iphigenia's story compounds both animal sacrifice with marriage that conjure conflicting feelings of empathy for Iphigenia, for Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra's entrance directly after the Chorus' description aligns her with cause of vengeance for Iphigenia's horrifying death prophesied from the killing of a pregnant hare. Cassandra and Iphigenia corrupt matrimony as they are young woman married to death

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 228-9.

¹⁸⁹ Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 20.

¹⁹⁰ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 239.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pg. 12.

through violent masculinity. Aeschylus erodes the concept of marriage with these two women, as Clytemnestra also breaks her own marriage vows. In these warped and disfigured marriages, two women become gagged and lose their agency while another gains agency in unnatural ways. The masculine ideals become fulfilled when Iphigenia can die for a war and Apollo punishes Cassandra for her tampering with his patrilineal line. These sympathetic women show what can happen when masculine pursuits need to be fulfilled. Clytemnestra, on the other hand, offers a perspective of what happens when a woman becomes too powerful and overthrows the masculine marriage vows. The concept of marriage can continue to find new warped perspectives as the definition of marriage has greatly shifted in the past century, and something I hope to explore in the adaptation.

The young women stand in contrast to the primordial she-demons called the Furies. The chthonic monsters are the physical representations of the monstrous female other. In an ironic twist of mythical history, a rumor says the theatrical representation of the Furies were so scary that women to miscarry in the audience.¹⁹² Women may or may not have been in the audience in the first place, and if they were they would have had a safe distance from the monsters in their seats behind the men. Beyond the irony of female demons causing women to lose their babies in a play about women losing their biological rights, the Furies's frightful appearance served to radicalize femininity. These particular monsters are an amalgamation of different creatures in one. They are part snake, part bird, part Harpy, part Gorgon, part woman.¹⁹³ They somehow embody everything evil and synthesize evil female monsters. Aeschylus's characterization

¹⁹² Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

¹⁹³ Heath, John. "Disentangling the Beast: Humans and Other Animals in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 119 (1999): 34.

portrays the Furies as something completely otherworldly. When they first appear in a vision to Orestes at the close of *The Libation Bearers*, he calls out they are “Like Gorgons! Black clad, writhing with snakes” and “their eyes dripping with blood.”¹⁹⁴ Orestes draws upon famous she-monsters to establish ugly femininity. In their first characterization, Orestes’ reference to the Gorgons is not an accident. Rather, the Gorgons have a specific connection to Athena who wears the slain head of Medusa on her aegis. Their characterization only continues in the *Eumenides* when the Pythia stumbles out of Apollo’s chamber crying, “Not women, they were a hideous sight, more like Gorgons, but worse, much worse” and then describes them as “dark, dank and disgusting.”¹⁹⁵ As a priestess of Apollo she calls upon him to protect her and the chamber from the evil female monsters. When Apollo enters he further characterizes their evil femininity and calls them “disgusting virgins” and warns Orestes of their hideousness. In the dramatic action of the play, Apollo continues to antagonize the Furies which reminds the audience of their repellent state. As Apollo yells out in the trial, “You repulsive hags! The gods detest you,” the audience knows to hate and revile these creatures and hope for their submission.¹⁹⁶ The following continues to analyze how the Furies get cast as a threat to Athens because of their femme monstrosity and therefore in a recontextualized adaptation, I hope these characterizations that once damned them can become impressive and proud features.

As the curse of Clytemnestra, the Furies are a disgusting representation of dangerous femininity constructed in direct opposition of men. In every way the Furies represent otherness. Hippocrates writes about women being wet and cold and men dry and hot, therefore when the

¹⁹⁴ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1048-9, 1058.

¹⁹⁵ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 52, 48-9.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 644.

Pythia calls the Furies “dark, dank and disgusting,” she literally comments on their slimy, oozing femininity.¹⁹⁷ The Furies draw upon older aspects of Greek tradition and play the horrifying remnants “of the earlier chthonic female religions.”¹⁹⁸ A huge thrust of the *Eumenides* is the power shift from the chthonic power to the power of the Olympian gods. The cast of Furies worship a matriarch and constantly cry out to Mother Night. Beyond playing the female power the Furies cry out to, this mother figure does not have a role in the trilogy. Their attention to this mother figure represents “a negative matriarchy or ‘mother right’ that must be overcome.”¹⁹⁹ Their matriarchal fervor serves as an immediate threat to Orestes, but also threatens Athenian perception of power. Therefore, the Furies continue to encompass all the evils of femininity. Iphigenia’s virginity was treated like a treasure; the Furies’s virginity is spoiled and rotted. Their virginity compliments Clytemnestra’s dangerous and promiscuous sexuality that threaten the fertility of the land.²⁰⁰ Their sexual threat explains why the Furies keep chanting about how their “anger rises to ravage their land. Venom boiled from grief, seeping from seething hearts, poison oozing on the earth, sterile, stagnant pestilence polluting the ground.”²⁰¹ Athens tied female sexuality closely to the state, because they perceived unruly female sexuality as a potential risk for social instability.²⁰² The Furies attempt to disrupt the patriarchal line and family honor, but

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 52.

¹⁹⁸ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

¹⁹⁹ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 102.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 97.

²⁰¹ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 781-4.

²⁰² Please refer back to discussions on the *oikos* and Aegisthus’s relationship to Clytemnestra for more detail on how Athens regulated female sexuality.

also represent dangerous female emotions.²⁰³ The Furies represent multiple forms of the dangerousness of femininity in which emotions, matriarchs, chthonic female figures can all be hazardous to the state.

Orestes' collapses at the base of a statue of Athena, who has an opposing characterization to the Furies: a tamed masculine femme who rules in favor of the male agenda. As the city's patroness, Aeschylus makes her the virtuous voice in a tragedy. In retrospect, Athena represents a hypocrisy within Greek culture in which some women can be masculine for good while others are evil. Clytemnestra's masculinity is offensive, so much so it takes two plays to correct her wrongs. Athena, however, appears as a masculine goddess who adheres to masculine laws and therefore is the ideal woman. Zeitlin calls Athena, "the androgynous goddess."²⁰⁴ Athena might be a woman but has masculine features of a logical, stoic warrior and, yet, has sexuality of a cloistered vestal. Clytemnestra's sexuality and the Furies's virginity threaten the fertility of the land, but Athena's virginity is virtuous and prosperous. Keuls describes how later Roman authors called her a "virago," a sexless man-woman who can defend her position in a male world, but only at the expense of her own sexual role.²⁰⁵ Athena straddles the gender binary, but embodies the male's conception of virginity and morality. The Athenian patroness represents protection and the glory of the city.²⁰⁶ Her importance to the polis ties her role to the service of the male dominated city. Athena becomes the personified image of the city's purpose and goals, therefore

²⁰³ Gewirtz, Paul. "Aeschylus' Law," *The Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 5 (March 1998): 1051.

²⁰⁴ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 89.

²⁰⁵ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 38.

²⁰⁶ Heath, John. "Disentangling the Beast: Humans and Other Animals in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 119 (1999): 36.

distances herself from the female, and becomes an envoy of Zeus's will and power. The *Oresteia* allows Athena to act as an envoy for her father to exile chthonic figures, like what Zeus did with like the Titans.²⁰⁷

Athena's androgyny and subscription to the masculine world creates a female deity who propagates masculine virtues. She appears as a female warrior but her warrior status comes from images of subdued female others. Her infamous aegis has the Medusa head etched into it. Medusa was a fearful woman described with both snake imagery and swamp-like imagery.²⁰⁸ The aegis links her to Perseus who defeated Medusa, a myth in which a man subdues a monstrous female other. Keuls points to how the aegis represents a vagina dentata, with the snakes coiling around a gaping mouth.²⁰⁹ She enters and draws attention to her infamous aegis by saying, "My flailing Aegis whirling me wingless."²¹⁰ The vagina dentata represents the fear Athenian men had for female sexuality, where a vagina could bite off a man's penis. Sometimes Athenians depicted Athena with a sphinx, another female monster.²¹¹ A staple of the high school classroom is Sophocles' tragedy in which Oedipus becomes king after defeating a female monster. In addition, Athena has a strong connection to the Amazons. The Amazons appear throughout the *Oresteia* a constant comparison to Clytemnestra. A part of Athenian history is the Amazonomachy where the Athenians fought and won against the tribe of warrior women. The

²⁰⁷ Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 28.

²⁰⁸ Recall the discussion of the Furies's characterization in which femininity was perceived as wet and cool. The swamp imagery speaks to this trope.

²⁰⁹ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 39.

²¹⁰ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 404.

²¹¹ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 39.

Athenians memorialized the Amazonomachy throughout the city, including in reliefs on the western metopes of the Parthenon. Keuls says the Amazonomachy was “a familiar Attic patriotic motif which celebrated the victory of culture over barbarism.”²¹² Aeschylus draws upon the motif so that Orestes can find Athena’s statue in a building decorated with motifs of the goddess and a city conquering foreign female otherness. Athena becomes a symbol in defeating female otherness, which supports defending the male agenda that supports patriarchal values and limiting female power. Her power as a goddess cannot decide the case, but her jury of ten Athenian men can. She defers the judiciary system mostly to a council of Athenian men and therefore exerts the judicial system as a “gendered scheme.”²¹³ As Athena works to exile the female otherness, she supports male rule in the city and successfully distances herself from the evils of femininity. Encompassed in symbols of defeated female monsters, Athena becomes the only woman Athenians can trust.

Although Cassandra sang her sorrowful song two plays before Athena enters, the two characters are linked in iconography and myth. Cassandra enters in Agamemnon’s chariot – married to him, Apollo, and death. Her unofficial marriage suddenly becomes righted when Athena rides in on her chariot. Leah Himmelhoch argues that, “Athena transforms this corrupted event into a positive one” referring to Athena’s virginal and marriage status, and also the representation of winning the Trojan War.²¹⁴ Athena enters as a virginal visage, a patron goddess successful in battle. Her connection to Cassandra is in dialogue with the mythical history that

²¹² Ibid., 40.

²¹³ Gewirtz, Paul. "Aeschylus' Law," *The Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 5 (March 1998): 1052.

²¹⁴ Himmelhoch, Leah. "Athena's Entrance at *Eumenides* 405 and Hippotrophic Imagery in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*," *Arethusa* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 294-5.

Ajax raped Cassandra in her temple.²¹⁵ Apollo's dominance of the feminine continues to haunt the play, since Athena rules in favor of the masculine and against the feminine interest. Athena spares Cassandra's avenger, but also lets her rapist win his case – Athena not only acquits Orestes of his crime, but Apollo, too. Athena continues to preach of masculine dominance and enforces the gendered double standard through which Helen is mocked for her sexuality and Apollo remains immune from his sexual crimes.

Athena's birth from the male womb provides just another reason why the Athenians loved their patron goddess, because they had a fascination with male gods giving birth to their children. Aphrodite was born from Uranus's testicles, Dionysus is called the "twice-born" because Zeus bore him in his thigh, and Zeus birthed Athena from his head. Therefore, Athena – a woman born from man – is the perfect candidate to rule in favor of the patriarchal line. Since Athena has no mother, she represents the end of the dangers of the womb.²¹⁶ The Furies are a hideous, old world matriarchal cult to which Athena enters as a shining new Olympian god to destroy them. As Athena says at the end of the play, "I was born of no mother, and I defer to the male in all things with all my heart, except for marriage, as I will always be the child of my father. Thus, I cannot give precedence to the woman's death."²¹⁷ Athena exerts her role as a subservient woman in the male agenda. When Athena cloaked in misogynistic armor becomes an object from Zeus' male womb, she decides on the right of women from a male perspective. After looking at how Apollo, Athena, and the Furies operate in the *Eumenides*, a closer look at how Aeschylus constructs the final installment of his trilogy can illuminate the patriarchal climax.

²¹⁵ Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "The Marriage of Cassandra and the Oresteia: Text, Image, Performance," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 288.

²¹⁶ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 10.

²¹⁷ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 736-40.

Before the trial begins, Apollo and the Furies meet to introduce the debate of the trial and dissect the claim of parents over their children. Clytemnestra awakens her agents of revenge to continue their pursuit of Orestes. Her speech from beyond the grave gives a voice to the slain mother urging her female hellhounds to chase down Orestes since no one else can. She understands her daughter cannot give her a proper burial or avenge her death so she relies on the Furies. She calls out that she “suffered the cruelest pain from [her] closest kin.”²¹⁸ As the Furies wake and begin to work themselves into a rage, Apollo arrives before the audience may sympathize with these horrid creatures’s mission. In the monologue following his entrance, Apollo introduces his theory that men carry the seed that women incubate as if a vessel. He yells out to the Furies they belong “where a man’s seed is killed by castration and young boys are mutilated, their bull-spirit crushed.”²¹⁹ Apollo casts the Furies as evil female forces that want crush what makes a man a man. This speech emphasizes a man’s worth to their genitalia and offspring; castrating men is a crime equal to gouging out eyes and cutting off heads. This is not the first time, Aeschylus references Agamemnon’s castration early in *The Libation Bearers*.²²⁰ Apollo conflates Clytemnestra's crime and the Furies’s horridness. His argument in favor of the male seed only grows throughout the *Eumenides*. Apollo also begins to further attack the Furies’s demand for Justice. As the Furies insist that Orestes went against nature, Apollo slanders Clytemnestra’s character. When the Furies argue Clytemnestra’s crime against Orestes’, Apollo invokes Zeus, Hera, and Aphrodite. Before Athena appears, Apollo has already weakened

²¹⁸ Ibid., 100.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 188-90.

²²⁰ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 439.

the Furies argument by further criminalizing Clytemnestra through protesting the importance of marriage and advocating for the man's role in reproduction.

Trousdell calls the trial scene in the *Eumenides* "the most famous anti-climatic scene in classical drama."²²¹ Considering the action and high drama in the first two plays with scenes of murder and deceit, the trial reads like a bad episode of *Law and Order*. Although the scene may first appear anticlimactic and didactic, Aeschylus creates a scene that takes the barbaric, emotionally violent acts and moves into a realm of rational debate. Trousdell argues that the court is less about justice but "conscious moral choice" and "shared wisdom."²²² The court of Athens introduces a realm of morality and wisdom not yet seen in the world of the play. The shift changes from the crazed world of high tragedy to a scene correcting female fervor. Paul Gewirtz, argues as "passion is seen as a central, necessary element of law; and law is presented as a gendered phenomenon."²²³ The Furies's emotional passion in screeching goes unrewarded; Apollo's bombastic monologues leaves law with an impassioned, dramatic moment on stage but still reinforces Athenian perceptions of gender. The passionate, yet, wise court corrals the female other and reestablishes the powerful masculine order.

Athena intervenes between the Furies and Orestes, but she cannot preside over the trial herself so she calls "the exemplary men of [her] city" as the jury for the case.²²⁴ Aeschylus treats the jury as a tool that shifts the private matters of the home to the public arena. The public trial also parallels how a female matter is taken from the home and once put public becomes a

²²¹ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 27.

²²² *Ibid.*, 27.

²²³ Gewirtz, Paul. "Aeschylus' Law," *The Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 5 (March 1998): 1044.

²²⁴ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 482.

masculine matter to debate and subdue. The story of Orestes and his salvation are referenced within the *Odyssey*, but Aeschylus dramatizes this moment to show how the Athenian judicial system has become a beacon of rationality and reason within the new world. Aeschylus moves the myth from the violent world of Homer to the civilized, new age of Athenian democracy.²²⁵ Just as Athena, the new Olympian goddess, overshadows the old, chthonic female monsters of the Furies, the Athenian court and jury ensures that the new judicial system ends an ancient and intergenerational cycle of violence. The play makes a plea on the behalf of the institution of the court for its role to publicly arbitrate and decide on issues that were once private, familial ones.²²⁶ Athena and the jury work together to show the power and order within the court and its jurisdiction to extinguish female otherness and exert masculine order. As Apollo reminds the court as the votes are counted, “Make a careful count, be fair, have respect for Justice as you divide the votes. An ill-judged verdict could cause great harm, and a single vote can restore a mighty House.”²²⁷ In the closing moments of the trial, Apollo reminds not only the court but also the audience of the task at hand. As he bolsters the important role of the jury, he continues to show the power, might, and righteousness of the court. Even Athena’s decision to vote on behalf of Orestes in case of a tie supports the power and might of their judicial system. A jury’s tied vote would go in favor of the defendant, therefore Athena’s precedent adds mythical history to the rules of the court. Aeschylus’s courtroom drama showcases the power of the jury. As a group of men, they help their patroness establish an institution that can oversee even the most treacherous and important cases.

²²⁵ Dolgert, Stefan. "Sacrificing Justice: Suffering Animals, the Oresteia, and the Masks of Consent," *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (June 2012): 268.

²²⁶ Gewirtz, Paul. "Aeschylus' Law," *The Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 5 (March 1998): 1045.

²²⁷ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 748-51.

In the context of the demos and the court system, Apollo and Athena propagate male superiority and lay the groundwork for complete female subversion in Athens. Once Athena has the Furies and Orestes swear to defer to her court and her rulings, the court case is off with only an interruption of Apollo as Orestes' gifted defense attorney. As Athena assembles her court, the Furies sing of Orestes' crimes and of justice as their final, unrestrained plea for maternal rights. Apollo meets their passionate cries with Apollo's logical rhetoric. The Fury's must negotiate the supposed masculine rationality of the court with their irrational, emotional frenzy. Orestes admits, "I killed her, I do not deny it," proudly and bluntly.²²⁸ He feels safe under the protection of Apollo, the advocate of the murder. Yet Orestes also invokes his father and reminds the audience that he killed his mother to avenge his death. The Furies question the rules of murder, but Orestes makes a compelling argument (to an Athenian audience) that Clytemnestra "was tainted with two crimes ... She murder her husband and she murdered [Orestes'] father."²²⁹ The Furies become incensed with Orestes' logic, and begin to remind him of the cycle of vengeance wherein Clytemnestra paid for her sins in death, but Orestes has yet to pay his debt. Once the Furies mention how Orestes "grew in her womb" and "disown the bond of blood between mother and child," Orestes sends in Apollo to spin misogynistic rhetoric in his defense.²³⁰

Apollo begins his arguments first by praising Agamemnon and condemning Clytemnestra by recounting Agamemnon's sacrilegious death and uses his most powerful tactic of invoking the power of Zeus. He says Agamemnon was "a nobleman sceptered with Zeus-given honor."²³¹

²²⁸ Ibid., 588.

²²⁹ Ibid., 600, 602.

²³⁰ Ibid., 607-8.

²³¹ Ibid., 6271.

Apollo dramatically recounts how Agamemnon did not die a heroic death in battle, not even by the arrow of an Amazon, a cowardly weapon from a barbaric female other, but by something worse: a deceitful, villainous wife. Apollo narrates Clytemnestra's horrific deceit and violence to Athena while also reminding the court (and audience) of Agamemnon's impressive and distinguished accomplishments. As Apollo reinforces the power and importance of the father, the Furies argue against Zeus and attack the way he treated his father. The Furies often bring up strong counterarguments with Apollo, but they focus on the binary between guilty and not guilty. Apollo, on the other hand, uses instances and exceptions to erode their case.²³² Apollo can cut them off, belittle them, and yell his counter argument over them. Apollo shouts down the Furies by calling them "repulsive hags" and scrutinizes the difference between killing a father and simply imprisoning a father for eternity.²³³ As the Furies attack Apollo for letting Orestes get away with disrespecting "mother's blood," Apollo sharpens the blade for the final kill in the trial in the infamous monologue in which he glorifies the male womb and strips women of their reproductive rights. The monologue betrays Apollo's matrilineal line and his gift of prophecy and aligns him completely with his paternal line.²³⁴ He successfully razes the matriarchy by denying the mother completely.²³⁵ Apollo propagates alternative facts of birth in which the father is a "child's true parent" since "man mounts to create life" with his "newly sown seed."²³⁶ In a

²³² Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 104.

²³³ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 644.

²³⁴ Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 15.

²³⁵ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 108.

²³⁶ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 658-9.

continued argument from earlier, Apollo asserts the importance of men's testicles having the seed. For the woman, however, he calls them the "nurturers" of the male's seed.²³⁷ He explains that a "woman is a stranger fostering a stranger, nourishing the young, unless a god blights the birth."²³⁸ The argument presents the woman as solely a vessel that incubates the male seed but has no biological connection to the child. Apollo includes how women carry births to term "unless a god blights the birth." In multiple cases within the Greek religion, male gods intervene to birth their children and Apollo points to Athena as "the child of Zeus. She never grew in the darkness of a womb, and no goddess could have borne such a child."²³⁹ Apollo alludes to the myth in which Zeus had a prophecy that warned him that he would have a child stronger than him so he swallowed his pregnant wife, Metis. Athena continued to grow within Zeus until she hatched from his head fully grown and armored. The male birth of Athena not only proves an exception to the rule, but also continues to characterize Athena as the perfect woman. Athena presides over the court as a sexless virgin decorated in subdued female otherness and as a patriarchy's dream of male birth. The sweeping monologue of Apollo ends the trial since Athena asks if both sides rest their case and then sends the jury to deliberate and vote.

As Athena sends her jurors off, Athena continues to position herself as the voice of reason, subduing the female otherness. She refers to explicitly to the Amazonomachy and brags of her city's defeat of the crazed female barbarians. Her monologue shifts the action of the court case to the suspenseful moments before the verdict. It allows a moment for the Furies and Apollo to spar one last time. Apollo advocates for Zeus's power that favors male killers; he mentions

²³⁷ Ibid., 644.

²³⁸ Ibid., 660-1.

²³⁹ Ibid., 664-6.

Ixion while the Furies keep clamoring about the crime of killing one's mother. Athena disrupts the argument with the final votes. Before she reveals the count, she proclaims that she will acquit Orestes if the vote is a tie, because of her role as a sexless, male birthed deity. Athena proclaims,

Now my task is to make the last judgement, and I cast my vote for Orestes. I was born of no mother, and I defer to the male in all things with all my except for marriage, as I will always be the child of my father. Thus I cannot give precedence to the woman's death: she murdered her husband the guardian of the House; if the vote split Orestes will be the winner.²⁴⁰

Her vote acquits Orestes and her reasoning serves to completely undermine the matriarchy.

Athena asserts her role as the ideal masculine woman because she will "always be the child of [her] father." She may support the Athenian legal system wherein the benefit of doubt is given to the defendant in case of a tie, but her reasoning also supports the Athenian view of the patriarchy. Orestes' and Apollo's celebration contrasts sharply with the Furies's anger, but the two men leave Athena with the mission to destroy the last shred of evil femininity in the play.

Many scholars – Zeitlin, A. M. Bowie, Trousdell, Porter, Gewirtz, Stefan Dolgert, Markovits – have analyzed Athena's role in the final moments of the trilogy. Zeitlin points out the irony that Athena, a goddess, takes away women's independence and sovereignty.²⁴¹ Many other feminist scholars see the end of the trilogy as exerting patriarchal values, while some scholars argue that the play actually warns of tyranny ruling through force and fear.²⁴² Apollo and Athena mention their relationship to Zeus and infer the possible violence they could inflict on the Furies; Athena even mentions how she can access Zeus' fire bolts. Yet violence does not

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 734-41.

²⁴¹ Zeitlin, Froma I., ed. *Playing the Other: Gender and Sexuality in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: Chicago, 1996), 115.

²⁴² Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 11.

play a role in the final moments of the play, but rather further subverts the female other. Once Athena and Apollo topple the matriarchy, Athena has to move the Furies to the private space of the home. The Athenian demos belongs to the male world where men can decide, rule, and govern public matters and laws of the city, but women belong sequestered in the home to fulfill their duties of marriage and birth for the survival and stability of the polis.

Before the Furies can find their new home underneath Athens, Athena must tame their rage. Although Athena subscribes to nearly everything masculine, she uses an arguably feminine persuasion to subdue the Furies. The goddess Peitho was an anthropomorphic spirit of persuasion often linked to “sexual influence.”²⁴³ This minor goddess’s power worked alongside Clytemnestra in the first play and now Athena uses it to subdue the Furies. Clytemnestra uses persuasion insidiously as part of her deceptive feminine ways, but Athena uses it, as Trousdell says, like “a good-enough mother might with a child who feels abandoned, misunderstood, and helpless.”²⁴⁴ Persuasion manifests itself with two very different female figures. Clytemnestra uses persuasion as part of vile sexuality, while Athena uses it as a civilized figure of the polis empowered by her role in the masculine courtroom. The play ironically begins and ends with persuasion.²⁴⁵ Aeschylus shows how the power of persuasion, the power of a female goddess, can be corrupted by an evil woman or rightfully used by man’s ideal woman. The Chorus rejects Athena’s verdict and, completing the image of hysterical females, whip themselves into a rage. As discussed earlier, the Furies’s anger, female otherness, and “vile virginity” threaten the land

²⁴³ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), pg. 7.

²⁴⁴ Trousdell, Richard. "Tragedy and Transformation: The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 32.

²⁴⁵ Porter, David H. "Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Some Contrapuntal Lines," *American Journal of Philology* 126, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 306.

and Athena must subdue and sequester them. As they scream about justice, their destroyed matriarchy as “ill-fated daughters of Night,” and humiliation, Athena defends Orestes and blames Apollo for Clytemnestra’s death.²⁴⁶ She shifts the Furies’s rage away from Orestes and toward Apollo before stroking the egos of the Furies. The Furies continue to scream over Athena as she promises “gleaming thrones,” but, more importantly, the “first rites of birth and marriage.”²⁴⁷ The Furies continue to cry out for Mother Night, a symbol of their destroyed matriarch. Slowly Athena convinces them of the honors they will receive in Athens. The Furies become patronesses of birth and marriage within Athens when Greek women escort them to their new home beneath the city. Their new honors, however, lull them into serving the male needs of marriage and birth.²⁴⁸ Athena soothes the Furies into docility and then has women of her city guide them to their new place in the city.

The Furies do not return to the chthonic home but to a new home, practically like a tomb, underneath the city. If the hearth is the center of the home where women belong, Athena places them in the center of the city, below and sequestered from the male polis. Dolgert sees their transition to the underground as almost a sacrifice to a new order for birth and marriage.²⁴⁹ The Furies maintain some of their power in their new home underground, but the new home comes with a change of honor and responsibility. After a trilogy of intergenerational violence, Athena ends the *Oresteia* “by engaging with the past” and reinterprets the role of the chthonic figures.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 790.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 806, 834-5.

²⁴⁸ Gewirtz, Paul. "Aeschylus' Law," *The Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 5 (March 1998): 1054.

²⁴⁹ Dolgert, Stefan. "Sacrificing Justice: Suffering Animals, the *Oresteia*, and the Masks of Consent," *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (June 2012): 271.

²⁵⁰ Markovits, Elizabeth. "Birthrights: Freedom, Responsibility, and Democratic Comportment in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2009): 438.

Their movement to the internal parts of the city shows a repurposing of the past for the new masculine order. Athena brings together “children, women and venerable ladies” to lead the Furies underneath. The plays lost the presence of female characters such as Electra and Clytemnestra, but female figures reappear and transformed in the guise of Athenian women. The celebratory parade of women through Athens actually seals the Furies’s fate and destroys the matriarch. Athena successfully exiles the female other and uses it for the male need. The Furies become guardians of marriage and birth. Throughout the trilogy, Aeschylus corrupts marriage imagery and birth rhetoric. He plays with it so he can reassemble these themes with masculine images at the end of the play. Femme figures come to celebrate the male ideal marriage and birth. Iphigenia, Cassandra, and Clytemnestra all become distorted through marriage imagery and Apollo ensures women lose their right to children. Finally, women come to celebrate their newly reinvented goddesses. The Furies transform from the hysterical, monstrous matriarchs to pacified, ideal woman. As Athena represents a version of accepted femininity, the Furies are reshaped into representative dieties. In the new place in Athens, they stand as women entombed in privacy to serve the men’s needs for marriage and birth for the stability of the polis. The women’s procession leads all Athenian to the monument of the women’s role in the male hierarchy.

The role of Dionysus in the *Oresteia* is a minor one, if that. In the Pythia’s opening monologue she refers to him and his “Bacchae, weaving the Destiny of Pentheus, the death of a hunted hare.”²⁵¹ Yet I want to spend a moment discussing the role of Dionysus in Athens not only because he was the patron god of the festival, but also because of themes I draw upon from the *Bacchae* in the adaptation. Dionysus complicates the Athenian perception of gender. He

²⁵¹ Aeschylus. *Eumenides*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 25-6.

appears as a mighty god able to rip apart Pentheus and turns pirates into dolphins, but also blends masculinity and femininity to become a new patron god for women and fertility. In many ways he threatens the home since the Bacchae, a Dionysian ritual, lead women out of the home and into the wilderness.²⁵² His rituals undo Athena's work to secure untamed femininity within the private bowels of the city. Dionysus, especially in Euripides' *Bacchae*, gets his power and might from his femininity and connection to women. His femininity empowers him, while at the same time effeminacy weakens Pentheus. Dionysus is also an exotic god who arrives in Greece from the East.²⁵³ His exoticism supports his identity as an other, a foreign entity that invades Greece with his crazy cultic maenads and satyrs. Somehow Dionysus becomes a symbol of power and prestige within the Athenian pantheon despite his connection to female other. The Athenians, however, use Dionysus to take over the role of goddesses. Case argues, "Dionysus appeared in Athens and usurped from earlier female goddesses their associations with fertility and sexuality, while boys assimilated female sexuality in the social practice of homosexuality."²⁵⁴ As the Furies, Mother Night, Mother Earth, and other female deities lose their place in religion, Dionysus enters as a male god to take over the female religious symbols of fertility and sexuality. His associations with homosexuality also reinforce the principle of penetration. The practice of pederasty derived its acceptance and power from old men showing their dominance through the penetration of young men, therefore Dionysus' relationship to sexuality may also connect him to the power of penetration on women, too. In addition, Apollo's winning argument

²⁵² Zeitlin, Froma. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," 1985. In *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 63.

²⁵³ Redfield, James. "From Sex to Politics: The Rites of Artemis Triklaria and Dionysos Aisymnetes at Patras," In *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 124.

²⁵⁴ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 10.

that Athena was born from the male womb resurfaces with Dionysus. The *Bacchae* narrates the story of Semele and Zeus, where Zeus impregnated the Theban noble but smote her once Hera discovered the affair. Zeus stiches the living half-god fetus into his thigh until Dionysus is born again. Dionysus represents another god that fulfils the male fantasy of a male womb. Since Athens dedicated its theatre to Dionysus, the god and theatre work in tandem to institutionalize the art as part of the “new patriarchal institution of gender wars” in Athens.²⁵⁵ His small reference in the *Oresteia* is only a small part of how the festival and Dionysus continue to work as part of the patriarchal society of Athens.

Although Dionysus represents femininity, he is something akin to problematic aspects of privileged white gay male culture in contemporary western society. This dominant subgroup of the LGBTQ+ community has greatly benefited from its gender and race and often forgets those who lack the same advantages of their masculine identities and white privilege. Often appropriating cultures of people of color and women, they synthesize it into a gynophobic culture. Despite adopting more embracing feminine culture, they create a fear of female genitalia and isolate themselves from the larger struggles of the LGBTQ+ community. Although the connection to Dionysus may seem a stretch, Dionysus functions somewhat similarly within Athens. As a male god he continues to support a patriarchal structure that appropriates the female rites of older goddesses to create a culture centered around penetration. (My connection between Dionysus and the LGBTQ+ community becomes an important part of rewriting the ending of the *Oresteia*.)

During the trilogy, Aeschylus refers to other female goddesses or other female figures in their mythic history to villainize Clytemnestra, the Furies, and women in general. Although the

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

inclusion of these women in the adaptation was beyond of the project, the role they play in the demonizes femininity continues to reveal how extensively the *Oresteia* functioned as a patriarchal work. The Greeks have a fascination “with monstrous women and gynecocracy.”²⁵⁶ Within the epics, other pieces of theatre, literature, and more, female otherness is a common theme that plagues the heroes of their stories. Aeschylus incorporates these stories as a continuous intertextual engagement with the evils of the female otherness. Carson says,

In myth, woman’s boundaries are pliant, porous, mutable. Her power to control them is inadequate, her concern for them unreliable. Deformation attends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she is penetrated, she suffers metamorphoses. The women of mythology regularly lose their form in monstrosity.²⁵⁷

These monstrous women become a threat to men as they adopt masculine roles but with their corruptible and maleficent female bodies. I have already discussed the evils of Gorgons both in Clytemnestra’s speech and Medusa on Athena’s aegis. The Gorgons represent serpentine, swamp women with looks that kill (literally). The Amazons create a figure of both barbaric female otherness who show male dominance and undermine Clytemnestra’s power. These figures are not the sole mythic women included in the text that add to Aeschylus’s attempts to denounce and subdue the female other.

Some of the most commonly referenced goddesses are Persuasion, the Furies, and Justice. Although they get all the attention, the small references to figures like Scylla also work to characterize females as monsters. Scylla was rumored to be a sea monster between what is now Italy and Sicily and who became a monster after she killed her father Nisus in cold blood.

²⁵⁶ Keuls, Eva C. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: California, 1985), 66.

²⁵⁷ Carson, Anne. "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton, 1990), 154.

She lives opposite from another female monster named Charybdis, who controlled the tides.²⁵⁸ When Cassandra tries to find the right words to describe Clytemnestra's impending act, she uses Scylla as an example. The sea monster reappears in *The Libation Bearers* when Orestes, Pylades, and Electra leave the tomb and head to the House of Atreus. The Chorus sings of evil women to transition the play back to the House of Atreus and continue to cast Clytemnestra as an evil woman. Within the different translations, Burian and Shapiro call her "a hateful maiden, the bloody Scylla" but Meineck drops his distinguished vocabulary register to call Scylla a "bloody bitch."²⁵⁹ Although the vocabulary differs, they both link Scylla's evilness to her gender. They also refer to Althaea who killed her son and to the Lemnian women. The latter was a group of women who killed all their men and created a gynocracy. The story of the Lemnian is made famous in the *Argonautica* when Jason and his crew stopped on the island. Bowie points out how usually the Argonauts help repopulate the Lemnians but Aeschylus's Chorus sings, "their strain died out."²⁶⁰ The Chorus of mourning women damn the Lemnian women and condemn their race for the crimes against their husbands. These allusions to female figures go to serve a larger point in the text that evil women need male suppressors. The trilogy uses monstrous women that support Apollo and Athena in subduing the untamed "vile femininity" in the Furies.

The image of mother goddess resurfaces throughout the trilogy, especially when feminine characters pray or call for assistance. Electra and her Chorus of women keep praying to Gaia/Mother Earth in *The Libation Bearers* and the Furies often call to Mother Night, a refuge of

²⁵⁸ Atsma, Aaron J., ed. "Skylla." The Project. Last modified 2017. Accessed March 17, 2017. <http://www.theoi.com/Pontios/Skylla.html>.

²⁵⁹ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 701, 614.

²⁶⁰ Bowie, A. M. "Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1993): 17. Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 636.

a lost matriarchal goddess. The presence of Mother Earth contradicts how Clytemnestra abandoned Electra. Case points out that Mother Earth gives birth to a line of intergenerational violence and therefore represents the dangers of a womb.²⁶¹ She continues to say how Athena represents the end of the dangers of the womb since she was born from Zeus's head. Mother Earth gives way to a strong patriarchal society in which the male becomes dominant and the dangers of the womb are subdued. Clytemnestra represents the dangers of womb because of how her offspring cause so much violence. Clytemnestra and the Furies both protest that Orestes grew in his mother's womb, but Orestes continues the cycle of violence until Athena can stop the violence of the womb, subvert it, and imprison femininity.

From start to finish, the *Oresteia* demonizes the feminine other and glorifies the masculine order. The Apollonian masculine agenda of patriarchal-centric power tramples and entombs the feminine within the city. The role of theatre enforced cultural identity with Athens and each playwright played with the myths of the city's common knowledge. Each playwright did not compete with inventive plots, but rather by innovating and reinventing the myth. The power of their theatre came from how the playwright told the story. Homer tells a different story in the *Odyssey*: Aegisthus is the villain who kills Agamemnon to avenge Atreus's crimes against his father. Aeschylus recasts the myth with Clytemnestra as the murderess and Aegisthus as the effeminate opportunist. In the differences from Homer, Aeschylus creates unified ideas of the evils of femininity and the glories of the masculine in which each woman goes to serve either villainizing the feminine or assisting the masculine. Helen is merely an object of the dangers of women sexuality and even when Clytemnestra vouches for her sister, she reinforces the dangers of unruly femininity and sexuality. Clytemnestra then becomes a fellow adulteress, while

²⁶¹ Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 10.

standing over her dead husband like some type of hungry, bestial lioness. Her spirit goes onto to call upon the Furies who are literal representation of the evils of femininity and feminine sexuality. As they threaten the land, Orestes and Apollo fight to control and subjugate it. The other women in the plays are merely accessories in the crimes against the house. Cassandra sings laments of the destruction of war, familial tragedy, and sexual assault. The twisted marriage imagery connects her to two abusers who leave the trilogy victorious. Cassandra's dramatic prophetic moments may momentarily sing of women's struggles in war, but her words die right alongside her. Iphigenia's death repeats itself with Cassandra's murder and the two become linked in shared imagery of marriage and maidenhood forever staining Clytemnestra's character. Electra offers a point of access for Orestes to enter his home, but once her purpose is gone she disappears from the narrative. Her presence is solely linked to her father and Orestes, but once the action of the play commences she falls away never to make an appearance or even mentioned again. Other women in the show only serve the patriarchal pursuit like Orestes' nurse crying over Clytemnestra's horrific maternity or the chorus of libation bearers who become accessories to Orestes' crimes. Even the goddesses play a role in marginalizing women. Artemis calls for the sacrifice of Iphigenia and her importance within the work fades right alongside the motivating death of Iphigenia. Athena betrays the female interest as she sides with Apollo. Unlike the masculine Clytemnestra, Athena's masculinity is merely decorative as she displays male triumphs over the scary femme. Her armor and speeches portray her as an agent of masculinity rather than a threat. The spattering of other goddesses, monsters, and mythical women all go to serve either the power of masculinity or the ostensible evils of femininity. Theatre's potency comes from its communal power to unite an audience in a specific live experience and Athens had all of its citizens (male citizens, that is) present for City Dionysia. Each male citizen may

have shared a moment of cultural unity as he watched each tragedy and then voted for a winner. Aeschylus work stands a symbol for the misogynist ideologies of the Athenians.

Analyzing the way that the Athenians viewed the *Oresteia* only makes the misogyny more apparent and unfortunately Aeschylus's words resonate today. The men in the trilogy continuously question, undermine, and silence the female figures. The plays dramatize sexism that femme people face daily in moments such as when the Chorus questions Clytemnestra's knowledge of the fall of Troy, when Orestes condescendingly orders the Chorus to keep their plot silent, and when Apollo yells over the Furies in the trial. The big climax that destroys Clytemnestra's maternal rights to her son and therefore all of women's rights in Athens comes about because of the rhetoric of a male god, which relates to current conversation about reproductive health and rights that plague the current political sphere. Aeschylus's work finds a unfortunate relevancy to today's society in which the masculine political statements and damaging representation of the female is all too familiar. Although the contemporary society does not share the same cultural identity nor the same mythical vocabulary, the themes of the *Oresteia* are arguably timeless. Although a contemporary audience may not understand all the classical allusion, the shifting context of the play still speaks to the misogyny of both Athenian and contemporary American culture. In understanding how the *Oresteia* functioned in Classical Athens, I plan to recontextualize the trilogy so not to forget the misogyny but damn it.

Introduction to the Adaptation

The close reading and historical context gives insights how to restructure the trilogy and reclaim the narrative for Clytemnestra so that she becomes dominant force in the first play and whose power echoes throughout the following two. To create this new version of the *Oresteia* I took one translation of the trilogy in order to create a collage piece or a cut and paste piece or hack job for the adaptation. After multiple readings of four translations of the *Oresteia* – Peter Meineck’s, Peter Burian’s and Alan Shapiro’s, Robert Fagles’, and Ted Hughes’ – I chose Meineck’s blank verse translation for its accessibility and musicality. His word choices were not overly complicated but continued to play with language for performance: highly descriptive, alliterative, onomatopoeic, etc. After choosing his translation, I cut the three plays down to a bare bone script. I knew roughly how many people I needed for the cast and wanted to get the text as short and fast-moving as possible without sacrificing the plot or the themes. Once I had a cut of the *Oresteia*, I begin to copy and paste lines from other texts. Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles all give their voice to the adaptation. Using characters, lines, and themes from other works helped create a new narrative in which the women get more active and vocal roles. Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* gave fodder for a parallel story and a new theme of femme empowerment in the story of Io. The *Electra* plays give a new voice to the quieted titular sister and also the often forgotten one, Chyrsothemis. The other plays helped make the adaptation something considerably different than Aeschylus’s original *Oresteia*. Repurposing and retooling Greek playwrights changed the intent of the play while playing with the genre and structure of Athenian tragedy. As I found moments for queer performance, characters like Athena evolved into lip syncing drag queens as gender and the scenes of the play blurred together. The adaptation follows a somewhat similar structure to Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* in which Clytemnestra

kills Agamemnon who is in turned killed by Orestes, who is then chased by Furies to the court, but new characters and a shifting narrative create a new story from this deconstruction of the *Oresteia*.

The traditional Chorus of the *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* had no place in this condensed and fast paced adaptation. Electra become an important figure in the work after I became infuriated at her small role in the plot of *The Libation Bearers* despite her role in the house, which the death of her parents would have greatly affected. She inherited a majority of the lines of the Chorus, but needed a partner to share the burden of the lines original spoken by a fifty-man Chorus. In my readings, I discovered that Sophocles, unlike Aeschylus and Euripides, includes Electra's sister, Chrysothemis, in his tragedy, *Electra*. I wanted to add this neglected female figure into the narrative of the *Oresteia*. The two sisters take over much of the burden of the Chorus in the first two plays, but beyond playing the Chorus they become more active in the plot of the play and also become an important through line for the femme revolution. They become victims of deception, first of their father's, then their mother's, and then their brother's. Orestes abandons not only the throne of his House but his sisters when the Furies appear. I envision how the sisters left to their own devices could create a new regime in Argos and end the cycle of violence perpetrated from the toxic masculine figures in their family.

In *Agamemnon*, I felt it was important to keep a remnant of the elderly male Chorus since they play an important role in reinforcing toxic masculinity as they vilify the feminine other. The father of Clytemnestra, Tyndareos, who appears in Euripides' *Orestes* made a perfect character to speak the misogynist lines of the once all-male Chorus. In *Orestes*, Tyndareos arrives in Argos after his daughter's murder and becomes integral in cursing the deeds of Helen and Clytemnestra. He does not act like a loving father, but a man that despises his infamous

daughters. The addition of Clytemnestra's father also provides a patriarchal figure in Argos when Agamemnon is at war and ensures that Clytemnestra always stays under the watch of a male family member, an element the patriarchy continuously governing women. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Clytemnestra damns her father for giving her to Agamemnon as his wife, after the latter kills her first husband and child.

Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* speaks of the terrors of regime change, unfair punishments, and a ruined woman. Prometheus's railing against the crimes of the new rulers as chains confine him to the cliff, inspired a major thematic element for Agamemnon's and Clytemnestra's death. After each of their deaths, these characters appear in chains to watch the narrative shift in focus. Agamemnon watches from his bathtub, hopeful, that Clytemnestra's reign will end by his son's hands and Clytemnestra watches her vengeful hellhounds chase Orestes across the Earth. The references to Prometheus, however, become secondary to how the story of Io interweaves throughout the entire work. Aeschylus dramatizes the plight of Io in his play. In her sad story, Io wanders up the mountain to discover Prometheus; the two become fast friends while commiserating over their fates. Io shares how Zeus has destroyed destroys her life because of his lust and desires and Prometheus tells Io of her future. The titan gives Io some hope that her miserable life she will give engender to a prosperous line, but adds that her female descendants fifty generations later will flee Egypt and return to Argos looking for refuge from fifty men demanding their hand in marriage. Aeschylus also tells this story in his incomplete trilogy of *The Suppliant Women* in which the refugees arrive in Argos and end up killing their new husbands sans one couple. This couple produces that will eventually birth Heracles, who frees Prometheus. This long and twisting story become an interesting to parallel the *Oresteia*'s slaughtered young women, a murdering wife, and homecomings. In the original trilogy, the

Chorus speaks of how Agamemnon slaughtered Iphigenia like an animal. After changing some language, Iphigenia dies like a cow at the altar and Cassandra stands as an example of a female life ruined by male lust. The story of Io first starts as a children's story that changes to a mocking tale Iphigenia tells her chained father in the Underworld becomes an anthem of empowerment for Electra and Chrysothemis in the final moments of show. The story might dramatize the tragedy of a young girl's life, but Io becomes a symbol of strength for Iphigenia, Electra, and Chrysothemis.

The role of Athena also became a more prominent figure in the adaptation. Inspired by Caryl Churchill's characterization of Betty in *Cloud Nine*, Athena represents an ideal woman further underscored because a man plays her in drag.²⁶² As a part of queer culture, drag is an important performance art and can be seen as revolutionizing concepts of gender, but some critique drag queens for mocking femininity. The Athenians used female impersonation to construct their ideal and villainous women, but contemporary drag creates a larger discussion of gender and breaks down boundaries of what bodies can wear, say, and perform. The drag community does not go without its criticism. For many years, the drag community was conflated with the trans community and as each group has gained visibility, critics have accused some drag queens, such as the celebrity RuPaul, for perpetrating transphobic language and culture.²⁶³ Drag culture is not immune from the issues of privilege, and continuously complicate the role of drag

²⁶² Caryl Churchill is a British feminist playwright, who found great success in the second half of the twentieth century. Her play, *Cloud Nine*, straddles two time periods: colonial Africa and '70s London. Betty, the wife of the colonial administrator, is played by a man to represent how she embodies all the feminine qualities deemed ideal by men.

²⁶³ D'Angelo, Rafi, "RuPaul's Drag Race Crosses the Line with 'Female or Shemale,'" *Slate*, March 19, 2014, http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/03/19/rupaul_s_drag_race_and_transphobia_why_the_shemale_game_wa_s_offensive.html. RuPaul has done a lot for the queer community and her show, *RuPaul's Drag Race*, has launched the career of many drag queens and helped this art form gain mainstream acceptance. Critics, however, have commented on her history of using transphobic language on the cult hit show.

queens in our culture. While I definitely did not want enter into trans issues in this adaptation, I wanted to include a complex figure of a drag queen in the adaptation. Athena becomes almost like an emcee throughout the piece as she facilitates the transitions in the piece. She lip syncs during each transition infusing drag culture and gay nightlife into the narrative. When it comes to the trial scene in which Athena sides the male, the drag queen subverts the narrative by inserting queer art to exaggerate the absurdity of the scene; like a wolf in sheep in clothing, a drag version of Athena helps decide the restriction of women's reproductive rights. Often called the punk of the queer community, drag culture often enters dialogue with current events and pop culture to parody and redefine it.²⁶⁴ Athena's more visible role in the play frames the work in queer art, which subvert and complicates the structure and intent of the piece by playing with concepts of gender, problems and all.

The adaptation takes a turn from the traditional story of the *Oresteia* following the Athenian court's verdict. The play typically ends with Athena calming the irate Furies and guiding them to their new home underneath the city with the women of Athens so they can become part of the patriarchal society. I restructured the ending, however, so that Athena does not calmly placate the Furies, but forces the ending down the Furies's throats and even introduces a Satyr Play. Inspired by Euripides' *Bacchae*, I wanted to replace the Apollonian patriarchal happy ending with a Dionysian femme genderqueer finale. Satyr plays celebrated Dionysus, the god of theatre, and revelry followed by maenads and satyrs, adding lightheartedness after a day of tragedy. The addition of a satyr play allows the adaptation to unravel into a grotesque humiliation of the Furies as the patriarchy becomes engorged to a point of utter absurdity. When masculinity climaxes, the play shifts from the end of the *Oresteia* to a

²⁶⁴ Alaska Thunderfuck, Henry Rollins, Alice Bag, and the Boulet Brothers, "RuPaul's DragCon 2016 - "Drag is Punk" Alaska, Henry Rollins, Alice Bag, & the Boulet Brothers," YouTube video, 30:00, May 19, 2016.

new epilogue of what happens to the Furies and the House of Atreus. Playing with the idea of the *deus ex machina*, Dionysus enters to empower the Furies to create a new order in Argos.²⁶⁵

Borrowing elements and lines from the *Bacchae* to create something unrecognizable, Clytemnestra reappears as a genderfucked Dionysus. The female politician who had to balance her ostensibly masculine characteristics in a femme appearance reemerges in the narrative in a gendered collage. The god who once undermined female goddesses' rights to fertility and women in ancient Athens, Dionysus, enters as a new femme genderfuck deity to steal back the narrative back from the patriarchal voices of Apollo and Athena, to empower a new regime in Argos.

I have listed some of my original thoughts, ideas, and plans for the adaptation when I began to work on it alone, but the script continued to change once I started to introduce it to the Tufts community and had to address notes, casting, budgetary, etc. The adaptation changed during casting as I recognized and addressed the talents and concerns of my cast. Part of the goal for the adaptation was that it remained flexible, allowing it to evolve during casting, workshops, and rehearsals. Since queer lives and experiences vary so much, I wanted to respond to those who were speaking and living the roles I had deconstructed and reformed. The annotated adaptation therefore cites moments in which the actors helped to reshape the work and inserted their narratives into the fabric of the piece. I responded to concerns, for example, about comfort levels with male impersonation from Amanda Rose, the female actor who performed the roles of Agamemnon, Apollo, and Tiresias. Puerto Rican actor Jacquie Bonnet was incredibly excited to use her first language to augment the role of Cassandra. Sean Murphy who dances in burlesque and does drag, became an incredible resource for the satyr play and helped to infuse voguing

²⁶⁵ *Deus ex machina* refers to a plot device in Greek tragedy where in the final moments of the play, a god intervenes to set things right and finish the plot.

throughout the work.²⁶⁶ Moments in which actors helped shape the work are therefore noted throughout the adaptation, since the cast and I built the final stages of the project together.

Double casting became an important means of supporting important themes and unifying the entire work. First starting with the femme characters, Cassandra always had a connection with Iphigenia because of their roles as women used and abused for the male interest. I knew I wanted three Furies, because I preferred to have an odd number and did want to go beyond three. It then became obvious to make a mother's vengeful hellhounds her three daughters. The Furies become the sisters warped with elements of ferocious scavengers. Clytemnestra gets reinvented as Dionysus, as a way for Clytemnestra to get a to have deification, reclaim fertility and femininity from the male god, and also exact her revenge with a complete destruction of gender. Gender codes kept Clytemnestra imprisoned for years, so the arrival of a genderfucked deity can revolt against the oppressive gendered and patriarchal systems. The daughters and Clytemnestra get to reconnect as the Furies and Dionysus and repeat images from the initial prologue. Athena and Aegisthus were also performed by the same actor; the two share an interesting dichotomy where Athena has masculine characteristics and men often call Aegisthus a woman. The two characters complicate the story of the *Oresteia* since they are secondary characters that enter the narrative to disrupt it. Aegisthus enters seeking revenge against Agamemnon, but also complicates Clytemnestra's characterization; Athena enters seeking justice but destroys her gender's claim to rights. The combination becomes more pertinent when reading Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*, in which Aegisthus purposely limits Electra's right to have children (who

²⁶⁶ Livingston, Jennie, *Paris is Burning*, Documentary, Academy Entertainment and Off White Productions, 1991. Vogueing is a form of dance originated in African American drag balls in New York City in the 1980s and 90s. Madonna brought the form to the mainstream when she appropriated it for her music video titled, "Vogue." We borrowed elements from voguing, but did not try to duplicate the exact style. In the future, I hope to look at how to better use this form because even though we did not duplicate it, we continued a pattern of appropriation of the form.

might avenge their grandfather's death by killing him). As stated earlier, Athena's origin myth has Zeus eat his first wife to circumvent the prophecy he would have a child stronger than him. The two share characteristics of the opposite gender, roles in the plot, and similar connections to overpowering offspring. My goal for the femme double casting was to provide strong femme voices and through line that supported Clytemnestra's narrative.

For the masculine figures, I reshuffled my original doubling of roles during callbacks. Many of the characters are tied up in toxic masculinity and how they treat the female figures.²⁶⁷ Originally, the actor playing Orestes was meant to play Tyndareos, and Pylades doubled with Apollo, while Agamemnon was a non-doubled role, with the character chained to the bathtub for two thirds of the production. Due to the talent of the actors in the audition room, I reconstructed the double casting in order to reinforce the themes of toxic masculinity. Tyndareos' and Pylades' tracks were combined to illustrate how men second-guess, condescend to, and undervalue women. During callbacks, I created an additional character for the Tyndareos/Pylades track: a satyr. The satyr appears as a male go-go dancer to provide an objectification of a male body to contrast how the commonality of objectifying women's bodies. It also draws upon themes of toxic white gay male privilege. Creating a discussion of how gay men engage with masculine and femme identities becomes a part of this track, where Pylades gets turned into an objectified male beast that first dances to Jonny McGovern, a white gay man who has had success from gay nightlife, first but then accepts and succumbs to femme power. Agamemnon and Apollo become one since they are unassuming, confident male figures that feel they have the right to trample over the maternal rights of women. Orestes, for the most part, gets to stand as his own. The narrative use to focus on Orestes, but allowing him to be the only character without double

²⁶⁷ Toxic masculinity refers how the patriarchy encodes men to withhold emotions, use of violence, and reject femme representation.

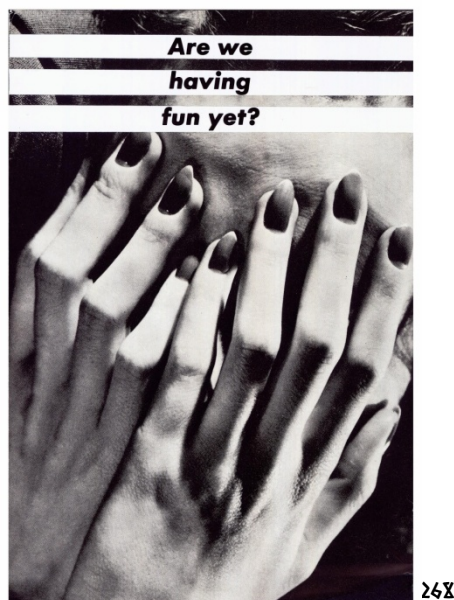
casting allows for experimentation on how to take away his agency within the work. I had multiple ways to assemble the male identities, but the actors' abilities and fit helped direct the final choices for double casting and, in turn, the end of the show. I allowed my work to respond to those in the room, and created femme and masculine narratives influenced by my actors.

The last few paragraphs have served as an introduction to the annotated adaptation. Hopefully, this introduction provides insight into my thinking about and crafting of a piece that challenges conceptions of Greek tragedies, gender, sexuality, structure, and more. The annotations range from citations of source for line or dialogue, to my inspiration for inventing specific moments in the *Oresteia*. The following adaptation, sans annotations, is what the designers, actors, and I worked with during the production. The piece evolved thanks to three workshops and continued to change during rehearsals. I will continue to expound upon my authorial and directorial decisions following the annotated adaptation, in my discussion of the directing concept for the production itself.

Adaptation

CLYTEMNESTRA

AN ADAPTATION OF AESCHYLUS'S ORESTEA



ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY PETER V. SECREST

A TUFTS DRAMA DEPT. HONORS THESIS & BARE BODKIN THEATRE CO. PRODUCTION

CAST

CLYTEMNESTRA/DIONYSUS - Blair Nodelman '17

CHRYS²⁶⁹/FURY 3 - Jamie Hattler '20

²⁶⁸ Kruger, Barbara. *Untitled (Are we having fun yet?)*, 1987. Collage. Accessed April 15, 2017.

²⁶⁹ Chrys' original name, as it appears in Sophocles' *Electra*, was Chrysothemis. Everyone struggled to say the name and it was unnecessarily cumbersome. I shortened it to the androgynous name of Chrys to everyone's relief.

IPHIGENIA/CASSANDRA/FURY 1 - Jacquie Bonnet '20
 ELECTRA/FURY 2 - Sean Murphy '20
 AGAMEMNON/APOLLO/TIRESIAS - Amanda Rose '19
 TYNDAREOS/PYLADES/SATYR - Kevin Lombard '18
 ATHENA/AEGISTHUS - James Williamson '18
 ORESTES - Jack Cramer '17

MATERIAL AND TEXTS USED²⁷⁰

The Oresteia by Aeschylus, translated by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro²⁷¹
The Oresteia by Aeschylus, translated by Peter Meineck²⁷²
Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus, translated by James Kerr²⁷³
Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus, translated by James Romm²⁷⁴
Little Shop of Horrors by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken²⁷⁵
Gnit by Will Eno²⁷⁶
Bacchae by Euripides, translated by Emily Wilson²⁷⁷
Electra by Euripides, translated by Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford²⁷⁸
Electra by Euripides, translated by Emily Wilson²⁷⁹
Iphigenia at Aulis by Euripides, translated by W.S. Merwin and George E. Dimock, Jr.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁰ The materials and texts used were either quoted directly, paraphrased, or used as inspiration. I will include the specific citations here and will throughout the work cite which play and translation I used either for each scene or specific lines when appropriate.

²⁷¹ Aeschylus. *The Oresteia*, trans Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro (Vol. 1 of *The Complete Aeschylus*. Oxford: Oxford, 2011).

²⁷² Aeschylus. *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998). Meineck's translation worked as the skeleton of the adaptation. His translation was both familiar after working with it for two past classes but his translation does not use a strict meter giving me freedom to cut and play around. I also love his word choices are simple but highly descriptive and poetic.

²⁷³ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Romm, In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016).

²⁷⁴ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. Deborah H. Roberts (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2012).

²⁷⁵ Ashman, Howard, and Alan Menken. *Little Shop of Horrors* (New York: Samuel French, 195).

²⁷⁶ Eno, Will. *Gnit* (New York: Samuel French, 2014).

²⁷⁷ Euripides. *Bacchae*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016).

²⁷⁸ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford (New York: Oxford, 1994).

²⁷⁹ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016).

²⁸⁰ Euripides. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. W. S. Merwin and George E. Dimock Jr. (New York: Oxford 1978).

Orestes by Euripides, translated by John Peck and Frank Nisetich²⁸¹
Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe²⁸²
Metamorphoses by Ovid, translated by Rolfe Humphries²⁸³
Electra by Sophocles, translated by Mary Lefkowitz²⁸⁴
Our Town by Thornton Wilder²⁸⁵

NOTES

*Art on the title page is Untitled (Are we having fun yet?), 1987 by Barbara Kruger

**Anything in italics without parentheses is either a prophecy or a prayer.

PROLOGUE

SCENE 1²⁸⁶

(*CLYTEMNESTRA* is center stage surrounded by her three daughters – *IPHIGENIA*, *ELECTRA*, and *CHRYS*.)

IPHIGENIA

Mother, please tell us the story of Io.

ELECTRA/CHRYS

Yes, please. Mom, please... Etc.

CLYTEMNESTRA

There once was a nymph. The daughter of the river god, Inachus.

²⁸¹ Euripides. *Orestes*, trans. John Peck and Frank Nisetich (New York: Oxford, 1995).

²⁸² Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*. In *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, edited by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen. (Oxford: Oxford, 2008).

²⁸³ Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, IN: Indiana, 1983).

²⁸⁴ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016).

²⁸⁵ Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town* (New York: Harper Collins, 1965).

²⁸⁶ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. Deborah H. Roberts (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2012), 565-893. Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Romm, In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 561-887. This scene is based on the conversation between Io and Prometheus in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. The story of Io is a story that has stuck with me since I read about it in middle school and I even wrote a small play based on Ovid's version for a Latin class my freshman year of Tufts. The story of Io dramatizes the cruelty of the gods and exemplifies the Greeks' fascination with sexual assault in myth. Aeschylus often refers to Io in his other works like in *The Suppliant Women*. Including the story of Io made even more sense since she was from Argos and her descendants returned to Argos which Aeschylus dramatizes in *The Suppliant Women*. I create a strong connection between the cruelty of Io and Iphigenia as the play continues.

IPHIGENIA

And she would see something at night.

CLYTEMNESTRA

She saw a shape.

IPHIGENIA

Many shapes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes, Iphigenia, and the many shapes would say, “You lucky, lucky girl, why waste virginity when you can offer yourself to a higher power.”²⁸⁷

ELECTRA

Zeus had fallen in love with her.

CLYTEMNESTRA

She met him in the meadow of Lerna. She hid amongst the sheep and cattle.²⁸⁸

IPHIGENIA

But Hera!

CLYTEMNESTRA

Zeus had snuck around behind his wife’s back. Deceiving her. But Hera discovered Zeus’ meeting with Io and became very upset.

ELECTRA

What did Io do?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Zeus hid Io from Hera, Electra, and turned Io into a...

IPHIGENIA

A cow!

CLYTEMNESTRA

Her father, Inachus, looked everywhere for Io but only found a cow. This cow, however, followed him.

ELECTRA

Poor Inachus.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 664-5.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 668.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Everywhere Inachus went, the cow went.

IPHIGENIA

Poor Io!

CLYTEMNESTRA

His search for Io brought Inachus to the Oracle of Delphi. Apollo did not reveal where his daughter was, but rather told him to thrust away the cow or Zeus would send a fiery bolt to blot out all his kin.²⁸⁹

CHRYIS

Oh no! He must have thought the cow was a bad omen.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Unfortunately he did, Chrys. Mislead by Apollo, Inachus drove his daughter out, locking the doors against her.²⁹⁰

IPHIGENIA

Her father and Io torn apart by Apollo's oracle.

CHRYIS

Where did Io go?

CLYTEMNESTRA

She went East toward the sun's rising.²⁹¹ And she climbed many mountains, crossed many rivers and seas, and passed many people.

IPHIGENIA

Like the Chalybes, workers of iron. Brutal men who do not take to strangers.²⁹²

CLYTEMNESTRA

Then she took a southern path on sky-grazing peaks.²⁹³

ELECTRA

²⁸⁹ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Romm, In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 664-8.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 670.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 707.

²⁹² Ibid., 714-6.

²⁹³ Ibid., 721.

To the Amazons, haters of men!²⁹⁴

CLYTEMNESTRA

They welcomed her and were her guide. They helped her cross the Cow-ford.

ELECTRA

The Bosphorus!

CLYTEMNESTRA

She went everywhere. She even traversed a mountain to visit Prometheus, who was chained to the cliff for giving humans fire.

*(The story is interrupted by the entrance of AGAMEMNON. IPHIGENIA races to him.)*²⁹⁵

IPHIGENIA

Father! How happy I am to see you. It has been so long.²⁹⁶

AGAMEMNON

And I am happy to see you, Iphegenia.²⁹⁷

IPHIGENIA

Mother was telling us the story Io!

AGAMEMNON

Did she tell you about her meeting Prometheus?

ELECTRA/CHRYS

Yes! Yes! Etc.

AGAMEMNON

The titan who gave man the gift of fire. Angering the gods so much, Zeus ordered him to be chained to a cliff! Zeus even created woman to punish man for their newly acquired gift.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 723-30. The story of Io includes a catalogue of different locations Io visits, therefore I had to choose which ones to include. I decided to include the Amazons who are often characterized as exotic, barbaric evil women but here they actually help Io find her way.

²⁹⁵ Euripides. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. W. S. Merwin and George E. Dimock Jr. (New York: Oxford 1978). The following interaction came from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* where Iphigenia greets her father.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 838-9. Iphigenia's reaction to her father's homecoming comes from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* when she warmly greets her father with Clytemnestra on the shores of Aulis.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 840-1.

²⁹⁸ The part about Zeus creating women to punish man does not appear in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, but does in other renditions of the myth. During a workshop I mentioned this fact and everyone looked at me as if I was crazy for not including it in the earlier draft.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Agamemnon! My husband! I like to leave the part out about the story where you call us, women, curses against men. What brings you back to Argos to ruin my stories? Shouldn't you be at the shores of Aulis setting sail to destroy Troy?

AGAMEMNON

The winds are against us at Aulis.

ELECTRA

Do you want to see Orestes?

CHRYS

He is inside the House!

AGAMEMNON

Not today, daughters. I have come to see Iphigenia. While we wait for favorable winds, we will have a wedding. The great Achilles, hero-to-be, wants to meet *you*.

(Music begins. AGAMEMNON and IPHIGENIA exit. CLYTEMNESTRA watches. She points for her daughters to go inside the House.²⁹⁹ ELECTRA and CHRYS exit. There is a mood change as CLYTEMNESTRA watches IPHIGENIA's sacrifice offstage. AEGISTHUS enters. ELECTRA and CHRYS pop out on the roof.)

ELECTRA

Is that Aegisthus?³⁰⁰

CHRYS

Father's cousin.

ELECTRA

Yes, the son of Thyestes.

CHRYS

Thyestes who ate...

²⁹⁹ Many people that attended the workshops worried that people unfamiliar with the story would not know Iphigenia died, but I have three reasons for not having her sacrificed on stage. I first did not want to have a young girl killed on stage. The second came from I knew my sound and lighting designer, plus Clytemnestra, would let the audience know something sinister happened. Lastly, if they were confused they continued on the journey of not knowing Iphigenia's fate just like Electra and Chrys do. Depending on an audience member's familiarity with Classics, they will have their own unique experience!

³⁰⁰ An unfortunate part of the *Oresteia* is Aegisthus's plot line because it complicates and confuses. People who are not familiar with the *Oresteia* get very confused at the role of Aegisthus and Thyestes in the play. In the beginning of the adapting process, I contemplated cutting Aegisthus and his plot line but that would take out a lot of the juicy plot points. Therefore, I added this small vignette to attempt to give the audience another opportunity to know who Aegisthus is and is relation to the House of Atreus.

ELECTRA

His sons. Fed to him by his brother.

CHRYS

Our grandfather?

ELECTRA/CHRYS

Atreus.

(CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS enter the house.)

AGAMEMNON**SCENE 2**

(An interlude to show that ten years have passed. ELECTRA stands in a watchtower. Scanning the horizon.)

ELECTRA³⁰¹

How well I've come to know night's congregation of stars,
They are a doing their old, old crisscross journeys in the sky.
It took millions of years for those specks of light to get to the earth.³⁰²

(An eruption of fire offstage.)

Oh! Oh! The beacon! The signal!
Welcome, beacon of the night, bright as the day!
I have watched and watched for you
The burning flame that will tell us, Troy has fallen!
I must wake my mother! She must rise up out of bed, quickly,
wake the house and welcome the signal fire with the hallowed cry.

SCENE 3

(CHRYS enters from the House.)

CHRYS

It has been ten years since,
my father and uncle Menelaus,
the sons of Atreus,

³⁰¹ One of the first things to go in the adaptation process was the Chorus. If I could not have the fifty-man Chorus of Aeschylus, I was not going to have one at all. I repurposed all of their lines to Electra and Chrys throughout *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* to give them a more active and present role in the play. Tyndareos also speaks many of the lines of the Chorus.

³⁰² Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town* (New York: Harper Collins, 1965), 111. I am a huge sap for *Our Town*. It informs my view of art and life, and I had to sneak a few lines of it in here.

Launched from this land
 A thousand Argive ships.
 Like vultures grieving wildly
 For the stolen young kidnapped from their lofty nests.
 An entire generation brought to their knees,
 Wrestled down, ground into dust.

(TYNDAREOS enters)

TYNDAREOS³⁰³

Chrys! What are you doing out at this hour?

CHRYS

Grandfather! I was on my way to see you!

TYNDAREOS

What is going on? The city is abuzz.

CHRYS

My mother will tell you soon, but has ordered for more sacrifices.

TYNDAREOS

I take my orders from a woman, a daughter who waits for news,
 Oh she's a woman all right, a woman with a man's heart.
 All because Zeus, the god of guests, drove
 Atreus' proud sons at Paris, all for a woman bedded by many.

(CLYTEMNESTRA and ELECTRA enter.)

TYNDAREOS

I have come, Clytemnestra, respectful of your power.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hello, Father!

TYNDAREOS

It is just to honor the wife of a ruler
 When her husband's throne is vacant.
 Have you heard some good news, some new hope?

CHRYS

We would be grateful to hear, but will respect your silence.

³⁰³ Tyndareos is Clytemnestra's father. I was originally just going to have an unnamed old man but when I fell in love with Tyndareos in Euripides' *Orestes*. The crotchety father damned both Helen and Clytemnestra for their evil femininity, therefore I had to include the crabby patriarch to inherit the Chorus' lines to slut shame Helen and question Clytemnestra's power.

CLYTEMNESTRA³⁰⁴

As the proverb says: “May Mother Night’s birth of morning bring tidings of joy!”
The Greeks have captured Priam’s city!

TYNDAREOS

What? I don’t understand.

CHRYIS

I can’t believe it!

CLYTEMNESTRA

The Greeks have taken Troy! Is that clear enough for you?

TYNDAREOS

Are you sure? Do you have proof?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Of course. Unless a god deceives me with a trick.

TYNDAREOS

So you believe in the persuasive power of dreams.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I do not accept guidance from mere sleep.

TYNDAREOS

Perhaps you have heard a rumor then, and it has kindled your hopes?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Don’t insult my intelligence. You treat me like a child.

TYNDAREOS

But when was the city captured?

CLYTEMNESTRA

During the night, which has now given birth to the dawning light.

TYNDAREOS

What messenger could possibly reach here so quickly?

ELECTRA

A beacon, Grandfather! I saw it with my own eyes.

³⁰⁴ The following interaction between Clytemnestra and Tyndareos is one of my favorite moments in the trilogy. In a contemporary reading, the audience watches Clytemnestra contend with a man who questions her intelligence despite her qualifications.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hephaestus sent a brilliant courier!³⁰⁵ The fire from a beacon at Mount Ida traveled from city to city. Beacon to beacon the fire passed until the sign flashed here in Argos at the House of Atreus.

TYNDAREOS

Lady, you speak wisely like a man of discretion.

CLYTEMNESTRA

It was all arranged at my command.

TYNDAREOS

My daughter, I shall offer thanks to the gods.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Today the Greeks hold Troy,
 Its streets echo the harsh cries of discordant voices.
 Cries, howled over the corpses of husbands,
 Brothers, children, and fathers.
 A lamenting wail from throats enslaved
 Mourning the death of loved ones, the loss of life.
 For the victors, after the battle,
 A night spent scavenging
 Through the Trojan streets,
 Hungrily breakfasting on the city's scraps.
 Now, if only they respect the captured city's gods
 And honor their holy places,
 The victors will not be vanquished.
 Even if the army returns safely, without transgressing
 Heaven, the malice of the dead might yet be stirred
 And bring some sudden act of evil.
 You have heard my words, women's words.

TYNDAREOS

I sing the praise of Agamemnon, the conqueror of Troy!
 And will even welcome home weak Menelaus!

ELECTRA

Be in no doubt, we will see good prevail.

CHRYIS

That would bring me joy above all other blessings.

³⁰⁵ An unfortunate cut I made was to Clytemnestra's catalogue of beacon locations. While I enjoyed all the connections to Iphigenia's death and the Gorgons, the long speech most likely would have bored an audience with listing of meaningless places.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Daughters, father, please conduct a prayer of thanks while I prepare the House for Agamemnon's return.

(Exit CLYTEMNESTRA)

CHRYS³⁰⁶

*Great Zeus, god of guests, I honor you,
You have done this! All that time
Stretching your bow against Paris.*

TYNDAREOS

Such a man was Paris, who came
As a guest to the House of Atreus
And shamed all hospitality
By stealing another man's wife.
She took a dowry of destruction with her.

ELECTRA

Men we all knew, sent out to war, returning home, ashes in urns.

CHRYS

*Through all the homes of Greece,
Women sound the sorrows,
Sorrows that tear at the heart.*

TYNDAREOS

Helen, the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium!³⁰⁷

ELECTRA

*Ares, god of war, dealer in death,
He stows the ships with an easy cargo,
Ashes crammed into urns.*

³⁰⁶ The following prayer/rant sequence came from a song of the Chorus. Electra and Chrys sing the hardships and loss from war. They see firsthand the brutality of war as women at the home front mourning for their husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons. Tyndareos, however, does not feel for the women who suffered at home but rather slut shames Helen. He continuously mocks, blames, and curses his stepdaughter, as he assures his role in the community as a powerful man blaming evil femininity.

³⁰⁷ Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus B-Text*. In *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, edited by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford, 1995), 5.1.93-4. This line comes from the infamous Helen monologue in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The devious femininity inspires playwrights for millennia. *Doctor Faustus* was the first of the three shows I directed at Tufts. I include a reference to each show, because what is the point of a thesis production without a hint of sentimentality?

TYNDAREOS

Who is so childish and senseless as to let some burning signal
Fire up their heart with hope, only to be dashed when the real word comes?

CHRYIS

So they lament, honoring each man in turn.

ELECTRA

“How skilled he was in battle,”

CHRYIS

“All for another man’s wife!”

CHRYIS/ELECTRA

Is whispered in secret.

TYNDAREOS

Trust a woman to praise a sign before the truth is clear.
Persuasion is all too quick to cross a woman’s mind.

CHRYIS/ELECTRA

Give me good fortune without envy.

TYNDAREOS

Women’s gossip flies fast and quickly dies.

(Enter CLYTEMNESTRA)³⁰⁸

CLYTEMNESTRA

Ships have been spotted from the watchtower!
Agamemnon will arrive soon.
There is no day’s dawning light happier
For a woman as when she unbars the door
To her her man, back from war, spared by the gods.
Just as he left her, the watchdog of his house,
an enemy to his enemies. In all this time, I have not changed.³⁰⁹

SCENE 4

³⁰⁸ I cut out more from the Chorus, so Clytemnestra can enter earlier to hear her father’s ranting.

³⁰⁹ Clytemnestra hints at how she still harbors anger for her daughter’s death in these fantastic little double entendres.

(*Fanfare as AGAMEMNON enters with CASSANDRA in his chariot. The entrance is brilliant and as AGAMEMNON is near god-status, ATHENA lip syncs to a remix of Ella Fitzgerald's "Too Darn Hot."*)³¹⁰

ELECTRA

Mother, don't be angry if I run from you to be the first to embrace him!³¹¹

CHRYIS

I want to run and put my arms around you!³¹²

TYNDAREOS

King, conqueror of Troy,³¹³
 How should I salute you?
 You are not fooled by the eyes that lie.
 When you were gathering the armies
 For the sake of Helen, my mind painted
 An ugly picture of you, I thought you must have lost all grip
 On your senses, when you dared
 That sacrifice, to save your dying men.
 But now, from a heart loyal and true I say:
 "Well done to all who wrought this joyful end."

AGAMEMNON

Thank you, Tyndareos.
 First, I must address Argos and the gods of this land – my allies who helped me exact
 Justice from Priam's city and return home safely.
 You can still see the smoke from the sacked city,
 The ashes of Troy's wealth are scattered to the wind.
 For their rape of a wife we exacted payment,³¹⁴
 Ground their city to dust!

³¹⁰ I made a choice with my cast on what song to use here for Agamemnon's entrance. I originally had Alaska Thunderfuck's "Legendary" as a placeholder in this moment, but I wanted to use the drag queen's music sparingly so it didn't become just an homage to the trash queen. When I discovered the remix of "Too Darn Hot," the cast instantly gravitated towards it especially because it comes from the problematic musical, *Kiss Me, Kate*.

³¹¹ Euripides. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. W. S. Merwin and George E. Dimock Jr. (New York: Oxford 1978), 827-9. Just as Iphigenia greets her father in the Prologue, I took inspiration from *Iphigenia at Aulis* for how Agamemnon's daughters should greet him.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 832.

³¹³ As much as I tried to cut down Tyndareos' lines, I kept a good chunk of this Choral speech because of its layers of irony of complimenting Agamemnon that he is "not fooled by the eyes that lie" and how the Chorus of men can forgive Agamemnon only after his success.

³¹⁴ Greek plays throw around the word "rape," quite a lot. I had to limit its use and chose when to employ the word. The word now has an extreme amount of power, especially on a college campus. In this moment, I wanted Agamemnon to use the word for its violence to create a quick characterization of the decorated general.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I feel no shame in telling you of my love
 For this man. I will speak from the heart.
 I will tell you how unbearable my life has been
 While this man stood under Troy's walls.
 To begin with, when a woman sits at home,
 Parted from her husband, rumors she hears spread like a disease.
 A messenger comes to the house bringing bad news,
 Then another and the reports grow worse.
 If this man had been struck as often
 As false rumors flowed into this house,
 Then he would have more holes in him than a net.
 These rumors ate away at me, to the point
 That I had to be released, against my will,
 From the noose of suicide, more than once.
 My father warned me of the dangers you would face,
 Battling under the walls of Troy,
 And of the anger of the people who might
 Have rebelled against the House.
 Just as Penelope has to fend off suitors
 Vying for Odysseus' throne in his absence,
 I have had to defend the House of Atreus.³¹⁵
 This is why our child, the seal of our pledge,
 Is not here, standing by my side as is right.
 Do not worry, Orestes our son is safe in the care
 Of our loyal ally, Strophius of Phocis.
 I sat up night after night, waiting, straining to see
 The beacon-fires that were never lit.
 I welcome this man, the watchdog of the fold,
 The steadfast broad-beam of the ship, the strong pillar
 Of the towering roof, the one true heir to his father.

AGAMEMNON

Clytemnestra, guardian of my house,
 Your speech was like my absence, too long.³¹⁶
 You should not praise me this way,
 Such words should come from others.

³¹⁵ One large annoyance I have with *Agamemnon* and Aeschylus's characterization of Clytemnestra is that they do not address the same threats to the throne seen in the *Odyssey*. Penelope fends off suitors while her son is threatened by them. Aeschylus's Clytemnestra only complains of how hard it is to live without her husband. Even if Clytemnestra is playing to her husband's ego, I wanted to add at least one line acknowledging the difficulty a woman might face when left in charge of a kingdom in a patriarchal world.

³¹⁶ I wish I wrote this line, but unfortunately Aeschylus included this zinger himself. During the workshops Agamemnon's joke always got a big laugh from the room. This line, however, sounds just like a line from a couple where the husband always makes fun of his wife in public.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Enough modesty!

(CLYTEMNESTRA gives a signal, ELECTRA and CHRYS unfurl a path of crimson tapestries from the doorway to the foot of AGAMEMNON's chariot.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Do not place your kingly feet on common ground,
Not the feet that stamped out Troy.

AGAMEMNON

Do not bring Envy on me by strewing my path with cloths,
Only the gods should be honored this way.
Do not pamper me like a woman.
I am a mortal man and the thought of stepping
On these beautiful embroideries fills me with dread.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What do you think Priam would have done if he had won?

AGAMEMNON

I think he would walk on these embroideries.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Then do not be ashamed of the disapproval of men.

AGAMEMNON

The voice of the people carries enormous power.

CLYTEMNESTRA

But the unenvied man is unenviable.

AGAMEMNON

A woman should not be so fond of argument.

CLYTEMNESTRA

It becomes the fortunate man to yield a victory.

AGAMEMNON

You really want your victory in this contest?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Be persuaded, you have the power to surrender of your own free will to me.

AGAMEMNON

Well if you want this so much. Here, girls help me off with my boots.

(ELECTRA and CHRYS help AGAMEMNON; he starts to walk on the tapestries)

And as I tread on these lavish sea-red cloths,
Let no god's envious glare strike me from afar.

(AGAMEMNON pauses.)

Take this stranger into the house.
Cassandra, once a princess of Troy.
She is a gift from the army, the choicest flower, the pick of the prizes.

(AGAMEMNON exits to the House.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

You. Come inside.

TYNDAREOS

It's very clear you are caught in the net of Destiny.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Step down from the chariot, this is no time for pride.

ELECTRA

Be persuaded if you can.

CLYTEMNESTRA

If her language is not unlike the chattering of a swallow,
Some unintelligible barbarian speech, then I hope
I can make her see sense and persuade her with reason.

CHRYS

Go in with her, it is the best choice you have.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I do not have time to waste by the door with her!
Are you going to do as I say?

TYNDAREOS

I think this foreigner needs an interpreter, she's like a freshly caught wild animal.

ELECTRA

She has come from a city just conquered.

TYNDAREOS

She will not learn to bear the bridle until her spirit has been broken in blood and sweat.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I will not waste any more words to be insulted.

(CLYTEMNESTRA moves towards the door.)

Zeus! Zeus fulfiller! Fulfill my payers!
Complete your plans, once and for all!

(CLYTEMNESTRA exits)

SCENE 5³¹⁷

CHRYIS

I will not be angry, I pity her.

ELECTRA

Come, step down from the chariot.

(CASSANDRA leaves the chariot.)

CASSANDRA

OTOTOTOI POPOI DA! Apollo! Apollo!

TYNDAREOS

He does not hear songs of pain.

CASSANDRA

Apollo! Apollo!
God of the ways, my destroyer!
How easily you destroy me again.

ELECTRA

Why do you scream for Apollo?

CASSANDRA

Apollo! Apollo!
Where have you brought me?
What House is this?

³¹⁷ I did not add much to this scene other one additional prophecy. I did, however, restructure the scene. Aeschylus's scene has some confusion exactly when the Chorus knows who Cassandra is and her power, but then forget so Cassandra can tell her story to the audience. I rearranged the scene so Electra, Chrys, and Tyndareos would only know as much about Cassandra as she could tell them. In addition to the structure, I modified Cassandra's prophecy to create a stronger connection between her and Apollo and also create a strong characterization of alienation.

CHRYIS

The House of Atreus.

CASSANDRA

No! No! A House that hates the gods! Butchery! Manslaughter!

TYNDAREOS

She's like a dog tracking a scent.

CASSANDRA

*Miren, los niños están sollozando.*³¹⁸

APOLLO (*echoing voiceover*)

Look, the children are wailing.

CHRYIS

What children?

(CASSANDRA shakes her head no.)

CASSANDRA

No! Oh gods, what is she plotting?

CHRYIS

Who?

CASSANDRA

*Aterradores malhechores los acechan, insoportable.*³¹⁹

APOLLO (*echoing voiceover*)

Huge evil lurks, unbearable.

TYNDAREOS

You are confusing me!

CASSANDRA

³¹⁸ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán. One major change to this scene is translation of Meineck's English translation of Cassandra's prophecies to Spanish. I had the idea for the Spanish prophecy after casting Bonnet as Cassandra. I knew she was a native Spanish speaker from Puerto Rico which gave me the idea to bring the actor's own identity to the show. Not only was Bonnet excited to bring her culture and language to the Tufts stage, we talked at length at how the Spanish further alienates Electra, Chrys, Tyndareos, and the predominantly English speaking audience. The Spanish helps characterize Cassandra's otherness in Argos and adds dramatic flair to the prophecies. Whenever Spanish appears in this text, Bonnet and her mother provided the translation, the English translation appears follow in Apollo's voiceover.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

Why have you brought me here in all my misery?
Of course, to share his death. Why else?

ELECTRA

What god sends you these futile fits of pain?

CASSANDRA

It was Apollo, the prophet god, he gave me this power.

TYNDAREOS

A god?

ELECTRA

Did he fall in love with you?

CASSANDRA

He gave me the power of prophecy.

TYNDAREOS

Would you warn your countrymen of the suffering that was coming?

CASSANDRA

Yes. But not anymore.

CHRYIS

What happened?

CASSANDRA

Once I was ashamed to speak of this, but not now. He was like a mighty wrestler, breathing passion.

ELECTRA

And did you bear his child?

CASSANDRA

I promised I would, but I cheated him of that.

ELECTRA

Then how did you escape the anger of Apollo?

CASSANDRA

I didn't. Once I had offended him, I could persuade no one. They believed nothing.

ELECTRA

But your prophecies seem...

CASSANDRA

Ah! Ah! The agony! The pain of my true prophecies,
Whirling around inside my head!

*¡Los niños asesinados por sus parientes!
Entierran sus manos dentro de los suyos.
¡Manos despreciables! ¡Y el padre, él los saboreó!³²⁰*

APOLLO (echoing voiceover)

*The children killed by kin!
Hands delving into their own flesh and blood.
Wretched handfuls! And the father, he tasted them!*

TYNDAREOS

Thyestes' feast, the eating of his own children's flesh.

CASSANDRA

*Un león asqueado, planeando la venganza ante lo sucedido,
Rondando sus pasillos, aguardando el regreso de su amo.³²¹*

APOLLO (echoing voiceover)

*A cringing lion, plotting revenge for all of this,
Stalking his halls, watching for the master's return.*

CHRYIS

It makes me shudder with terror.

CASSANDRA

*¡Miren! ¡Allá, miren! Protejan al toro de la vaca.³²²
¡Embestido por el negro cuerno!
Cae de cara al agua.
¡Asesinato! ¡Traición! ¡Muerto en su propio baño!³²³*

APOLLO (echoing voiceover)

*Look! There, look! Protect the bull from the cow.
The black horn gores through!
He falls face down in the water.
Murder! Treachery! Dead in his own bath!*

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Bonnet and I did the initial translation together where I explained the meaning and its function of each word in the lines. As we discussed, Bonnet was amused to discover my middle name is Vacca, the Italian cognate for cow.

³²³ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

I am lost. ELECTRA

I don't understand. CHRYS

You will see Agamemnon dead! CASSANDRA

Don't say such things! ELECTRA

Poor girl. TYNDAREOS

Your words wound. CHRYS

Nothing can heal these words. CASSANDRA

No, not if what you say is true, god forbid! CHRYS

What man devises this terrible act? ELECTRA

You have strayed so very far from the path of my prophecy. CASSANDRA

We don't understand. CHRYS

Ai! His fire rises up inside me! CASSANDRA

Why am I wearing these mockeries of myself,
This staff, these garlands of prophecy around my neck?
At least I will destroy you before I die!

(She tears the garlands from her neck and throws her prophet's staff down on the ground.)

Die! Die! Die! I will smash you! That is my revenge on you!
He saw me ridiculed, wearing these robes of his.
He has brought me here to meet my death,
But I will not die ignored by the gods.

*Otro vendrá para infligir venganza.
 Algún ternero con cuernos de toro listo para matar la novilla y vengar al toro masacrado.
 Un desterrado, un vagabundo, exiliado de su patria,
 Que los dioses han jurado,
 Que el cuerpo masacrado de su padre lo arrastrará a su hogar.³²⁴*

APOLLO (*echoing voiceover*)

*Another will come to exact vengeance.
 A bull horned calf to kill the heifer and avenge the slaughtered bull.
 An exile, a wanderer, estranged from his homeland,
 For the gods have sworn a great oath,
 That his father's butchered corpse will pull him home.*

TYNDAREOS

Poor girl.

ELECTRA

What comfort can we give you?

CASSANDRA

There is nothing you can do for me!
 No! Apollo! Ai! It burns! His fire!

*Serpientes gemelas olvidadas en los bosques
 Renacerán y atacarán.
 ¡Ignorado por Phoebus!
 Un profeta sirviente de la serpiente coronada verá el final.
 ¡La novilla vengará al toro-ternero
 a través de las serpientes gemelas!³²⁵*

APOLLO (*echoing voiceover*)

*Twin snakes forgotten in the woods
 Will rise and attack.
 Unknown to Phoebus!
 A prophet who serves the snake crowned will see the end.
 The heifer will avenge the bull-calf
 through the twinned serpents!³²⁶*

TYNDAREOS

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ As mentioned earlier, I added one prophecy to this scene. I wrote the additional prophecy to foreshadow the end of the play. The twin-snakes refer to the arrival of Tiresias and to the surviving sisters.

Dear girl, we understand nothing.

CHRYIS

Oh Cassandra! What can we do for you?

TYNDAREOS

Chrys, she is hopeless.

CASSANDRA

The agony, the agony of my city, Troy, utterly destroyed!

TYNDAREOS

Girl, enter the House.

CASSANDRA

Yet, I will be brave, I will go in and face my death.

ELECTRA

Such suffering, yet such wisdom.

(CASSANDRA approaches the door, then reels back in terror)

CASSANDRA

No!

ELECTRA

What is it, what terror drives you back?

CASSANDRA

No! No!

ELECTRA

What is it?

CASSANDRA

*¡Asesinato! La casa apesta a la sangrienta matanza!*³²⁷

APOLLO *(echoing voiceover)*

Murder! The House reeks with bloody slaughter!

TYNDAREOS

That is only the smell of the sacrifices at the hearth.

ELECTRA

³²⁷ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

You will find safety at our hearth.

CASSANDRA

Ah, my friends, I won't cry any cry of terror like a panicky small bird caught in a bush. But I will have one last word, I pray to the Sun, the last time I will see his light, That my avengers will exact a bloody payment from my foes, for my murder, For the murder of a slave, harmless prey. I do not pity myself, I pity mankind.

(Exit CASSANDRA through the doors)

SCENE 5³²⁸

(An interlude as the scene shifts to the bath. ATHENA lip syncs briefly to another song, maybe a remix of Nina Simone's "Don't Let Me be Misunderstood."³²⁹ Clytemnestra enters the bathroom.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Come in, husband. I have drawn your bath.

(AGAMEMNON enters. CLYTEMNESTRA undresses her husband.)

AGAMEMNON

I have longed dreamed of this day. From the last time I saw you...

CLYTEMNESTRA

At Aulis. When the water was just as welcoming.

AGAMEMNON

Please, do not bring up what happened so many years ago.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I remember seeing you off after the wind changed.
No longer the bitter winds, that kept the Greek force unable to sail.

³²⁸ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 104-255. This scene mostly existed but in a completely different form in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. The Chorus sings of Iphigenia's slaughter at the very beginning of the play. When I cut the Chorus, I lost the most obvious way to tell this incredibly important part of the story. I, therefore, added a scene where Clytemnestra seduces Agamemnon to tell his story, to relive his past, to convince himself one last time what he did was righteous before she kills him in the bathtub. For those unfamiliar with the story, they get to watch Agamemnon and Clytemnestra relive and tell them the story of Iphigenia's horrid death while those who know get a new, sexier staging.

³²⁹ In addition to cutting the script, I curated the songs for the lip sync songs. I looked to Nina Simone because Taylor Mac referenced her in another song in Judy's *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac*. As I began to look for music, Professor Kareem Khubchandani called me out for drawing from mostly white performers. The intertextual connection between Mac and Simone became even more important for me. The lyrics also support Clytemnestra's as "just a soul whose intentions are good."

AGAMEMNON

That wind kept us at port where
Time, crawling slowly by, wore them down.
The flower of Greek manhood
Began to wither and waste away.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Zeus laid down his law: "Man must learn by suffering!"

AGAMEMNON

Calchas, my army's trusted prophet, made his prophesy.

CLYTEMNESTRA

"Beware, for Artemis, pure goddess, feels pity.
She resents her father's winged hounds
For the sacrifice of the trembling creature."

AGAMEMNON

He saw the sign we received from the twin eagles,
Who, in full view, feasted on the hare and her unborn young.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Beautiful Artemis kind even to the fiercest lion's cub.

AGAMEMNON

Remember how she begged to fulfill these signs,
She sent savage storms to keep us from sailing,
She demanded another sacrifice.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Unspeakable, uneatable.

(AGAMEMNON gets into the bath.)

AGAMEMNON

Iph...

CLYTEMNESTRA

Our daughter...

AGAMEMNON

Iphigenia.

CLYTEMNESTRA

...

AGAMEMNON

How could I choose? How could I stain my hands, the hands of a father, with my daughter's blood? But how could I desert the fleet and fail my allies? Both ways were full of evil!

CLYTEMNESTRA

The sacrifice would stop the storm.

AGAMEMNON

The blood of a virgin had to be spilled.

CLYTEMNESTRA

And you strapped yourself to the yoke of Necessity.

AGAMEMNON

Such shameless thoughts make men bold,
A first offering to bless the fleet,
To fight the woman-revenging war.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Your men raised her over the altar; her pleading, her terrified cries of "Father!"

AGAMEMNON

How many times her pure young voice had so lovingly sang, for her father.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Face down, like some sacrificed calf.
She begged for mercy with the heart-rending cries.
You ordered her beautiful mouth to be gagged,
To stifle a cry that would curse the House.

AGAMEMNON

Her eyes threw a last pitiful glance at her sacrificers.

CLYTEMNESTRA

But like a finger in a painting, she could not call to them for help.

AGAMEMNON

But the prophecies of Calchas are always fulfilled.
Justice will tip scales, to bring learning through suffering.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You will know the future when it comes, until then let it be,
To know the future is to bring sorrow in advance,
It will all come clear in the light of dawn
And let all that comes now turn for the best.

(ATHENA drops a net down to CLYTEMNESTRA. As she catches the net, a beat drops and begins a club remix of “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” and “The Revolution Will Not Be Masculinized.” Insanity ensues. CLYTEMNESTRA throws the net over AGAMEMNON and kills him with her man-killing axe. CASSANDRA reenters pursued. A moment devised through Viewpoints.)

SCENE 7

(Enter CLYTEMNESTRA from the doors to face her daughters and the city of Argos.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Finally, I am not ashamed to speak openly.
 So long my mind has been preparing for this,
 This trial of an ancient vendetta.
 This was my work, I do not deny it,
 He could not have escaped his destiny.
 I cast my vast net, tangling around him.
 I don’t care if you praise me or blame me,
 It makes no difference to me, the glory is mine.
 I have avenged the sacrifice, the death, the murder of my daughter, Iphigenia!³³⁰

ELECTRA

Our sister is dead?

CHRYIS

When?

ELECTRA

How?

CHRYIS

Was it on the shores of Troy?

ELECTRA

Beside her husband?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Daughters, Iphigenia never married Achilles.
 You father deceived us to get your sister to the altar

³³⁰ One problem that emerged with handing over part of the role of the Chorus to Electra and Chrys were how they responded to Agamemnon. If they knew Iphigenia had died, then would they not resent him just like Clytemnestra? When solving this problem, I decided Electra and Chrys should have similar journeys through the play as audience members who are unfamiliar with the myth. During workshops, people expressed concern that people may not understand why Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon until after she has done it. In playing with the format of Greek theatre and its new role in contemporary theatre, the audience and the sisters get to have similar journeys of ignorance and enlightenment.

where he slaughtered her like a cow for his war.

CHRYIS

Ten years ago?

ELECTRA

Mother, why did you not tell us?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Daughters, I tried to shield you from this Ruin,
But all must come out in the end.

*(TYNDAREOS enters from the House holding a piece of bloodstained net.)*³³¹

TYNDAREOS

The citizens will curse you! You will be cast from the city, an exile.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Father, am I on trial like some senseless woman?

TYNDAREOS

I am amazed at your brazen tongue, that you dare to say these things.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Now you pass judgement!

Agamemnon came on his knees to you, father.

After he took me by force, he married me against my will.

He killed my first husband. He ripped my baby, still living, from my breast, and smashed her on the ground. You gave me to him as his wife.³³²

I bore him a son, and three daughters, and he had the cruelty to take one from me.³³³

He sacrificed his own child, my labor of love,

What charges did you ever bring against him?

For all he cared he might as well have been killing an animal.

Go on, threaten away! I'll meet your match.

³³¹ When I added in the part of Electra and Chrys discovering their sister's fate, it no longer worked to have Tyndareos outside the palace to watch this intimate moment between mother and daughters. Tyndareos entrance adds some extra dramatic flair to the final moments of *Agamemnon*.

³³² Euripides. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. W. S. Merwin and George E. Dimock Jr. (New York: Oxford 1978), 1541-6. When I read *Iphigenia at Aulis*, I was shocked to hear Euripides' version of Clytemnestra's marriage to Agamemnon. It completely changes the relationship between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, as he does not only kill one of her children but two. In this moment, Clytemnestra gets to share Agamemnon's savagery and how her father sold her to an abuser.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 1560-3.

TYNDAREOS

The city reviles you! They will cast you out!

CLYTEMNESTRA

If Menelaus had been swept off in secret instead of Helen, should I have killed my son, Orestes, to save my sister's husband? How would Agamemnon have handled his son's death?³³⁴

TYNDAREOS

Revenge will come and you will pay, blow for blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Listen then to my oaths, sanctioned by what is right.
By the Justice I exacted for my child,
By Ruin, and the Fury in whose name honor I sacrificed this man.
Here he lies, the adulterer, and his prize won by the spear,
His prophetess and prostitute.

TYNDAREOS

No one will stand by you, you have no allies.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I doubt that, Father. I will have at least one ally in Argos. Welcome home Aegisthus, the surviving and once exiled son of Thyestes.

*(AEGISTHUS enters with a gust of wind or some type of natural fanfare.)*³³⁵

TYNDAREOS

You! You insidious soul! An abomination!

AEGISTHUS

No longer must I travel the lands I could never call home. Nor hide in the shadows of my fatherland.

TYNDAREOS

You are a malfeasant! Atreus banished you from this land.

³³⁴ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford (New York: Oxford, 1994), 1078-81. In another Euripidean play, Clytemnestra points to the double standard of men versus women and sons versus daughters. Interweaving these moments from Euripides became an important part of adding to Clytemnestra's character and her justification for killing Agamemnon.

³³⁵ The actors gave me a note in the last workshop of the adaptation that Aegisthus's entrance was tacked on to the end of *Agamemnon* and anticlimactic. The late entrance and lengthy monologue diffused the dramatic tension and muddled the plot. I moved Aegisthus entrance earlier in the scene and reworked the structure of it to ensure Aegisthus had a dramatic and effective entrance. I wrote the following lines leading up to Aegisthus monologue as a way to add some tension between Tyndareos and Aegisthus.

AEGISTHUS

Atreus' laws died alongside his son.

TYNDAREOS

I cannot stand anymore for defilement of the laws of Argos.

(TYNDAREOS goes to attack Aegisthus but AEGISTHUS calmly draws his sword.)

AEGISTHUS

Stand down, little man!³³⁶
 Argos, welcome the right day of Justice!
 Now I know that the gods look down
 On the crimes of mortal men, and exact vengeance,
 Paying the price for his father's revolting crime.
 Agamemnon's father, Atreus, once ruler of this land,
 Killed my brothers and fed them to my father, Thyestes.
 My father returned as suppliant to his own kin
 Where Atreus hacked the heads and hands of my brothers
 Into pieces and threw them into a boiling stew.
 From which my father, in ignorance, ate his fill.
 When he discovered the obscene truth,
 he reeled back from the table, kicking it over,
 And, retching, vomited up the butchered flesh.
 Then he shouted out his curse upon the sons of Atreus.
 I was youngest child and just a babe in arms
 When my father was driven from his home. I was in exile.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Aegisthus has helped me return Justice to this House.
 A House that once stood for the murdering of children,³³⁷
 Is now washed clean of its sin with Agamemnon's blood.

TYNDAREOS

Woman! You skulked at home, while the other men
 Went to war, all the time you were fouling Agamemnon's bed,
 Plotting the death of our commander.

AEGISTHUS

Such sentiments breed grievous tears.

³³⁶ Since I wrote the few lines, I got really excited for James Williamson to call Kevin Lombard "little man." Lombard and I have often bonded over our height and since the two actors are such good friends, I thought this was a good opportunity to sneak something in for us while also serving the show's dramatic arch.

³³⁷ In adding lines to Clytemnestra to support Aegisthus new entrance, she reiterates her commitment to avenging children.

TYNDAREOS

As if you could ever be the master of Argos!
You who plotted the death of our king,
And did not even dare to do the deed yourself.

AEGISTHUS

Because the deception was clearly woman's work.
Work of a lioness avenging the death of cubs.³³⁸

TYNDAREOS

Why did you not kill the man yourself?
You coward! Why did a woman murder him?

AEGISTHUS

I was a suspect, an enemy known of old.

TYNDAREOS

He endured so much for the sake of a woman,
Now a woman's hand has struck him dead.
Oh demented Helen, you wasted all those lives,
Under the walls of Troy, now you are crowned with the final victory.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Don't turn your anger on Helen³³⁹
As if she killed so many Greek men!
She was just one woman!
She did not cause these incurable wounds.

ELECTRA

Your power surges through the souls of women.

TYNDAREOS

Such a sacrilegious death by the treacherous hand of Agamemnon's wife.

CLYTEMNESTRA

So you confidently claim that this was my work
But do not call me Agamemnon's, no!³⁴⁰

³³⁸ I often wondered whether I should cut this line because Aegisthus makes sexist comments about femininity and deception, but pairing it with the line about Clytemnestra being like a lion protecting her cubs should become switch the original intent to an empowering statement for the audience.

³³⁹ One of my favorite moments in the trilogy is when Clytemnestra stands up for Helen. Tyndareos berates and complains about her for the entire show, and Clytemnestra stops the slut shaming in its track as soon as she gains power.

³⁴⁰ In another power move, Clytemnestra rejects her husband and stands independently of Agamemnon. While the Greeks saw this as villainous and treasonous words, her words become a cry for patriarchal liberation.

For I am the age-old spirit of vengeance
In the guise of this dead man's wife.

AEGISTHUS

She repaid the debt of Atreus,
The giver of the obscene banquet,
And she sacrificed a full-grown victim,
In payment for her slaughtered young.

TYNDAREOS

And you say that you are innocent of his murder?

CLYTEMNESTRA

He suffered, deed for deed,
For what he did to our daughter,
his own flesh and blood!

TYNDAREOS

What will you do with his body?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I killed him and I will bury him,
Deep down under the earth;
This House will not mourn for him
Just like he ordered us after he slaughtered my daughter.

ELECTRA

As is right, Iphigenia will meet our father
At the crossing of the swift sea of death.

CHRYIS

And she will throw her arms around him,
And she will kiss him.³⁴¹

AEGISTHUS

The plunderer plundered, the killer killed.

CHRYIS

And now finally we can see that the prophecy was true.

³⁴¹ The image of Iphigenia meeting her father in the Underworld became a big part of restructuring the adaptation. The next scene has Iphigenia meet her father in the Underworld but does not have her run to greet her deceased father, but rather coldly chains him to his bathtub. Clytemnestra, however, does get a hug from her daughter at the close of Act I.

ELECTRA

*Oh, Orestes, if he still sees the light of day,
May good fortune bring you home.*

CHRYS

Hermes, guide our beloved brother home!

ELECTRA/CHRYS

Unite our family!

TYNDAREOS

Girls, stop your incessant futile whining!³⁴²

AEGISTHUS

Tyndareos, it might be your time to stop infantile tantrums.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Father, please go home before you come to harm.

TYNDAREOS

Yes, boast while you feel brave like a cock beside his hen!

(TYNDAREOS exits.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

What we did had to be done. That is the word of a woman if any care to heed it.

CHRYS/ELECTRA

Gods bring Orestes home.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You and I hold the power of this house. We will set things right once and for all.

(CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, and CHRYS exit.)

SCENE 8³⁴³

³⁴² This line and the one following are once again added lines to cover up the changes I made to Aegisthus entrance and to further create strife between Tyndareos and Aegisthus.

³⁴³ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Romm, In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 561-886. The following scene includes more of Io's story featured in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. Since Agamemnon cuts off the story in the Prologue, Iphigenia enters to resume the story after chaining her father to the bathtub as punishment. Agamemnon's punishment parallels Prometheus to mimic story's themes of tyranny. The story of Io becomes even more relevant as the story shifts to the story of the fifty brides fleeing their fifty husbands. Io glorifies the forty-nine murderous women while Agamemnon celebrates the one dutiful bride.

(AEGISTHUS/ATHENA lip sync to Alaska Thunderfuck's "Beard."³⁴⁴ IPHIGENIA begins to chain her father to his bathtub. Once the song is complete, AEGISTHUS/ATHENA exits.)

AGAMEMNON

Iphigenia? My daughter?

IPHIGENIA

Yes, Father.

AGAMEMNON

Remember when you ran to me so many years ago? Undo these chains, my daughter.

(IPHIGENIA walks to AGAMEMNON. She does not make eye contact and sits on the lip of the tub.)

IPHIGENIA

Do you know how the story of Io ends, father?

AGAMEMNON

I do...

IPHIGENIA

The woman made to wander because a god lusted for her, a mortal.

AGAMEMNON

Yes.

IPHIGENIA

When she reached the Nile, Zeus restored her mind and sired a son called Ephaphos.

AGAMEMNON

He reaped the fruit of all the land watered by the broad flowing Nile.

IPHIGENIA

But her great-great-grandchildren, a clan of fifty, all women,
flew back to Argos, our homeland, unwillingly, to escape a rape marriage with fifty cousins.
These cousins hot for sin, swooped like hawks on doves.
The gods wouldn't let them have the women's bodies.
Argos, however, dripped with female slaughter,

³⁴⁴ When I started to brainstorm and conceive this project, I was listening and enjoying the absurdity of *Anus*, an album by Alaska Thunderfuck 5000, a drag queen featured on season six of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and winner of season two of *RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars*. Their absurd and dirty album provided a lot of inspiration for the production including "Beard," a song about a beard becoming a symbol of power for the feminine, too. The song introduces the change from Agamemnon's tyranny to Clytemnestra's power.

Each husband bled from the blade of their bride.³⁴⁵

AGAMEMNON

But passion bewitched one of these women, a man was saved by one of them.³⁴⁶

IPHIGENIA

A coward rather than a killer.³⁴⁷

AGAMEMNON

And this one virgin gave birth to a line of kings to rule in Argos.
One seed was a boy seed, who broke the chains of Prometheus.

IPHIGENIA

Prometheus, the god who cursed man with fire and woman.³⁴⁸

AGAMEMNON

ORESTES!

(As AGAMEMNON calls out for his son to avenge his murder, ORESTES and PYLADES enter. IPHIGENIA stands up. She places a gag in his mouth and exits.)

THE LIBATION BEARERS

SCENE 9

(At the tomb/bathtub of AGAMEMNON)³⁴⁹

ORESTES

Father, I call on you, here at your tomb,
I have returned to my land, I have come home.
Hear me, father! Heed my words!

PYLADES

Look! A woman making her way towards us?
What does this mean? More misery for the House?

³⁴⁵ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Romm, In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 853-62.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 865-6.

³⁴⁷ Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*, trans. Deborah H. Roberts (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2012), 871-2.

³⁴⁸ I added the extra line to further reinforce the portion of myth punishing man with woman for Prometheus' crime.

³⁴⁹ The bathtub becomes an important part of the show. It goes from serving as a bathtub to Agamemnon's tomb since he is literally chained to it. It later becomes the altar of Apollo. The bathtub becomes a center point of the set and also Agamemnon's, Apollo's, and Tiresias's storyline.

ORESTES

No, I think she is bringing libations for my father,
To soothe his spirit beneath this earth.
It must be one of my sisters, Pylades, let's hide.

(Enter ELECTRA with her libation vessel. ORESTES and PYLADES hide.)

ELECTRA³⁵⁰

Oh! River God, Inachus, father of Io,³⁵¹
Hear my cries of pain.
I hate what my mother has done.
I can almost understand what she did to my father,
As too I mourn for Iphigenia.
But it is Aegisthus that I cannot forgive.
When I see Aegisthus seated
On my father's throne, wearing
My father's clothes, pouring my father's libations
It makes me shiver with pain.³⁵²
He fears as I get older, as I begin to flower,
That I could marry and have a child to overpower him,
So he keeps me cloistered, a prisoner in a home I barely recognize.
He once planned to kill Chrys and me, but my savage mother
Was still enough of my mother to stop him.³⁵³
Yet Aegisthus still watches and stalks us, and ensures
We are powerless within our home.
Inachus, the river of Argos,
Help guide Orestes safely home to rid us of Aegisthus
And unite my family once more!

(CHRYS enters with her libation vessel.)

CHRYS

³⁵⁰ The following conversation between Electra and Chrys is an amalgamation of things said by and about Electra in the beginning pages of Euripides' *Electra* and fragments of the conversation Electra and Chrysothemis have in Sophocles' *Electra*. The conversation shows for the first time they are two unique and different characters. Electra mourns and complains about her mother and stepfather while Chrys just tries not to rock the boat to make her life easier. The scene first quotes and synthesized the two versions of *Electra*, but were further reworded and paraphrased in rehearsal with Murphy and Hattler.

³⁵¹ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 5. I added the reference to Io and Inachus in this scene to fully incorporate the myth into as many parts of the play as possible.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 261-70.

³⁵³ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 19-30.

What are you doing by the riverside, Electra?

ELECTRA

Chrys, what benefit might come to me if I stopped my lamentations?

CHRYIS

In all this time, have you not learned your anger is useless?³⁵⁴

ELECTRA

What choice do I have other than to live miserably?³⁵⁵

CHRYIS

Electra, stop you complaining and please help me with Mother's errand before Aegisthus' return.

ELECTRA

You follow every order and go on living with my father's killers.³⁵⁶

At least my angst gives pain to our mother and Aegisthus,

And that is my way to honor the dead, if there is any possible consolation in this House.³⁵⁷

CHRYIS

If I don't want to be treated like a slave, I must obey their rules.³⁵⁸

So please, Electra, help me pour the libations at the tomb as our mother requested.

ELECTRA

Hollow gestures from a loveless mother.

CHRYIS

Use your lamenting to make the gestures mean something.

(They turn to the bathtub/tomb.)

ELECTRA

Oh Gaia! Earth-Mother!

This is an empty gesture to ward off evil.

CHRYIS

When I pour these burial offerings, what should I say?

³⁵⁴ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 330-1.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 552-3.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 358.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 355-6.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.

ELECTRA

*Should I say I bring dedication from a loving wife
To her beloved husband, when they come from my mother?*

CHRYIS

*Should I pour them away in silence and disgrace,
Just as my father died, and let the earth drink them dry?*

ELECTRA

*Or should I throw this vase behind me, just discard it,
Then avert my eyes and just walk away?*

CHRYIS

*Now we live no better than refugees,
Sold by our mother in exchange for a man,
Aegisthus, her partner in your murder.*

ELECTRA

*As I pour the holy water for the dead,
I call to my father: take pity on me, bring back
Dear Orestes, rekindle the light of this House.*

CHRYIS

*May the turn of fortune bring Orestes home!
This is my prayer, hear me father.*

ELECTRA

Grant me the discretion my mother lacks.

CHRYIS

Keep my hands clean and pure.

ELECTRA

These prayers are for us, for our enemies I say:

ELECTRA/CHRYIS

Let Justice revenge the killers!

(ELECTRA and CHRYIS pour their libations over the tomb. ELECTRA sees footprints on the ground.)

ELECTRA

*Look at these tracks, a pair of footprints.
There are two sets of marks here, his own,
And these must be his companion's.*

(ORESTES moves toward the altar.)

CHRYS

Electra, look – Men ready for ambush. Quick!³⁵⁹

ELECTRA

Give them no chance to rob or attack us.³⁶⁰

ORESTES

Stay. Don't be afraid.³⁶¹

CHRYS

Mother Earth, don't let us die!³⁶²

ORESTES

I'd rather kill someone I hate.³⁶³

(ORESTES reaches toward his sisters, but does not touch them.)

ELECTRA

Thank you for never touching me.³⁶⁴

ORESTES

I have no reason to touch you.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford (New York: Oxford, 1994), 226-37. I never liked how Electra and the Chorus discover Orestes and Pylades in Aeschylus's version. How does having the same foot size as your sibling, especially of the opposite sex, tell you anything? Also, some siblings have the same hair color but many do not. This scene in *Electra* has a much more realistic and chilling reaction to men popping out of bushes to talk with unprotected and solitary women. Women face this threat all the time of possible getting attacked by men when alone, therefore I wanted to include this much more likely reaction of women rather than some trite matching hair and footprint bit.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 229.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 230.

³⁶² Ibid., 231. Electra originally calls to Apollo, but I changed the line for Chrys' deity of choice to be Mother Earth. Chrys just prays to her at the grave and Apollo has evil connotations in this piece, especially as regards the protection of women against rape.

³⁶³ Ibid., 232.

³⁶⁴ Eno, Will. *Gnit* (New York: Samuel French, 2014), 61. This is the second of three references to past shows I directed at Tufts. The line comes from a scene where Peter Gnit, the epitome of toxic masculinity, keeps flirting with a woman who barely speaks his language and in her broken English says the infamous line.

³⁶⁵ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford (New York: Oxford, 1994), 234. The original line had Orestes say he had just reason to touch Electra, but that really just means Orestes is entitled to her because he is the surviving male heir. I changed the line to "no reason" to make it less creepy.

CHRY S
 Go! Don't paw. No need to paw me.³⁶⁶

ELECTRA
 Why lurk in ambush with a sword?³⁶⁷

ORESTES
 Stay. You won't regret it.³⁶⁸

ELECTRA
 We have no choice. You're stronger than us.³⁶⁹

ORESTES
 Are you the daughters of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra?

CHRY S
 Yes.

PYLADES
 We were dispatched from Strophius of Phocis.

ELECTRA
 The man appointed to take care of our brother.

ORESTES
 Yes, Orestes.

ELECTRA
 How do you know? Why are you here?

ORESTES
 Because I've returned home, sister. It's me, Orestes.

CHRY S
 Oh Orestes!

ELECTRA
 Hold on, Chrys. We have gone through so much, what proof can you offer us?

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 233.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 235.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 236.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 237.

ORESTES
Sisters, stand here before my eyes.³⁷⁰

CHRYIS
Electra, he has a scar above his eyebrow.³⁷¹

ELECTRA
Tell us how you got this scar.

ORESTES
I got it by tumbling – remember?³⁷²

ELECTRA
What were we chasing?

ORESTES
We chased after a fawn.³⁷³

CHRYIS
No more delay! Your evidence persuades my heart.

ELECTRA
At last!

(The sisters begin to react joyously.)

ORESTES
This is Strophius' son, Pylades, we grew up together.
He joins me with his full love and loyalty.

CHRYIS
You are the closest and dearest to your father's House.
How I wept for you, the seed of hope, salvation!

ELECTRA

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 589.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 591.

³⁷² Ibid., 591-2.

³⁷³ Ibid., 592. Another element of why I liked this reconciliation scene rather than Aeschylus's original is because of the animal imagery. The cow becomes so closely related to Iphigenia that it became important to have more links between other characters and animals. Orestes becomes like a deer who skips and leaps away from danger first chased by hunters and then escapes freely (or that's what he thinks.) Later, there is another connection between Orestes and a deer.

Bright-eyed joy! I pour out my love for four people:
 First the love for my sister, savagely sacrificed,
 Secondly the love for my father struck down,
 Third the love I should feel for my mother,
 And lastly my love for you as your sister.

ORESTES

*Zeus! Zeus! Behold our cause!
 Look on the brood bereft of their eagle sire,
 Who died entwined in the coils of a vicious viper.*

CHRYIS

Speak softly, you may be overheard!

ELECTRA

Rumors can be spread and reach the ears of those in power.

ORESTES

The great oracle of Apollo will never betray me,
 It is his mandate that I should endure this trial.
 His shrill prophecies wrenched my guts and chilled
 Me to the bone, they foretold storms of suffering
 If I do not avenge our father's killers.
 He said to kill the way they killed,
 And claim my birthright like a savage bull.
 He told me of the onslaught by the avenging Furies.

ELECTRA

A curse from a parent's spilled blood.

CHRYIS

Visions of scowling faces peering from the gloom.

ORESTES

The great sorrow I feel for my father
 And the burden of my stolen birthright.
 Argos should not be ruled by a pair of women!
 My people are the finest of men,
 Who conquered Troy with their sterling spirit?
 Aegisthus is a woman at heart!

ELECTRA

Aegisthus, my master and keeper.
 The worst outrage of all is seeing him
 In my parents' marriage bed
 With my wretched mother, if I can call her

Mother, since she sleeps beside that man.³⁷⁴

CHRYIS

Why do we suffer the pain of our parents?

ELECTRA

Our wicked mother who treats us like her Trojan slaves.

CHRYIS

She sold us as prisoners to Aegisthus to avenge Iphigenia!

ELECTRA

I grow older, unwed, and unmarried as Argos gets restless. He plans to marry me off to an elderly farmer so I can not have a child to avenge Aegisthus' cruelty to quiet the people of Argos.³⁷⁵

CHRYIS

And he'll keep me in the home forever to be his servant.

ORESTES

Sisters, I am sorry, but why did our mother send these libations? What compelled her, After so long, to try to soothe this incurable wound?

CHRYIS

She had a terrible dream.

ORESTES

Do you know what the dream was?

ELECTRA

She dreamed she gave birth to a snake.

CHRYIS

She laid it down, and wrapped it like a baby.

³⁷⁴ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 273-6. I borrow more lines from Sophocles to further develop Electra's and Chrys' objection to Aegisthus. For the following lines, however, I used either direct quotes or inspiration from Sophocles to show the daughters hatred for Aegisthus. The sisters, however, never mention wanting to kill their mother but want to kill Aegisthus. Orestes and Pylades trick the sisters into helping them infiltrate the house to kill Aegisthus without mentioning their plans to kill Clytemnestra, too.

³⁷⁵ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 21-24. Aegisthus's fear of Electra's potential child further links to the double casting to Athena, who Zeus feared would be more powerful than him.

ELECTRA
She dreamed that she suckled it herself.

ORESTES
It must have slashed her breast?

CHRYIS
It sucked her milk, clotted with blood.

PYLADES
It has its meaning, the snake represents a man.

ORESTES
It means me.

CHRYIS
I believe your interpretations.

ELECTRA
Orestes, she buried him unmourned.

CHRYIS
Laughter died and how I wept, secret tears of forbidden grief.

ELECTRA
She mutilated his manhood.

CHRYIS
He was humiliated and disgraced.

ORESTES
But she will pay for my father.

ELECTRA
Make her mourn the loss of her lover!³⁷⁶

CHRYIS
She must suffer as we have had to suffer.

ORESTES
Sisters, I will help you punish our mother.

(They begin to pray.)

³⁷⁶ As I continued to develop the sisters, I continued to create lines where Electra and Chrys restate that they want to punish Clytemnestra by killing Aegisthus. Orestes never objects in front of his sisters.

ELECTRA/CHRYIS

Look at your fledglings, nesting at your tomb.

ORESTES

Pity the male

ELECTRA/CHRYIS

and female

ORESTES/ELECTRA/CHRYIS

pity your children.

ELECTRA

Father, hear my grief!

ORESTES

*If only at Troy, Father, a spear had cut you down.
Your legacy would glorify*

ORESTES/ELECTRA/CHRYIS

The House.

ORESTES

And the name of your

ORESTES/ELECTRA/CHRYIS

Children

ORESTES

Would be met with respect.

ELECTRA

Your tomb would stand high.

CHRYIS

I wish instead

ORESTES

Your killers had died your despicable death.

ELECTRA/CHRYIS

*Murder screams for the Furies
To stand for those long dead,
To bring on Ruin in the trail of Ruin.*

ORESTES

Hear me! Give me power over the House.

CHRYIS

Father, help us, help us destroy Aegisthus, help to set us free!

ORESTES

Help me fully avenge your death!

CHRYIS/ELECTRA

And I will pour my dowry out to you.

ORESTES

Oh Earth, raise my father to watch my fight!

ELECTRA

Oh Persephone, give us your beautiful power!

ORESTES

*The House of Atreus must survive;
Dead but not dead, your memory lives with me.*

PYLADES

The agony of generations.

CHRYIS

Now our minds are set, it is time for action.

ELECTRA

We will find healing in ruin once Aegisthus' tyranny is over.

ORESTES

The plan is simple. If they used stealth to kill a man of honor,
We will stealth, and trap them in our snare.

(Interlude of music. ELECTRA and CHRYIS exit. We go back to the House. CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS make a cameo. ORESTES and PYLADES go to the doors.)³⁷⁷

SCENE 10

(The House of Atreus in Argos)

ORESTES

³⁷⁷ Whenever I direct I like to include transitions that allow for creative storytelling. I wanted to bring Clytemnestra and Aegisthus out in this transition not to establish their power over the House, but to show off the amazing and laborious designs of my costume designer, Dan Ciba.

Pylades, my sisters only know part of what will happen.³⁷⁸

PYLADES

They will understand, you heard what ill words they spoke against her.

ORESTES

They are angry at her, but only want to see Aegisthus dead.

PYLADES

Do not worry what girls think, but rather Apollo.³⁷⁹ Follow his oracle and the throne will be yours.

ORESTES³⁸⁰

Thank you, Pylades. If I am to die, let me die in a manner worthy of the name and deeds of Agamemnon! You are the only one I will let judge the way I die. If I die today lay out my body; Bury us in one tomb. I go, now, to accomplish the deed.³⁸¹

(ORESTES moves towards the palace.)

PYLADES

Did you think I'd care to go on living if you die?³⁸²

ORESTES

I assumed you would: why must you die with me?³⁸³

PYLADES

You ask me that? What is life without you?³⁸⁴

ORESTES

Do not risk it. This is not your family.

³⁷⁸ I wrote the opening lines of this scene to, once again, reinforce Orestes' deception of his sisters. Electra and Chrys become victims of repetitive deception first by their father, then their mother, and then their brother.

³⁷⁹ I continued added lines to Pylades to posture him as a toxic masculine figure who is a manipulative agent of Apollo. I purposely wanted him to call Electra and Chrys "girls" to undermine and marginalize their feelings and role in the House.

³⁸⁰ Euripides. *Orestes*, trans. John Peck and Frank Nisetich (New York: Oxford, 1995), 1109-1124. The following exchange from Pylades and Orestes comes from the end of Euripides' play titled after Agamemnon's only son. A major goal of mine was to upgrade the friendship between Pylades and Orestes to lovers. This interaction further complicates their relationship.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1109-7.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 111-20.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1121.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1122.

PYLADES

It's right for me to do this with you. Trust me, and don't use the sword just yet.

(They kiss. ORESTES knocks on the doors.)

ORESTES

Is anybody there! Is anyone at home?

PYLADES

Does Aegisthus welcome strangers to this house?

ORESTES

Tell the heads of this house that I am here,
I have come to see them with fresh news. Be quick about it!

PYLADES

Have someone in authority come out.

ORESTES

The mistress maybe, who runs the place!

(Enter CLYTEMNESTRA from the doors)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Strangers, please.

ORESTES

I am foreigner from Delphi. Now at journey's end, I can unyoke my feet and rest.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Your needs are our pleasure, we have warm baths and soft beds to soothe
Your cares away, and honest eyes to watch your sleep.

ORESTES

I came across a stranger, another traveler on my journey.
We told each other where we were going, and we talked.
I learned his name, Strophius the Phocian.
He saw I was going to Argos and asked me to
deliver this message: "Orestes is dead."
He stressed that I must be sure to tell his parents
And to inquire whether his family would want him home.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh! We are besieged by ruin!

ORESTES

I should really be speaking to the head of the house.
 A man must veil his words when talking with a woman,
 But with a man he can frankly say whatever's on his mind.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh damned curse that grips this House!

(Calling ELECTRA and CHRYS onstage.)

Chrys, show this man to the guest rooms,
 And take his traveling companion with him, too.
 Let them enjoy the hospitality of this house.
 It is your responsibility: they are in your charge.
 I will share this news with the head of the house,
 And we will consult our many friends.

(Exit ORESTES, PYLADES, and CHRYS through the doors)

CLYTEMNESTRA³⁸⁵

Electra, go summon Aegisthus.
 As quickly as you can. He has to come and hear the news.

ELECTRA

Man to man, so it'll be clear.

(CLYTEMNESTRA exits.)

ELECTRA³⁸⁶

Place the heart of Perseus in your breast,
 Repay the debt of those you love.

(Electra exits. Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.)

PYLADES

When the time comes for you to act,
 Be strong. When she cries, "My child!"
 Say, "My father's child!" and do the deed.
 You won't be blamed for the course of Ruin.

³⁸⁵ I briefly reworked this scene to facilitate the role of Electra and Chrys in the narrative. Usually at this point Electra disappears from the story, so I repurposed the female Chorus so Electra and Chrys have more active roles in the story. I also cut Cilissa's monologue because it seems mostly unnecessary, vilified Clytemnestra, and would have required another actor.

³⁸⁶ *Agamemnon* benefits from having a strong dramatic arc, but *The Libation Bearers* has a clunky dramatic rise. Therefore, I worked in overlapping entrances to help build up the tension in *The Libation Bearers*.

Now go git it.³⁸⁷

(*CHRYS enters.*)

CHRYS

Electra and Aegisthus are coming! Hide quickly!

(*ORESTES, PYLADES, CHRYS hide. Enter AEGISTHUS and ELECTRA.*)

AEGISTHUS

How can this House bear another blow
And its murderous, festering wound not drench us in terror?
How can I tell if this really is the living truth that Orestes is dead
Or just a fearful rumor spread by women.

ELECTRA

Go inside and hear the strangers for yourself.

AEGISTHUS

I want to see this messenger and question him again.
I'll not be fooled, my mind sees with sharp eyes.

(*Exit AEGISTHUS through the doors.*)

ELECTRA³⁸⁸

I tell you that Aegisthus has to die.
If he out-wrestles you and you should die,
I'm dead as well.³⁸⁹

CHRYS

He will make us live in a shuttered dwelling
Away from the House, and sing our sorrows there.³⁹⁰

ELECTRA

Now's the time for revenge, my brother.

³⁸⁷ Ashman, Howard, and Alan Menken. *Little Shop of Horrors* (New York: Samuel French, 195), 54. This is the third and final reference to shows the show I directed at Tufts.

³⁸⁸ As I added more dramatic action to *The Libation Bearers*, the sisters once again appear to speak of their need to dispose of Aegisthus.

³⁸⁹ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 686-8.

³⁹⁰ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 381-2.

PYLADES

By the gods I ask that you keep it silent.³⁹¹

ORESTES

If our mother learns about this, I am sure
I will regret that I have dared to do this deed.³⁹²

(ORESTES and PYLADES exit.)

CHRYIS

Zeus, Zeus, what should I say

ELECTRA

My intentions are worthy, I ask the gods for help.

CHRYIS

Zeus, look after our brother.

ELECTRA/CHRYIS

Hera, bring an ending to our ordeal.

(A cry from behind the doors.)

AEGISTHUS

Ai! Ai!

CHRYIS

There! There it is!

ELECTRA

O glorious dawn, bright chariots of the sun!
The man who planned our father's death has fallen!³⁹³

(Enter CLYTEMNESTRA from the doors.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

What even is the matter? What is all this shouting in the House?

CHRYIS

³⁹¹ Ibid., 469.

³⁹² Ibid., 470-1.

³⁹³ Euripides. *Electra*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 867-9.

The living are killed by the dead!

ELECTRA

Mother! Orestes has freed us from Aegisthus.³⁹⁴

CLYTEMNESTRA

Orestes? My son? Is here?

CHRYS

In the name of our father, he has killed Aegisthus.

CLYTEMNESTRA

He'll come for me next.

ELECTRA

He came to liberate us, something you could not do.

CLYTEMNESTRA

We killed by deceit and by deceit we die.³⁹⁵

(ORESTES bursts through the doors.)

ORESTES

Clytemnestra!

ELECTRA

Brother!

ORESTES

Agamemnon's murderer!

CHRYS

Orestes, what is the wildness in your eyes?

ELECTRA

I beg you, before we are all destroyed
Totally, and our family obliterated,
Restrain your rage!

ORESTES

Your words are unsaid and unfulfilled.

³⁹⁴ The sisters must again deal with the revelation that they were duped by their family. They cheer for Aegisthus's murder, but Clytemnestra knows better than to accept that Orestes will stop with Aegisthus.

³⁹⁵ To help the suspension build, I restructured the scene so Clytemnestra has a moment of reflection before Orestes's grand entrance. The scene stealing entrance helps unravel Electra's and Chrys' illusion.

Be sensible, and yield to rulers when you have no power.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Quickly, bring me the man-killing axe.³⁹⁶

(Exit ELECTRA and CHRYS through the doors)

ORESTES

If you loved that man, then share his grave
And never betray him, even in death.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Wait, my child! Orestes!
My son, have you no feelings?
This breast once nurtured you, cradled your sleep,
Your soft mouth sucked the milk that made you strong.

(CHRYS enters with axe, pursued by ELECTRA. A kerfuffle over the axe as ORESTES confers with PYLADES.)³⁹⁷

CHRYS

Mother, I have your axe.

ORESTES

Pylades, what should I do? How can I kill my
own mother?

ELECTRA

Chrys, no! She's going to kill Orestes!

PYLADES

And what then becomes of the Oracle Apollo
declared at Delphi?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Electra, dear, I am only protecting myself
from Agamemnon's curse!

ORESTES

But she gave birth to me?

ELECTRA

³⁹⁶ Clytemnestra's infamous man-killing became a fan favorite during the workshop process.

³⁹⁷ The kerfuffle (a term I inherited from a mentor, Lisa Houston), came about to further show the differences between Electra and Chrys and also a way to address what Clytemnestra does when Orestes confers with Pylades.

You are the one who cursed us.

PYLADES

What about the unbreakable oaths we took?

CHRYS

Aegisthus treated us like cows!³⁹⁸

ORESTES

An oath of matricide.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I have made mistakes. All of them for Iphigenia.³⁹⁹

PYLADES

Better to be hated by every man on earth than hated by the gods!

CLYTEMNESTRA

I could not rule this House alone, my daughters.⁴⁰⁰ I was deceived just as Orestes has deceived you.⁴⁰¹

ORESTES

Your wise words have won me over, Pylades.

CLYTEMNESTRA

(She grabs the axe.) Giving birth is strange: one cannot hate a child even when he can do you wrong.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ The reference to the cow reinforces the theme of Io in the story.

³⁹⁹ In the workshop process, often people noted how Clytemnestra abandons her surviving children to avenge Iphigenia. In this moment, Clytemnestra admits how her anger for Iphigenia blinded her.

⁴⁰⁰ Just as I included the reference to Penelope in Clytemnestra's monologue greeting Agamemnon, she again refers to the issues of ruling Argos alone as a woman. In many ways, society requires Clytemnestra to take Aegisthus as a lover to protect her position as queen.

⁴⁰¹ Clytemnestra point blankly tells her daughters that they once again were deceived.

⁴⁰² Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 770-1. A favorite line of Blair Nodelman's, this is the moment Clytemnestra breaks away from her daughters to have a showdown with her son.

(PYLADES, CHRYS, and ELECTRA get out of the way. CLYTEMNESTRA and ORESTES square off.)

ORESTES

Alive, you thought him better than my father.
Die then! And lie with him forever, your lover!
Since you hated the man you should have loved.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Let me grow old with you.

ORESTES

You killed my father, and now you want me to live with you?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Destiny played a part in this, my son.

ORESTES

Then Destiny shall make your deathbed.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You should fear the curse of your mother, Orestes!

ORESTES

You just gave birth, then abandoned me to a life of misery.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I never abandoned you. I sent you to be the house of an ally.

ORESTES

Sold like a slave, the son of a free man.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You should also speak of your father's vices.

ORESTES

Do not accuse him! He endured while you sat at home.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Sat at home? Ruling alone threatened by usurpers? Without two of my children?

ORESTES

But it was a man's labor that provides the home you sit in.

CLYTEMNESTRA

A man's labor killed my daughter, but my son, I think you mean to kill your mother.

ORESTES

You are the killer, not I. You kill yourself.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Then beware the vengeful hellhounds of a mother's curse.

ORESTES

And how would I escape a father's if I failed?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm crying in vain over my own tomb.

ORESTES

The fate of my father marked out your end.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Ah! I suckled this serpent, I gave it life!

ORESTES

Yes, the terror you saw in your dream was true.
You should not have killed, now suffer what you should not.

(Another sequence of murder! ORESTES chases CLYTEMNESTRA into the House. ELECTRA and CHRYS scream. PYLADES both supports and watches the mayhem. ORESTES enters.)

ORESTES

The killers of my father, the desecrator of his House, are dead.
How regal they must have been, seated on their thrones,
And so much in love, even now, judging by their end.
They made their vows and stood by their pledges,
Together they swore to murder my father,
Together they swore they would die. They kept this faith.
Let the Father see, not my father, but the one that sees all,
Let Helios, the sun, the father who sees all, gaze at my mother's foul work.
He will testify that I was right to kill my mother.
As for Aegisthus, there is no need to speak of him,
He died the adulterer's death as set down by law.
Once there was love, but now you see the hatred, the evil.
What was she? A deadly serpent, a venomous viper.

(During the monologue, AGAMEMNON stands as the chains fall off his body. He exits.)⁴⁰³

⁴⁰³ In an earlier draft, Agamemnon remained in chains for the entire show. After I changed my initial plan for double casting during callbacks, I changed the concept to allow Agamemnon to gain freedom once his son avenged his murder. Agamemnon, however, returns to the bathtub in chains in another form at the end of the play.

CHRYIS

You gloat, while I grieve!

ELECTRA

Orestes, you have left us orphans!

CHRYIS

What about us? Where can we go?⁴⁰⁴

ELECTRA

What life can we live with a family destroyed?

CHRYIS

You have ensured Ruin will stay in the House!

ELECTRA

Who'd marry me? Who'd take me as a bride?⁴⁰⁵

CHRYIS

What group of girls will want to dance with me?⁴⁰⁶

ELECTRA

What will happen to us now that you have killed our mother?

ORESTES

Sisters! I have righted the wrong against our father,⁴⁰⁷
And as Apollo prophesied I shall have his throne.

*(A supernatural moment. CLYTEMNESTRA enters with chains. ORESTES imagines that he sees the Furies approach.)*⁴⁰⁸

Ah! Ah! Women, there! Like Gorgons!
Black clad, writhing with snakes!
I can't stay here! I have to go!

⁴⁰⁴ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 1198. How do Electra and Chrys react to Orestes' deceit and their mother's death? Using text from Euripides' *Electra*, the girls weep over how Orestes has ensured their misery will continue.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 1200.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 1159.

⁴⁰⁷ This original line segues the action from Electra's and Chrys' berating to the arrival of Furies.

⁴⁰⁸ Continuing the theme of chains and the cycle of violent tyranny, Clytemnestra enters like the ghost of Banquo to scare Orestes.

ELECTRA

What is it?

CHRYE

What sights whirl you into such a frenzy?

ORESTES

The mother's curse, the hellhounds of hate, they are here!

PYLADES

You are distraught, confused.

ELECTRA

It is the fresh blood on your hands.

CHRYE

She warned you of the curse!

ORESTES

Lord Apollo! They are coming! Closing in!
I can see their eyes dripping with blood!

PYLADES

You must be purified.

CHRYE

The touch of Apollo may free you from this torture.

ELECTRA

Torture well deserved!

ORESTES

You can't see them, but I can, they force me away!
I must go now! Now!*(Exit ORESTES)*PYLADES⁴⁰⁹

Orestes!

CHRYE

⁴⁰⁹ Orestes leaves behind his special traveling companion, but what does he do in his friend's absence? A question that lingers and becomes bastardized at the end of the show.

We have no friends here to help us.⁴¹⁰

ELECTRA

Hades has taken them away from us and we two are left alone.⁴¹¹

PYLADES

You have me. I will wait for Orestes, as he will return one day.

CHRYS

Deception has run amuck in the House.

ELECTRA

Orphaned in the House.

*(ATHENA closes the first act with a lip sync to Young Jean Lee's "I'm Gonna Die."⁴¹²
IPHIGENIA enters. She runs and embraces CLYTEMNESTRA in chains.)⁴¹³*

Intermission.

EUMENIDES

SCENE 11⁴¹⁴

*(ATHENA lip syncs to PWR BTTM's "West Texas"⁴¹⁵ as APOLLO chains CLYTEMNESTRA up.
ORESTES crosses the stage as he's chased. The music is interrupted by the scream of the*

⁴¹⁰ Sophocles. *Electra*, trans. Mary Lefkowitz. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 948-9. What happens to Argos after Orestes leaves? The Furies chase off the heir to the throne and leaves Electra and Chrys alone. In the immediate moments following Orestes' flight, Electra and Chrys must evaluate their new and lonely situation.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 949-50.

⁴¹² It took me a while to find a song to close the act. I finally realized I had been listening to it the entire time. After listening to the titular song in Young Jean Lee's *We're Gonna Die* for Professor Natalya Baldyga's class "How Do You Stage That?", it became a staple of my music playlists. While I love the entire show dearly for its beautiful and quirky stories and message, the music is really fantastic. The cacophony and discordance instruments with the sweet, optimistic melancholy has a perfect tone to underscore Clytemnestra's and Iphigenia's reunion. Not to mention, the song literally repeats the lyric "I'm gonna die," which is great way to have fun with the structure of a trilogy.

⁴¹³ At the end of *Agamemnon*, Electra and Chrys comfort themselves that at least Iphigenia will greet their father in the Underworld. That, however, does not happen since in the following scene Iphigenia binds her father to the tub and taunts him with the story of Io. In this final moment, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia have the reunion in the Underworld originally intended for Agamemnon.

⁴¹⁴ For the most part the following scene is mostly a cut down version of Meineck's *Eumenides*. I restructured it slightly and cut it considerably, but other than that it is mostly words from the original translation.

⁴¹⁵ The initial idea for my thesis came from attending a PWR BTTM concert in Harvard Square in June of 2016. The band's amazingly queer punk pop performance inspired my concept for queer, genderfucked, and

FURIES. APOLLO and the FURIES have some weird duel. He puts them to sleep. ORESTES is left on the stage at the altar/bathtub of APOLLO.)⁴¹⁶

ORESTES

Lord Apollo, you know how not to be unjust,
So learn how not to be neglectful.

APOLLO

(As he talks, APOLLO purifies ORESTES hands in the bathtub.)
Orestes, I will not forsake you, I will protect you until the end,
Your enemies will never receive comfort from me.
You see those foul, frenzied creatures, they are trapped,
I have lulled the disgusting virgins to sleep.
They are the wizened ancient children, repugnant.
They are abhorred by men on earth and despised by the Olympian gods.
So run, flee these creatures, never weaken,
Go to the city of Athena, be her suppliant,
There you will find the judges of your cause,
And we will charm them with words, we will find a way
To finally free you from this ordeal.

ORESTES

You have the power for good, you can save me.

APOLLO

Remember this, never let your mind be overcome by fear.

(Exit ORESTES; exit APOLLO through the doors. The ghost of CLYTEMNESTRA appears. Another moment of supernaturality.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hear me, underworld goddesses,
They charge me with the killings, accuse me,
And the dead are relentless in resentment.
I have no place, I am shunned in shame,
They indict me with the harshest blame,
I who suffered the cruelest pain from my closest kin.
There is no angry god to avenge me,
Slaughtered by these mother-killing hands.
See my wounds – let them tear your hearts!

glittered *Oresteia*. Their song, “West Texas” along with other hits like “Dairy Queen” became an anthem for the summer and my own coming out.

⁴¹⁶ I went through a few different renditions of how to start the Eumenides. After cutting the Pythia’s monologue, it took me a few drafts to consolidate the opening lip sync with the battle between Apollo and the Furies. Before I had split them up into two moments but made the beginning choppy and awkward. Consolidating the moment, allowed for the second act to start off with a bang.

He has gone, just skipped away like some fawn,
 Sprung from the midsts of your hunting net,
 Turning back only to grin and mock you.
 Hear me, I am pleading for my soul!

(The FURIES stir and groan.)

You whine while your man has fled and gone.
 Even suppliants have allies, I have none.

(They stir again.)

Too much sleep, not enough pity for my pain.
 Orestes, the mother-killer, has escaped!

(The FURIES moan.)

You groan, yet sleep. Awake! Awake!

(They moan again.)

So fatigue and sleep have conspired
 To suck the strength of the furious serpent.

Hunt! FURY 1⁴¹⁷

Hunt! FURY 2

Hunt! FURY 3

Hunt him! FURIES

CLYTEMNESTRA

You're preying on a dream, howling dogs,
 Hounding, hunting, chasing blood.
 Wake up! My scorn will stab your hearts,
 A spur to prick the conscience of the just.
 Let him feel the blast of your reeking, bloody breath,
 Bleed him dry and burn him in your stomach's fire.

⁴¹⁷ When originally planning out the adaptation, I knew I wanted three Furies; three was the minimum of an odd number bodies I wanted to play the chthonic femmes. As I cut the script, I just divided up the Chorus' songs among the three of them. I edited and tweaked as I went.

Hunt him down! Waste him away!

FURY 1

Awake!

FURY 1 and 2

Awake!

FURIES

Awake!

FURY 1

Seek out the truth of the dream.

FURY 3

Sisters we have been wronged!

FURY 1

Our prey has slipped the net.

FURY 3

Our victim has fled.

FURY 2

Apollo, you are a thief!

FURY 3

The youth galloped past the ancient spirits.

FURY 2

Your sacred suppliant is a godless man.

FURY 1

How can this be justice?

FURY 3

These new gods!

FURY 1

This is how they behave?

FURY 2

Their power exceeds the bounds of justice.

FURY 1

Their thrones are drenched in blood.

FURY 3
Soaked from head to foot.

FURY 2
He flouts the law.

FURY 3
Puts men before gods.

FURY 1
He destroys the ancient lot of Destiny.

FURY 3
He has wounded us.

FURIES
But the man will not escape.

FURY 1
He can run to the ends of the earth, he'll never be free.

FURY 2
He'll take the mark of murder to his grave.

FURY 3
More blood will come.

FURIES
On his own head.

(Enter APOLLO from the doors.)

APOLLO
Out I say! Get away from my house!
Leave the prophetic chamber,
I'll pierce your guts, and you'll spew the black blood
And scum sucked from men, and choke in the putrid clots.
You belong where justice slaughters men for their crimes,
Where heads are cut off and eyes gouged out,
Where a man's seed is killed by castration
And young boys are mutilated, their bull-spirits crushed.

FURY 1
Lord Apollo, listen, it is our turn to speak.

FURY 2

You are not merely an accessory to this crime.

FURY 3

It was your doing, you bear the blame.

APOLLO

How?

FURY 1

Your oracle told the outcast to kill his mother.

APOLLO

My oracle told him to exact revenge for his father, what of it?

FURY 2

You offered to shelter him.

FURY 1

The blood still on his hands.

APOLLO

I told him to come to my house as a suppliant.

FURY 3

But we brought him here and now you malign us.

APOLLO

You should not come anywhere near my house.

FURY 1

But it is our place!

FURY 3

Our responsibility.

APOLLO

By what authority? Please proclaim your ancient prerogative.

FURY 2

We drive mother-killers from their homes.

APOLLO

And what do you do when a wife kills her husband?

FURY 3

Then the killer would not be spilling kindred blood.

APOLLO⁴¹⁸

Then you demean and dishonor
The marriage vows of Hera and Zeus.

FURY 1

The marriage of a man and woman is set by Destiny.

APOLLO

Your statement discards Aphrodite,
She who seals the most cherished of mortal bonds.

FURY 3

A marrigital bond is defended by Justice.

APOLLO

If you are prepared to allow murder in marriage,
I say the goddess Athena should preside over this case.

FURY 2

We will never let that man be free.

FURIES

Never!

APOLLO

Chase him then, and suffer the consequences.

FURY 3

I will not allow you to argue away our authority.

APOLLO

Authority? If it was offered to me I would refuse it.

FURY 1

Of course.

FURY 3

For you are a mighty god enthroned by Zeus.

FURY 2

But we are forced on by the shedding of mother blood.

⁴¹⁸ As I cut up the scene, I wanted the Furies and Apollo to have a quicker back and forth between them, so I often would break up Apollo's longer chunks with an interjection from a Fury.

*(APOLLO exits. An interlude as FURIES unchain CLYTEMNESTRA.)*⁴¹⁹

SCENE 12⁴²⁰

(At the foot of Athena's statue before her temple. Enter ORESTES.)

ORESTES

Lady Athena, I have come at the command of Apollo,
Greet this outcast with kind good grace.
I am not an untouchable, my hands are clean,
I traveled the earth and spanned the seas,
Following the oracle, the word of Apollo,
Now I'm here, I'll watch and wait for the final judgement.

(Enter the FURIES)

FURY 1

We have him!

FURY 2

Look, at the man-tracks!

FURY 3

Hound him.

FURY 1

Hunt him like a wounded fawn.

FURY 2

The mother-killer must not escape.

FURIES

He must be punished.

(The FURIES see ORESTES)

FURY 2

He's taken sanctuary!

FURY 3

⁴¹⁹ Clytemnestra gets unchained by the Furies at this moment for two reasons. The Underworld goddesses are set to avenge Clytemnestra and therefore actually can cross into the realm of death to unchain her from her punishment. Agamemnon gets freed indirectly by his avenger. The practical reason, however, comes from the actor needing to change from Clytemnestra and Dionysus and this was the convenient time to get her offstage.

⁴²⁰ Similar to the scene prior, I did not augment or supplement Meineck's translation. I mostly cut the trial scene down and divided lines between the Furies.

He wants to wipe his hands clean with a trial!

FURY 1

We will bleed you dry.

FURY 3

Then banish you below.

FURY 2

We'll see you in hell.

FURY 1

You'll suffer the pain that Justice ordains.

ORESTES

The blood on my hands has been worn to sleep,
 The mark of mother-killing has been washed out.
 The fresh stain was purged before Apollo's hearth.
 Now my pure and pious lips call on Athena,
 Queen of this country, to come to my aid.

FURY 2

There is no salvation, not from Apollo, nor Athena.

FURY 3

You will be cast out.

FURY 1 & 3

Adrift.

FURIES

Abandoned.

(Enter ATHENA.)

ATHENA

I see new visitors have come to my land,
 I speak to you all, even you, inhuman, grotesque creatures
 Fatherless by birth, and reared
 By no goddesses known to the gods.

FURY 1

Daughter of Zeus, I will explain,

FURY 2

We are the eternal children of Night.

FURY 3

The curse that dwells deep in the earth.

ATHENA

I know of your kind, I have heard your name.

FURY 1

And you will soon hear of our authority.

ATHENA

If you state your case clearly, I will learn it.

FURY 2

We drive murderers from their homes.

ATHENA

Is this your fugitive, are you hunting him?

FURY 3

Yes, he saw fit to murder his mother.

ATHENA

Was he forced? Did he fear the anger of another?

FURY 1

What could goad a man to kill his own mother?

ATHENA

There are two sides to this, it is only half-heard.

FURY 2

Then question him.

FURY 3

You judge the justice.

ATHENA

Stranger, it is your turn to speak, to answer these charges.

ORESTES

I have powerful proof that I am speaking the truth.

I am an Argive, and you know my father well,

Agamemnon, who crushed the city of Troy.

Returning home he died a miserable death,

Hacked down by my foul-minded mother,

I was in exile then, but when I returned
 I killed the woman who bore me. I do not deny it.
 It was revenge for the murder of my beloved father.
 Apollo was my accomplice, he shares the charge,
 He lashed me with threats of heartwrenching pains
 If I did not take action against the guilty ones.
 You judge if I was just or not. I have made my case.
 Whatever you decide, I will accept your verdict.

ATHENA

Will you give the final say in this case to me?

FURY 3

Yes, respect from you can make our respect due.

(Enter APOLLO.)

APOLLO

I have come to testify under the law.
 This man is my suppliant and sought sanctuary
 At my hearth, I purged him of his blood-guilt.
 I stand as his advocate and share the blame
 For the murder of his mother. I ask you
 To decide this case.

ATHENA

This matter is too great to be decided by a mortal.
 It is not even appropriate that I preside over
 A murder trial that inflames such furious rage.

(Indicating the FURIES)

Because this case has become my responsibility
 I will appoint the exemplary men of my city
 As magistrates over murder, bound by a solemn oath.

FURY 1

Ancient mandates will be usurped
 Should the corrupt plea
 Of the mother-killer prevail.

FURY 2

His crime will unite all mankind
 In anarchy and lawlessness,
 Down through the generations.

ATHENA

Prepare your sworn testimonies to support your cases. I summon the jury of Athenian men!

(The jury pops up from the bathtub. They are ten finger puppets.)⁴²¹

Be silent as the court convenes,
The city will learn my eternal laws,
And litigants will receive a fair trial
And hear a prudent judgement.

(To the FURIES)

Make your case. The prosecution will present its arguments first.
Explain your accusations and set out your charges first.

FURY 1

Although we are many, we will be brief.

FURY 2

Answer our question point for point.

FURY 3

Tell us first, did you kill your mother?

ORESTES

I killed her, I do not deny it.

FURY 1

Will you tell us how you killed her?

ORESTES

I held my sword at her neck and slit her throat.

FURY 2

Who persuaded you to do this?

FURY 1

Who advised it?

ORESTES

It was the god's word, he will testify to that.

⁴²¹ I could not cut the jurors from the show, because I thought it was important to include the presence of a male jury deciding whether it's wrong for a man to kill his mother. I could not, however, get ten extra actors to play the masculine jury so I turned to a side passion of mine: puppets. The finger puppets reduce the jury to objects manipulated by Athena and Apollo. I use manipulation both literally and figuratively, since the actor who plays Pylades is the puppeteer. Puppets also add extra layers of absurdity to the court scene. The trial scene should end up being a trippy, absurd episode of *Law and Order*.

FURY 3

The prophet guided you to kill your own mother?

ORESTES

Yes, and as yet I have no regrets.

FURY 1

You will, when the verdict places you in our grasp.

ORESTES

I have faith in my father, help from beyond the grave.

FURY 2

You trust the dead?

FURY 3

You?

FURY 1

The mother-killer!

ORESTES

Yes, I killed her, because she was tainted with two crimes.

FURY 3

How?

FURY 2

Explain that to the jury.

ORESTES

She murdered her husband and she murdered my father.

FURY 1

But she was absolved by her death, while you still live.

ORESTES

Why did you not drive her out when she was alive?

FURY 2

She was not of the same blood as the man she murdered.

ORESTES

So do I share my mother's blood?

FURY 3

You butcher!

FURY 1

You grew in her womb!

FURY 2

How can you question the bond of blood between mother and child?

ORESTES

The deed was done, I did it, I do not deny it. They must hear my side of this case.

APOLLO

I say to you, and to this great court of Athena,
That he was just. I am the seer and I speak the truth.
No man, woman, or city has ever heard a word
From my seat of prophecy that was not
ordained by Zeus, the Olympian father.
Understand the force behind the just please
And be sure you heed the will of my father,
For no oath can surpass the power of Zeus.

FURY 2

Zeus?

FURY 3

Are you saying Zeus gave you this oracle?

FURY 1

He told Orestes to seek revenge for his father
By disregarding the honor he owed his mother?

APOLLO

He was avenging the death of a nobleman sceptered with Zeus-given honor.
The man was struck down by a woman, but not in battle
by the furious flight of an Amazon's arrow.
No, he returned from the long war and she welcomed him with kindness.
As he stepped into the bath, she threw the shroud around him, tangling him
In the endless, intricate fabric – and then she struck.

FURY 2

You say that Zeus has higher regard for a father's destiny,
And yet he placed his own father, old Cronus, in chains.

FURY 3

This seems to contradict your argument.

FURY 1

I call on the jurors to witness this.

APOLLO

You repulsive hags! The gods detest you!
Chains can be broken, there is a remedy
And countless ways to be set free.
But once the dust has soaked up a man's blood
He is gone forever, nothing can bring him back.

FURY 1

Look at how you justify his defense!

FURY 2

He spilled his own mother's blood on the ground.

FURY 3

And you would have him home in Argos at his father's house?

APOLLO⁴²²

Then learn the truth, the one named mother
Is not the child's true parent but the nurturer
Of the new sown seed. Man mounts to create life,
Whereas woman is a stranger fostering a stranger,
Nourishing the young, unless a god blights the birth.
I have proof that there can be a father without a mother,
Proof that what I say is true,
There stands your witness:
(*Indicating ATHENA*)
The child of Zeus. She never grew in the darkness of a womb,
And no goddess could have borne such a child.

FURY 3

This youth rides tramples over his elders.

APOLLO

We have shot all our defensive bolts.

FURY 1

But we will wait to hear the verdict and then decide if this city will incur our wrath.

ATHENA

Now my task is to make the last judgement.

⁴²² Apollo's following lines are the patriarchal climax of the entire *Oresteia*. At this point, the trial scene should be moving incredibly fast and gotten to a climax of absurdity that this line sounds even more ridiculous and inane.

I was born of no mother, and I defer to the male
 In all things with all my heart, except for marriage,
 As I will always be the child of my father.
 Thus, I cannot give precedence to the woman's death:
 She murdered her husband, the guardian of the House;
 So I cast my vote for Orestes.
 If the vote is split Orestes will be the winner.
 Now the jurymen proceed with the count.

(The jury casts its vote. The urn is brought to ATHENA.)

ORESTES

Apollo, lord of the light, what will be decided?

FURY 2

Dark Mother Night, are you watching?

ORESTES

Is it death at the end of a rope, or will I see the light of life?

FURY 3

Is it the end for us or a new blow to our authority?

APOLLO

Have respect for Justice as you divide the votes.
 An ill-judged verdict could cause great harm,
 And a single vote can restore a mighty House.

ATHENA

Each side has received the same number of votes.
 This man is acquitted the charge of murder.

APOLLO

Athena, you inherit a new ally, today.
 Both he and his descendants will be true to you forever,
 The generations bonded in a covenant of faith.

ORESTES

Athena, you have saved my House!
 I was denied the land of my fathers,
 But you have restored me to my home.
 The Greeks will say, "The Man is Argive again.
 He holds his father's House by the grace of Athena
 And Apollo, ordained by the Zeus, the Savior."

SCENE 13⁴²³

(*Orestes and Apollo triumphantly leave. The FURIES work themselves into a rage.*)

ATHENA

Ancient goddesses, although you have lost your case, I have a consolation for you.
I will provide a home for you underneath my city.

FURY 1⁴²⁴

You young gods have ridden over the ancient ways.

FURY 3

Wrenched them from our grasp.

FURY 2

We are dishonored

FURY 1

And dejected!

FURY 3

Our anger rises to ravage the land.

ATHENA

Be persuaded not to bear this burden or grief.
You were not defeated, the votes were even,
It was an honest verdict, there is no disgrace.

FURY 1

We must suffer this?

FURY 3

All is rage

FURY 2

Breathe the fury!

FURIES

⁴²³ From here on out, the adaptation really becomes my own invention. I use the ending of the *Oresteia* as a template but rebuild the structure and rewrite the ending. I play with elements of Athenian tragedy and use inspiration from Euripides' *Bacchae*. I struggled to write the ending and used trial and error with closure of the trilogy. The following scene continues to take the absurdity of the trial scene and take it even further. Athena dismisses, accelerates, and pushes the ending of the *Oresteia* onto the Furies. In Aeschylus's version, Athena victoriously persuades the Furies to submit their will to her patriarchal city but my Furies refuse to acknowledge Athena's ending.

⁴²⁴ Using inspiration from the Choral verses, the Furies scream for Mother Night and their loss. I, however, repurposed, rewrote, and added many parts to their cries.

Ai, Mother Night!

ATHENA

Furies find peace! Remain beneath my city where my people will sacrifice first rites
Of birth and marriage to them forevermore.⁴²⁵

FURY 1

Birth.

FURY 2

Marriage.

FURY 3

Undermined!

FURY 2

Shattered!

FURY 1

Disfigured!

FURIES

The ancient ways.

ATHENA

Athenians will honor you in your new home beneath our city streets.

FURY 2

Ancient wisdom buried deep down under this land!

FURY 1

Ignored!

FURY 3

Wasted!

FURY 1

Out of sight!

FURY 2

Out of mind!

⁴²⁵ It is nearly laughable in the *Eumenides* that Athena has the audacity to offer first rites of birth and marriage to the Furies. After Athena oversaw a case that completely rewrote maternal rights, she now offers the Furies a place of honor for the Furies. Although the original Furies accept this honor, my Furies react poorly to the cavalier Athena.

	FURIES
Ai! Mother Night! Hear our screams!	
	ATHENA
Enough!	
	FURIES
<i>Grumblings.</i> ⁴²⁶	
	ATHENA
My verdict has rung out! You have a new home. The trilogy has ended!	
	FURIES
Ai! Ai! Ai!	
	FURY 1
An ending? No!	
	ATHENA
It is time to celebrate!	
	FURY 3
Celebrate what?	
	FURY 2
Clytemnestra's loss?	
	FURY 1
Matricide gone unpunished?	
	ATHENA
We shall have a satyr play to finish off the night! ⁴²⁷	
	FURY 2
Desecrating our authority!	
	FURY 3
Marring birth and marriage.	

⁴²⁶ As I wrote the ending of the script, I wanted to give my actors and myself room to experiment in the rehearsal room. I also was unsure of how the actors would create Furies, so I added the word “grumblings” as a stand in for whatever angry, distraught noises we generated in rehearsal.

⁴²⁷ Tragic trilogies were in fact tetralogies that included a fourth act of a satyr play where a farcical show would cap off the day with phallic revelry. When taking the end of the play to new levels of extreme absurdity, I really wanted to shove masculinity and phalli down the audience’s throat before a femme explosion.

FURY 1

Traumatizing ancient ways!

FURIES

Ai! Ai! Scorn, disdain, anger, etc.

ATHENA

According to one extant line, the satyr play should be about Menelaus and Proteus.⁴²⁸

FURY 3

Who?

FURY 2

The son of Poseidon?

ATHENA

Exactly, no one knows who Proteus is!⁴²⁹ So we shall have the homecoming of Menelaus.⁴³⁰

FURY 2

The man who waged a war like a dog over a bone?

FURY 1

Mocking a man because he lost his wife?

ATHENA

And his victorious return with his wife, Helen!

FURY 3

Athena, you want to taunt Helen?

FURY 1

A woman fought over as if she belonged to two men!

FURY 2

You will ridicule the woman auctioned into marriage and stolen into another?

FURY 3

⁴²⁸ In the growing absurdity, Athena breaks the fourth wall. She starts to make comments that directly reference the material and the show.

⁴²⁹ I had to look up who Proteus was when researching the satyr play, and if I had to look him up then no contemporary audience wants to watch a satyr play about him.

⁴³⁰ The image of Helen chained to chaise lounge in Mary Zimmerman's *Odyssey* has always stuck with me. The ugliness of retrieving a wife from a ten-year war only creates question of how the two lived in Sparta after the war.

I thought you defered to the male in all things, except for marriage?

ATHENA

And I will belong to all things male, including the heteropatriarchal narrative.⁴³¹

FURY 1

Do you not hear your own words?

FURY 2

Mother Night hear this defamation!

ATHENA

Due to issues with double casting, low audition turnout, and budget limitations, we will need one of you to play Helen.⁴³²

FURY 2

One of us?

ATHENA

Thank you for volunteering!

FURY 2

You will make a mockery of me?

FURY 1

A mockery of us!

FURY 3

Humiliate us!

FURY 1

This is how you honor us?

ATHENA

Let the satyr play begin!

SATYR PLAY SCENE 14

⁴³¹ Another moment where Athena breaks the fourth wall, her satirical bite only drives the absurd energy of the piece forward.

⁴³² These are all actual reasons why I needed a Fury to play Helen. The line used to continue on to say, “But hey, at least we weren’t kicked out of the theatre this time” as a reference to an event concerning another show I directed at Tufts. I cut it, however, after my cast informed me my bitterness would have done more to confuse the audience than to say anything of substance.

(A grotesque satyr play begins.⁴³³ The SATYR, our Menelaus, enters out of nowhere with a large phallus dangling between his goat legs. FURY 2 is our Helen.⁴³⁴ ATHENA lip syncs to a campy discotech song.⁴³⁵ At the climax, the FURIES finally have enough and begin to turn on the SATYR. The SATYR snatches ATHENA's wig and exits. ATHENA chases after, exits.)

FURIES (A jumbling crescendo of anger and humiliation. Suggested words below.)⁴³⁶

Ai!

Humiliation.

Disrepute.

Abhorrence

Ai!

Scandal!

Mother Night!

Shame!

Cursed!

⁴³³ I decided to make this moment a grotesque burlesque. Tufts has a certain fascination with burlesque thanks to the dance group (although it is arguable what they do is actual burlesque). I talked with a friend, Claire Mieher, who is involved with Burlesque and is also a fellow Classics major about choreographing a burlesque number to dramatize Menelaus' homecoming with Helen. She instantly agreed and we discussed why I wanted to include burlesque for the satyr play. Many burlesque performers find it empowering and there are figures like Dita Von Teese who celebrate the art. It, however, can have women still become sexual objects for men. The sexual component of burlesque helps further disrespect the outcome of the trial. The dance, however also includes two masculine bodies as the focus of the dance, so to quote Peaches' "Dick in the Air," "we have been shaking our tits for years, so let's switch positions." The satyr plays features men dancing around, one with a large phallus. They were not as coy as the burlesque dancers who make an art of strip teases. Playing with the two forms, I wanted to create a moment that is grotesquely sexual to add to the level of absurdity in the final moments of the play.

⁴³⁴ The satyr play existed in a very different form before casting. The Satyr did not even exist before callbacks, but during Lombard's callback I had the sudden urge to cast him as an impish satyr. Luckily Ciba was in the room and instantly agreed to add another character and costume to the show. I decided to add Fury 2 into the satyr play after casting Murphy who loves his involvement with Tufts' Burlesque troupe and is always vogueing in the corner.

⁴³⁵ It took me a while to find the right music for this moment. I initially thought about using a song used in my favorite "Lip Sync for Your Life" on *RuPaul's Drag Race* in season three between Delta Work and Manila Luzon, but Donna Summer's "MacArthur Park" did not end up working with my vision. I spent a day looking on Spotify to find explicit and ridiculous songs. I discovered Jonny McGovern's "I Saw Your Cock on Craigslist." McGovern is a gay entertainer who I first found on Youtube to watch his show called *Hey Qween* that primarily interviews drag queens and others affiliated with *Drag Race*. His horrific song in the style of club remixes dramatizes how a gay male relationship fell apart when one man discovered a picture of his partner's penis on Craigslist. I wanted to recontextualize the toxic masculinity and slut shaming of Helen in the realm of problematic white gay culture. McGovern's song could not, however, be the entirety of the burlesque, so I borrowed part of Tyra Bank's viral fit from *America's Next Top Model*. I had the idea to include the viral sensation after watching a lip sync by Trixie Mattel, a drag queen from Season 7 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, in a London club on Youtube. Her lip sync performance of RuPaul's song, "Read U, Wrote U," featuring the top four contestants from *RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars* season 2, gets interrupted by Banks' infamous tantrum during Roxxy Andrew's embarrassing verse. The tantrum ends segues the Burlesque from McGovern's song to Peaches' "Dick in the Air." Professor Stephan Pennington suggested I look at Peaches for music inspiration. Peaches song adds a femme voice of empowerment to the disenfranchised Furies and gives them an opportunity to regain agency.

⁴³⁶ This is another moment that I wanted the Furies to be able to experiment and devise their reactions, movements, words, and sounds.

*Foul young gods!
Ancient ways turned over!
Disgraced!
Destroyed!*

(The sound of a pipe, as the SATYR skips back on wearing the wig of ATHENA.)

FURY 3

You goat boy!

FURY 2

Your giant dick flapping at our discontent!⁴³⁷

FURY 3

Getting off on the abolishment of order!

(The FURIES began to circle. Antagonizing the SATYR.)

SATYR

Goat scream

(A gay explosion. DIONYSUS, a genderfucked dominatrix appears. They commune with the FURIES.)⁴³⁸

DIONYSUS

Congratulations, Athena on your justice system. But I believe you've been snatched.⁴³⁹

FURIES

(Screeches, moans, cusses) Bacchus, Liber, Anax Agreus, Bromios, Taurokerôs Theos, etc.⁴⁴⁰

DIONYSUS

⁴³⁷ In case anyone was wondering if I wrote this line myself, I did. Unfortunately, I could not find a Greek tragedian who got this graphic and crass, but we can call it an homage to Aristophanes.

⁴³⁸ From the conception of the project, I knew I wanted Dionysus to appear as a genderfucked deity. The god often appears in mythology and theatre mixing gender. From my genderqueer and genderfucked inspirations, Dionysus became the perfect vehicle to bring a genderfucked presence into the show. The dominatrix came about in one of many renditions of the ending. The idea of chaining up Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Apollo/Tiresias suggested elements of BDSM, therefore I honored the impulse and character Dionysus as a dominatrix.

⁴³⁹ Dionysus enters and automatically introduces a new vernacular. They continue the Furies's lower register of words with drag slang. Drag queens often to use the phrase "my wig was snatched" as a way of saying they were blown away by something. Dionysus mocks Athena in this moment by playing with drag queen language.

⁴⁴⁰ The third moment I gave the Furies to experiment. The whispers of Dionysus, their other names, and things related to the god allowed a moment of improvisation for the rehearsal room.

Here: I am: I, Dionysus.⁴⁴¹

FURY 1

Child of Zeus and of Semele, midwifed by lightning fire.⁴⁴²

FURY 3

The Twice Born.⁴⁴³

FURY 2

Another born from Zeus.

FURY 3

Born from his manly womb.⁴⁴⁴

DIONYSUS

I have heard your cries. The sound of avenging the death of a mother.

I come from my mother's smoking ruins, the thunder-blasted tomb, destroyed by Zeus' flame, still burning. The mark of a mother struck down.⁴⁴⁵

FURY 1

The mark of a victim to a god's lust.

FURY 2

Zeus sacrificed your mother.

DIONYSUS

Murdered my mother.

FURY 3

To save her from Hera's wrath.

DIONYSUS

To save himself.

⁴⁴¹ Euripides. *Bacchae*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 1. The following lines come from Dionysus' origin story in the *Bacchae*. Not only does Dionysus represent the theatre and queer gender, they also have a story of a mother wrongfully struck down because of masculine interest. The actor who plays Clytemnestra appears as Dionysus not only to mimic how Agamemnon and Aegisthus also play gods, but also to reclaim Dionysus as a god of fertility and liberated women.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 2-3.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 526.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 527.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 6-10.

FURY 1

She left you, a tiny child, before your time.⁴⁴⁶

DIONYSUS

Zeus hid me in his chambers of birthing, his thigh, to hide me from his wronged wife.
I sprung forth the bull-horned god crowned with snakes for a crown.⁴⁴⁷

FURY 2

Ai! Mother Night!

FURY 3

Dionysus, young god, you have found us defeated.

FURY 2

Ruined.

DIONYSUS

Children of Mother Night, the night is still young. Join my Bacchantes, I can sneak you out of Athens and away from Athena, and we can still right some wrongs.

FURY 3

Your followers are...

FURY 1

Like freshly caught wild animal...

FURY 2

Crazed and hysterical...

DIONYSUS

They are liberated! They follow me at their own choice. In Bacchic ecstasy they are free to live how they want, but keep their convictions if they so wish.

FURY 2

A parade of partiers is going to avenge Clytemnestra?

FURY 3

A goat boy is going to take down Orestes, the mother-killer?

DIONYSUS

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 95-7. Dionysus also has the Athenian ideal birth from the male womb, but unlike Athena I include how Dionysus' mother died on their behalf.

In time! Follow me and I will seat you on an altar beside gleaming thrones.⁴⁴⁸ Goat boy, my whip!

(The SATYR fetches their whip.)

FURIES

Ai! Mother Night!

(The SATYR gives DIONYSUS their whip.)

DIONYSUS

If Athena belongs to man for everything except for marriage, let me defer to everything other than the masculine.

(With a crack of the wip, a Bacchanal gay explosion begins to “The Revolution Will Not Be Masculinized.”⁴⁴⁹ APOLLO enters and, as in the Bacchae, APOLLO becomes Pentheus and the FURIES become the bacchants. APOLLO is transformed into TIRESIAS. FURY 1 rebinds a blindfolded TIRESIAS to the bathtub with chains.⁴⁵⁰ FURY 2 and FURY 3 transform back to ELECTRA and CHRYS. ORESTES enters. The world is disoriented. ORESTES returns with same fervor he left the trial and unaware that his homeland has greatly changed.)

ORESTES

The shores of Argos! The doors of my father’s House.

TIRESIAS

*I see two moons, and Argos itself,
The House, looks double,
And you, you like a bull:
I see horns growing on your head.
You’ve changed into a bull – or were you always?⁴⁵¹*

⁴⁴⁸ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. In *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 806. Originally a line Athena says to placate the Furies became appropriate for Dionysus to offer the Furies “gleaming thrones” in the new femme revolution.

⁴⁴⁹ I became fascinated with Taylor Mac and Judy’s work at the end of the semester in the fall of 2016. After discovering Judy’s play, *Hir*, I listened to Mac’s *Be(A)st of Taylor Mac* and fell in love with the parody of Gil Scott-Heron’s “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.” The song became crucial to my concept of the play since Electra and Chrys stop the cycle of masculine violence and their feminine revolution ends the trilogy.

⁴⁵⁰ I used Euripides’ *Bacchae* as an inspiration for the end of the play. I remember in my high school AP Latin class, my teacher, Wendy Morris, pointed to an allusion of the bacchants in the *Aeneid* and informed the class we would hear all about the bacchae in college. That summer, I read Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History* where college students conduct a bacchanal in the woods and I decided to become a Classics major. My decision did not come from sentimentality, but an actual curiosity and fascination with the bacchae. Obviously, I am one of many artists who found inspiration from the Greek ritual. The crazed feminine celebration seemed a perfect end not only to a repurposed tragedy and my college career.

⁴⁵¹ Euripides. *Bacchae*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 918-22. Pentheus

FURY 1 (*echoing voiceover*)⁴⁵²

*Veo dos lunas, y el mismo Argos,
La Casa, se ve doble,
Y tú, tú te vez como un toro.
Veo cuernos creciendo dentro de tu cabeza.
Te has transformado en un toro – o has sido uno siempre?*⁴⁵³

ORESTES

Sisters!

ELECTRA

Do you not listen to Tiresias?

CHRYS

The Theban speaks of a new order.

ORESTES

Will you not run to me and embrace me?

ELECTRA

They are a gifted seer granted the gift after living multiple genders.⁴⁵⁴

CHRYS

Thrown across the binary after discovering twinned-snakes in the woods.⁴⁵⁵

says this line when he exits his house clothed as a woman. He becomes transformed in women's clothing and under the spell of Dionysus. In its place here, the imagery of the bull recalls how Cassandra called Agamemnon the bull and seeing double refers to Electra and Chrys.

⁴⁵² I flip the order of prophecies heard earlier in *Agamemnon*. Cassandra use to speak her Spanish prophecies as Apollo controlled and spoke through her. Now, Fury 1 speaks through Tiresias. Iphigenia/Cassandra/Fury 1 gains agency and domination over their oppressor, Agamemnon/Apollo.

⁴⁵³ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

⁴⁵⁴ Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, IN: Indiana, 1983), 316-41. When I looked at the *Bacchae* for inspiration, I found Tiresias. Tiresias gained their power of sight after they discovered mating snakes in the woods not once but twice. Each time they found the snakes, they switched gender. After going from male to female to male, Zeus and Hera asked him who enjoyed sex more. He, of course, said women because they get the pleasure of penetration and also giving pleasure to the penetrator. Hera then blinded them, but Zeus gave them the power of prophecy. I definitely wanted to include this story of a genderfucked seer in the show within the show. I originally borrowed more heavily of Ovid's origin story for Tiresias but it unnecessarily dragged out the end of the show. I condensed their story into two lines that honor the genderqueer experience of the seer without going into full explanation.

⁴⁵⁵ Tiresias discovery of twinned snakes mating in the woods, gave me an idea of how to bring the trilogy to a new end. Clytemnestra and Orestes both get called snakes, and Dionysus has a crown of them. Electra and Chrys become twinned snakes to carry on the family likeness, but also to parallel the twinned-throned generals, Agamemnon and Menelaus.

ELECTRA

Their service is a gift from Dionysus.

TIRESIAS

*The bull-calf grown into a bull,
Returns home to find two snakes.
The snakes coiled to turn out
The bull like Inachus to Io.⁴⁵⁶*

FURY I (*echoing voiceover*)

*El toro nace dentro de otro toro,
Vuelve a su hogar a encontrar dos serpientes.
Las serpientes enrolladas para salir
El toro como Inachus a Io.⁴⁵⁷*

ORESTES

Athena has granted me an acquittal.

CHRYS

We're glad of your safety.

ELECTRA

But we reject her executive order.⁴⁵⁸

ORESTES

She has restored me to the throne.

ELECTRA

Has she unseated us?

ORESTES

Apollo has told me I am to marry Helen's daughter.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ I wrote this prophecy and invoke Io and Inachus one last time. The agency goes from the ignorant father to the sovereign daughters.

⁴⁵⁷ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

⁴⁵⁸ I wrote this line as a blunt response to President Donald Trump and his onslaught of executive orders.

⁴⁵⁹ Euripides. *Orestes*, trans. John Peck and Frank Nisetich (New York: Oxford, 1995), 1720-1. In one of my least favorite readings, Apollo in a *deus ex machina* absolves Orestes of his crimes in the Oresteia. Not only does he give innocence to Orestes, but praises him for ridding the world of two horrible women – Helen and Clytemnestra – and then gives him Helen's daughter, Hermione, as a wife. Apollo also gives Electra to Pylades. Euripides' Apollo goes further than just absolving Orestes' of his crimes but rewards him by handing women over as property. I decided to include this horrific part of Orestes' story, so Electra and Chrys could turn him down and reject Apollo's prophecy.

CHRYS

That may be difficult.

ELECTRA

The son of Achilles, her fiance, may object.⁴⁶⁰

CHRYS

As might she.

ORESTES

And Electra, you are to marry Pylades.⁴⁶¹

ELECTRA

I do not prescribe to beasiality.

ORESTES

Pylades?

(The satyr reappears.)

SATYR

Baah.⁴⁶²

ORESTES

Pylades? What has happened to you?

TIRESIAS

*You are not blind I tell you now that you are walking from Delusion.
Do not blame fate or god but blame yourself.*

FURY 1 *(echoing voiceover)*

*Tu no eres ciego te digo yo ahora que tu estas caminando de Delusión.
No culpe al destino ni al dios pero culpesé a usted mismo.⁴⁶³*

ELECTRA

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 1723.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 1726-7.

⁴⁶² In the upside down world of a feminine Argos, the double casting further gets confused. Just as Fury 1 blends into both Iphigenia and Cassandra, Tiresias with Agamemnon and Apollo, and Fury 2 and 3 with Electra and Chrys, Pylades blurs with the Satyr.

⁴⁶³ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

Brother, you are exiled.⁴⁶⁴

ORESTES

Under what authority?

CHRYIS

The one we took when you deceived us and then left us.

ELECTRA

We rule twinned-throned. Just as Agamemnon and Menelaus did before us.⁴⁶⁵

ORESTES (*finally hearing his sisters.*)

You insufferable creatures, I ask you,
Is this the best, is this for the city's safety,
To be ruled by a tribe of women?
The throne of my father is supposed to be mine.

(Just as ORESTES is about to lose his temper and draw his swords. FURY 1 step forward. There is a similar supernatural moment to the end of The Libation Bearers.)⁴⁶⁶

ORESTES

My mother's curse. It is here.

ELECTRA

As will it remain.

CHRYIS

A mark of her lineage.

ELECTRA

Just as Io gave birth to a line of kings in Argos, Clytemnestra has born new rulers.⁴⁶⁷

ORESTES

Not in my father's home.

⁴⁶⁴ Part of me wanted the sisters to kill their brother to avenge their mother's death, but I fought the urge so women could end the cycle of violence. When masculine energy continued the violence, femme authority stops the cycle and shows restraint and mercy.

⁴⁶⁵ The twinned-snakes prophecy becomes true when the sisters decide to rule as Agamemnon and Menelaus ruled.

⁴⁶⁶ The rest of the scene draws upon other moments and lines in the show. I borrow mostly from Clytemnestra as it is her power which now speaks through her daughters. Iphigenia gets her moment to establish her authority within the home as Fury 1 steps forward to intimidate Orestes.

⁴⁶⁷ The story of Io comes full circle when Electra refers to her for the last time.

ELECTRA

His House fell when Iphigenia died.

ORESTES

I will curse you, you wretched hags. Now suffer what you should not.

(ORESTES draws his sword. The SATYR jumps in front ORESTES. The SATYR releases a large supernatural screech that is a distorted curse from DIONYSUS)

SATYR

Beware the vengeful hellhounds of a mother's curse.⁴⁶⁸
Rising like the smoke from a thunder-blasted mother's tomb.⁴⁶⁹

(The SATYR collapses and DIONYSUS is revealed in full power and horrification to ORESTES. ORESTES exts.)

TIRESIAS

*This trial of an ancient vendetta.
He could not have escaped his destiny.
Tangling around him, the vast net.⁴⁷⁰*

FURY 1 (*echoing voiceover*)

*Este juicio de una antigua venganza.
El no pudo ser escapado de su destino.
Enredado en él, amplia red.⁴⁷¹*

CHRYS

What we did had to be done. That is the word of a woman if any care to heed it.⁴⁷²

ELECTRA

In the Furies's name we honor and give thanks.

CHRYS

⁴⁶⁸ Aeschylus. *Libation Bearers*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 924. This line blends lines repeated earlier in the play and from different texts – *The Libation Bearers* and the *Bacchae*. Clytemnestra warns her son of the curse from matricide right before Orestes kills her, and Dionysus mentions his mother's smoldering tomb earlier to the Furies.

⁴⁶⁹ Euripides. *Bacchae*, trans. Emily Wilson. In *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, edited by Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 7-9.

⁴⁷⁰ Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1375-82. I ripped this line straight from Clytemnestra's monologue directly following Agamemnon's murder.

⁴⁷¹ Translation by Jacquie Bonnet and Luisa Inclán.

⁴⁷² Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*, in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1558, 1661.

Whose power surges through the souls of women.⁴⁷³

ELECTRA

You and I hold the power of this house. We will set things right once and for all.⁴⁷⁴

(ELECTRA and CHRYS enter the house to echoes of “The Revolution Will Not Be Masculinized.” TIRESIAS stays in the tub like a panicky small bird caught in a bush,⁴⁷⁵ as DIONYSUS and FURY I coldly sit on the lip.⁴⁷⁶)

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 1470.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 1670-2.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 1316. Cassandra specifically says she will not be a panicky bird before she enters the House to meet her death. In a complete role reversal, Tiresias rolls in the bathtub just as Cassandra swore she would not.

⁴⁷⁶ I repeat the image of Iphigenia coldly sitting on the tub from the end of *Agamemnon* to create more repetition and intratextual references.

Directing Concept

Queering the narrative of the *Oresteia* goes beyond changing the text of the trilogy, but also experimenting with how it is performed. There is no “authentic way” to perform Greek theatre, but there is a way to combat the expectation of what Greek theatre might look like. For some, it involves columns, masks, and togas.⁴⁷⁷ The changes made in the script needed to find support in the performances and aesthetics of the show that continue to challenge preconceived notions of staging and gender. Listening and looking at the work of drag queens and queer punk pop bands guided a vision for the world of the play, not only because of what they sounded and looked like, but also because of the messages in their art. Many queer performers have a biting punk edge to their art, but behind the teeth their art stands for rebellion, respect, love, and a twinge of sadness. In season nine of *RuPaul's Drag Race* came out, I became obsessed and searched for pictures, interviews, and videos of one of the queens: Sasha Velour. In one her videos posted on her YouTube channel, she says,

What drag does is it takes normative narratives, the songs we hear around us every day, the imagery, the characters, that we surround ourselves with and it squeezes our fabulous little queer bodies into it. And it shifts the meaning of that culture of those normative stories, of stories of love, of beauty and we put our bodies into it and it makes it weird and makes it fabulous.⁴⁷⁸

Velour, a high concept and cerebral queen from Brooklyn known for her trademark stylized unibrow, uses drag as performance art to make statements that goes beyond lip syncing to pop songs in clubs to create art that addresses queer experiences and how even the single act of a man

⁴⁷⁷ Togas are Roman piece of clothing, but often people conflate the cultures of Greco-Roman world.

⁴⁷⁸ Sasha Velour, “Sasha Velour on “What Drag Does” | NIGHTGOWNS,” YouTube video, 3:31, January 21, 2017.

putting on a dress, a simple gendered item, can be groundbreaking in so many ways.⁴⁷⁹ When developing this show, I looked to queer performers for insight on resistance and innovation in original intent.

Recently, PWR BTTM – the Massachusetts-originated, Bard college alumni, queer pop punk band, PWR BTTM – has had national success and even appeared in interviews and features printed in *The New York Times*.⁴⁸⁰ When I was in the beginning stages of this project, I attended one of their concerts in June of 2016. Their thirty-minute set completely rewrote my concept. Before I entered the venue, I was intending to write a thesis that looked at women in post-conflict environments in Euripides extant work, but PWR BTTM inspired me to tackle Aeschylus’s anti-femme work with glitter and thrift store drag. The duo – Ben Hopkins and Liv Bruce – are both genderqueer musicians who appear on stage in genderfucked drag covered in glitter.⁴⁸¹ They marry thrift shop drag with an explosive amount of glitter and stickers. Hopkins appears in a more stylized drag oozing in glitter, while Bruce is a quieter presence in a more reserved femme look. Their high energy performance was met with passionate and enthusiastic response from the audience. The duo reminded the audience of their goals to maintain a safe place for their audience members and to respect everyone’s personal space in the mosh pit.⁴⁸² In

⁴⁷⁹ I use the term “high concept” to refer to Velour’s highly layered and intellectual work. Drawing upon themes of modern and performance art, she creates work that goes beyond surface level aesthetics and plays with perceptions of beauty and cultural references ranging from Keith Haring, Marlene Dietrich, Judith Butler, and more.

⁴⁸⁰ Caramanica, Jon. “Review: PWR BTTM Is Part Theater, Part Punk, Entirely Captivating,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Jan. 9, 2017.

⁴⁸¹ Marinucci, Mimi, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (London: Zed, 2010), 126. “The term genderqueer is used to refer to all manner of identities and sexualities that expose the ‘mismatch between sex, gender and sexual desire’ (Jagose, 1996, p.3) for those who are unwilling or unable to define themselves in terms of the established binary”

⁴⁸² Bruce, Liv, and Hopkins, Ben. *Pity Sex w/ PWR BTTM, Petal at The Sinclair*. The Sinclair, Cambridge, MA. June 9, 2016. A “mosh pit” refers to the crowded area of a dance floor closest to the stage.

an interview later that summer, Hopkins and Bruce spoke about gender politics specifically in light of North Carolina's infamous bathroom law that regulated that people could only use the bathroom that corresponds to their gender at birth. The band became very vocal about requiring all venues to provide accessible gender neutral bathrooms in their riders.⁴⁸³ In the wake of the, the band stood out as a voice against the discriminatory laws and advocated for the trans and gender-nonconforming community. Using their platform, this band mixes rebellion with fun and respect. Their form of rebellion involves donning pounds of makeup in the messiest way possible to sing bops like "I Wanna Boi" about wanting "a boy who finds it sexy when my lipstick bleeds" or "Dairy Queen" about putting on "makeup in the parking lot / and get so famous we both get shot / but right now / I'm in the shower."⁴⁸⁴ Many of their songs are fun and upbeat, but often speak to larger themes and issues. In "Serving Goffman," Hopkins sings, "I want to put the whole world in drag / But I'm starting to realize it's already like that."⁴⁸⁵ The good natured rebellious spirit of PWR BTTM speaks to an aspect of queer culture that understands and deeply resents the inflexible structures of the heteronormative, patriarchal society. The line – somewhat reminiscent of RuPaul's famous line, "You're born naked, and the rest is drag" – became my inspiration in reinventing the *Oresteia*. Taking their energy and message to heart, I reconceived the plan for my thesis to use this queer punk rock aesthetic of glitter, Goodwill drag, and gender politics to repurpose the *Oresteia*.

⁴⁸³ Kill Rock Stars, and Portia Sabin. "Pearl Jam / PWR BTTM / Tune-Yards / Zac Brown Band." *The Future of What*. Podcast audio. July 26, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2017.

⁴⁸⁴ PWR BTTM. "I Wanna Boi" and "Dairy Queen" in *Ugly Cherries*, Father/Daughter Records, 2015, *Spotify*.

⁴⁸⁵ PWR BTTM. "Serving Goffman" and "Dairy Queen" in *Ugly Cherries*, Father/Daughter Records, 2015, *Spotify*.

In rehearsal, we developed a vocabulary for different types of drag performances: the capitalized Drag and the lowercase drag. Athena's performance belonged to the capitalized Drag, referring to the structured art form of drag; she therefore lip synced and was given eyebrows painted like Divine.⁴⁸⁶ Yet, other characters played with lowercase drag, exploring how masculine bodies wear femme clothing and femme bodies wear masculine clothing, but are not in the highly stylized, overtop fashion of a drag king or queen. This informality, which goes beyond just the clothing people wear, but impacted the characterization of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. Both were meant to demonstrate what it means to be a woman and a man in society from the quiet, dutiful wife to the proud, strong general, and also what it means to cross the boundaries of their gender. Agamemnon plays the role of an arrogant, prideful man, while his wife plays the role of an attentive and loving homemaker. Clytemnestra then adopts more masculine qualities as she combats her father and reigns over Argos. Because the performance of gender is so coded in our society, queer art can distort, subvert, and parody the meaning of those coded gender roles. Queer performers such as RuPaul and PWR BTTM continuously question and remind audiences that gender is a merely performance, one that includes wearing specific clothing and subscribing to defined characteristics.⁴⁸⁷

In the continuum of messy drag, Taylor Mac also has a unique performance of drag that continues to create original work that challenges conception of the world around us. Judy (Mac's preferred pronoun) breaks from more traditional forms of drag for a more theatrical, cabaret, and

⁴⁸⁶ Divine, Queen of the Filth, was a drag queen made famous for her roles in John Water's movies in the 1970s and 80s. Her iconic eyebrows inspire drag queens to this day including, my Goddess of Filth, Athena.

⁴⁸⁷ Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 34. Gender is not a specific entity but rather acts that respond to societal expectations of gender expression. Performing gender involves subconscious and conscious choices to adhere and reaffirm (or reject!) societal standards for subscribed ideals that relate to gender and sex.

performance art version of drag that include a lot of glitter, haphazard makeup, and costuming made from found objects. I fell in love with Mac's crazy energy while listening to Judy's *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac* after reading *Hir* in class.⁴⁸⁸ The recording of the one-person show accompanied by a sole ukulele and a strange, animated voice with a surprisingly impressive range and bravado combats Bush-era politics only as a rebellious queer performer can. Following the presidential election of 2016, Mac's songs found new meaning to millennial who came of during the Obama administration.⁴⁸⁹ I became enthralled with two songs on the album: "Alright" and "The Revolution Will Not be Masculinized." The first song is actually the finale, where Mac dramatizes an overdue phone call with an old-time friend. Mac weaves the humor and sorrow of a long conversation with a good friend as they catch up over past relationships, funny stories, sad stories, and politics. Judy quotes a geriatric drag queen, Queen Flawless Mother Sabrina, who gives great advice, including "Taylor, if it's not glued, it's taped" and "Taylor, we don't care what other people think about us, we only care what we think of other people!"⁴⁹⁰ The most important quote from Sabrina in Mac's song, however, is "Taylor nothing is worth doing, unless it makes you nervous." This piece of advice from the older drag queen speaks to not only my director's concept of embracing a ninety-minute genderfucked *Oresteia*, but also a fantastic mantra for life.

⁴⁸⁸ Mac, Taylor. *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac*, Taylor Mac / Ethyl Crisp Productions, 2009, *Spotify*.

⁴⁸⁹ Sharon Needles, TV3 Ireland, "Sharon Needles | US Presidency | The Seven O'Clock Show," YouTube video, 1:38, November 9, 2016. Sharon Needles, a drag queen featured on season 4 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, gave an interview in Ireland before the 2016 election and actually expressed the sentiment that queer millennials have had the great fortune of coming of age during the Obama administration when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed and the Supreme Court legalized gay marriage nationally, and her only hope from a Trump administration were that it would create a more punk art once again. She cites the amazing art that came out of the Nixon and Reagan administration.

⁴⁹⁰ Mac, Taylor. "Alright" in *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac*, Taylor Mac / Ethyl Crisp Productions, 2009, *Spotify*. The latter is now a favorite line of mine that I parrot back to my own friends.

The line becomes a calling to make queer anti-establishment art when coupled with another line towards the end of the song when Mac jokes about becoming an expatriate like Nina Simone and the friend interrupts Judy to say he doesn't believe in that "hate it or leave thing" because "What's the point in the Constitution, if you can't stick around to make home a better place?"⁴⁹¹ This line stuck with me, especially after the election when there was so much doom and gloom, and then as I began to think about the roles of Electra and Chrys. When Orestes leaves his home and his two sisters alone in Argos, how might these two women change their home into a better place? As I began to think of how Electra and Chrys might transform Argos, Mac provided more inspiration through the song, "The Revolution Will Not Be Masculinized," a parody of Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Mac's version repurposes the African American Beat poet's song and makes a new song for Judy's queer punk one-person show. The song celebrates femininity and bashes toxic masculinity. Mac starts the song with a crooning "The revolution will not be masculinized, BROTHER"⁴⁹² and goes into how toxic masculinity will not be part of Judy's revolution because it "won't be troubled, but trebled"⁴⁹³ As Mac bashes toxic masculinity, Judy also celebrates queer and feminist icons. At one point, Judy interrupts themselves to say, "the revolution won't support the troops, because it will be too busy supporting its civilizations."⁴⁹⁴ Judy interrupts the solemn, deep singing to go on a tangent of why Judy "didn't get an Oprah clap on that one" because Mac is not saying we should not

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Mac, Taylor. "The Revolution Won't Be Masculinized" in *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac*, Taylor Mac / Ethyl Crisp Productions, 2009, *Spotify*.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

support the troops but “maybe ... support the people without the automatic weapons.”⁴⁹⁵ The song celebrates a revolution “feathered, tulle-d, sequined, glittered, long-legged, high heeled, powderpuff” for a new femme order.⁴⁹⁶ The song became an inspiration for how I might end the reworked trilogy in which masculine power has a continuous cycle of violence until finally femme figures stop the cycle in their new order. These songs not only offered inspiration based on their lyrics, but Mac’s eccentric personality and style became a huge force in the design and rehearsal room. Mac’s persona radiates chaos, fun, creativity, queerness, and femme in a voice that wavers between fabulous, flirty emcee, an exaggerated high pitched voice of a cartoon character, and a sultry deep voice of emphasis. Dressed in a crocheted poncho over nude spanx or a blue painted baldhead poking out of a large blue jellyfish-like gown or an ensemble made of confetti with a matching towering headdress, Mac creates a unique persona to sing of love, pain, hope, and the future. Similar to PWR BTTM, Mac does not subscribe to the typical idea of drag but has a messy, fabulous, chaotic, beautiful drag and aesthetic.

Someone who advertises messy and trashy drag but actually has polished, meticulous standard drag that is only influenced by trash is the drag queen, Alaska Thunderfuck 5000. She found her national platform by appearing on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* on both Season 5 and then “All Stars,” Season 2 and became famous for her trashy style and whiney persona.⁴⁹⁷ Before she appeared on television, Alaska comes from a punk and alternative style of drag, especially in comparison to other pageant queens. Following her participation on *Drag Race*, Alaska released an album titled *Anus*. If that does not give an insight in Alaska's aesthetic than what does? Her

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ When using the word “trashy,” I mean it literally. Her first look for *All Stars*, was an actual dress made from black trash bags.

brand relies on trashy and borderline outrageous gimmicks and has comical techno dance songs with such titles such as “Your Makeup is Terrible” and “I Love Your Pussy.” Alaska’s over the top style became an important component for the vision of *Clytemnestreia*. Her songs, like “Hieeee,” “Legendary,” and “Beard,” all became lip syncs used to drive forward the direction of my adaptation, not only through their the sound but also through their ridiculous lyrics. “Beard” in particular has lyrics about how the power of the beard “can now be wielded ... by man, woman, or...”⁴⁹⁸ The absurd songs played a role in adding of elements of humorous and absurdity that continued the dialogue about social constructs. Alaska’s influence added layers of absurdity to the vision of the project, while also playing an important part of defining our trash couture.

Alaska’s trashy aesthetic led me to discover her drag mother’s drag movement, Tranimal.⁴⁹⁹ Jer Ber Jones created a found object drag aesthetic that mixes trash, colors of the street, and high fashion. Often Tranimal drag models display trash bag black eye makeup, wigs made of singed paper, and a splattering of safety cone orange makeup applied as if it was spray paint. The eclectic drag comes from the combination of (the problematic) word transvestite and animal, through which the movement creates a new queer art from assembling found objects. Often using fishnets and pantyhose to disfigure the face, the Tranimal movement stands as a uniquely queer form of punk street art. Tranimal celebrates the ugly and the discarded to create new gorgeous art. The form parallels how many queer people feel marginalized or shamed for their identity, but come to find ways to accept and celebrate themselves.

⁴⁹⁸ Alaska Thunderfuck 5000. “Beard” in *Anus*, Sidecar Records & Producer Entertainment Group, 2015, *Spotify*.

⁴⁹⁹ A “drag mother” refers to a drag queen’s mentor.

PWR BTTM, Taylor Mac, and Tranimals all have something in common: messy found object beauty. These queer performers present an amalgamation of glitter, trash, and everything in between to create, in the words of Mac, their “fineries.” When I approached my adaptation, I used the same thinking and took the template for a standard Greek play, and scavenged for new texts and inspiration. I pieced together other Greek texts and even dug up some lines from past shows I have directed, to create a new piece of work. Although it is messy and sprawling, there is meaning in reassembling art from trash. In contemporary America, what does Greek theatre serve? If the *Oresteia* propagates masculine ideals, then what is the purpose of doing it? The only reason to perform it is to learn and engage with antiquity by borrowing the principles of sustainability: reduce, reuse, and recycle (with emphasis on the last two.) For unfortunate reasons, Greek theatre’s patriarchal themes resonate with current issues in America. Yet, doing Greek theatre unchanged or uncut just continues to perpetrate violence of the patriarchy. I, however, believe it is important to engage with the past of human history and repurpose it for our own art.⁵⁰⁰ Creating dialogue with the past opens a world through which to create new and meaningful art. Taking the characters and stories discarded by the patriarchy, and “wiggling” queer bodies and art into canonical work can be revolutionary, just as Velour says. Artists like PWR BTTM, Mac, and Jer Ber Jones inspired me to create the world of Greek theatre out of found object.

My found object inspiration helped start conversations with my design team. In our dialogues we came up with our term and aesthetic: “Fantasy Apocalypse.” The themes murder, revenge, justice speak of a primal story that wreak havoc and destruction in a house. The story

⁵⁰⁰ There are many artists out there like Charles Mee and Mary Zimmerman who often engage with past and recreate new work. This inspiration partially comes from my interest and passion for Classical Studies. My rationale for majoring in dead civilizations is that I believe it is important to keep the history of mankind alive.

has intergenerational violence from brother to brother, father to daughter where the natural order goes completely astray creating a world of ruin and lawlessness. All those elements point to an apocalypse, where a massive catastrophe deprives human of civilization. Armageddon does not follow the death of Agamemnon or that of Clytemnestra or the Furies's loss, but when adults kill children. The destruction begins long before the play starts, but the world does not need to be ugly but can be beautiful out of the reclaimed materials salvaged following the disaster. In creating the new world following the destruction of laws and civilization, queer artists tell us to make a world of glitz, artistry, and whimsy and to forget the "masculine" ideals of grit, dirt, and sweat. In a "fantasy apocalypse," glitter can replace blood, confetti for water, and lip syncing drag queens for bards.

The world of the play mirrors the found object queer influences and the hodgepodge of the text. The world of this *Oresteia* blends the relics of ancient Greece and the trash of 2017. Although the themes of the piece arguably have a timeless quality, we anchor ourselves temporally in that we can only use what we have from 2017 and backwards. If civilization stopped now, we could only draw upon what survives at this moment. Worlds collide and blend together into a shape that somewhat resembles Greek architecture and the back alley of a gay club. The "fantasy apocalypse" reconstructs a world from the discarded and forgotten. Telephone poles become columns, bleach bottles become libation vessels, and a bathtub to Agamemnon becomes Prometheus's cliff. Worlds continue to blend throughout the work, where double casting even implodes in the final moments of the story with a collage of inter and intratextual references.

Velour summarizes it best in her quote about inserting queer bodies into everyday work. Picking up the pieces of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, a piece of trash that has survived millennia, and

adding it to the garbage of the twentieth-first century creates a new piece of art and meaning. Aeschylus preaches patriarchal ideals against the evils of femininity, but the use of queer found object art repurposes the narrative to show the history of patriarchal violence and reconstructs it into the power of femme. Reusing Aeschylus's work allows for a performance that mocks gender performance and roles encoded in our society. Actors even get to pick up coded clothing, physicality, and narratives and assemble their own art out of them. They lend their bodies to the found object aesthetic as they honor and mock the power of femme and the violence of the masculine.

Queer performers have an art for blending edginess and provocativeness into art that inspires revolution of love. Queer art breaks down social norms and threatens the establishment, not to preach anarchy or destruction but to beg for love. Masculinity can destroy and erase, but femininity once seen as an evil in Athens can find power and beauty. Reassembling the story of the *Oresteia* with the help of Liv Bruce and Ben Hopkins, Taylor Mac, Jer Ber Jones, and our creative team sought to create found object finery in a fantasy apocalypse that ensures the revolution will not be masculinized.

When entering rehearsals, I often referred to a postcard of collage by Barbara Kruger hung above my desk. The untitled work, often referred to by its superimposed text, "Are we having fun yet?," has a woman covering her face wonderfully manicured nails as if in pain.⁵⁰¹ A red border surrounds the picture and three thin bars cut across the woman's forehead with the text in white bold italics. Kruger's art became a great inspiration for the pacing and feel of the show. The play starts slow and continues to swell. The initial moments of *Agamemnon* begin at slower tempo drumming along with longer monologues as suspension slowly builds. The death

⁵⁰¹ Kruger, Barbara. (Are we having fun yet?). (Fotofolio.com), Postcard.

of Agamemnon begins a ride that gets faster and faster. The plot of *The Libation Bearers* does not have the seething suspension but the tempo of an action movie. It only gets faster in the *Eumenides*.⁵⁰² Like a nightmarish carnival ride, the plot keeps picking up speed as it spins faster and faster around. The masculine – Apollo and Athena – plays the sadistic ride operator rejoicing in the dominance of the patriarchy while the femme – the Furies – play the part of the screaming patron. Kruger’s work became a running theme for the show, especially when Blair Nodelman, who played Clytemnestra and Dionysus, brought in another untitled piece of her work into rehearsal as her own inspiration. This collage has a woman’s face divided in half: on the left is in black and white and the right is negative. Red bars with the same lettering of “Are we having fun yet?” cut across the photo to read “Your body is a battleground.”⁵⁰³ Nodelman connected Kruger’s collage to her own experience as a woman lending her body to this art. Clytemnestra battles sexism, policing of her body, and the threat of her reproductive rights, as men debase Clytemnestra’s body, Nodelman uses it as a battle cry to fight against the patriarchy.

⁵⁰² The word “fast” refers to the tempo of the piece and to express how the ideas, movement, and elements get thrown around much faster to the point of absurdity.

⁵⁰³ Kruger, Barbara. *Untitled (Your body is a battleground)*. June 30, 1989. Photograph. Accessed April 15, 2017.

Reflection and Conclusion

I entered casting nearly gender blind; I knew what characteristics each character needed but was not married to a predetermined double casting, the gender of the characters, or even the list of characters. Responding and casting based on the talent in the room connected to the found object aesthetic. I let the actors inspire me to create new characters and reshape double casting. For a role like Agamemnon, I had always envisioned a highly masculine body chained to a bathtub for nearly two thirds of the show, but when Amanda Rose presented a strong, grounded presence she blew all the other men out of the water. Sean Murphy was not even called back for Electra, but after I reassessed during callbacks, Murphy read and immediately fit the role of the older sister. Kevin Lombard had a perfect voice for the grumpy, old man of Tyndareos and answered my question about what was missing in the scene between Pylades and Orestes at the doors of House of Atreus (which was homoeroticism). The actors brought new voices and their own performances to the piece, literally, as Jackie Bonnet brought her Puerto Rican heritage and her first language to let her own narrative inform Cassandra's role as foreigner alienating her Argive audience. Murphy's interest in heels, drag, and burlesque helped me shape the Furies and the ending moments of the play. James Williamson created the dichotomy of an effeminate Aegisthus and a masculine Athena based on his ideas in rehearsal. The actors became like pieces for the found object art whose leant their talent, voices, and bodies to help to turn the *Oresteia* weird and beautiful.

The production had three workshops, in two of which the cast read for their parts, followed by five weeks of rehearsal. The three workshops were integral in developing the work, especially in forming a new ending for the trilogy. The first workshop was open to the public where friends and peers read the parts. The following two workshops happened after casting, and

therefore each cast member in many ways helped develop the script through those two workshops. In each workshop, I had notes from myself and also from the readers and listeners. The first workshop had people mostly compliment the work, but I received a fair amount of criticism for the ending. In addition, hearing the word “rape” said too many times pointed me to find new ways to say those lines without repeatedly using a highly charged and powerful word. In the following two workshops, I heard more criticism about the ending, the role of Electra and Chrys, and Aegisthus’s entrance. Each time we had a workshop the ending was a little bit different. The first draft had Dionysus confront Athena, and Orestes returned home to be met with an onslaught of names that I copied from Euripides’ *Orestes*. The format did not engage enough with the common structure of Greek trilogy. In trying to recreate the ending, I lost my way by trying to completely forgo Aeschylus’s ending. Professor Natalya Baldyga encouraged me to look back at how Aeschylus and other tragedians had structured the ending, and find ways to deconstruct the ending while still staying in dialogue with the tragic form’s structure. The following draft had the inclusion of the satyr play and specifically riffed off the ending of the *Oresteia*, satyr plays, and *deus ex machina* but the ending moments dragged on with the story of Tiresias and there was no final button to the piece. Jamie Hattler, who played Chrys and a Fury, gave an insightful note in the second workshop that the ending appeared tacked on and tried to clean up the misogyny too quickly and neatly. The last draft cut away part of Dionysus’s origin story and practically cut all of Tiresias’s, and I embraced the quick and crazed ending in which double casting became overly blurred.

The major addition to the script for the final workshop was in the final moments of the play, where Electra, Chrys, and Tiresias repeat lines Clytemnestra said at the end of *Agamemnon*. The workshops helped respond to the needs of the show and the cast, and although the ending

was a major portion of the workshops the scenes between Electra and Chrys also grew in importance. Throughout the process, Electra and Chrys became very defined and different people rather than just two women speaking what a Chorus used to say. Electra became an angst-ridden teenager preoccupied with thoughts of marriage and Chrys became the dutiful and miserable younger sister. Specifically, Murphy vocalized how he had more to work with after I included the scene between Electra and Chrys in the beginning of *The Libation Bearers*. Their characters and lines continued to evolve in rehearsals as well, and both Murphy and Hattler helped me with wording in that scene in one of the first rehearsals. The last big note I got from my cast was about Aegisthus's entrance at the end of *Agamemnon*. They noted how it seemed tacked on, and I responded that to making him a more integral presence in the last scene. This is an example of how the workshop process helped me rearrange and resolve some issues in the dramatic tension in the show. After spending so much time with the *Oresteia*, I learned how Aeschylus's rising action does not necessarily translate for an English speaking audience, at least within my cut of the play, therefore some moments changed to reinforce the dramatic tension. In addition to providing me with a lot of information about the structure and wording, I hoped the workshops would give the actors a sense of ownership over the script. For some actors, such as Bonnet who responded so positively to the inclusion of the Spanish or Williamson with Aegisthus's entrance and Athena's characterization, the workshop process helped them find a voice and ownership over the words. Others, however, did not fully cooperate with the work and did not find the same ownership over the text like Bonnet and Williamson. Both actors had an extreme amount dedication to the part from learning their lines earlier than other actors, coming in early to review blocking in the space, asking plenty of questions, and more. They took an initiative with their characters that helped elevate the characters and the double casting.

We only had five weeks for rehearsal, which in comparison to other rehearsal schedules for student productions at Tufts is on the shorter side. I worked alongside my stage manager, Rachel Canowitz, to map out our five-week schedule. We knew from the beginning that it would be a marathon sprint from mid-March to the show at the end of April. Our first two weeks of rehearsal were separated by spring break, and therefore in many ways it felt as if we only had four weeks to put the show together. We planned out the first week, however, to be focused on initial character, ensemble, and text work. I made sure we planned for Viewpoints sessions, because I like to use Anne Bogart's and Tina Landau's discipline to help unify the cast into an ensemble and to create a common vocabulary.⁵⁰⁴ I often draw upon Viewpoint exercises in scene work so that actors can play, experiment, and open up the text and their characters. Following spring break, the four weeks leading up to show were jam packed as the second week of rehearsal had some more character work and then blocking, by the third week we finished up blocking and begin polishing, the fourth week introduced choreography and lip-syncs, and the final week was to do runs, fixes, and more runs. For the most part, Canowitz and I kept to this schedule as we had to plow ahead with the work to make sure it all got finished before tech. In retrospect, I wish I had spent more time in character, scene, and ensemble work. Something I learned from directing Will Eno's *Gnit* is that actors adapt to blocking and their characters after extensive scene work. I did not have luxury to play around with each scene because the rehearsal period was so short. If I had more time, I might have hopefully avoided some of the problems that arose in rehearsal.

⁵⁰⁴ Anne Bogart and Tina Landau are contemporary legends in theatre community for developing the Viewpoints. A technique in theatre that draws upon aspects of dance that breaks theatre down into nine components: tempo, duration, spatial relationship, kinesthetic response, architecture, shape, gesture, topography, and repetition.

In the four shows I have directed at Tufts, I never came across a cast with so many external issues as this one. Usually there is one cast member that I have struggle to work with for some reason. In *Doctor Faustus*, I had one actor who could not learn their lines or show up on time. I can still clearly remember during a show, they adlibbed Marlowe's text and said, "I'm a dog that's amazing!" In *Little Shop of Horrors*, I had one actor who was reluctant to commit to their role and fell into the shadows of their fellow cast members. Yet, in the rehearsal room of *Clytemnestria* half my cast could not learn their lines, kept bringing up conflicts, and refused to commit to their characters. I have a pretty good track record with my rehearsal rooms, and often strike strong relationships with my cast members and find myself working my cast members again. Half of the cast had performed in three of my other shows at Tufts, not to mention that two of three members of the rehearsal staff had worked with me on other shows. From what I gathered, a lot of external factors contributed to my rehearsal room that constantly distracted and hindered the process for the actors. I had some actors who struggled to put in the work due to run of the mill college stresses, but they communicated those problems to me. The major issue, however, was caused by another two actors who resisted the material, their characters, and other cast members, which I think contributed to a rehearsal room that often struggled to move at the pace I needed from them. In reflection, however, I realize I could have done a lot more to energize the cast and have them understand the importance of the work. In the closing week of rehearsals, I grew in frustration. I reminded them how much work I had put in the project, but for our few last rehearsals I changed my tone. I made sure the cast knew that the work was important to me not just because I had put so much work into it, but because I firmly believed in the importance of making femme, queer art. Becca MacLean, assistant stage manager and close friend, and I both shared our stories of coming out and our struggles with toxic masculinity,

misogyny, and homophobic cultures. The tone shifted away from me complaining about the amount of work I had put into the project and redirected it to the importance of queer, femme representation became the battle cry for the cast. In my rushing to get everything done and my complete submersion in the work, I forgot to teach and remind my cast about the importance of queer art. What I assumed was obvious was lost to those cast members who were preoccupied with external stresses. Two of the heterosexual members of the cast were always the first to embrace the queer art because they had no preconceptions or reservations about queerness. Other people, however needed more help in navigating, accepting, and figuring out their roles, which I should have recognized and embraced earlier on in the process.

The design and tech leading up to the show had its hiccups as any show does, but overall the process was delightful and we rejoiced in seeing our design meeting conversations come to life in the performance. The success of the design process and the execution of it should fall to Dan Ciba, the costume designer. In conversations with my lighting designer, Nick Cicchetti, we both agreed that the successful process came from Ciba's strong and bold costume designs. His colors, inspirations, and taste helped the other designers and myself navigate the rest of the process.⁵⁰⁵ Cicchetti used Ciba's designs to create a color story to support Clytemnestra's and her daughter's stories. Ciba and Cicchetti were able to nudge the scenic designer, Jonathan Rooney, closer to our vision of the glittering garbage heap. Rooney originally envisioned a very clean set that mimicked a night club. Yet Ciba, Cicchetti, and I persuaded him away from the clean nightclub to the fantasy apocalypse world of Ciba's costumes where found object, back alley meets ruins of Oracle of Delphi. One of the more interesting (and at times frustrating) aspects of the process were how the heterosexual designers navigated this process. Ciba,

⁵⁰⁵ Ciba suspects he spent over a 100 hours constructing and altering costumes for the show.

Cicchetti, and I all identify as queer men with similar experiences, consume similar media, and share common interests and aesthetics. Designers like Rooney and the sound designer Timothy Secrest (also my brother), had a steep learning curve with queer culture and art. Rooney had to get him give up his conceptions of gay nightlife culture and accept the fantasy aspect of redefining gender out of found objects. It became very evident that Secrest struggled to understand the femme queer narrative, as even during tech I saw him chose very strong masculine songs and tended to support Agamemnon's and Orestes' storyline over Clytemnestra's. When it came to tech, I relied on the assistant sound designer, Jon O'Brien, and the production manager, Mitchell Katz, to implement my changes and notes. Once again, these were queer theatre artists who were able to corral a more masculine, heterosexual design and help rewrite cues to tell the femme story. They helped cut an ethereal song that underscored Orestes's speech after he kills Clytemnestra which gave the impression that angels were signing that Orestes had killed female other and reshape the cue to demonize Agamemnon's rise from the bathtub. O'Brien and Katz turned Dionysus' entrance from a hyper aggressive masculine 90s pop song into an explosion layered over the disco classic of Donna Summer's "MacArthur's Park." While I thoroughly enjoy working with Rooney and Secrest, it became apparent that it was important to have queer artists working on the project. Ciba, Cicchetti, and Katz had almost a common vocabulary because of our shared identities, and that is something our heterosexual designers had to learn how to include themselves.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶ Katz, Cicchetti, Ciba, and I may have similar experiences and taste, but we are only a small sample of highly educated, white, gay men. While we are more than just those identities, many of our perspectives are linked to those upbringings. Our shared similarities should not try to make statements of how all queer white men should feel and experience. The same goes for Rooney's and Secrest's experiences and perspective. I, however, do believe sexuality does affect one's perspective because of how one must navigate the world by either living with or against heteronormativity.

I should mention that I was uncomfortable from the very beginning that the design team was headed by all white men.⁵⁰⁷ Even with more than half of the team identifying as queer, it felt weird to try to reclaim the narrative with every head designer as male. I therefore encouraged sub departments like Hair and Makeup and Props to include themselves in the design process. Anna Robson, the Hair and Makeup designer, became a huge resource in bringing a strong femme perspective into the room. Robson's artistry with hair and makeup elevated Ciba's costume design, especially because society has encoded makeup solely for women. Robson was able to play with our conceptions of who and how people wear makeup – from adding white eyebrows to Tyndareos to adding spots and smears of primary colors to Pylades. She became crucial to helping the conceptual part of the femme and queer designs. When faced on how to address the use of liquids on stage – which can be very hazardous to costumes, lights, and scenic elements – we came to conclusion to use glitter as stylized liquids. This concept referred back to the original inspiration material like PWR BTTM and Mac, as a component to their performance of femme. Robson helped turn all of the blood into red glitter, and created ways of applying it quickly so Clytemnestra and Orestes could hop offstage and return moments later with red glitter all over the finger tips. She also often offered insights on the script and helped me when addressing the overuse of the word “rape.” Beyond the design room, I surrounded myself with incredibly strong women on the rehearsal staff. In addition to identifying as femme, many of them were queer women who lent their voices to helping reinforce the importance of the work. An exciting addition to the team was Kristin Reeves, my assistant director. Reeves and I worked well together when she played the Mother in *Gnit*. Her strong voice helped shape the rehearsal room,

⁵⁰⁷ This is a major theme in this part of the project is the limited perspectives in the design process. My head designers were white men with some variation in sexuality. The women I brought into the room, were white also. No one is an authority on their race, gender, or sexuality but can only offer their individual experiences and perspective in the room.

she acted as my confidant, and I could have her talk to actresses who might feel more comfortable talking with another woman with material they were struggling with. Reeves's additional perspective and voice supplemented my limited experiences and voice and became so important in navigating the challenging text, vision, and rehearsal room. Due to the external stresses, the women on my rehearsal staff were invaluable in helping me navigate the obstacles in the room. My stage management team was crucial in navigating the never ending conflicts that cropped up, and Canowitz took a large brunt of dealing with the more volatile and sensitive external stresses when handling cast members. Becca signed on to the show because she very badly wanted to be part of this show. As a queer woman, MacLean wanted to help me put this piece of work together. MacLean and I have had a very successful working relationship, and had shined in her roles in *Gnit* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. I was overjoyed for her to join me again even if she was learning a new role as an assistant stage manager.⁵⁰⁸ I let MacLean have a more vocal role than the typical assistant stage manager, because of the trust I had in her. She helped me immensely in the last week of rehearsal in speaking to the importance of queer art in the world and even spoke of her own experience of coming out to her family. Nodelman also played an important role in crafting the piece. An actor usually does not serve as a member of the rehearsal staff at Tufts, but Nodelman made her role as Clytemnestra/Dionysus her acting capstone. I placed a lot of responsibility on Nodelman to help craft her Clytemnestra. I often gave her notes to push her Clytemnestra along, but I wanted her to do the brunt of the work to create an original characterization. Due to some external factors, Nodelman took longer to make Clytemnestra fully hers but when she finally brought Clytemnestra alive, she did it spectacularly. Additional rehearsal staff members were my choreographers – Megan McCormick and Claire

⁵⁰⁸ My mother loves MacLean and thinks the world of her solely because of her performances in *Gnit* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. One should always trust their mother's intuition.

Mieher – also women I have worked with in the past and I brought them in as more strong femme voices to help shape the work. In summary, I would have preferred a more femme and queer design team, I actively looked for femme voices in the process to help shape the project.

Thanks to the work of my scenic, lighting, and costume designers – what I like to refer to as my triumvirate – we entered tech with designs that completely upheld the dialogues from the design meetings two months prior. At one point during tech, Cicchetti called me over to his table to show me some of his original inspiration photos that he shared in the first design meeting; the pictures had warm up light on Greek ruins. When he pointed to the stage, I saw very similar image on stage. In moments during tech, I got emotional to see how well costumes, lights, and scenic worked together. Murphy's shiny bright blue wings as a Fury responded spectrally to the Cicchetti's blue and purple lights. Yellow became a color that made the set glow and became a useful tool in telling Orestes' story. The only problem came from sound and props during tech. Props had just fallen behind and it then longer than expected to have everything ready for the show. Sound, however, had not taken any of notes for Act II and put tech at a halt. Problems with sound came from Secret doing his design remotely in California and not taking all of my notes. O'Brien's inexperience with sound may have slowed the process down, but O'Brien kept a level head and worked tremendously under pressure. In my experience with student theatre, *Clytemnestreia* marks the third show I have worked on with limited time in the space. In my experience, limited tech time will always leave things unpolished and holes in fully realized designs. I noticed that in the performance that there were moments where lights, sound, actors, and stage management all made small nearly unnoticeable mistakes that could have been avoided if we had not rushed through our tech through turned cue to cue. Although they were all small

mistakes and only I and the designers caught them, the show was only 90% of what it could have been.⁵⁰⁹

Having one performance puts a lot of pressure on that one time show.⁵¹⁰ Despite my anxiety of the success of my riding on one show, the performance was a perfect explosion of queer, femme artistry that appears to have disoriented and amazed its audience. I have gotten mixed responses to the show, but in the best way possible. Each person who spoke to me took something away from the show, was disoriented by different moments, and reacted uniquely to the material. When I periodically snuck a peak around the audience during the performance, I did not see the usual few browsing their programs but everyone intently watching and taking in the sights, sounds, and craziness before them. Although the crowd watched with attentiveness, at times I heard some giggles and laughter at Cassandra's scene or in scenes between Orestes and Pylades.

The audience's reaction to the show was at first surprising to see some people laugh at moments that I never had thought of pretty, but I began to notice a pattern to the snickering. For a majority of the show, the audience took all the masculine parts very seriously but anything queer or femme was met with a hesitant, unsure laughter. There are moments in the *Clytemnestreia* that are humorous, fun, and over the top that invite the audience to coo and titter. For instance, Agamemnon's entrance created a humorous stir with Cramer entering as a horse oiled up in a booty shorts and rubber mask pulling a grocery cart as Rose entered as a stunning general while Williamson lip synced to a remix of "Too Darn Hot." Yet, the audience responded

⁵⁰⁹ When I directed a middle school play my senior year of high school, the technical director and former history teacher, Jason Harding, gave me this advice, "It's a middle school play run by middle schoolers. You will never have a perfect show." This piece advice has kept me grounded many a times, because a show can never be 100% but we can aim to as close to perfection as possible.

⁵¹⁰ A peer mentor of mine, Ally Benko, always preached about how the ephemeral power of theatre and how it exists in one moment and is gone the next.

to Cassandra's scene almost a little too jovially. The audience may have found it funny to see their peer in this role for some reason or it might be because Bonnet brought in an energy unseen in the show before and took the audience by surprise. Her ravings give off a pure youthful power, that the audience may have reacted to. It may have been her stylized post-modern hippie look with her neon makeup and water bottle. Yet, while Bonnet literally threw herself on the floor yelling about murder in gorgeous Spanish wails and spoke of her character's rape by Apollo, the audience laughed at Tyndareos' sexist little comments. In the midst of a femme speech about the cruelties of masculine violence, the audience continued to find fun in the patriarchal dismal of Cassandra. MacLean, using her own perspective as a Latinx and mixed race woman, to hypothesized that layers of misogyny, racism, and xenophobia may have played a part in the audience's reaction. She wondered how an audience would react to African American actress playing the role, as they might take that more seriously than a short Latina woman. Lacking a larger survey of the audience, I am unsure of MacLean's analysis, but I do find it unsettling how the audience laughed away Tyndareos's misogynistic lines.

The audience also twittered at Orestes' and Pylades' tender and sexual moment before the doors of the House in *The Libation Bearers*. I noted a difference between how seriously the audience took Orestes's speech following the murder of his mother versus the speeches of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. You could hear the audience hold its breath as Cramer yelled about Clytemnestra's crimes against her father, while the audience lacked the same amount of focus when watching the moments before Agamemnon's death. It could be the audience had grown more accustomed to the world by Clytemnestra's death, or there were less things happening in the scene following the matriarch's death, or maybe Cramer was just more interesting to the audience, but I theorize the femme power on some level alienated the audience. I am fascinated

with the audience's reaction, even if I cannot fully understand what happened. It makes me question of how I can continue to play with standard masculine theatre and stylized femme, queer staging, and how I might continue to push the work to parody the traditional patriarchal view and exert an alienating and foreign femme power in the work.

The audience's focus or energy never disengaged, however, and they continued to stay invested all the way through the Satyr Play and Bacchanal. From the response of the audience during the performance and a few conversations later, these moments appeared to have amazed and disoriented many of the audience members. I think it is important to say in these moments, I do not think lost these audience members, especially those I talked to after the show, but bewildered, blurred, and excited many of them. They appeared to stay entertained and invested in what was happening. The audience had fun during the Satyr Play and cheered as the Furies reclaimed the play with Tyra Bank's monologue and Peaches' "Dick in the Air." During Dionysus's entrance with the gay explosion, their huge joyous reaction eclipsed one of the sound cues. The Bacchanal had many people on the edge of their seats and cheering, which I took to mean many people were delightfully disoriented as Apollo's and Agamemnon's identities were confused into Tiresias. Although some may be confused, it was clear that Electra and Chrys had ended a cycle of violence by exiling Orestes and created a powerful matriarchy.

Unfortunately, I do not have polling information or formal interviews with audience members, and only interactions I had with people offer me any insight on how people perceived and reflected on the performance. Following the show, Professor Noe Montez called the show "visually arresting." This phrase helped me reflect on the designs of the production, since this compliment, in my opinion, goes to serve the dedication and execution of my design and technical team. The show relied heavily on saturated colors in the lights, elaborate and diverse

costumes, complex and shimmering makeup and hair, and a cohesive set of found objects. Many of my designers received awards for their work, which only goes to demonstrate the success of the visual elements of the show.

The day following the performance, lecturer Sheriden Thomas, emailed me with her personal reflection. She wrote, “Your *Clytemnestreia* blew me away. So bold and funny. So fully outrageous. So large in scope and expression. So visually stunning. So in sync with your peeps. (whew).”⁵¹¹ She followed her compliment with a constructive note that the Furies were hard to hear, a note that Professor Baldyga had warned me of and my roommate Lucy Kania also complained of this.⁵¹² Thomas, however, gives me a huge accolade in her email about how the show pushed gender norms and challenged the establishment through the visual and acting choices. She continued to reflect on the show in the following day, which is the biggest honor of all. In creating a work that disorients, I was glad to hear that people left the theatre questioning what they had seen and continued to do so after they woke up the following morning. Thomas is a queer woman from another generation who often speaks about her experience and perspective in class. Therefore, I particularly appreciated her response. Yet I often wonder about the extent of how “sync” I was with my classmates. Did my work only speak to queer millennials or maybe to queer and/or millennials? What responses did people of older generations think about the work verse younger patrons? How did heterosexual and/or cis students think about the show when they

⁵¹¹ Sheriden Thomas, email message to author, April 26th, 2017.

⁵¹² I had tried to fix the Furies’s screaming and protect their voice, but it may have been too late in the process. The Furies were made up of three first years, two of which were relatively new to acting. Since they were young and untrained, they were not able to fully understand how to use their voices in the most helpful way.

left the theatre?⁵¹³ Since I do not have the data to fully analysis my audience's reaction, I can at least use Thomas's email to help guide me in my own reflection on the night.

Although the production was a success in many ways, the performance also provided an opportunity to see what did and not work and how I might continue to reshape the work for a future revival. Even before the performance, for example, I began to question the choice I had made in the characterization in the Furies. When I started rehearsals, I was still unclear of who and what the Furies were; I therefore wanted to create them with the help of my actors. Since they were younger actors, I still had to shepherd them through the devising process and I wish I had been more prepared on what I wanted the Furies to be so I could have better helped my actors in their journeys to create the Furies. When I watched our last run before tech, I thought to myself that I now wanted to take the Furies in a completely different direction. I was haunted by a description of a production of the *Eumenides* directed by Mary-Kate Gamel in 1992 that began with a lecture on the *Oresteia* by a teaching assistant, the Pythia, on behalf of "Dr. Aeschylus," who is interrupted by "the Furies female beatniks and proto-feminists."⁵¹⁴ My Furies became ambiguous animalistic spirits, and I wonder what would happen if I focused more on creating stylized women that specifically referenced strong female figures such as Gamel's proto-feminist Beatniks. In the next iteration of the project, I would want to work more extensively with queer performance artists to help transform an anthropomorphic "vile femininity" into stylized supernatural women to create stronger versions of the Furies.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ I refrain from mentioning how queer patrons might experience the work, because of how varied those experiences can be and what those mean in relationship to seeing work titled "queer." I chose to use heterosexual and cis, because those identities are part of the mainstream culture and have further distance from queer art.

⁵¹⁴ Gamel, Mary-Kay. "Staging Ancient Drama: The Difference Women Make." *Syllecta Classica* 10 (1999): 39.

⁵¹⁵ For the record, I am incredibly proud and happy with the final products of my Furies. The three first year students who did some incredible work to create their Furies and what I say should not discredit their hard work

The Furies were the only major aspect of the performance I would have wanted to really change and take in a new direction, but in looking at the scope of the text and the project I would also like to continue to work on deconstructing the narrative and piecing it back together.⁵¹⁶ Professor Baldyga, on the Friday before the performance, mentioned how much she enjoyed the script when it started to unravel, suggesting that she might prefer an earlier deconstruction of the structure. I, however, liked where the text started to unravel because of how it played with the structure of Greek tragedy and how the dramatic arc gets crazed at the end, but I see her point nonetheless of how it gets more interesting with more modifications I make to the text. I would love to work some opera into the show especially during Clytemnestra's speech as a ghost in the beginning of the *Eumenides*. A dissonant underscoring or full out opera could add more moments of high theatricality that continue to challenge the prescribed narrative and form. I also would like to play with the beginning portion of *Agamemnon* to make it a lot more presentational. As I began to fully understand the relationship between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, I realized how much they are scoping each other out and how much they are hiding the power struggle from the public. I almost want to make the beginning of the first play very presentational with highly stylized and gender codified gestures. Playing with a beginning that is highly presentational could offer a huge contrast to the bathroom scene where Clytemnestra and Agamemnon could switch between presentational and more natural performances to show how Agamemnon is a puppet to toxic masculinity and Clytemnestra purposefully plays the role of a dutiful wife. In addition to making it more presentational, I could

but rather is a reflection on what I could do in the next iteration. I am not even sure what I mean by "stronger versions," as I am still pondering this idea.

⁵¹⁶ I was unsatisfied with a few of my actors' performances. Many of them had stressful external factors that I did not know were going to become such obstructive issues during the process. This paper, however, is not the place for more detail about specific performances that I had issues with.

see Athena playing a larger role as an emcee and having a more active role as puppet master throughout the show. I started this concept with Athena lip-sycning throughout the show and then later when talking with the Furies about how their bodies should respond to the different choreography in the Satyr Play and Bacchanal. I'm unsure if I would want to literally use puppets or just figuratively, but the idea of puppets could become a stronger theme throughout. Many characters toy with gender, for an example Clytemnestra hides behind soft, docile, weak femininity in Agamemnon's homecoming scene to lure him into the house. Gender could become like a puppet that characters such as Clytemnestra manipulate and others such as Agamemnon become puppets themselves. Many of these ideas are merely ideas that occurred to me in reflecting on the process and would need additional time and workshops to fully flesh out these ideas.

One major structural change that I am interested in doing in the next rendition is working on how to deconstruct and synthesize *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers*. They have similar structures, especially following the murders. I am interested to see if it would be possible to either do the plays nearly simultaneously or at least non-linearly. The questions remain how to make the plot comprehensive while completely unraveling the structure, and especially how to ensure that it is accessible to audience members unfamiliar with the Greek mythology and the *Oresteia*. Yet the mirrored plots and speeches invite moments where the plots could collide: Agamemnon's and Orestes' arrivals home, Clytemnestra's and Orestes' speeches following their murders, and the arrivals of Aegisthus's and the Furies's. This would involve another extensive workshop process, but it excites me to think about how this project could continue to evolve.

In a conversation with Dan Ciba before tech, he remarked that he would love to see me do the project again with an entire cast and design team of intersectional queer artists.⁵¹⁷ Frankly, I agree with him. While I thoroughly enjoyed working with many of friends and peers – especially for my last show at Tufts – it became obvious this show would benefit from bringing in queer artists to lend their voices, talents, and perspectives to the work. Rooney and Secret needed a crash course in queer culture, while some actors could not understand homoeroticism and were uncomfortable with performing as a drag king or playing masculine. My most fruitful conversations were with fellow queer theatre artists like Ciba, Cicchetti, and MacLean. Queer theatre artists have very specific and highly variable perspectives on the world and their art since they first have to come to terms with their marginalized identity in society and then must learn to how to navigate society while also representing their identity. Queer theatre artists come from a perspective that their identity breaks social norms defined by the patriarchy and then their art continues to respond to their experiences and also continues to break social norms. Although there might be shared experiences and similar experiences, each queer artist has a unique perspective.⁵¹⁸ Each and every queer artist brings something new to the table. In creating a queer space to create work that reflects our perspective, each artist can bring their own voice to the work. Experimentation with gender, sexuality, and other representations of identity all come to serve on how deconstruct the social norms that tell them their identity is imperfect. Instead of just using PWR BTTM, Taylor Mac, and Jer Ber Jones as inspiration to push against boundaries,

⁵¹⁷ I use the term “queer artist” to refer to anyone who might have connections to the queer community. As I have expressed earlier, this project had limitations due to a mostly homogenous perspective. I would hope to have a group of diverse queer artists that have varying forms of sexual, gender, racial, socio-economic identities.

⁵¹⁸ A “shared experience” might just mean not fitting into a heteronormative, cis-normative world. What it means not to fit into that world differs so much for everyone. I do not want to conflate people’s experiences or identities, but rather I am saying the opposite. Queer people come in so many different forms and live varying lives with their own expressions, obstacles, and environments.

I want to work with artists whose work is uniquely punk and loving way.⁵¹⁹ In the next rendition, including more queer artists as part of the collaborative process could help completely give the narrative a new life.

Although I have many edit to make and thoughts about the future form of this project, I want to return to the final moment of the performance. In the last moments of the performance on April 25th, 2017, Electra and Chrys vanquished Orestes before the doors of the House of Atreus. As they repeated the lines Clytemnestra spoke an hour earlier and demanded that the audience heed the words of femmes, they stood over the body of the deceased flaccid satyr as the new rulers of Argos. The sisters finished their lines, stepped over the goat boy, and entered the doors that once belonged to their father. The lights went down on everything except but lingered for a second on Dionysus towering over everyone on their ladder while a Fury crouched over the bathtub. In that bathtub, sat a scared Tiresias who as their chains clattered on porcelain jumped to see Electra and Chrys enter the doors of the House of Atreus. In those concluding seconds, I – and I'd like to think the audience – felt the femme power resonate through the theatre. As Electra and Chrys repeated the lines their mother had once said, femme figures stood in unrelenting power. Although the audience may have snickered at the glitter and the man-killing axe earlier in the show, many watched at the power of the new genderfucked, feminine, sequined monarchy with gaping mouths. Powerful, righteous femme figures stood as a complete antithesis to Aeschylus's *Oresteia* which originally extolled masculine ideals of coming of age and the rationale of a male state while destroying the remnants of matriarchies and characterizing

⁵¹⁹ I got along with Ciba and Cicchetti so much is because we shared this aesthetic, but I wonder what would happen if I worked with varying queer artists who both share this vision and also reject it. Again, queer punk rock is merely a sliver of queer culture and introducing more elements of the culture could push the work to new extremes.

femininity as something dangerous, barbaric, and other. A play that once condemned the matriarchy found a new ending where the House of Atreus had two new femme queens who ruled in honor of their mother. Electrifying moments – Furies ripping apart the set, Dionysus’s fabulous entrance, and the uncomfortable founding of a matriarchy – gave Clytemnestra a new voice in her now titular play where the words of Aeschylus metamorphosed into something completely new. In those last seconds of the play, Electra and Chrys emerged as the surprise leads of the show and reclaimed the story from their brother, the mother-killer, to give the trilogy back to their mother, “a soul whose intentions are good.”⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ Nina Simone. “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” in *Broadway – Blues – Ballads*, Philips, 1964, *Spotify*.

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