LEADING THE CHORUS: THE CREATION AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ROLE OF THE LEAD CHORUS WOMAN IN SOPHOCLES' ELEKTRA

A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

The following thesis is a documentation of my process in the preparation, rehearsal and performance of the role of the Lead Chorus Woman in Sophocles' *Elektra*, translated by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming, at The Ohio State University. The central question I explored was: How do I portray the Lead Chorus Woman, a role that requires me to organically make shifts in language and style and do this in a confident and authoritative manner? I attempted to answer this question by researching Ezra Pound, his style of writing, and Greek mythology; analyzing the script; and exploring my role in the rehearsal process. I discovered that traditional acting methods are not always the key to creating a believable character. The process required a trust of the text and of alternative methods in working with the script in order to make choices in the development of the character.
Dedicated in memory of John and Wilma Rockensies
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a documentation of my work in creating and performing the role of the Lead Chorus Woman in Sophocles' Elektra, translated by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming. The production was directed by Sue Ott Rowlands and presented in the Mount Hall Studio Theatre at The Ohio State University October 31 to November 18, 2001.

Although this was not the last role I performed at The Ohio State University, it was certainly the most challenging in terms of language and style. The role is complicated in terms of language predominantly because the Chorus is required to speak in Greek as well as English. I had never before performed in another language nor faced the acting problems that accompany such a task. Performing in Elektra gave me the opportunity to address specific challenges in my work as an actor, as well as strengthen my confidence in my abilities on stage.

My first acting role was Gretel in the operetta Hansel and Gretel when I was in third grade. The show was directed by a music teacher at my elementary school who had graduated from Juilliard. Years after that production, he periodically checked to see if I was still involved in theatre. With his encouragement, I continued to perform throughout elementary school and while I attended Notre Dame Academy High School in Staten Island, New York. Before I entered my senior year, my father was presented with a job
opportunity in Pennsylvania which meant my family had to move. Rather than enrolling at a new high school for my last year, I applied for early admission to College Misericordia in Dallas, Pennsylvania. I was accepted as an English major, beginning my college career at the age of 16. Not wanting to abandon acting, I immediately auditioned at King’s College Theatre Department in nearby Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for its fall production of Fortinbras by Lee Blessing, and was cast as Ophelia. It was at King’s College that I completed several elective courses in theatre and continued acting throughout my four years of college.

My parents were concerned about the stability of a career in theatre and encouraged me to study English which has aided me in text analysis and research for some roles. However, I knew that if I wanted to pursue acting professionally, I needed formal training which is why I applied to The Ohio State University’s MFA Acting Program. My time at Ohio State proved to be an amazing experience in learning the craft of acting. Graduate school provided me with the opportunity to learn technique, to be more specific in my choices, to gain an awareness of my physical and vocal habits, and to find more ease and confidence on stage.

In spite of what I accomplished, I doubted my abilities. I convinced myself that pure luck was the reason I was cast in roles. During college, my insecurity was heightened because I knew I caused tension among my classmates. The other female students resented that I was given the opportunity by faculty to play leading roles while they had more experience and training. As a result, I did not believe I deserved the opportunities I received. Similarly, when I entered graduate school, I disregarded my past
accomplishments because I knew that I was in an environment where most people studied acting formally for four previous years. How could any of my past experiences be credible without training? I spent most of my graduate experience not feeling good enough and this uncertainty affected my performance. Unfortunately, I did not always feel free to experiment with bold choices in my work. Nor was I able to fully utilize the leadership skills which I knew I possessed for much of my graduate school experience. This was one of the biggest problems I faced going into rehearsals for Elektra. It also formed the basis of my thesis question: How do I portray the Lead Chorus Woman, a role that requires me to organically make shifts in language and style and do this in a confident and authoritative manner?

Ezra Pound’s translation of Elektra is unusual because of its textual and language challenges. The Lead Chorus Woman must effortlessly shift between English and Greek as well as the style of language within the action of the play. Pound, by retaining the Greek language as a special bond that the Chorus Women and Elektra share, creates an intimacy between them. The language also serves as a means of emotional expression. Cries of outrage and whispers of comfort are better expressed in the natural rhythms of Sophocles’ original words.

The summer of 2001 was spent researching Pound and his writing style, Greek mythology, and the role of the Chorus in Sophoclean tragedy. In particular, reading several different translations of Elektra and Sophocles’ other plays made me realize the clarity of Pound’s translation. His specific language choices were made for the sole reason of producing the clearest, most concise expression of what is in the heart of a
character in a given moment. That clarity and directness influenced my own active choices for my character. Pound’s language allowed me to explore a variety of reasons the Lead Chorus Woman uses a particular language or dialect in a certain moment, and her function within the action of the play.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each exploring a different aspect of my process in creating the role. Chapter One contains biographical information on Ezra Pound, production history, research on language issues within the text, research on Sophocles and Greek theatre, and my character analysis. Chapter Two contains the production circumstances. Chapter Three details my acting methodology, an explanation of acting terminology, and the scored script. Chapter Four includes my rehearsal and performance log, documenting my observations and discoveries within the process of creating this role. The final chapter contains my conclusion and evaluation of this process.
CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH

This first chapter contains my research and is divided into three sections. The first section contains my research on Ezra Pound, his writing style, and the production history of the play. Section two includes information on Sophocles, mythology, and Greek theatre. The last section provides my character analysis and research on the traditional role of the Chorus in Sophoclean tragedy. My research aided me in understanding the language challenges in Elektra and guided me in making choices that further developed the character that I played.

1.1

Ezra Pound was born on October 30, 1885 in Hailey, Idaho, to Homer Pound, who ran the United States Land Office, and Isabel Weston-Pound. He was extremely ambitious, deciding at age 15 to become a poet. His ambition eventually led him to be admitted to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in 1901 when he was not yet 16 years old. He began his studies there and in 1903 transferred to Hamilton College in New York. Some say he transferred because his parents were unhappy with his progress and the company he kept, but Pound maintained that it was because he wanted to
experience the difference between a large university setting and a small college campus (Stock 15). At Hamilton College, Pound was exposed to a wider variety of language and literature studies by his professors. He then continued his master's work at the University of Pennsylvania from 1905 to 1906.

While at the University of Pennsylvania, Pound was granted the Harris Fellow in Romantics in 1906. The award funded his first independent trip to Europe where he began his research into writing and literature (Stock 28). However, the manner in which he chose to pursue his studies caused controversy at the university. He finished his formal education at the master's level and continued his study of literature outside of the academic setting (Stock 34). Pound then taught briefly at Wabash College in Indiana and later decided to go abroad again, to Venice and London.

While in Europe, Pound began to develop his own style of writing. He befriended many young poets including William Carlos Williams, the English poet Richard Aldington, and Hilda Doolittle, the poet known as H.D. In 1912, Pound, Aldington, and Doolittle “. . . decided they were agreed upon three principles of good writing: (1) direct treatment of the subject, (2) to allow no word that was not essential to the presentation, and (3) in their rhythms to follow the musical phrase rather than strict regularity” (Stock 115). Pound called the members of this new movement Les Imagistes, or The Imagists. The Imagists went on to influence a great number of other young poets and writers including James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Ernest Hemingway. The principles they embraced are evident in Pound's later work, including his translation of Sophocles' Elektra. Pound
was not interested in creating extensive ornate descriptions. He wanted only to use language that was direct and essential to his work.

As a translator, Pound’s approach differed from his contemporaries. Although he specialized in Romance languages and studied a variety of languages at school including Latin, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, and Greek, he was not a true expert. Literal translation was not necessarily his strength (Xie 204). “... Pound pays more attention to meaning and its equivalences than to grammar” (Nadel 18). To him it was more essential to gather the essence of the meaning rather than translate it word for word. In a letter dated 1946 to his American publisher James Laughlin, Pound clarified what this essential word choice meant to him:

God Damn & buggar the punctuation
The important thing is
for the 1st time
to emphasize
the articulation
of the thought. (qtd. in Nadel 1)

The direct articulation of thought and emotion is present in his translation of Elektra. Pound once stated, “I believe in an ‘absolute rhythm’, a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed” (qtd. in Stock 109). This idea can be seen not only in his translation of Elektra, but other translations as well. The essence of the emotion is present in his words and the intent of his characters is undeniably clear in what they express.
While in London around 1913, Pound met Mary Fenollosa. She was the widow of Ernest Fenollosa, an American educator and art critic who made a significant contribution to the preservation of Asian art. Mrs. Fenollosa determined that Pound should be entrusted with the literary works of her deceased husband. Ernest Fenollosa was fascinated by the arts in Japan and China. The books Pound inherited included drafts of translations of Chinese poetry and Noh dramas, as well as an essay called “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry” (Stock 148). The subject matter was perfect for Pound. Asian languages became of great interest to him because they had such a similarity in principle to his own Imagist literary theory. Imagism “... derived its technique from classical Chinese and Japanese poetry—stressing clarity, precision, and economy of language” (Academy of American Poets 1). In a similar manner, Fenollosa’s aesthetic is based on a number of convictions about Chinese ideograms which may be summarized as follows: 1. they are essentially pictorial; 2. they present natural processes as verbal action; 3. their formal configurations reside in natural metaphors; 4. these qualities make written Chinese an ideal medium for poetry. (Wilson 101)

Both the Chinese and Japanese languages rely heavily on individual pictures or symbols in order to express an idea. “Pound is able to identify the ideogram as an ideal medium for ‘direct treatment of the thing’” (Wilson 102). The direct treatment of an object and the economy of expression that are present in the Chinese and Japanese languages are the same concepts introduced by Pound in his Imagist theory. Economy of expression and directness are at the core of Pound’s work as a poet and translator. He went on to study Chinese and Japanese and utilized them in his greatest work, The Cantos, which he wrote over a period of 40 years.
An example of Pound’s direct approach to translation is his version of Sophocles’ 

*Women of Trachis*. In his introduction to the play from 1957, S.V. Jankowski gives an excellent overview of Pound as a translator:

All of Pound’s work of translation is done with the reverence due to a great classic. First he seeks the truth which is usually entombed beneath a conventional dictionary. Then, he gets down to his task of finding its appropriate, living expression in contemporary speech and finds that expression in his genius, his own self. (xiv)

It is evident in Pound’s words that there is a modern feel to the language. Using the vernacular, the language of the people at the time he is translating, Pound is not afraid to employ all styles of slang terms and expressions that are identified with the modern. “He made his version as hard and direct as it could be. He made it . . . nearer the bone; while, at the same time, it would be impossible to detect a note of baldness or monotony in his style” (Jankowski xv).

This “getting nearer the bone” is amazing in that it exposes the life and the humanness in Pound’s characters. Pound’s words mirror the language of his audience and therefore make the ancient Greek story more accessible to a contemporary audience. Jankowski observes that

. . . there is no getting away from the fact that every living language is shaped by the people, and not chiselled in classrooms and libraries of students and professors. . . . The people mould their language day after day in their unending struggle for survival. . . . Their newly formulated words and idioms are usually blunt and go straight to the point. (xxii)

Pound truly knew how to make Sophocles’ characters speak to a modern audience, thereby maintaining the spectators’ interest in such ancient stories.
There are many examples of Pound’s translation compared with other translations of Women of Trachis included in S.V. Jankowski’s introduction to the play. The following is an example of one of these differences in style in a scene between Daianeira and Hyllos. This is Lewis Campbell’s translation:

DAIANEIRA. Dear child, dear boy! Even from the lowliest head Wise counsel may come forth. This woman here Though a bond-maiden, hath a free-born tongue; HYLLOS. What word is spoken, mother? May I know? (xv)

Gilbert Murray’s translation:

DAIANEIRA. My son, my child! From humble lips may fall Wise words, methinks. This woman being a thrall, Hath spoke a word would well be seem the free. HYLLOS. How, mother, if not secret, tell it me. (xv)

Ezra Pound’s translation:

DAIANEIRA. See here, son, this slave talks sense, More than some free folks. HYLLOS. What’s she say? Lemme hear. (xvi)

In examining these three examples, the differences in translation style are obvious. Traditionally, there is a heightened formality applied to the language of Sophocles’ characters. Campbell and Murray’s translations have this more formal and indirect quality. However, Pound’s translation has a modern and direct sound and contains more slang characteristics. The language does not sound completely like natural speech, and is still stylized, but the meaning is more apparent because of his word choice.

Elektra’s language also has a variety of shifts in dialect and style of everyday speech. The variations come from Pound’s own love of experimentation with language
and the use of language as a mask, or a way of deceiving. A young poet, who was a pupil of Pound, gave an interesting picture of what his own speech sounded like:

Iris Barry has given a very memorable picture of Pound in London, as she knew him there in 1916. She writes, ‘Pound talks like no one else. His is almost wholly an original accent, the base of American mingled with a dozen assorted “English society” and Cockney accents inserted in mockery, French, Spanish and Greek exclamations, strange cries and catcalls, the whole very oddly inflected, with dramatic pauses and diminuendoes’. (Mullins 105)

The characters in his translation of Elektra embodied Pound’s own vocal qualities as described above. Orestes’ Cockney dialect and the Tutor’s Irish dialect that are used to deceive Klytemnestra and Aegithus, are written directly into the text. Elektra and the Chorus women cry in Greek to each other as they lament the death of Orestes. For Pound, Sophocles’ characters became a means of expression. The translation was completed while he was imprisoned. Through the characters in Elektra, Pound protested his confinement and gave voice to his political opinions.

While in Italy, Pound became interested in Mussolini’s fascist government and was vocal about his desire for the United States to lead the way in a worldwide reform of economic and monetary systems. From 1941 to 1943, he was presented with the opportunity to offer his opinions and ideas by broadcasting over Radio Rome. Wanting to “save America,” Pound spoke out against President Franklin Roosevelt and the United States’ involvement in World War II. Authorities ultimately became suspicious of Pound’s objectives, prompting the United States Federal Communications Commission to monitor his broadcasts. The style of speech Pound adopted for these broadcasts caused some of the government’s mistrust of his intentions.
Pound made about seventy-five radio broadcasts over Radio Rome, including one on December 7, 1941, before the advent of the United States into the Second World War. The Italian government, ever-suspicious of his motives, then temporarily stopped him from broadcasting. The odd jargon and mixture of dialects that he employed had convinced the Fascist secret service, which was as prone to error as its American counterpart, that he was sending messages in code to the United States armed forces! (Mullins 203)

Pound's own life experience ironically embodied his literary work. He experienced how language can be used intentionally as a mask, and how words and the manner in which they are spoken can be misinterpreted. For him, in his poetry and other literary work, "The search for the self, for the real beneath the mask, was also a search for 'sincere self-expression,' a bid to find the right language" (Wilson 85). In her introduction to *Elektra*, Carey Perloff further discusses the idea of language as a mask: "The notion of verbal deception lies at the core of Sophokles' *Elektra* in which characters are constantly revealing or concealing themselves through the use of verbal 'masks,' masks which often prove very dangerous indeed" (xi). With Pound's manipulation of language, it is clear to the audience who is deceiving whom in order to get what they want. The verbal deception creates and adds to the drama.

The Radio Rome broadcasts were Pound's downfall. As he became increasingly fascinated by the fascist government, he also began to publicly express anti-Semitic opinions. The broadcasts caused great suspicion of Pound on both the American and Italian sides and led to an FBI investigation of his speeches. He ultimately was arrested in Genoa, Italy in 1945. Pound then spent six months as a military prisoner at the American Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa. While confined there, he was isolated in
an open barbed wire cage which was exposed to the elements. Pound received permission to borrow a typewriter and worked on his translations of Confucius. Some of his finest poetry was written about his experience in the prison in Cantos LXXIV-LXXXIV, which later became known as The Pisan Cantos. Pound was sent back to the United States to Washington, DC to stand trial for treason, but after he was examined by doctors, he was found mentally unfit for trial. The court ordered him to be committed to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Washington. Pound was able to receive visitors for several hours a day and had some freedom to roam the hospital grounds. He was visited nearly every day by many of the writer friends who he had influenced, as well as by his wife Dorothy Shakespear Pound.

While at St. Elizabeth’s, Pound continued writing and in 1951 translated Sophocles’ Elektra, shortly before completing Women of Trachis (Perloff ix). The dark and isolated living conditions he experienced in the hospital, as well as those described earlier at Pisa, manifest themselves in his version of Elektra. One can sense that he identified with Elektra because she suffered a great injustice in the murder of her father, King Agamemnon. She became a prisoner in her own home and had very few allies. The only weapon she had against Queen Klytemnestra were words. As a writer, Pound used words to express his disapproval of the American government. Officials could confine him to a mental hospital but they could not stop him from writing and expressing his opinions.

There is very little written about Pound’s translation of Elektra, probably because Pound never sought to have it published. The translation was written with the assistance
of Rudd Fleming, a classicist from the University of Maryland, who visited Pound over
the years of his confinement. The play was not discovered until Carey Perloff, artistic
director of the Classic Stage Company, visited James Laughlin, Pound’s American
publisher, in 1986. They discussed the lack of suitable translations of Greek tragedy.
The manuscript was turned over to Perloff to direct and the first production was presented
at the Classic Stage Company in New York in November of 1987. The production
generally received a positive response and the script was thought likely to replace existing
translations. Pound’s version was also said to be an “extremely actable” translation
(Gussow C20).

In 1992, Sue Ott Rowlands, the director of The Ohio State University production,
played the Lead Chorus Woman at Round House Theatre in Washington, DC. Generally,
the production was not praised. In his review, Hap Erstein found it difficult to take the
tragedy seriously because of the comic elements of Pound’s translation. He felt that
“Pound, through his use of inappropriately informal expressions, injects comedy that is
wholly counterproductive” (C2). Erstein’s observation seemed to find fault with Pound
rather than the production itself. However, Ott Rowlands, during the Ohio State process,
said that she believed Round House’s version was not successful primarily because the
potential that Pound’s script had to offer was not fully explored, nor were the actions of
the characters sufficiently specified. Ott Rowlands’ previous experience of working on
Elektra informed her direction of the play at Ohio State. Great care was taken to ensure
that Pound’s irony and humor were clear to the audience and had an essential purpose. In
order to produce the play in an effective manner, months of research were undertaken by
the director and cast.

1.2

My research on the world of the play consisted of reading about Elektra’s original
playwright, Sophocles, the importance of ritual, and the relationship between the gods
and humans during the time the play was written. I also researched the mythology
surrounding Elektra’s history in order to understand textual references within the script.
The play’s content made it necessary to fully understand the extensive history of Elektra’s
family.

Sophocles lived circa 496 to 406 BC. He most likely wrote Elektra for the Great
Dionysia competition. He was typically a well-received playwright, writing and directing
over 100 plays (Hogan 3). Elektra is one of only seven plays that are known to be
authored by Sophocles. He was credited in Aristotle’s Poetics as having added the third
actor to the action of a play. The particular style of Sophocles’ writing is unique in that
his Chorus partook in the action of the play more than the Chorus of other playwrights.

Sophocles also focused on human suffering and the downfall of great heroic figures:

He is perhaps the most abstract of the three great tragedians in that the
bare bones of his tragedies may be anatomized in terms of abstract nouns:
and yet, at the same time, he is supreme in giving his thematic structure
human shape, in making it immediate through the behavior of people,
and in presenting that behavior through the medium of the theatre. . . . he
touches most directly and most painfully the very sources of human
suffering. (Taplin 25)

In his ability to do this, it easy to see why Pound was a perfect fit to translate Sophocles.
Pound both understood the human suffering as well as the desire to express only what was most essential to telling the story.

At the time he was writing, Sophocles had to reach a huge audience, so it was necessary to write about themes that were universal in Greek culture. “Throughout the fifth century the tragedians drew on a common body of traditional stories which we know as Greek myths. The heroes and heroines of myths and their adventures were known to every child” (Hogan 8). Many different authors took the same stories and handled them very differently, altering events and developing the characters as they desired. So every Greek citizen knew at least one version of any given story. In Greek culture, the family was the fundamental social unit and these myths often involved conflict and strife within this unit. Thus, a story such as Elektra’s had great political and social relevance during the time that it was written.

One of the most important relationships in Greek tragedy is that between the gods and humans. Sophocles built Elektra’s tragedy out of her family’s long history of conflict with the gods. In some accounts, her ancestor Tantalus sacrificed and served his own son to the gods in a fit of hatred against them. In their horror at being tricked by a human, they cursed the family line (Hamilton 346). However, as mentioned in Sophocles’ script, some consider Tantalus’ son Pelops as the cause. According to myth, Hippodamia, the woman Pelops pursued, arranged a chariot race between him and the King’s charioteer, Myrtilus, and bribed Myrtilus to pull the bolts out of the King’s chariot so Pelops could easily win. Later on, Myrtilus was killed by Pelops, cursing him as he died. Many
believed Mytilus’ curse was the cause of the misfortunes that soon followed the family of Pelops, known as the House of Atreus.

Sophocles’ contemporary Aeschylus wrote his trilogy of plays, collectively called The Oresteia, which tells the entire chain of events after this initial ill-fated encounter with the gods. During the Trojan War, King Agamemnon and his troops were held up from traveling to Troy because the gods created a storm to prevent them from setting sail. The only way to calm the winds and ensure a safe voyage was for Agamemnon to sacrifice his own daughter Iphigenia to the gods (Hamilton 261-262). Iphigenia was killed and the troops had a safe journey. However, Agamemnon’s wife, Clytemnestra, was enraged that he had sacrificed their daughter without her knowledge. She took Agamemnon’s cousin Aegithus as a lover, and the two of them murdered Agamemnon upon his return home. In the view of the gods, the slaying was a great injustice and needed to be avenged. The only individual able to vindicate Agamemnon’s death was his son Orestes.

Orestes was sent away to safety by his sister Elektra at the time of the murder, and 10 years passed before he returned to take revenge by killing his mother. However, the familial relationships within the tragedy caused a potential risk for Orestes. “It was a son’s duty to kill his father’s murderers, a duty that came before all others. But a son who killed his mother was abhorrent to gods and to men. A most sacred obligation was bound up with a most atrocious crime” (Hamilton 357). After consulting with Apollo, Orestes was granted the gods’ blessing in avenging his father’s death, even if it meant destroying
the sacred bond between mother and son. When the deed was finished, Orestes stood for the murder of his mother, but Apollo kept his blessing and excused him.

In Sophoclean drama, there is a great distance between the gods and humans. "Man is subject to death; the gods are not. Man is limited in power and knowledge; the gods are not. Man is the victim of chance; the gods are not" (Hogan 11). Therefore, humans must take great care in what they choose to do and who they listen to. They must respect divine power since the gods have control over the human condition. "In our plays oracles and prophesies always come true. One may say that they are self-fulfilling... one may say that they reflect the will of the gods" (Hogan 14). The Chorus women understand the perfection of the gods and fallible nature of humans. When they hear about Klytemnestra's dream, there is no doubt that the prophesy will be fulfilled. If Elektra acts rashly and takes action on her own before the timing is right, human error might destroy the hope for vengeance. Therefore, the Chorus women encourage Elektra to wait patiently for Orestes, because the gods say he will return.

The relationship between the gods and humans adds a religious overtone to the story. Sophocles' characters have great faith and believe in ritual. The pouring of libations, the carrying of Elektra's belt and a bit of her hair to Agamemnon's grave, and the invocation of the gods are all ritualistic in nature. Elektra and the Chorus must pay Apollo and the other gods respect so that the prophesy of revenge will come true. "Man worships divinity by observing rites and ritual and by taking care not to violate, by word or deed, the particular interest of the divinity" (Hogan 10). Great care is taken by all of the characters to make offerings and ensure the support of the gods. Even Klytemnestra,
in fear of Orestes’ return, appeals to Apollo by pouring libations and praying at the family’s altar.

Traditionally, the more poetic translations of Elektra have required a certain stylized approach to acting the text effectively. In Sophocles’ time “... it is generally supposed that the Greek tragic theatre was particularly non-naturalistic and stylized. In so far as the acting had to be appropriate to the size of the theatre this is no doubt right” (Taplin 15). The Greeks’ larger-than-life acting style incorporated the use of masks and conventional gestures. But is it possible to base Elektra’s story in some modern, more naturalistic acting technique? Can the acting be stylized but still retain some sense of realism? In his book Greek Tragedy in Action, Oliver Taplin briefly discusses the issue of acting style and insists that modern productions of Greek tragedy that handle performance in a non-realistic way alienate rather than involve the audience in the action (16). In researching traditional Greek theatre, it is safe to say that the larger, more unrealistic manner of performance is not necessarily the best choice for Pound’s translation.

Stylistically, The Ohio State University production contained mostly contemporary elements combined with some Greek elements. Costumes were derived from 1950s America and the set reflected a post-World War II destruction. The updated style suited Pound’s language and required the actors to use a style of acting based in realism. However, these modern elements quickly acquired the potential for even more meaning because of recent current events. “Although Greek drama was heavily in debt to myth... it is never far from vital contemporary issues, and that mix accounts for much of
its enduring vitality” (Hogan 15). People might not believe in the revenge of gods, but after the tragic act of terrorism which occurred on September 11, 2001 in New York City, Americans fully understood the desire for revenge in response to an unjustified act. Thus, the mixture of contemporary styles utilized in the Ohio State production was extremely effective in telling this ancient story.

1.3

The Chorus women of Pound’s Elektra are called “noblewomen of Mycenae” by Elektra. The shared Greek text between the Chorus and Elektra immediately creates an intimate familiarity among the women. In my character research, I focused on the shifts in style within the Chorus’ dialogue and attempted to find some natural reason or motivation for the changes. I also researched the role and function of the Chorus within Sophoclean tragedy which helped a great deal in determining who these women are and the reason for their personal investment in Elektra. Why do these women share a bond with Elektra? What is at stake for them in the avenging of Agamemnon’s death?

In her director’s concept, Sue Ott Rowlands says these women are “...reminiscent of ‘Las Madres de la Plaza’ in Argentina” (Appendix A). Las Madres are women who have experienced the horrors of a fascist regime and who have waited for years, seeking justice for their children and grandchildren. Their children disappeared between 1976 and 1983 for speaking out against the barbaric economic and social system imposed in Argentina by President Maria Estela Martinez de Peron (Madres de Plaza de Mayo Linea Fundadora 1). Those who visibly opposed the movement were kidnapped and later killed by the military. “For the last 20 years, the Madres circle the plaza,
holding photographs of the children they lost. They also demand that the military men who carried out the genocide be brought to justice” (Fisher 1). Ott Rowlands’ vision for the Chorus was one of strength, power, and determination. The women of the Chorus use their authority as women, in a manner similar to Las Madres, to see that justice is done in the world of the play.

The women of the Chorus are older than Elektra. They say to her, “I’m talkin’ to you like a mother, you can trust me” (11), indicating the wisdom of their experience. They are women who surely remember seeing the men of their families leave for the Trojan War where Agamemnon led his troops. They more than likely suffered their own losses in the process, in a sense experiencing the murder of a loved one. The Chorus also witnessed the tragedy of Agamemnon’s murder and want to see that justice is done. The women stand in as a mother figure for Elektra. They will not leave her side until Orestes comes home to avenge his father’s death. Thus, they have a personal investment in Elektra’s cause and are in a position to offer advice; they know what it means to wait and to accept the control the gods have over their fate.

In American Theatre magazine, a 1999 article discusses the various Greek tragedies being produced that year. Pound’s Elektra was not one of them, but a version directed by David Leveaux was included. A quote from actress Pat Carroll in this particular production put the role into perspective for me, in terms of the Chorus’ function and importance within the action:

Pat Carroll, who plays the leader of the Chorus in Leveaux’s Electra, has played some of the significant maternal roles in dramatic literature . . . and understands her role in Electra in those terms: the voice of female
authority and of conscience. ‘Isn’t that the thing we admire particularly in women who have gone through wars?’ Cartoll reasons. ‘The men are gone. She [the Chorus] is playing a political role as well as a maternal one, because she has to be the leader—not because she was elected, but by the very authority of her being. That kind of female authority is a very unusual characteristic in a woman of any time.’ (Zinman 63)

The Chorus women probably lost husbands, fathers, or brothers in the Trojan War and share a common bond of loss with Elektra. Their men have been murdered too, so they want to see justice served within the royal family. If the king’s murder is paid for, society as a whole will be set right again. The avenging of Agamemnon’s death will, in some way, pay retribution for the losses of the Chorus and society.

In this way, the women form a kind of conspiracy. The Chorus, who initially seems to be outside the situation, takes on an increasingly active role within the progression of events. The women ask Elektra if Aegisthus is home and when they are told he is not, they respond with “Well then I can say what I think” (14). They are aware of the dangers surrounding Elektra’s home situation. Extremely opinionated about the royal family’s situation, they are wise enough to keep their mouths shut when necessary. Elektra, on the other hand, has some difficulty doing this.

Since the language at first reading has a hardened edge, it is easy to initially interpret the Chorus ladies’ responses to Elektra’s incessant cries as scolding. However, if this were the case, the Chorus might have packed up and left Elektra to her sorrow long ago. Instead, the women maintain their interest in her cause and plan to stand by Elektra no matter what happens. “They have not come to berate Elektra or to scold her, but to provide consolation and relief” (Gardiner 143). Sympathetic to Elektra’s cause, they also
gently rebuke her excessive emotions over the death of Agamemnon. Elektra’s emotions and shouts of anger outside the palace are what keep her from living in decent conditions. The women sensibly urge Elektra to restrain her outspokenness so that she might not get into any more trouble with Klytemnestra and Aegithus.

After reading several articles, I discovered that some modern critics theorize that the Chorus is concerned for Elektra’s psychological health. Her excessive mourning is contributing to some form of madness. However, I prefer the simplicity of Cynthia Gardiner’s answer to these critics in her book on the Chorus:

But not once do the Chorus suggest that Electra’s troubles are psychological. . . . All the miseries mentioned in the parodos are physical: because Electra dares to defy the ruling powers she is unwed, meanly clothed, and ill fed. These are the conditions that motherly chorus are trying to assuage. This is not a crowd of starry-eyed idealists or frenzied partisans, but fifteen sensible and concerned adults . . (145)

Gardiner’s is a very simple interpretation because it led me towards uncomplicated and uncluttered objectives, most beneficial in the rehearsal process.

The Chorus also plays referee, particularly between Elektra and Chrysothemis. The sisters argue about Chrysothemis’ loyalty to Klytemnestra and disloyalty to their father. The Chorus does not say much, but is very sharp in responding with:

For the gods sake, keep your tempers,
There’s something to be said on both sides
if either of you could learn from the other. (16)

Again, “The effect is to reinforce our perception of the chorus as practical, level-headed, and mature” (Gardiner 147). They listen to Chrysothemis report Klytemnestra’s dream
which can only mean that Orestes is on his way to avenge the wrongful death. With
Chrysothemis’ departure, there is a definite shift in the language of the Chorus:

You can say that I never guess right
a born fool without second sight,
that my head was never screwed tight,
but if Justice don't win just this once
I’m a dunce

And before a great time has gone by.
My heart’s risin’ now
and my dreams are breathin’ deep
with a free and airy sound:
the greek king won’t forget you,
he’ll be comin’ yet
and the double headed axe
be payin’ back the smacks
and the bloody blood be flowin’ once again. (21-22)

The new rhythm that is created expresses delight at the conversion of Chrysothemis to
Elektra’s side. Carey Perloff, in her introduction to the play, states “[Pound] created a
sort of rap rhythm that puts us right onto the streets of contemporary America” (xx). The
rhymes at the end of each line emphasize a build up of rhythms, which parallels the
women’s building excitement over the sign in Klytemnestra’s dream. The dream is
evidence that the gods are working and that Orestes is coming to finish the job. They are
giddy with excitement; their dialogue culminates in Greek song, cursing the plague on the
house.

This rejoicing is broken by the arrival of Klytemnestra. The Chorus women do
not speak, except to comment among themselves on Elektra’s increasing fierceness
against her mother. When the Tutor arrives and reports the “death” of Orestes, they
exclaim, “Ah, ah, that’s the end of the dynasty!” (31) along with other cries in Greek.
They weep because their hope for Agamemnon’s vengeance is gone. Their keening is the most emotional they have been so far, not a level-headed reaction since Klytemnestra is still present. They take a huge risk to express themselves so honestly. Once Klytemnestra leaves, the Chorus women join in the very personal lamentation with Elektra. They attempt to comfort her, but all of their hope is gone. Ultimately, they weep as much as Elektra does, crying out, “God, where the hell are you?” (34). Thus, they begin to personally partake in the turn of events, rather than simply bearing witness. “The chorus sympathize with Electra’s sufferings . . . offer their usual practical observation . . . which Electra again shows to be inadequate to the facts of the present situation, yield to her view . . . and finally become so involved in the sorrow that they themselves cry out” (Gardiner 153). Their speech in this section of the script feel like sobs and cries, interspersed with soothing sounds, and then erupting in further outbreaks of crying.

In the next meeting with Chrysothemis, Elektra is convinced that Orestes is dead. Elektra again tries to recruit her sister to murder their mother, but she is unsuccessful. The Chorus women side with Chrysothemis this time since Elektra’s ideas are too extreme and dangerous. They reasonably urge Elektra to listen to her sister:

You better listen, there’s nothing more useful to a human being than forethought and a prudent mind. (43)

Instead, the sisters continue to argue until Chrysothemis leaves. Again, the Chorus’ style changes with their intent. When they call on the gods, it is in Greek, questioning whether the conflict between the children can be reconciled. Pound’s choice to use Greek text first, followed by poetic, stylized English text indicates a prayerful and solemn tone. He
also specifies the Chorus’ anger at being abandoned and their need for the gods’ intervention.

Once the disguised Orestes arrives, again the tone changes. Orestes’ words are written in a distinct dialect and the Chorus women, encountering a stranger, resort to their short, gruff street talk that seems slightly confrontational:

ORESTES: Eh, can any of you ladies tell me: did we hear right and are we getting to where we wanted to come to? CHORUS: Where do you want to come to? AND WHY? What are you here for? ORESTES: Aegisthus. Where does he live? I’ve been looking for him for SOME time. CHORUS (gruffly): Well yuh can’t blame the fellow that told you. You got here. This is it. (48-49)

The Chorus is then silent for the rest of the scene, with the exception of their tears of joy when Orestes reveals his identity to his sister. In their silence they bear witness to the fulfillment of the prophesy of revenge and experience the same joy as Elektra. They fully participate in this reunion and in the action surrounding the murders of Klytemnestra and Aegisthus.

As Orestes enters the palace to kill Klytemnestra, the women wait with Elektra. Their language retains a street-like style, because of their heightened anxiety saying, “Whatchu come out for?” (65) and “It’s awful. Gimme the creeps” (66). The less formal style reflects their primitive state of emotions and anxiety in this life-and-death situation. As they wait, they take on the role of sentries, looking out for the arrival of
Aegisthus. They approve of Orestes’ action and are part of the revenge. Again, they fully participate in the gods’ plan.

The Chorus ladies’ language is a reflection of their journey within the piece. They adapt their style according to their emotional state and their intentions. They respond in a way that is organic for them. In terms of acting, it was important for me to remember that human reactions, in their most direct forms, are hidden underneath the words.

The poet has given them the personality of warmhearted, kindly women . . . who are also reasonable and practical . . . . Nor, on the other hand, can their commonsense approach be construed as timidity or cowardice, since their utterances contain recurrent tones of spirited indignation at wickedness and an irrepressible confidence in the righteous order of the universe. (Gardiner 160)

Pound’s women retain these characteristics, but he also layers in attitude, strength, and power. They want what is good and right. They are street-smart women who understand how the universe works. Their gritty sarcasm, all-knowing wisdom, and wit are also the source of much humor within the text, making them an integral part of the action in the play.

In this chapter, I have detailed my research on the translator of Elektra, Ezra Pound; the production history of the play; the playwright, Sophocles; and the style in which the play was written. Additionally, I have presented my character analysis of the Chorus. The research was invaluable in the process creating my thesis role.

The history of Pound’s fascination with language combined with his political views and imprisonment were key factors in understanding his translation of Sophocles’ play. The style of language was useful to me as an actor in making active choices for my
character. The Greek elements that were retained in the translation also had to be fully researched in order to understand the world of Sophocles' characters. Although the play was set in a modern time period, it was important to understand what was valued in ancient Greek culture. Having this understanding allowed the actors to juxtapose different styles and effectively portray the characters as real people in a desperate situation.

In Chapter Two, I will document the details of the production circumstances of Elektra, performed at The Ohio State University. This will include information about the individuals involved in the creative process and the environment in which the play was produced.
CHAPTER 2

PRODUCTION CIRCUMSTANCES

This chapter documents the production circumstances of Elektra and is divided into three sections. Section one contains information on the theatre in which Elektra was performed, the director, and the production team. Section two provides details about the casting process. Section three contains production schedule information.

2.1

Elektra was performed in the Mount Hall Studio Theatre at The Ohio State University October 31 to November 3, November 5-9, and November 13-18, 2001. Mount Hall Studio Theatre is a black box theatre located on West Campus. The space measures approximately 39' long, 34' wide, and 16' high. Seating can be adjusted to fit the needs of a production's scenic design. Elektra was staged in the round and seated approximately 80 audience members.

The production was directed by faculty member Sue Ott Rowlands who is an Associate Professor of Theatre and the Chair of the Acting and Directing Area at The Ohio State University. Ott Rowlands received her MFA from the University of Oklahoma and her BS from Oklahoma Christian College. Other shows she has directed at Ohio State include Orpheus Descending by Tennessee Williams, King Lear by William
Shakespeare, Neil Bartlett’s translation of The Misanthrope by Moliere, and The Memorandum by Vaclav Havel. Ott Rowlands has also directed for The Cleveland Playhouse, Dobama Theatre, Beck Center, the Halle Theatre, Contemporary American Theatre Company (CATCO), and The Cleveland Theatre Company. As an actress, Ott Rowlands most recently performed as Vivian Bearing in Margaret Edson’s Wit at Ohio State in the spring of 2001.

Ott Rowlands has also served on the acting faculties of various actor training programs across the country including Circle-in-the-Square, New York University, The Actor’s Space, The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, Western Maryland College, and Webster College. During the summer of 2001, Ott Rowlands attended the LaMaMa International Symposium for Directors held at LaMaMa Umbria outside of Spoleto, Italy from July 12-30. The conference had a great impact on Ott Rowlands and influenced her direction of Elektra. Others in attendance, and who were the source of creative inspiration, included Anne Bogart of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI), Ayla Algan from Turkey, and Malick Bowens of France, an actor with Peter Brooks’ company.

Mark Shanda, Associate Chair and Technical Director in the Department of Theatre, served as producer for the Ohio State production of Elektra. Undergraduate student Shelley Little assistant directed the production. The stage manager was undergraduate Kristin Kidd and assistant stage managers were undergraduates Jennifer Doelger and Eric Mayer. Costumes were designed by undergraduate Colin Sweet. Scenic design was provided by graduate student Brad Steinmetz. Graduate student Jim
Hutchinson served as the lighting designer. The sound design was created by undergraduate Ben Shurr. Greek text coaching was provided by undergraduate Eleni Papaleonardos, aided by faculty member Stratos Constantinidis.

2.2

The casting process for the 2001 fall quarter at Ohio State was unusual in that the graduate students in the department were pre-cast in their roles during the spring. The productions performed in spring of 2001 were Margaret Edson's *Wit*, and *Uncommon Clay*, a new work devised by faculty member Jeanine Thompson. The students cast in *Uncommon Clay* understood that work on the project spanned two quarters; a preview showing took place during the spring and the finished product was performed in the fall. The graduate students cast in *Wit* were then pre-cast in *Elektra*. However, auditions still needed to be held in the fall to fill the remaining roles in both productions.

The only major roles not filled in *Elektra* were Klytemnestra and two Chorus members, one speaking and one mute. Carie DeVito, who played Elektra, and I read scenes focusing on these character relationships with students who were called back. We were required to improvise with the text and explore spatial relationships. Particularly crucial was the casting of the mute Chorus member who needed a good sense of listening and physical improvisation in order to establish a strong connection to Elektra. After extensive callbacks, a change in previous casting occurred. Graduate student Tarashai Lee, who was originally cast in the spring as Chrysothemis, was moved to the role of Klytemnestra. Undergraduate student Amanda Buffington took over the role of Chrysothemis.
Auditions for Elektra were held as part of The Ohio State University Department of Theatre's unified auditions on September 20, 2001 in the Roy Bowen Theatre. The other productions being cast from the auditions were Uncommon Clay by Jeanine Thompson, and Private Words: The Hiding of Anne Frank's Diary, a touring production written by Lesley Ferris. Callbacks for Elektra were held on Sunday, September 23, 2001 in room 107 of the Drake Union. The final cast list, consisting of six graduate students and six undergraduate students, was posted on Monday, September 24, 2001 as follows:

TUTOR: Damian Bowerman
ORESTES: Donald Clark
PYLADES: Luke Mess
ELEKTRA: Carie DeVito*
CHORUS: Regina Rockensies*
        Dana Spurlock
        Leah Reddy
CHRYSOTHEMIS: Amanda Buffington
KLYTEMNESTRA: Tarashai Lee
MAID: Tiffany Wickham
AEGITHUS: Jonathan Park
BODYGUARD: Andrew Wood

(* Denotes partial fulfillment of MFA Degree in Acting)
2.3

The rehearsal period for *Elektra* ran from September 25 to October 30, 2001. Rehearsals were held in room 101 of the Drake Union from September 25-30, then continued in Mount Hall from October 1-30. Technical rehearsals were held October 24-26 and dress rehearsals were held October 28-30. Our final dress rehearsal had a preview audience in attendance. Performances of *Elektra* were held for three weeks from October 31 to November 3, November 5-9, and November 13-18. All were evening performances except for two matinees. A post-performance discussion that was open to the department was held on November 20, 2001 in room 107 of the Drake Union. The discussion was attended by cast members, faculty, and other students.

This chapter detailed the production circumstances of *Elektra*. The next chapter will focus on describing the acting methods I used to approach my thesis role in *Elektra*, as well as my approach to analyzing the play's script.
CHAPTER 3

THE SCRIPT

This chapter contains details pertaining to my work on the script for Elektra and is divided into three sections. The first section is a description of my acting methodology. The second section contains an explanation of my script analysis terminology and the complete scored script. The third section is a glossary of terms which were important to my research for the role.

3.1

During my graduate school experience I have been exposed to a variety of acting tools and techniques. The two approaches which I have adopted as in my approach to realistic scripts are the Stanislavski technique and Meisner training. Although my role in Elektra provided the challenge of performing a non-realistic text, I felt the need to base my work in psychological realism in order to create a believable character (admittedly living in an extraordinary world) with whom the audience could connect.

I began my process by examining the text through a Stanislavskian approach. My first task in creating the Chorus Woman was defining her super-objective. The super-objective is the overall life goal of a character to which his/her through-line of action carries him/her. The super-objective is the greatest need that drives an individual
to take action. In his book *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski defines the relationship between the super-objective and through-line of action:

That inner line of effort that guides the actions from the beginning to the end of the play we call the continuity or the through-going action. This through line galvanizes all the small units and objectives of the play and directs them toward the super-objective. (273-274)

I had to answer the questions: Why is Elektra's situation so important to the Chorus? Why are these women so personally invested in her cause? I found that the Chorus' super-objective was to ensure that Agamemnon's murder was paid for. This super-objective was achieved by pursuing smaller objectives, many of which focused on supporting Elektra and keeping her emotions under control. Some examples of these objectives included to console, to rescue, to conspire, to lament, to rally support, to mediate, to advise, to scold, and to praise. Achieving these objectives would ensure that Agamemnon's death was properly avenged by Orestes.

In order to achieve any objective, action must be taken by the character in order to get what he/she wants. Whatever these actions are, they must always be done with a specific purpose. Most times while pursuing an objective, a character encounters an obstacle which hinders the pursuit. Depending on the obstacle, the character chooses a specific and appropriate action in a given moment in order to fulfill his/her want. In order to make this structure more clear, I had to break down my script into beats, or smaller units in which my character pursued a specific objective. Once the objective was fulfilled, or once a new problem was presented, the beat changed and there was the need to pursue a new objective. This structure, outlined by Stanislavski, makes the play easier
to work because the actor can approach it in smaller units, rather than tackling an entire scene at one time. The smaller bits of text allow for more specific and detailed choices to be made for the character from moment to moment.

In order to create an authentic character, I also had to examine my given circumstances, those facts about my role provided by the playwright. The given circumstances led me to imaginatively create my relationship with Elektra and the other two Chorus Women. My research from the summer of 2001 helped to supplement and define the clues about my character within the script even before beginning the rehearsal process. The information I gathered on Ezra Pound helped me recognize his biting wit and use of irony in his translation of Elektra. Having knowledge of his imprisonment and political views helped me to understand Elektra’s opinions and the perspectives of the Chorus on her situation. Although written by Sophocles, Pound’s personal experiences resonate throughout the translation, and my research was essential to my full comprehension of these elements.

The research I gathered on the traditional role of the Chorus in Greek tragedy was useful once rehearsals began. The information guided me toward a maternal characterization and clarified my ultimate choices of actions in specific scenes. Many scholars have compared various translations of Elektra and offered different interpretations of the Chorus’ experience within the play. These comparisons gave me many options to work with in the process. The research on Greek mythology aided me in understanding Elektra’s family tree, the familial relationships which determined the
current situation, and the importance of religion and the reverence of the gods in Greek culture.

In particular, researching Greek tragedy and Greek culture became important to understanding the circumstances in Elektra. In Greek tragedy, the stakes are extremely high for all of the characters. They are literally involved in life and death situations. In performing Elektra, it is easy to over-dramatize the performance because of the magnitude of the circumstances. One of my biggest challenges was finding the honesty and sincerity of the character within these extreme occurrences. To find this sincerity, an actor must fully believe in his/her given circumstances. Stanislavski's concept of the "magic if" was especially helpful in this process.

The "magic if" is a tool introduced by Stanislavski that sparks an actor's belief in the possibility of a given situation. Stanislavski explains in An Actor Prepares that:

> If acts as a lever to lift us out of the world of actuality into the realm of imagination. . . . The secret of the effect of if lies first of all in the fact that it does not use fear or force, or make the artist do anything. On the contrary, it reassures him through its honesty, and encourages him to have confidence in a supposed situation. . . . It arouses an inner and real activity, and does this by natural means. (47)

To put the word "if" in front of a situation asks the actor to imaginatively and naturally respond to the possible circumstances. The actor then has an easier time believing in the possibility of what he/she is called to do on stage. Using the "magic if" made the larger than life circumstances of Elektra more tangible to me as an actor. I had to ask myself what "if" I was willing to risk my own life for Elektra's cause? What "if" I desired revenge so strongly that I joined Elektra everyday outside the palace in protest? The
“magic if” was a valuable tool in recognizing the urgency of the Chorus’ situation and their commitment to Elektra.

Sanford Meisner’s work also was helpful in the creation of my thesis role. The Chorus Women are always physically present, but do not always speak. They bear witness and listen to the progression of events. Listening is the basis of the Meisner work. In order to listen, I had to focus all of my attention on the present moment. During a performance, it is essential for an actor to fully focus his/her attention on what is happening on stage, rather than in the audience or in the outside world. The only way proper focus can be achieved is through the relaxation of the actor. Distractions to the actor such as outside thoughts or fears cause tension in the body, ultimately affecting breathing, physicality, and the ability to be open and responsive to the world of the play. Being in the present moment demands uncompromising concentration from the actor.

During the rehearsal process for Elektra, I struggled many times to maintain focus and not be worried about my own performance. However, my training allowed me to utilize relaxation techniques that reminded me of where my attention needed to be. The role required that I remain open and available, responding to everything within the world of the play. Meisner’s technique helped me to address the challenge of listening for a full hour and a half onstage in such a high stakes world. I had to take the attention off myself, believe in the circumstances, and respond as honestly as possible in the moment.

When I studied the Meisner technique in my graduate work with faculty member Bruce Hermann, I remembered him saying, "There is never a 'nothing' response." We are always "doing" something. His statement also helped to raise the stakes for myself,
especially in those silent moments. Everything from the start of the play had to be life and death; the actions could never be too casual. For example, in rehearsal scene two, I could have chosen “to quiet Elektra” as my action to prevent her from getting into trouble with Clytemnestra. Instead, I made stronger choices such as “to chide Elektra” and “to shut her up,” which are more active and imply higher stakes. Connecting in this way to the given circumstances also helped me approach Pound’s text. Although the mixture of rhythmic English and Greek text was unnatural for me, it was a completely normal and natural manner of speech for my character. As long as I connected with and believed in the action of the present moment, the transitions in language happened honestly.

In finding the physicality of my role, the greatest use to me was Tadashi Suzuki’s method. Early in rehearsals, my initial instinct was to physically keep moving on stage in order to be interesting. However, director Sue Ott Rowlands said she wanted to see stillness from the Chorus. She also wanted to experiment with physical distance between Elektra and the Chorus. Finding the required stillness was a challenge for me since I habitually have very indirect and free-flowing movement qualities. Suzuki’s methods were the means through which I found a sense of active stillness.

Suzuki believes that “A performance begins when the actor’s feet touch the ground. . . . The actor composes himself on the basis of his sense of contact with the ground, by the way in which his body makes contact with the floor” (8). As a Chorus woman, I needed to be stable and dependable. It was necessary to root myself to the ground and be still, but not forget to listen with the full body. Suzuki’s work incorporates
the creation of standing statues which are still poses held by the actor. While holding these positions, there is a great level of alertness and ready energy that makes the actor compelling to watch. Throughout the process, I was able to find moments of this kind of stillness and felt quite engaging, especially once the cast began performances.

Vocally, my previous graduate training was predominantly in Fitzmaurice work. I also studied a full quarter of complex text which aided my ability to find clarity in Pound’s translation. However, the Linklater work I studied with visiting faculty member Maureen Ryan during the quarter of my thesis performance proved to be the greatest benefit for my role in Elektra. The Linklater warm-ups taught in class sought to develop greater breath support, deeper breathing, greater breath capacity, and increase of vocal range. I carried the warm-ups into my own personal routine and the results served my character well. For the first time, I discovered a much deeper and richer vocal quality which suited the grounded nature of the Chorus woman. I also felt more breath support and felt in control of my sound. As an actor, I habitually generate a great amount of tension and I tend to push vocally. However, I soon realized that my sound was stronger than ever before and there was no need to force anything. I was able to go through the entire rehearsal and performance process with no major vocal problems. I was also able to produce the desired effect for speaking Pound’s poetic text and not damage my instrument.

Working with a text such as Ezra Pound’s was a blessing in that the objectives of the characters are so clear; they say what they mean and there is no mistaking what they want. My job as an actor was to specify the actions so they would be effective in front of
an audience. However, there is a certain amount of trust that the actor needs to place in
the written text. While working on Pound’s *Elektra*, it was sometimes necessary to
temporarily abandon traditional acting techniques and dive into the work without thinking
everything through. The script required a trust that the material would be made clear just
by "doing."

As I entered the rehearsal process for *Elektra*, I soon discovered that traditional
psychological realism techniques were not going to carry me through my acting process.
Stanislavski and Meisner were useful in scenes such as rehearsal scene two which had a
more realistic and conversational tone. However, rehearsal scene four is an example of
how I needed to trust the rhythms of the text and discover my actions through reading the
words out loud. Pound’s script required so much trust from the cast. The creative
process is never comfortable because, as actors, we are facing the unknown. Finding the
trust to boldly approach the work is one of the biggest challenges I personally face as an
actor. However, the tools I applied to *Elektra* helped to make the challenges
approachable.

3.2

The next section of this chapter includes the key to my script scoring terms and
abbreviations and my scored script for *Elektra*. The following key uses definitions
derived from Stanislavski’s work and are included in the book *A Practical Handbook for
the Actor*. 

41
Key to Scoring Terms and Abbreviations

I. Script Analysis Terms (These appear in the left column of the scored script.)

(A) Action: The physical pursuit of a specific goal (what you do physically to get what you want). Expressed in verb form. The verb will appear in boldface, with pertinent information after the verb appearing underlined, i.e. to chide Elektra until she backs down.

(B) Beat (labeled as B1, B2, etc.): A single unit of action. Beat titles will appear in quotes, i.e. “Dance of Delight.”

(O) Objective: What the character wants in a given scene.

(PA) Physical Action (called Physical Activity in the Handbook): A specific bit of stage business that the actor chooses to aid his/her action.

II. The Text (This appears in the center column with only essential stage directions.)

(ST) Subtext: The implicit meaning of the text. (This will appear in italics in the right column.)

(T) Translation: The English version of Pound's Greek text. (This will appear in the right column.)

(') Glossary terms are indicated with a superscript number and are defined at the end of the script.

(*) The Chorus' text was divided between speakers. The text I spoke appears in italics in the center column. An asterisk indicates the text that was delivered in unison. A note also appears in the right column, further specifying if the text was spoken, sung, or chanted.
III. **Blocking Notation Terms** (These appear in the right column of the scored script.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(SL) Stage Left</td>
<td>(DSL) Downstage Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SR) Stage Right</td>
<td>(DSR) Downstage Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CS) Center Stage</td>
<td>(PR) Platform Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(USL) Upstage Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(USR) Upstage Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(PL) Platform Left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rehearsal Scene One - "Home Sweet Home"

Scene: at Mycenae, in front of Agamemnon's palace

B1: "New Arrivals"
O: to sustain my energy
so that I can endure
another day of waiting
for Orestes’ return
A: to sleep
PA: Asleep on sandbags

TUTOR:
Well, here’s where your father landed when he
got back from the Trojan war,¹ this is where you
wanted to come to;
Old Argos² over there
where the gad-fly³ chased Miss Inachus,⁴
and that’s the Lukeum,⁵ named after the wolf-god,⁶
the wolf-killer, market place now;
and Hera’s⁷ church on the left
everybody’s heard about that.
Down below there: Mycenae,⁸
center of the gold trade,
and Pelops⁹ palace, the throne room,
where the dirty murder was done.
That’s where I picked you off your dad’s
bloody body,
that is to say your kind sister
did, and give you to me to take off and raise
like a proper avenger.

And now, Orestes, it’s up to you
and your dear friend Mr. Pilades, stranger in these parts.
Get goin' quickly.
Sun’s risin’, birds are singin’,
stars going down, darkness broken.
Get going before people start moving about
and be clear in your own minds what you’re up to.
ORESTES:
All right, Old Handy,
you sure have stuck with us
like a good ole horse rarin' for battle,
urgin' on and keepin' right forward
up in front every time.
This is what we're agoin' to do,
listen sharp and check up if
I miss any bullseyes.

When I went off to the Pythoness\textsuperscript{10}
to ask about doin' right by my father
Phoebus\textsuperscript{11} answered:
Don't start a war,
take a chance, do it yourself:
Kinky course, clean in the kill.

Now as that's the oracle we heard
the first chance you get
you nip into this building, find out everything that's
being done there, and keep us wise to the lot of it. Snap.
Nobody'll recognize your old block
after all these years, under all this herbage.
Make your cock-crow.
You've come here from their best pal Phanoteus\textsuperscript{12}
first time you've ever been out of Phocia.\textsuperscript{13}
Swear that Orestes was killed in a chariot race
at the Pythians.\textsuperscript{14} Put in the details.

We'll go to Dad's tomb as ordered
with libations an' all my pretty curls
we'll bring back that nice brass urn
we hid in the underbrush
to back up the yarn that I'm dead
and buried and this dust all that is left of me.
They'll like that.
I don't mind being dead that way
if I can live on in honor.
I don't suppose the lie will ruin our luck,
not the first time a wise guy
has said he was dead
in order to get a warm welcome.

Earth of the fatherland
bless the roads we have come by
for the old home and this clean up,
the gods are in me to do this,
clean the old home
that I be not sent back into exile dishonored
give me back the heritage
that I bring back the old rule of abundance
and make it solid.

Nuff talk. Get in there, old buck, and
keep steady
and we'll go now
and watch for the moment
time, time
best leader men have.
B2: “Here We Go Again…”

A: to sleep

ELEKTRA:
Oh, oh, I’m so unhappy.

IOO MOI MOI DUSTAENOS

TUTOR:
Some slavey howling inside there.

ORESTES:
Poor Elektra, might be.

wanna stay and listen?

TUTOR:
Certainly not. Get our bearings first

as Loxias ordered. Holy water to wash up

the tomb-stone.

That’s the way to win out.

(TUTOR and ORESTES exit)

Rehearsal Scene Two - “The Daily Lamentation”

B1: “The Dream”

ELEKTRA:

OO PHAOS AGNON

Holy light

Earth, air about us,

A: to sleep

THRENOOON OODAS

POLLAS D’ANTFREIS AESTHOU

tearing my heart out

when black night is over

all night already horrible

been with me

T: Oh holy light

T: How many keening songs have you known? How many straight dealt blows?
my father weeping
there in that wretched house
weeping his doom.
Not killed abroad in the war
but by mother and her bed-boy Aegisthus.
Split his head with an axe as
a woodcutter splits a billet of oak,
and that killed him
and nobody else in this house seems to mind.
Well I'm not going to forget it
and all the stars can shine on it, all of them,
destiny
tears of hate
all flaming rips
of the stars
tide

B2: “I'm Gonna Let the
World Know”

PA: Wake up
and the day can look on it.
I won't stand it and just keep quiet.

O: to find out what the
racket is about

ALL' OU MEN DE
LAEXOO THRENOON
You can't stop the nightingale crying, for her young,
or me
on the porch,
let everyone hear it,

T: But I swear I will not stop lamenting

A: to confer with the
other Chorus women as
to how to approach
Elektra this morning

OO DOOM AIDOU
OO KTHONI HERMAE, OO Queen of Avenging,
O Vengeance,
Hear me,
ye that watch over shed blood,
over murder, over the usurping of beds.

T: Oh House of Hades, oh
Hermes of the underworld
CURSE, and hear me
god seed, ye Erinys, of doom
aid and defend us, avenging our father's death
HAI TOUS ADIKOOS THNAESKNONTAS
HORATH
HAI TOUS EUNAS HUPOKLEPTOMENOUS
ELTHER ARAEXATE

(sinks onto step)

and
send me my brother
I can do no more on my own
This
grief is too heavy.

B3: "There There"

CHORUS:

Poor Elektra

O: to restrain Elektra's emotions before she makes too much noise and causes her mother to come outside

A: to console

A: to blame

Klytemnestra for the murder

T: You [Furies] who see those dying unjustly, you who see those whose beds are stolen, come, help us

Rise and X to top step.

* Greek spoken in unison

T: Oh child, child of a most wretched mother, Elektra. Why are you always pining such a ceaseless lamentation for Agamemnon who long ago was godlessly trapped by the deceipts of your treacherous mother and was betrayed by an evil hand. May he who has contrived these things perish if I may lawfully say it.
A: to damn
Agamemnon's murderers

X to SR of wing.

ELEKTRA:
Yes, you are come nobly to help me,
I can feel that,
but I must go on.

DEAD, he is dead, I must go on.
It's my job,
I have never asked to neglect it,
let me go on alone.

CHORUS:

A: to scold Elektra's behavior - she is getting loud again!

But you won't get him back out of black hell by praying and groaning,
you destroy yourself with too much of it,
no harm to let up for a little.

(emphatic and explicit with meaning to ram it in)

* Greek spoken in unison
T: But you won't indeed rouse your father from the all-receptive lake of death neither by groans nor by prayers

ALL OUTOI TON GEX AIDA*
PANGKINOU LIMNAS PATER ANSTASEIS
OUTS GOOIS OUTS EUXAI
Nothing to be DONE about it.

(CHORUS trying to get idea into what they consider hysterical female)

Why do you make it all the harder?
ELEKTRA:

It would be childish to forget him,  
I'd be a ninny. Carried off that way 

a ITUN aien Itun.  

I think my mind groans as the sound of Itsy's lamenting, terrified, 

bring the news from Zeus. Niope weeping in a stone tomb 

has a better portion from heaven, 

weening forever. 

HAT EN TAPHOO PETRAIOO 

AIAI DAKRUEIS.  

T: For Itsy, Itsy evermore.  

T: You who weep forever in a rocky grave. 

CHORUS: 

A: to preach and remind her she is not the only one who suffers 

OUTOI SOI MOUNA TEKNON 

AXOS EPHANE BROTOON 

Not only you, dear, everyman alive's got his load. 

X to palace steps and sit. 

T: You are not the only mortal child to whom this grief had come. 

A: to sympathize 

PA: reach for her and rock with her 

PROS HO TI SU TOON ENDON EI PERISSA 

HOIS HOMOTHEN EI KAI GONAI KSUNAIMOS 

HOIA XRUSOTHESIS DZOOEI KAI IPHIANASSA 

Poor Chrysothemis, Iphianassa and your boy brother 

in exile 

god send 'em back to Mycenae 

T: Your grief exceeds the grief of those living in your house, of those of your kin and blood. See how Chrysothemis and Iphianassa
A: to cheer her and to inspire hope in her for her brother's return and his reclaiming of their father's throne

KRUPTA T'AXEOON EN HAEB
OLBIOI HON HA KLEINA
GA POTHE MUKAENAIOON
DEKSETAI EUATRIDAN DIOS EUPHRONI
BAEMATI MOLONTA TANDE GAN ORESTAN
Till Orestes come to the throne.*

ELEKTRA:
Whom I keep on expecting, childless, wretched,
unwed, in a dither of fear, muddy with tears,
one thing after another, unending, and always worse;
and he's forgotten all
that's ever happened to him or been told him

A: to dismiss her pessimism

every message I get is a cheat
always he wants to come
but never shows up.

CHORUS:
THARSEI MOI, THARSEI TEKNON*
(chorus moving / pause / move)

T: (and Orestes) hidden from sorrows, happy in his youth, someday the famous Mycenae will welcome back noble Orestes, coming to this land with god sent favorable step
* spoken in unison

A: to inspire hope
PA: start after her

B4: “Enough!”

ELEKTRA:
Gone, gone so much hopeless and there's no help
wasted already, gone by in despair
no going back on that
fatherless, loverless, without stand-bye housed neath my father's bed

T: Courage, child.
* Greek spoken in unison
Rise and X to US of wing.
kenned and fed on trash
in a shapeless sack.

CHORUS:

A: to condemn
Klytemnestra and
Aegithus (their actions
bred more destruction)
She'd a gloomy voice when he came;
and a gloomy sound when the brass axe hit him,
on the couch there in his dining room.
A twisty idea
and a leech that killed him,
one vehemence led to another
procreating the form
whether god or man did it.

ST: Klytemnestra planned this out
since Agamemmnon returned from
the war. She and Aegithus killed
him. One violent act bred
another, whether they were
causd by the gods or by people.

ELEKTRA:
That day was the vilest of all days
and that night at dinner was worse
beyond speakable language
horrible.
I saw my father killed by the pair of 'em
watched himself being killed
and insulted.
Bitched my life, that did, that betrayal.
Zeus avenger, don't let 'em enjoy it unpunished.
Make it hurt. Them in their luxury! Agh!

CHORUS:

A: to scold
Hush. Stop sounding off or talk sense.
Quit piling troubles one on top of the other
always making a row with that grouch of yours.
Don't take the discussable to the powerful

X to SR of wing.
A: to instruct

PSUXA POLEMOUS; TA DE TOIS DUNATOIS
OUK ERISTA PLATHEIN.

only gives 'em a handle.

ELEKTRA (Starts as if muttering):

DEIN EN DEINOIS ENANGASTHEN
It's too horrible, I can't keep it in.

I know you mean well, it's no use.

Go way and leave me alone,

let me have my cry out.

A: to pity

CHORUS:

But, dearie, you make it all worse,

I'm talkin' to you like a mother, you can trust me.

A: to plead with her to calm down!

T: (Always breeding) wars in your soul; one cannot fight with the powerful.

T: I have been compelled to do terrible things in terrible circumstances.

X US of wing to SL side.

ELEKTRA:

Is there any limit to the nature of misery?

Is there anything pretty about neglecting the dead?

Has that idea cropped up anywhere among men?

If so I don't want their respect

and if I come near to getting any good from it

may I not live tranquil among 'em

by smothering my keening for the shame of this house.

For if the dead lie down-earth and then nowt, 25

wretched

and there be no death for a death,

shame would go wrack,

all duty would end and be nothing.

A: to challenge her

(Elektra refuses to listen to us)
CHORUS:

A: to demonstrate
disdain for her stubborn
attitude

I rushed out here for your sake as well as mine,
if you don't like what I say, have it your own way,
we'll stick by you.

ST: Fine, you can complain all
you want, but we're not leaving.

ELEKTRA:

B5: “Let Me Tell You
All About It...”

I'm sorry, I oughtn't to let 'em get me down,
but I am driven to it,
they've got the power, all I can do is yammer
and make too much noise. Excuse it.

O: to find out and listen
attentively for some
shred of hope for
Elektra to hang onto

I'm ashamed of this clatter.
Could any decently brought up girl
see that done to her father, and act any different?

I see it day and night getting thicker, not dying down
and my own mother the most loathsome of all
and I have to live in the same house with
the people who murdered my father
and have 'em pushing me round

A: to retreat from her
increasing rage

WHACK, take it, WHACK, leave it,
which ever way they've hexed it.

How do you think I pass my time anyhow?
When I see Aegisthus sitting there
in my father's chair,
even wearing his clothes
pouring libations
right by where he killed him

A: to demonstrate
disgust toward
Klytemnestra and
Aegisthus

then havin' mother right there in the same bed
just to show off, a whore, a mother? Call it
a concubine
she's got so used to the dirty slob,
A: **to demonstrate**
surprise and horror at the behavior Elektra is describing

no longer scared of the curse, celebrates with a dance one a month with a whole sheep for "his dinner"

joke that is, but it gets me down all the same.

And I go moulder in an attic and blubber over "Agamemnon's bean-o," the accursed feast named in his honor yes, they call it by old pop's name.

Can't even have my cry out in peace with that old big-talk bawling me out:

"You the only slut ever lost a father, nobody else had any troubles, go rot and keep on yowling in hell."

That's how she goes on, bobbies over EXCEPT when someone says Orestes is comin' then she gets scared and blows her top proper, goes shoutin' frantic:

"You got him away, it's all your fault you cheated me out of Orestes, you sneak, mark my word, you'll get your come-uppence."

A: **to investigate if**
Aegisthus is home or anyone dangerous

that's her bark, and her ponce\(^\text{27}\) sick her on marvelous of all the dastardly yellow pests fightin' from under her skirts
and me rotting away, waiting here for Orestes
to put a stop to it all.
And he's worn out all hope, by waiting,
dither and dally,
yes, my dears, a nice place for moderation and decency
and with all this rot I've gone rotten.

B6: "Let's Change the
Subject"

O: to steer Elektra to
think positively

CHORUS:
HE, is Aegisthus here, while you're talkin'?

ELEKTRA:
Naturally NOT. Think I could get out, with him in?

CHORUS:
Well then I can say what I think

X US of wing.

ELEKTRA:
He's out, you can say what you like.

CHORUS:
Well about your brother, is he coming or not?

ELEKTRA:
Sez he will an' he don't.

CHORUS:
A man's likely to go slow, take his time, on a big job.

ELEKTRA:
If I'd gone slow, he wouldn't be there to take it.
A: to put her in her place
PA: gesture to quiet her

CHORUS:
Hang on, he was born honest,
he won't let you down, cares too much.

ELEkTRA:
If I didn't think that, I'd be dead.

CHORUS:
Sshh, here comes your sister.
I see she's carrying . . . oh . . . offerings,
like for DOWN THERE, all very proper.

B1: “What’s She Up To?”
O: to find out why
Chrysothemis has these offerings today
A: to observe Chrysothemis

Rehearsal Scene Three - “Mother’s Little Helper”

CHRYsOThEMIS (tone of thorough weariness, and discouragement):
Oh Dear, are you out here again, sounding off,
never learn, makes it worse,
let out every fool feeling you got in your gizzard.
I don't like it any better than you do.
If I could get hold of the power, the levers
I'd show 'em what I think,
but for the present I'm going to keep in my sail
and not think I'm harming 'em when I'm not,

and I advise you to do the same.
Just the same I know you're right and
what I say isn't so, and what you think is,
but I've got to obey in order to keep my freedom of action.
ELEKTRA:
It's just awful the way you take her part
and forget him.
YOU didn't think of any of that,
it's just what she's told you.
You can do one of two things: be honest and speak out
or play dumb and forget your friends.

You just said if you had the power
you'd show 'em how you hate 'em
but when I'm out to do right by my father
will you come in on it? No, no you try to put me off it.
Need we add cowardice to all the rest of the filth? (pause)
Tell me, or lemme tell you what good it could do me
to stop objecting out loud.
I'm not dead yet, it's a dirty life
but my own.

It annoys 'em. That honors the dead
if the dead get any joy out of THAT.

You say you hate 'em, but
you play ball with our father's assassins.
Well I wouldn't knuckle under, not for one minute
nor for all this stuff they have given you

(She takes hold of CHRYSTHEMIS' bangles or bracelet or
whatever ornament or fine dress)

that you swank about in.
Have your big dinners, comforts
and everything easy,
your lie-down, flow-about life.
If I don't eat, I don't make myself spew with disgust.
Keep my self-respect anyhow.
I wouldn't want to have a sense of honor like yours
nor would you if you understood it.
You're even called by your mother's name
when you could use father's
and he was some good,
best of the lot of 'em.
It don't look nice.
Most people would say you are going back
on your dead father, and the people you care for.

\[ A: \text{to seold the girls' bickering so they do not spark interest from the house} \]
\[ \text{PA: bang stick on the ground} \]

\[ \text{B2: "The Truth Will Come Out"} \]

\[ \text{CHORUS:} \]
For the gods sake, keep your tempers,
there's something to be said on both sides
if either of you could learn from the other.

\[ \text{CHRYSTHEMIS:} \]
Oh, I'm used to the way she goes on.
I wouldn't have come here now, but she's in worse danger
in fact should stop her howls once and for all.

\[ \text{ELEKTRA:} \]
Well what could be worse? If you tell me
anything worse, I'll shut up.

\[ \text{O: to snap Elektra into reality (she is going to jail!!!)} \]

\[ \text{CHRYSTHEMIS:} \]
All I know is that if you don't quit bawling
they'll shut you up where you'll never see daylight
in some black jail outside the country,
do stop to think, and don't blame me
when it's too late.

ELEKTRA:
So that's what they're up to.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
As soon as Aegisthus gets back.

A: to implore Elektra to be more rational
PA: go after her

ELEKTRA:
The sooner the better.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
So he can??
You're off your poor head. What for?

ELEKTRA:
To get away from the lot of you as far as possible.

PA: gesture for Chrysothemis to reason with Elektra

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
But at least you're alive here?

ELEKTRA:
A beautiful life, something for me to admire!

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
Might have been if you'd learned to adjust yourself.

ELEKTRA:
Don't educate me up to double crossing friends.
CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I'm only telling you to bend and not break
when you come up against power.

ELEKTRA:
Slobber over 'em. Not my way.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
It's perfectly respectable not to fail
out of sheer stupidity.

ELEKTRA:
All right I'll fail, for my father's honor
if it's so ordered.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I am sure he'd excuse one.

A: to demonstrate
distress

ELEKTRA:
You commend everything nasty.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
Well I suppose you won't listen to anything I say
let alone agree with it.

ELEKTRA:
Probably NOT . . . Not yet such a cipher.28

B3: “But What's This?”

PA: go after
Chrysothemis

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
Well, I'll be moving along.

X DS of wing.
ELEKTRA (noticing the offerings for the first time, having been up to now absorbed in her own fury):
    Goin' far?
    Uh'uh. What you carrying THAT for, all roasted?

CHRYSOthemis:
    Mother told me to go water the grave.

ELEKTRA:
    What!! and nobody she hates worse?

CHRYSOthemis:
    You mean the one she murdered.

ELEKTRA:
    Where did she get THAT fancy? Whose idea was it?

CHRYSOthemis:
    Had a nightmare, I think, and it scared her.

ELEKTRA:
    Gods help us. Whatever next!

CHRYSOthemis:
    That's cheered you up, now she's scared.

ELEKTRA:
    You tell me about that dream, then I'll talk. X to sandbags by altar and sit.
CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I don't really know that much about it.

ELEKTRA:
Spill it. A little word often counts for a lot, up or down.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
What they say is that it was like as if dad stood there right by her, and a second time in plain daylight. And took hold of his sceptre, the one Aegisthus uses now, and planted it by the altar and a branch grew right out of it and spread all over Mycenae.

That's what one of the girls says, who was there while she was telling it before Helios. That's all I know except that she was so scared she sent me out. Now listen you pray to the gods. Don't be a fool, listen to me, before it's too late.

ELEKTRA:
Don't put a bit of it on the tomb. It's not clean before men or gods that you plant gifts or carry lustrations from that hating woman, to dirty his grave. Throw 'em away, bury 'em, hide 'em deep, so long as none of 'em gets near his grave. Let 'em stay and wait for HER till she dies,
let her find 'em in hell, when she dies,
a little deposit.

The crust she's got, throwing her flowers and dirty water
onto him after bumping him off.

You think the dead from his grave is goin' to
reach up a lovin' right hand for these ornaments?
Killed like any damn foreigner
and wiped 'er bloody 'ands on his 'air,
cut off his hands and feet to keep the
ghost from walkin' and grabbin' her.

But don't YOU think
of carrying that stuff to purge her of murder.
Chuck it away.
Cut off the tip of one of your curls,
that makes a pretty gift,
and for me, god knows, I haven't anything,
I give my whole disheveled mop.
Here, take it,

A: to back Elektra's
instructions to her
sister

(jerks out a lock of her own (wig) violently)

and my belt, it's not much,
just a plain belt without ornaments.

PA: Kneel and look to
the heavens to pray

But kneel and beg him to come up out of the earth
to protect us
and that young Orestes get the upper hand of his enemies
and stay alive till he's got 'em under his feet,

X US to SR side of wing and
kneel.
so that we can crown him with something better
than we give now.

I think mebbe he's troubling her dreams.
Anyhow, you do this for me, and for him
even if he is dead, we still love him.

CHORUS:
A: to instruct
Chrysothemis to follow
Elektra's advice

She's on the right track now, dear,
you do what she says.

CHRYSOthemis:
I certainly will, it's what ought to be done
and no point disputing it.
But keep quiet about it for gods' sake,
don't let mother get wind of it.
if she does the old usurer's will
make me pay extra for the risk.

(exits)

Rise and X USR.

B1: "Conjuring the
Gods"
O: to conspire and seal
their fate through ritual

A: to challenge the
audience (they are
bearing witness too!)
A: to demonstrate
delight

**Rehearsal Scene Four - “Dance of Delight”**

CHORUS:
You can say that I never guess right,
a born fool without second sight,
that my head was never screwed tight,
but if justice don't win just this once
I'm a dweeze

X DSR.
A: to instruct the younger Chorus girl
PA: gesture to young Chorus girl and touch her face
A: to confirm the oracle's truth to Elektra
PA: Marceau revenge gesture

A: to predict

And Vengeance will come out from her hiding bush no doubt with the rush of brazen shoes, wid the sound of brazen shoes, she will come with brazen tread to their adulterous bed to wipe out all the stain as they wrestle there unwed;

A: to instruct young Chorus girl about revenge
PA: bang stick on plane wing

ever with lock and sigh
ill doer and ill do's mate
shall never dodge out of fate,*
ill done hath ill do won,
black ends that with black began,
fate shall out run any man,
fate is stronger than man, blacker than man.
Nothing foretells tomorrow to man neither horrors in dream nor in oracles if that night-sight don't damn well smash 'em.*

(Sing the Greek)
B2: "A Sobering Moment"
O: to endow the mute Chorus girl with the burden of the House of Atreus

A: to protest the curse, Klytemnestra, and Aegithus
PA: raise stick to heaven and sing

OO PELOPOS HA PROSTHEN
POLUPONOS HIPPEIA
HOS EMOLES AIANAES
TADE GA. TADE GA.*

(CHORUS LEADER speaks)

PA: look up to heaven

A: to lament the long history of events upon the house

For Myrtil's32 curse when he was drowned after that crooked horse-race, chucked out of his gilded car into the sea and the curse has continued on the house of Pelops rotting the earth.*

X onto palace steps.

ST: How wearisome this curse has been on the house.

* spoken in unison

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B1: "Big Mouth Mom"

O: to maintain peace between Elektra and Klytemnestra
A: to retreat from palace

KLYTEMNESTRA (entering):
Out here again making trouble, might have known it now Aegisthus' not here, he keeps you from making dirt on the family doorstep. He's away and you pay no attention to me. You've shot off a lot of brash talk to a lot of people,

X DSL and kneel DS of wing.

T: Ancient horsemanship of Pelops, loaded with pain, how wearisome you have proved to this land.

* Greek sung in unison
a lot more than was so
about how forward I am, how unjust
insulting you and your gang.

Nobody ever insulted me? Eh?
Bad? Eh?
Well I've heard 'em from you often enough
just as bad.
Your father, eh? that's your excuse
always that, never different.
I killed him, I did, yes me, have I ever denied it?
And a good job it was, don't I know it
with Justice on my side
as you'll have to admit if you think straight.

A: to warn Elektra to
control herself
PA: look toward her

A: to demonstrate
disgust with her
crudeness
PA: gesture for speaking
Chorus woman to
follow me. We need
distance.

This "father" you're always crying about
was the only one of the Greeks who would stand for
sacrificing your own sister to the gods,
he didn't have as much trouble in makin' her as I had
he put her in, I got her out.
Well who did he sacrifice her FOR,
you tell me, for whom and for what?
The Greeks. You say for the Greeks?
which of the two Greeks was it?
It wasn't up to them to kill my girl!
and if he killed her for his brother Menelaus
weren't there any rites due to me?

Hadn't Menelaus two children of his own?
Wasn't it up to them to die, if it was
their father and mother who were cause of the sailing?
A: to **demonstrate** distress

Did Hell have more appetite for my children than hers?
Or had the rotter\textsuperscript{35} less paternal affection
than Menelaus?

Signs of a gutless and dirty father I say
they are, even if we split on it.

And it's not what your dead sister would say if she
could manage a voice.
I'm not peeved about what I've done
and if you want to sling abuse
try slinging it at somebody else in the family,
get on the right track. Put the blame where it belongs.

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B2: “The Trial”

O: to monitor Elektra’s approach with Klytemnestra

**ELEKTRA (calm):**

Well this time you can't say I started it.

But if you let me,
I'll give you the rights of it about my father and sister.

**KLYTEMNESTRA:**

Of course I'll let you. If you
had always had that tone of voice
no one would have objected to listening.

A: to **demonstrate** approval of her rational approach

**ELEKTRA:**

All right, you admit you killed him.
Can anyone say anything worse?
Legally or illegally,
well justice didn't come into it.
It was your fetch for that bounder\textsuperscript{36} you're lying with.
Go ask Artemis\textsuperscript{37} and her dogs why she
shut up the winds in Aulis\textsuperscript{38}
all of them, for what vengeance?
And as she won't tell you, I will.
He was hunting away thru her forest

and not only started a spotted buck with 8 points
but made smutty jokes about it, it was
a kill
not according to the hunting rites.
And Artemis didn't like it,
she held up the Achaeans

to make my father pay
for the buck with his own daughter.
That's why and how she was killed,
she went to the altar smokes
a sacrifice,
the troops couldn't get either home or to Ilion
no other way out.
He did it against his own nature
not in favor of Menelaus.

But even if he had done it for Menelaus,
to take it your way,
ought you to have killed him?
What law was that?
You'd better be careful setting up that sort of law
for the rest of the world, you'll get into trouble
and wish you hadn't.
For if blood for blood makes justice,
you'll be the first to go.
But look, is all your talk sophistry?
fake, fake, a mere sophistry?
A: to warn Elektra her emotions are getting out of control
PA: look toward her

Say what you like, you get into bed with the murderer and breed to put out the true heirs, expect me to like that?
Call that avenging a daughter? Is that your excuse? A dirty job to marry an enemy for the sake of a daughter? And nobody allowed to warn you without your putting up a squawk about a slandering mama. Slave-driver more than a mother I'd call you, and a rotten life I have with you and your fellow-feeder, you're always putting all the low jobs onto me.

And poor Orestes who got away by the skin of his teeth wearing away in misery you always accuse me of saving him to come back and cleanup the dirt you've done here and you know damn well I would have too, if I could. So if I'm a dirty scold, abusive, completely impudent, looks like it runs in the family, not likely to disgrace your temperament. I got it all from you.

CHORUS:
A: to chide Elektra among ourselves

Gheeze, she's a-goin at it fierce,
right or not she don't care a hang.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
A: to withdraw

Why should I bother what she thinks spittin out at her mother that way, at her age? By god there's nothing she'd stop at, no sign of shame.
**ELEKTRA** *(Suddenly perfectly calm):*
Well now I think I have got a sense of shame.
I distinguish between suitable conduct
and what I'm driven to by your hate and your devilments.
Dirty workers teach dirty work.

**KLYTEMNESTRA:**
You beastly whelp, it's what I've said
and NOT done, that makes you talk a great deal too much.

**ELEKTRA:**
Now you're talkin',
you did the job, not me,
and things done get names.

**KLYTEMNESTRA:**
By the Virgin you'll pay for this
when Aegisthus gets home.

**ELEKTRA:**
Nice nature, comin' out, ain't it?
Temperamental, tells me to say what I like
and hasn't got brains enough to hear it.

**KLYTEMNESTRA:**
You'd even spoil the sacrifice, shouting,
now I've let you get it all out.

**ELEKTRA** *(coldly):*
Go along, yes, DO sacrifice, please.
and don’t say my noise is jinxing you,
I won’t say anything more.

KLYTEMNESTRA (to maid):

Here, you pick up all this fruit and incense
so I can pray and get rid of these worries.

(sotto voce)

O: to be rid of
Klytemnestra (we’ve had enough for today!)

Hear me Apollo, Patron, keep down this scandal
(I am not speaking among friends,
she is ready to yatter
and spread silly nonsense all thru the town,
envious little bitch).

But do hear me, let me explain
this ghost in the shifty vision of a dream.
O Apollo Lykeios, if it’s lucky let the luck come to me
and if it’s evil, let it fall to my enemies,
if anybody’s trying to cheat me out of my money
don’t let ‘em.

Let me run the house of Atreides as long as I live
and keep hold of the sceptre. Preserve me
to live comfortably with these friends,
and with children who like me
and who aren’t gone bitter with spite and gloom.

O Phoibos Lykeios hear me, with favor,
give to us all that we ask,
and you know all the rest I don’t say
for the sons of God see all that there is.
Rehearsal Scene Six - “Have I Got News for You”

B1: “Who Are You?”  (enter the TUTOR)

O: to find out who this stranger is
A: to investigate

TUTOR:
I'm a stranger in these parts, can any of you kind ladies tell me if that's Milord Aegisthus's palace?

A: to help out this stranger

CHORUS:
Yes, stranger, you've hit it, bullseye.

TUTOR:
Would I be right in sayin' that woman there is the queen? She looks it.

PA: gesture to Klytemnestra

CHORUS:
She's it.

TUTOR:
Gruss Gott, your highness, I've got good news for you and Aegisthus, come from a friend of his.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
That's nice. (dropping voice) Wonder who the deuce that can be.

TUTOR:
Phanoteus, of Phocia. It's a serious matter.
KLYTEMNESTRA:
Well, what is it? Go on, stranger
must be good if it comes from him.

TUTOR:
Orestes is dead. That's the short of it.

ELEKTRA:
Oooh, that's the end. I'm finished.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
What, what, don't bother with her.

TUTOR:
He's dead, Orestes, finished! na poo.49

ELEKTRA:
Ruin, ruin, I can't go on.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
(to ELEKTRA) Mind your own business.
Now, stranger, tell me about it,
how did it happen?

TUTOR:
That's what I'm here for.
He went up for the big Delphic49 prize.
That's the biggest Greek games
and when he heard the herald yellin' out the first race,
the foot race, he come out shining
admired of all beholders
an' he got the proize uv the first race.
I never see a man like him, from start to finish,
the crown he had for the victory,
I'm only tellin' part of it.
He took all the foive proizes, you could hear the umpires
tellin' it: Agamemnon's son, young Orestes.
Win for Argos. Old general's son licked the lot of 'em.

(change tone, and shaking head)

A: to console Elektra
from a distance
PA: kneel and make eye
contact with Elektra

There's no lickin' the god's bad temper.
An' the next day toward sundown
he entered, there were all the charioteers,
Sparta, Achaia, and two boys from Libya.
drivers, and one team of Thessalian mares;
an Aeolian, young chestnut fillies, and another from
Megara.

A white Aelian, and the Athenian, number nine,
the city the gods put up, and last and tenth the Boeotian.

And the umpires ranged 'em up as the lot fell
and they sounded off with the brazen horn
shakin' the reins and a-lickin' the horses
and a-yellin' till you couldn't hear over the plain
and the track wuz narrow, the lot of 'em drivin' togedder
and a-lammin' the horses, each one tryin' to git out of
the bunches
and the wheels a-rollin', and the horses a-snortin'
and their sweat spattered over the cars,
and their breath steamin' on the drovers in front of 'em
and Orestes come round at the turn, at the turns
all of 'em, shavin' the pillars
loosin' the off horse and pullin' in on the nigh.
And the Aneian's bolted between the sixth and seventh round
and fou'ld the Barcaen's, and they all piled up then
the lot of 'em
except the Athenian
who slowed up
and then Orestes
pulled in on his team
nothin' left but the two of 'em,
all RIGHT, till the very last turn, when his
axle-tip hit the pillar
and busted
and he got t'rown over the rail
and caught in the reins of his horses
wid the crowd yellin' for pity
now seein' him bumped on the ground and now lifted
wid his feet in the air
till the other charioteers
got hold of his horses
and found him
broke beyond recognition,
his best friend wouldn't have known him. (pause)
And the Phocceans burnt him then and there on the pyre
and the envoys are comin', bringin' what's left in an urn
to lay his dust in his fatherland.
It's a sad story, madam, I
saw it wid my own eyes.
Never a worse one.
PA: rise and call out to heaven

A: to lament and grieve

CHORUS:

PHEU, PHEU, MISERA.
Ah, ah, that's the end of the dynasty!
TO PAN DE DESPOTAISI TOIS PALAI
They are blotted out root and branch.
PRORRISDON HOOS EOIKEN

EPHTHARTAI

GENOS.

T: The whole of the ancient family of our lords, indeed, the dynasty, has perished, it seems, root and branch.

A: to demonstrate anger and disgust with Klytemnestra's happiness over Orestes' death

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Oh god, what, which, I dunno if it's lucky.
Terrible, it's terrible, it's, it's useful anyhow.
It's a miserable state of things when nothing but my own sorrows save my life.

TUTOR:
What, lady, am I gettin' you down with this news?

KLYTEMNESTRA:
That's the worst of being a mother, can't hate a child no matter how badly they treat you.

TUTOR:
Seems I came on a useless errand.

B3: “Klytemnestra’s Dance of Delight”

KLYTEMNESTRA:
No, not useless, if you've got proof of his death born of my life, forgetful of the breasts that suckled him banished himself to get away from me never seen me since he left the country accused me of killing his father
he was threatening terrible
what awful things he would do
till I couldn't get a night's sleep or a cat nap
thinking I was going to die every minute
and, now, eh, now I needn't be scared of him any more
nor of that worse little bloodsucker living here with me,
the pest,
now we'll get a day's peace somewhere
in spite of her threats.

ELEKTRA:
Ooooh, he's dead and it fits her book
miserly, motherly excitement
very pretty.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Not for you. I dare say he's better off.

ELEKTRA:
Holy vengeance, god hear her,
and him not cold in the grave.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Fate HAS heard, and managed it very nicely.

ELEKTRA:
Go on, keep it up. You're top dog, you've
hit the jackpot.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
You and Orestes can't spoil it now.
ELEKTRA:
    Spoil it! No, this is OUR finish.

KLYTEMNESTRA (to TUTOR):
    You'd deserve more than a good fat tip
    if you'd make her hush and finish her yatter.

TUTOR:
    Well ma'am, I'll be goin', if everything is in good shape.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
    NO, no, can't treat a friend's messenger that way.
    Come in, do, and let her yowl
    out here about her friends' troubles, and hers.

(KLYTEMNESTRA and TUTOR exit)

B1: "This Can't Be Happening"

ELEKTRA:
    Looks like she's grief-stricken, weepin' an' wailin'
    about her poor son being wiped out that way?
    Went out bursting with laughter.

    Poor me

    OO TALAIN EGO
    ORESTA PHILTATH HOOS M'APOOLESAS THANOOON
        not ever

    I'll lie down
    at the gate here
    and die here,
    got no friends.

T: Oh wretched me, Orestes, dearest, your death has destroyed me.
And if anybody kills me, because he don't like it, any of them inside, be a favor, that killing, got no wish to live anyhow.

CHORUS:

God, where the hell are you? Zeus,
Apollo, no light and no lightning. Is there no one to show these things up?

ELEKTRA:

AI AI

CHORUS:

No use crying.

ELEKTRA:

AIH

CHORUS:

SHHH.

ELEKTRA:

You are killing me.

A: to demonstrate surprise at her response

CHORUS:

What?*  

* spoken in unison

ELEKTRA:

Don't tell me about life after death, that's only another kick when I'm down. They're dead and gone forever.
A: to comfort her sorrow
A: to inspire hope in the gods' decision
PA: hold Elektra and stroke her face

CHORUS (sings softly? trying to comfort her):
OIDA GAR ANAKT" AMPHIAREOON KHRUSODETOIS HERKESI
KRUPHTHENTA GUNAIKON
KAI NUUN HUPO GAIAS
Nay but King Amphiarion63
that died for a golden chain
captured in a false wife's net under the earth reigns yet.

ELEKTRA (disgusted and bored with song):
Ajhh

∞

A: to convince her there is hope

CHORUS (singing):
He reigns and lords his mind.
PAMPSUKOS ANASSEI*

ELEKTRA (beginning to cheer up, still dubious, but singing now and echoing the tone of the Chorus):
AHI

CHORUS:
And bodes no good at all
for her who slew him.

ELEKTRA:
Slain.

CHORUS:
Ay, slain.*

X off PR to SR of wing.
T: King Amphiaraus, as I know, was caught in woman's golden snares and now beneath the earth

ST: There is still hope.

T: He reigns over all the souls.
* spoken in unison

ST: Revenge can still happen.
ELEKTRA:
Known, o'er known
mid grief, an avenger.
I have none.
He was, and is not,
vanished away, torn from me.

A: to demonstrate understanding of her pain
PA: stroke her face

CHORUS:
_Sorrow attains thee, sorrow_.

ELEKTRA:
Known, don't know, o'er known,
day after day, moon over moon,
overfull, pain over pain,
horrors of hate abate not ever.

A: to sympathize

B2: "I'm Doomed"
O: to pay homage to Orestes

CHORUS:
_Our eyes be witness._

ELEKTRA:
Then do not deceive me
neither lead me astray.

A: to demonstrate surprise at her turning on us (we are trying to help)

CHORUS:
_Thou sayest?_

ELEKTRA:
Not into emptiness
where there is no one at all.

ST: We know you are hurting.
* spoken in unison
A: to level with her

CHORUS (the two "alls" simultaneously):

All men must die.

X to palace steps.

ST: It was Orestes' time.

ELEKTRA:

But to die so, so clawed in whirling doom

torn in the track, if so that death must come

A: to sympathize with her pain

CHORUS:

mid tortures so

whose death was unforeseen.

X and kneel on sandbags.

PA: hold her

ELEKTRA:

How not? and him so far

no hand to lay

A: to lament Orestes' painful and untimely death

CHORUS: AHI

ELEKTRA:

His mangled limbs

in decent grave

unwept to meet strange clay?

T: Oh, child.

Rehearsal Scene Eight - "Best of Times, Worst of Times"

B1: “You’ve GOT to be Kidding”

CHRYSOTHEMIS (trots in puffing):

Oh dearest . . . so happy . . . . such news . . .
I'm all out of breath from running . . . .
your troubles are over.

ELEKTRA (voice of complete skeptical weariness):
What? You with a cure-all?

(after a pause, looking her up and down)

O: to enlighten
Chrysothemis to the bad news

A: to deny her good news

Where did you find what ain't?

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
He's here. Orestes is here.
I'm telling you, just as sure as you see me.

ELEKTRA:
You're CRAZY, poor dear, plumb crazy,
don't joke about horrors.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I'm not, I swear by the hearth-stone
he's come for the two of us.

ELEKTRA (sighs):
Oh dear, poor dear, has anyone LIVING
put that nonsense into your head?

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
No, but me, ME, from what I've seen,
me, with my own eyes, seen. 

Rise.
ELEKTRA:
  WHAT proof? you poor fool
  you’re blooty** delirious.

CHRYSO Themis:
  For gods’ sake wait till I finish telling you
  and then decide whether I’m batty.

ELEKTRA:
  All right, go on, if you like to talk.

O: to investigate
Chrysothemis’ story
(there could still be
hope)
A: to listen attentively
and find out anything
that may indicate that
Orestes is alive

CHRYSO Themis:
  It was like this:
  I was goin’ to father’s old grave
  and there was milk newly splashed over it
  running down from the top of the mound
  and all sorts of wreaths all around it
  out there for father
  like as if
  and I was wondering, and looking to see who,
  who on earth could,
  as if someone might be coming

(ELEKTRA masked, at first not even looking at
CHRYSOThemis but boredly
into distance, gradually grows attentive. Slowness in turning of
head, as per Noh)

and when I saw everything quiet
I sneaked up nearer the mound
and there was a new lock of hair on it
right on the edge
and, oh dear, it come over me while I was looking at it
that ORESTES had put it there,
almost as if I had seen him
and I picked it up and burst out crying, I was so happy,
and I'm perfectly sure nobody else could have put it there,
who'd have cared except us?
I didn't and you didn't
cause you couldn't get out of the house,
SHE wouldn't have, she's not taken that way
and she couldn't have, without being seen.
No, no, no, my dear, Orestes put that stuff in the grave,
you can buck up now.
The same devils can't always run things,
ours have been pretty bad,
but the luck's changing,
happen a really good day might come in.

ELEKTRA:
Poor thing, you were always soft in the head.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
But aren't you glad?

ELEKTRA:
You don't know whether you're on earth, or raving.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
Don't know what I've seen with my own eyes, SEEN.
ELEKTRA:  
He's dead, and the dead won't help you, and he can't,  
god help you, poor you.

CHRYSOthemis:  
Oh, o, o, but who told you.

A: to deny again, after all, this man saw  
Orestes die, right?

ELEKTRA:  
A man who was there and saw it. Killed.

CHRYSOthemis (in tone of complete puzzlement):  
Where is he, the man? It's very peculiar.

ELEKTRA:  
In THERE, and mother's so glad to see him.

CHRYSOthemis:  
Oh dear... But whoever can have put all those wreaths on the tomb?

ELEKTRA:  
Somebody must have put 'em there for Orestes.

CHRYSOthemis:  
O, O, and me running to make you happy  
and not knowing we'd only come into more trouble  
besides what we had.

A: to investigate since  
Elektra sounds like she is up to something

ELEKTRA:  
Well that's how it is. And now you turn to and help me  
at least this much with the load.
CHRYSOThEMIS:
    You want me to raise the dead?

ELEkTRA:
    That's not what I said. At least I wasn't born crazy.

CHRYSOThEMIS:
    Well what do you want me to do, that I can do?

ELEkTRA:
    Don't break down, and do what I tell you.

CHRYSOThEMIS:
    I'll do anything that can be the least use.

ELEkTRA:
    You can't do a good job without work

CHRYSOThEMIS:
    I know that. I'll do anything I can.

B2: “The Plan”
O: to prevent Elektra from acting so rashly
A: to alert among ourselves

ELEkTRA:
    Well then listen. I'm going to finish it up. We got no more friends to stand by us.
    Hell's grabbed the lot and left us you can see that, nobody left but us. As long as HE was alive I went on
homing he'd come and put things right about father, wipe out the murder.

Now he's gone, not there any more, I rely on you,
I hope you won't hold back,
we've got to kill Aegisthus ourselves, you're not scared?

It's our father was murdered, we've only got our own hands, might as well look at it straight,
here you are crying and grousing about being cheated out of father's fortune, well here it is: and we're not getting any younger without a man and unmarried, and without a room of your own, home of your own, unbedded, unchambered.

Don't think they'll ever let you get married. Aegisthus won't let us have children, he's too cagey for that, not to put him out of the running. But you do what I tell you. FIRST you'd be showin' respect for your dead father down under AND for your brother as well. SECONDLY you could live like a free woman, free born, as you were, for the rest of your life, and you'd get a man fit to marry. People recognize quality, everybody does.

Kneel on sandbags.
You listen to me, and we'd both get respected, everybody from here or abroad would say:

"There they are, those girls saved the dynasty, risked their lives doing it, threw out the crooks, settled the murderers' hash. You just got to like 'em, everybody's got to respect 'em."

(dreamy half-tranced voice)

We'd have our proper place of honor in processions and in assemblies on account of our courage. We'd have a reputation everywhere and it would last even when we are dead.

Trust me, my dear, and stand by your father, work with me for your brother, get me out of my misery, get yourself out of yours, and remember this, the free born ought not to sink into slavery.

Rise.

CHORUS:

A: to disapprove of Elektra’s plot

Well I guess lookin' forward is about the best ally one could have, if you're talking or listening to things like this.

ST: Of course we want to look ahead when she is talking crazy like this!
CHRYSO THEMIS:
No, girls, if she weren't on the wrong track
she'd have had a little caution before she sounded off
and she just hasn't got any.

(to ELEKTRA)

Where do you look to get the nerve to fight
or get me into the ranks?
Can't you see you were born a woman not a man?
You haven't got the physical strength
of these people you're up against.
Their gods, their luck is comin' up every day
and ours going out, not comin' in at all.

(CHRYSO THEMIS repetitive and very patient)

You try to break a man like that?
Who could get away with it
unharm ed,
and not make a complete mess of it.
Don't make it worse,
if anybody heard you talkin' this way
you'd get into more trouble,
we won't get OUT of anything that way,
and fine talk's no use if we're dirty dead.
Death's not the worst that can happen
but not to be able to die when you want to.
I put it to you, before we're completely wiped out
us two and all of the family
keep your temper, hold in.
I'll keep my mouth shut about what you've said cause I think it's, all of it, useless.

But do hang onto your wits, from now on. Don't go up against people in power.

A: to advise Elektra to think things through before acting on her emotions

CHORUS (to ELEKTRA): You better listen, there's nothing more useful to a human being than forethought and a prudent mind.

ELEKTRA: Just as I thought . . . All right, I'll do it alone, it's got to be done, have a try at it anyhow.

B3: “The Harsh Reality”

O: to maintain a connection between the sisters (this argument might be the breaking of their bond)

A: to intervene

CHRYSO THEMIS: Oooh Lord I wish you'd taken the chance the day he died! Anything was possible then.

ELEKTRA: Not that I didn't want to; I hadn't the sense.

CHRYSO THEMIS: I wish you still had as much.

ELEKTRA: That means you won't help me at all.
A: *to lament*
Chrysothemis' inaction
and failure to stand by
her sister

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
It CAN'T be lucky.

ELEKTRA:
Nice mind, no guts!

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I can bear up even under that compliment.

ELEKTRA:
You won't have to stand any more.

CHRYSOTHEMIS (*blandly)*:
That remains to be seen.

ELEKTRA:
Oh get out, you're no use at all.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
I am so, but you can't see it.

ELEKTRA:
Go tell it all to Mama.

CHRYSOTHEMIS (*explanatory)*:
But I don't hate you that way.

ELEKTRA:
No, but think how you'd lead me to shame.
CHRYSOTHEMIS:
No I would NOT.
I'm only asking you think forward.

ELEKTRA:
And accept YOUR values?

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
When you get untangled, I'll take to yours,
you can think for us both, then.

ELEKTRA:
That's talking, too bad you mean it the wrong way on.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
That's just the trouble with you.

ELEKTRA:
What? You mean what I say isn't perfectly true?

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
EVEN JUSTICE CAN BE A PEST.

A: to reason with
Elektra

ELEKTRA:
Anyhow, I don't want to go by your standards of conduct.
I'd rather die.

X after Elektra onto sandbags.

CHRYSOTHEMIS:
But if you did, you'd probably find I'm right.
PA: reach after her as she passes by

ELEKTRA:
I'm going on anyhow, you can't scare me.

CHRYSO THEMIS (very soberly):
You're serious? You won't think it over?

ELEKTRA:
Nothing stinks worse than bad advice.

CHRYSO THEMIS:
You just don't understand what I'm saying.

ELEKTRA:
This isn't something that's just come into my head.

CHRYSO THEMIS (resignedly):
Well, I'll go now.
You can't stand my talk, and I don't think you're going the right way about it.

ELEKTRA:
Yes, go along, but I'll never trail after you for the urging.
It's useless to chase after shadows,

(mezzo voce, as if reflecting)

such a lot of them,
all of them void.
CHRYSOTHEMIS:
If you ever aim to teach yourself to think straight,
think about it now. For my words will come back too late . . .
late.

Rehearsal Scene Nine - "Chorus' Prayer"

B1: "A Call to Arms"
PA: address heaven

O: to evoke the gods on behalf of Elektra's in her honor
A: to indict Chrysothemis for abandoning Elektra

A: to alert the Atreides of the split in their house between the sisters

CHORUS: TI TOUS ANOOTHEN PHRONIMOOOTATOUS OIOONOUS
ESOROOMENOI TROPHAS KAEDOMENOUS APH OON
TE BLASTOOSIN APH OON TONASIN HEUROOSI
TAD OUK EP' ISAS TELOUMEN.
ALL' OU TAN DIOS ASTRAPAN
KAI TAN OURANIAN THEMEN DARON OUK APOAETOI
OO KHTHONIA BROTOISI PHAMA,
KATA MOI BOASON OIKTRAN
OPA TOIS ENERTH' ATREIDAI, AXOREUTA PHEROUS' ONEIDAE
T: Why, when we see the most prudent birds in high caring for the nurture of those from whom they are sprung and from whom they derive benefit, do we not do the same? But, by the lightening-bolt of Zeus and Themis, 67 who rules high in the sky, they are not long untroubled. Ah rumor 68 that holds on earth amongst mortals, cry out for my sake the pitiable tidings to the Atreidai beneath the earth, bearing them shames that bear no celebration.

Shall not justice be done
By Zeus among men?
Shall a sound be borne under earth
to the sons of Atreus?

All is not well in his hall.
His line dies out.

HOTI SPHIN AEDAE TA MEN EK DOMOON NOSEI
T: (Rumor, tell them) that now their house is sick, their two
A: to honor Elektra for her courage in fighting to avenge her father's death

From above
give to Elektra a final look,
constantly to her burial place
Elektra, who mourns her father:
she has no one to help her
as she grieves in sorrow:
she does not care to live or die
were she avenged.

ST: Even the birds take care of each other, but Elektra is alone.

ST: She doesn't care to live or die (only if he could be avenged).

§

A child, indeed, of what race!
What breed? Nor would she live in shame.

ST: She cannot live with herself in shame.

T: Nobody knows those who are good. Oh child child.

A: to bless Elektra so that the gods will stay on her side now

So fame's all-hovering wing
shall bear her praise
for beauty of heart and mind
for constancy of faith.

ANTISTROPHE B

PA: raise stick to heaven, then begin rhythmic hitting of stick

Nay, ere she die
may power come
to lift her high.
on the ground to a climax

may yet her house be strong
as Zeus gave law. *

* last line spoken in unison

B1: "The Stranger"

O: to guard Elektra in her abandoned state

Rehearsal Scene Ten - "From Keening to Joy"

(Enter ORESTES and PYLADES)

ORESTES:
Eh, can any of you ladies tell me:
did we hear right and
are we getting to where we wanted to come to?

CHORUS (more or less automatically, mechanically answering):
Where do you want to come to?
AND WHY?
What are you here for?

ORESTES:
Aegisthus. Where does he live?

(with morgue and double entendre)
I've been looking for him for SOME time.

CHORUS (gruffly):
Well yuh can't blame the fellow that told you.

(thumb over shoulder, pointing)
A: to confirm that this is Aegithus’ palace

You got here.
This is it.

ORESTES:
Well, eh, will any of you go in and, eh, say politely that we have respectfully got here eh . . . on foot.

CHORUS:
This unfortunate girl should.
She's of the family.

ORESTES (dubiously, accent and tone a bit grim and deliberate):
Yes, lady? Would you go say that some Phocians have come for Aegisthus?

ELEKTRA (half-sob):
Oh God, I spose you've got the proof with you.

ORESTES:
Proof of what? Old Stroffy\textsuperscript{71}
told us to bring the news of Orestes.

ELEKTRA (Sort of gasp):
Eeh, I was afraid so

(in sort of glaze noticing her own hands)

I'm all of a tremble.
ORESTES:
We've got it here, all that is left of him
in this little jug, as you can see if you want to.

ELEKTRA:
O. O It's all I can bear.

ORESTES:
If it's Orestes you're crying for,
if it's for his troubles
he's all there in the urn.

A: to sympathize with
Elektra's pain (the news
must be true—they have
brought proof)

ELEKTRA:
Oh give it to me, for god's sake, give it to ME.

(hardly pause, but spoken staccato during the clauses)

It's the end of the line.
Were all there together:
ashes.

(ELEKTRA clutching at the urn which Pylades is carrying):

ORESTES:
Give it to her, let her have it, whoever she is
a gift

she's not asking from spite,
must be a friend or one of the household.
B2: “Elektra’s Keening”

O: to seek solace

A: to bear witness to
Elektra’s private moment with her dead brother

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ELEKTRA'S KEENING:

All that is left me
my hope was Orestes
dust is returned me
in my hands nothing, dust that is all of him,
flower that went forth.

Would I had died then
ere stealing thee from the slaughter
died both together
lain with our father.

Far from they homeland
died far in exile
no hand was near thee
to soothe thy passing
corpse unanointed
fire consumed thee
all now is nothing
strangers have brought thee
small in this urn
here sorrow upon me
fruitless my caring.

I as mother and sister both
thy nurse also ere thou hadst thy growth
this was my past
and swept away with thee
ever to me
thy summons came.
A: to grieve and to demonstrate anger for our loss (now Agamemnon's death will never be avenged)

All in a day
and is no more.

Dead Agamemnon, dead now my brother,
I am dead also, the great wind in passing
bears us together.
Mirth for our foemen.

(anger now stronger than grief; for a moment: spoken)

And that bitch of a mother is laughing
and they haven't sent back even the shape of him,
but a ghost that can't do its job.

Ajnn, ajnn.

Thou the avenger, no more avenging
born to misfortune, ashes avail not
shadows avail not.
Ahi, ahi,
bodiless
brother that art not.

(spoken)

The spirits love me no longer.
You kept sending messages
secretly, you would take vengeance.
(sings)
Thy death, my dying dread road thou goest brother, my slayer

(singing to the urn)

A: to lament and to seek justice through our pain
Oimoi! Oimoi!
Take me in with you
I now am nothing, make place beside thee
naught into naught, zero to zero
to enter beside thee
our fortune equal
death endeth pain.

CHORUS:
A: to console Elektra through our own tears
Mortal thy father, all men are mortal.
Mortal Orestes,
all men must die.*

ORESTES:
I can't stand much more of this.

FLEKTRA:
What's it to you?

B3: "The Chase"
ORESTES:
Good god. Are you Elektra?

ORESTES:
I am, and in misery.
A: to find out who this is since this man seems familiar with Elektra

ORESTES: Heaven help me.

ELEKTRA: What do you care about me?

ORESTES (very quick & angry): What in hell have they done to you?

ELEKTRA: But are you sorry for ME?

ORESTES: Unmarried, and such a life.

ELEKTRA: What are you lookin' at? What you got to be sad about? It isn't YOUR funeral.

ORESTES: I didn't know the half of it.

ELEKTRA: What has that got to do with ANYTHING?

ORESTES: Seeing you in this condition . . .

ELEKTRA: You haven't seen anything yet.
ORESTES:
    Amn't I seeing enough, can there be anything more, more, worse?

ELEKTRA:
    Yes, living here with these assassins.

ORESTES:
    Whose assassins?

ELEKTRA (*patiently and being explicit)*:
    My father's, and me a slave.

ORESTES:
    Who compels you?

ELEKTRA:
    They say she's my mother.

ORESTES:
    How? Beats you? Starves you?

ELEKTRA:
    Yes, and everything else.

ORESTES:
    And there's no one to help you, or stop her?

ELEKTRA:
    Nobody. Nothing but the dust you've got there.
ORESTES:
    Poor dear, I've been sorry for you, a long time.

ELEKTRA:
    Well you're the first man that ever WAS
    and the only one.

ORESTES:
    Cause I've got the same trouble.

ELEKTRA:
    You mean you're a relative?

ORESTES:
    Can you trust these people?

ELEKTRA:
    They're all right. You can trust 'em.

ORESTES:
    Give me back that jug, and I'll tell you.

ELEKTRA:
    No, don't cheat me that way, for gods' sake.

ORESTES:
    Come on, you won't miss it.

ELEKTRA:
    Oh gosh, don't take it, it's all I've got,
    don't rob me.
PA: try to stop him from taking the urn but stop myself since it is not my place to do so

ORESTES:
I won't. Give it here.

ELEKTRA:
Oh poor Orestes, if I can't even bury you.

ORESTES:
Watch what you're saying.
You oughn't to weep.

ELEKTRA:
What when my brother's dead.

ORESTES:
You oughn't to talk that way about him.

ELEKTRA:
What! Amn't I fit to?

ORESTES (admiringly):
You're fit for anything, but that isn't your job.

ELEKTRA:
Not when I'm carrying his body here in my hands?

ORESTES:
They're not his. That's a fairy tale.

ELEKTRA:
Well where IS his grave.
ORESTES:
It ain't. You don't bury people while they're still alive.

ELEKTRA:
What are you talking about?

ORESTES:
Only the truth.

ELEKTRA:
He's alive?

ORESTES:
As I am.

ELEKTRA:
YOU?

B4: "It's Me Silly!"
A: to demonstrate understanding that this is Orestes!!

ORESTES:
Here's Dad's ring.

ELEKTRA:
OO PHILATON PHOOS

O: to celebrate and rejoice!! (We are saved!!)

ORESTES:
What a day; I'll say it is.

ELEKTRA:
And I hear you talking.

Rise.

T: Oh dearest light
ORESTES:
Yes. We're agreed on that.

ELEKTRA:
And I can hold onto you.

ORESTES:
Never let go.

ELEKTRA:
Oh my dears, this is Orestes.
He wasn't really dead after all.
He was just pretending, so he could get here.

CHORUS:
Yes we can see him. Makes one cry this does.

ELEKTRA:
Heart, heart, heart thou art come.

ORESTES:
Yes, but keep quiet,
for a bit just keep quiet.

ELEKTRA:
What for?

ORESTES:
Somebody might hear there inside.
ELEKTRA (sings Greek like Carmagnole. THIS song can be burst into. Like wild Sioux injun war dance withh tommy hawks):

ALL OU MA TEN ARTEMIN
ADMAETAON AIEN
ARTEMIN HOTOTOTOI
Clear again, not to be ended
not to be forgotten
how our ill started, trouble began.

T: But by the ever-virgin
Artemis, hooray!

PA: hug other Chorus
women in joy and
celebration
A: to celebrate

ORESTES:
By god when the women get goin' it's Mars.73

ELEKTRA:
Oh to hell with all the hens
in the old hen house.

I ain't afraid of hens
cause they ain't a bit of use.

ORESTES:
Don't I know it but
to tell it in its time
when the DEED recalls it.

ELEKTRA:
Any time's right, now, I've hardly got my mouth free.

ORESTES:
I'll say it is. And you damn well keep it free.
ELEKTRA:
    How?

ORESTES:
    By not talking too much at the wrong time.

ELEKTRA:
    You came when I'd given up hope.
    I got to keep quiet now?

ORESTES:
    I came as the gods moved me.

ELEKTRA:
    That's the best the gods have done yet.

ORESTES:
    I don't want to stop down your enjoyment
    but afraid you're overdoing it.

A: to demonstrate
    delight at the brother
    and sister's reunion

ELEKTRA:
    Oh a long time to the right road
    you "deign" (gosh) deign to show up here
    but not me seeing me full of toil
    DONT . . .

ORESTES:
    Don't what?
ELEKTRA:
  Don't defraud me
  of the pleasure of seeing you here.

ORESTES:
  Damn well let anybody else try it.

ELEKTRA:
  You don't mind?

ORESTES:
  Of course not, how could I?

ELEKTRA:
  You like it?

ORESTES:
  Sure I'll do what you tell me, why not?

ELEKTRA (*performing for chorus*):

  Oh dearest friends
  if now's to ear
  a voice I ne'er
  had hoped to hear

  If joy shall not
  burst forth at this
  then ever dumb in wretchedness
  should one live on in deep distress.
A: to honor Orestes' return and what he is about to do

Now thou art here in full daylight
I shall not pour forth my delight,
who ne'er in deepest woe had forgot thee.

Rise.

B5: “Back to Business”
ORESTES (trying to stop her, gently, by covering her mouth):
Yes, yes, but lay off the talk.

O: to see the prophesy fulfilled
You don't have to tell me how that bitch and Aegisthus are running all dad's place to ruin sluicin' it out in extravagance, luxury,
no time for all that,
got to get on with the job.
Tell me the best way to get to it so I can fit the time, where to show, and where to hide to put an end to these bumptious27 bastids, and how.

Sit on SR side of wing.

And don't look so damn happy that when we go in, she'll twig75 something is up.

A: to mock and jest
Keep your face mum, keep on weepin' and bawlin' so she won't guess what we're up to, and laugh when we've finished the business and have got to some sort of freedom.

ELEKTRA (breathlessly eager):
Ye'ss my dear, I just love it, it's all yours and not mine, I won't get in the way, I won't bother.
What you like, I like, and my
pleasure's from you not me, and I wouldn't
pain you the least little bit for anything in
the world cause it would run counter to the
good luck now running.
You know Aegisthus is out, she's alone in the house.

A: to demonstrate
delight in the plot

Don't worry about my lookin' happy.
I loathe her, and I've been weeping and crying
(for joy, but she needn't know that)
for the dead come alive
to do what I never believed
so incredible that if father himself should come
here alive I'd believe it,
since you got here this way.
Tell me what you want done and I'll follow
since even alone I have done one or two things
and I'd have damn well thrown 'em out
or gone bust, been decently dead.

A: to retreat and to
hide my giddiness

ORESTES (puts hand over her mouth):
But HUSH
sounds as if someone
was coming out.

ELEKTRA:
Yes, gentlemen, this is the way
nobody in this house will object to what you're bringing in.
**Rehearsal Scene Eleven - “Shut the F____ Up”**

TUTOR (*furious*):
- You BLOODY fools shut up.
- Ain't you got ANY sense whatever?

O: to set the plan into action
- No more care for your lives?
- You ain't on the brink of trouble, you are plumb bang in the middle.

A: *to restrain* my laughter
- Don't you know you're in danger
- real danger, damn it.
- If I hadn't been there keepin' watch in this doorway they'd already know what you're at before you get to it, before you get in there yourselves.

A: *to demonstrate understanding* that we are in *real danger*
- I've saved you that, anyhow, and now if you've got thru with your gabble your blasted roaring exuberance go in, but quiet, no good wasting time, either, get it over.

ORESTES:
- What does it look like in there?

TUTOR:
- All jake"76, especially since no one knows you.

ORESTES:
- You've told 'em I'm dead?
TUTOR:
You're a ghost in hell as far as they go.

ORESTES:
And they're delighted. What do they say about that?

TUTOR:
We'll go into THAT later. The worse they do, the better...

A: to find out who this man really is

ELEKTRA:
For god's sake, who's this? Can you see?

ORESTES:
Haven't the foggiest...

ELEKTRA:
Well you handed me over to him.

ORESTES:
What, what?

ELEKTRA:
Well he sneaked me out of here and got me to Phoebe.
ELEKTRA (gasps):
   The only one of the lot
   who stood by me when father was murdered.

ORESTES:
   That's him. Now hush.

ELEKTRA (to TUTOR):
   What a day!
   You've done it alone.
   You've saved the line.
   How did you get here?
   You've saved him and me
   in all this misery, bless your hand.

   (grabs 'em, and presses them to her booZUM or cheeks)

   Oh gods bless the feet that brought you.

   (bit hysterical still)

A: to share Elektra's discovery

   How could you go on and not tell me,
   and telling us all of those lies
   and yet brought him.
   You seem more like a father,
   OHHH how I hated you.
   What a dear.

TUTOR:
   Yes, yes, but now hush.
There's enough history to fill nights and days.
We can go into that when the time comes.

A: to contain my joy so we can get to the murder (then noticing ORESTES and PYLADES are still standing there)

What the hell are you doing here?
Get with it, she's alone,
if you lose time, she'll have all the slaves up to fight you,
not only the servants but the palace guards,
the whole corps of them,
and no pikers. 77

ORESTES (to PYLADES, who hasn't said a damn word):
Come on, Pylades, cut the cackle.
May the gods of the door be with us.

(Exit ORESTES and PYLADES)

Rehearsal Scene Twelve - “Mom’s Murder”

B1: “With the Help of the Gods”

ELEKTRA (does the praying/ sings, sort of sing-song):

O King Apollo
HILÉOES
Favor us, favor us,
oft have I prayed thee,
my little I gave thee,
Phoibos, Lukeios,
aid the right now,
let the gods show their god head.

T: gracious
CHORUS:
Mars breathing blood
hounds that never miss their prey
miss never their spring, under the roof,
seeking the doers of all ill, by stealth, and by guile,
Mars breatheth blood,
avenging dogs that never miss their prey,
ineluctable, enter the palace roof,
not long to wait for the proof of my presage.
Will, heart, and all.

* spoken in unison, underscoring
Elektra's prayer

A: to urge the gods to
not abandon us

CHORUS:
What! What!
whatarethey doing?

ELEKTRA:
She's putting the wreath on the urn . . .
and . . . and they're waiting.

CHORUS:
Whatchu come out for?

ELEKTRA:
To keep watch for Aegisthus
so he don't catch 'em.

ST: Almighty and powerful and
inescapable gods of war, do not
fail us now.

B2: “The Look-Outs”

O: to bear witness to the
justified revenge

CHORUS:
Oh my dears, my dears . . .
It's coming . . .
sh hh hhh

ELEKTRA (emerging from the door, or slowly turning as part
of a pivoted door):

X US on PL to sandbags.
A: to retreat from gruesome murder

KLYTEMNESTRA:
AIII, nobody left,
oohh assassins.

ELEKTRA:
Hear that? Yes, dears, it's a noise.

CHORUS:
It's awful. Gimmee the creeps.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Aaaah, Aegisthus. AE-GIS-TUS.

ELEKTRA:
Hear it, that's it again.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Pity your mother.

ORESTES (grim):
Did you pity father or me?

A: to confirm that this act is justified after all of these years

CHORUS (now sings cry of misery keening on one note or minimum rise and fall but monotonous and legato):
O city, a WRETCHED house
and the curse's tooth gnaws
day after day.*

* chanted in unison

KLYTEMNESTRA:
That's done it.
ELEKTRA:
Hit her again.

KLYTEMNESTRA:
Twice twice always twice.

ELEKTRA (between her teeth):
Ahh. GOD I wish it was Aegisthus.

CHORUS:
Aah!
Curses work out. They live who lie under ground.
The blood of the dead, long dead
overwhelms their slayers
and the dead hands
drip Mars, and the slain
blood, blood. I can't blame 'em.

Rehearsal Scene Thirteena - “Next”

ELEKTRA:
Orestes. How are you?

ORESTES:
All right, the house is clean again, if what Apollo said
is right.

ELEKTRA:
The bitch is dead?

A: to justify the
murderous act (this is
what is right)

B1: “Look Out #2”

O: to orchestrate
Aegisthus’ murder

A: to keep watch for
Aegisthus’ arrival

Rise. Face DS.

ST: Those who need to be
avenged live in the underworld.
The murderer's hand drip blood
and the slain bleed. Revenge
must happen.

Turn US.
ORESTES (sobered tone vs. ELEKTRA'S exultation):
You won't have any more trouble with mother.

CHORUS:
Ssshh. Here comes Aegisthus.

ELEKTRA:
Back, can't you get back!

ORESTES:
Where is the bloke?

CHORUS:
Comin' up from the lower town, very chesty . . .

CHORUS:
Quick, get into that vestibule. Hop!
Good job so far. Now the next one.

A: to command

ORESTES:
We'll do it, don't worry.

ELEKTRA:
Hurry, hurry.

ORESTES:
Exit.

(He leaves.)
ELEKTRA:
Now mine.

CHORUS:
A: to instruct Elektra
how to handle Aegithus

B2: “The Trick”

CHORUS:
AEGISTHUS (enters, flanked by body guards?):
Say you, where can I find these chappies from Phocis?
They say that Orestes got killed in a chariot race
all messed up.

(to ELEKTRA)

Here YOU, always so full of lip,
it's mostly your business,
you ought to know.

ELEKTRA:
Sure I know. Think I don't care
about the last relative left me?

AEGISTHUS:
Well where are these chaps? Spit it out.

ELEKTRA:
Inside, and she's SO pleased to see 'em.
AEGISTHUS:
They said he was dead? How do they know?

ELEKTRA:
They don't. They've only got the corpse with 'em.

AEGISTHUS:
Can I get a look at it?

A: to hide my wisce at
Aegithus' request and
Elektra's lie

ELEKTRA:
Yes (slight pause), yes (spoken softly):
It's an awful mess.

AEGISTHUS:
'Tain't often you say anything to please me.

ELEKTRA:
Go on and enjoy it, if that's the kind of thing you enjoy.

AEGISTHUS:
Shut up.

(to CHORUS)

A: to witness

Get these doors open
so everyone in Mycenae, and Argos
can see.

(they open the big portone doors, slowly)
If anybody had hopes of this man
they can now see him dead

(smacks his thigh)

and do what I tell 'em
and not wait till they're dead to find out.

ELEKTRA:
Oh, I've learned that.
No use goin' up against people in power.

(ORESTES enters with the body of KLYTEMNESTRA, covered)

A: to anticipate the unveiling

AEGISTHUS:
O Zeus, I see a sight not sent without envy,
looks as if the gods didn't like him!
Here, I take that back, it ain't lucky.
Lift that napkin off his face, I'm one of the family
in mourning.

ORESTES:
Lift it yourself. It's not my place
to show these signs of love and affection.

AEGISTHUS:
That's right.

(to ELEKTRA)
Go call Clytemnestra
if she's at home.

ORESTES (as AEGINSTHUS lifts napkin):
She's right there. You needn't look any further.

B3: "Gaaaaaaa!"

ORESTES:

GAaaaaa!

AEGINSTHUS: X a few steps DS on PL.

A: to hide my
demonstration of
delight

O: to bear witness to
this final act of revenge

ORESTES:
Whazza matter? Haven't you seen her before?

AEGINSTHUS (in fury):
Who th' HELL.. Damn damn
I'm trapped.

ORESTES:
Haven't
you
ever
learned

that the
DEAD
don't
DIE?

AEGINSTHUS:
Ahh. You're Orestes.

ORESTES:
Ain't you clever. And it took you so LONG to find out.
AEGISTHUS:
Here now, wait a minute, just let me . . .

ELEKTRA:

DON'T
Don't let him get a word in,
the brute's caught, what good's a half hour?
Kill him. Kill him.
And let the sextons go cart him out,
get the stuff out of sight,
and let me forget it.

ORESTES (snarling):
GET ON IN THERE, stow the gab,
you're in for it.

AEGISTHUS (breaking):
Why have I got to go in
and die in the dark?
Why can't you do it here?

ORESTES:
None of your business. You'll die
where you killed my father.

AEGISTHUS:
Fate, fate, under this damned roof of Pelops
everything happens here.
ORESTES:
You'll get YOURS here at any rate.
I can tell you that much.

AEGISTHUS:
You didn't get that from your father.

ORESTES:
Make a song about it?

AEGISTHUS:
I follow.

ORESTES (patient, dragging voice, but sword pointing in small of A's back):
After you.

AEGISTHUS:
Hah. 'Fraid I'll give you the slip?

ORESTES:
No, but you aren't dying for pleasure.
You've got to go through with it ALL.
It's a pity you can't all of you die like this
and as quickly, every one like you.
It would save a lot of unpleasantness.
B4: "What Now?..."

CHORUS:

OSPERM ATREÖOS
Atreides, Atreides,

O: to embrace the horror
come through the dark.

PA: look to heaven

and move forward

My god, it's come with a rush!

A: to declare that the
prophesy has been
fulfilled

DELIVERED, DELIVERED
SWIFT END
SO SOON
TE NUN TELEOOTHEN.

T: Oh the race of Atreus,

T: was completed today with
force.
3.3

Glossary of Terms

1 Trojan War: in Greek legend, famous war waged by the Greeks against the city of Troy. Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, gained the love of Helen who was the wife of Menelaus, the King of Sparta. The expedition to avenge the injury to Menelaus was placed under the command of King Agamemnon, of Mycenae.

2 Argos: ancient twin city of Mycenae, the capital of Argolis in the Peloponnese.

3 Gad-fly: biting fly.

4 Miss Inachus: the goddess Io, loved by Zeus and sent out of the country. Zeus went after her but the gods sent the Furies to drive her mad. She was turned into a cow and chased after by a gad-fly so Zeus could not get a hold of her.

5 Lukeum: Pound’s version of Lyceum, the school near Athens where Aristotle taught, which was named for the nearby temple of Apollo Lukeios.

6 Wolf-god: cult name for Apollo, derived from Lykaios, the Greek word for wolf.

7 Hera: Zeus’ wife and sister, protectress of marriage.

8 Mycenae: town in Peloponnese where Agamemnon ruled, located on the northern edge of Argos.

9 Pelops: son of Tantalus; came to the south of Greece where he obtained his bride by winning a chariot race by bribing Myrtilus, the charioteer of her father. As payment for his service, Pelops murdered Myrtilus and threw him into the sea. Pelops was the grandfather of Atreus and Thyestes.
Pythoness: another name referring to Apollo. A female python was said to have protected the original oracle at Delphi. Apollo killed the python.

Phoebus: name for Apollo meaning “bright-one.”

Phanoteus: greatest ally of Klytemnestra and Aegithus in Phocis.

Phocia: district of Greece next to Beotia on the Gulf of Corinth.

Pythians: referring to the Pythian Games. The games were created when the python was slain by Apollo in celebration of the original ownership of the oracle.

Loxias: name for Apollo meaning “the ambiguous” or “the speaker.”

Nightingale: reference to Procone who was the daughter of the King of Athens. She was given to Tereus and they had a son, Itys. Tereus raped Procone’s sister Philomele. Procone killed Itys in revenge for what Tereus did to her sister. Later, Procone was turned into a nightingale and Philomele, a swallow.

Persephone: queen of the dead and daughter of Demeter. She was stolen away to the underworld, hidden there and married Hades.

Hades: the lord of the land of the dead and husband of Persephone. God who guides the souls of the dead to the underworld, but in this story, he guides the avengers of the dead.

Hermes: took souls to the underworld.

Erinnys: furies who are spirits of divine vengeance and later became the Eumenides.

Itys: son of Procone and Tereus. He was killed by his mother and served to his father for revenge.

Zeus: chief Greek god.
23 Niobe: after her children were killed, she wept for an eternity and turned into stone, always wet with tears.

24 Iphianassa: Agamemnon’s daughter, Iphigenia.

25 Nowt: nothing, naught.

26 Bean-o: British slang for party or celebration.

27 Ponce: pimp.

28 Cipher: zero, non-entity.

29 Helios: sun god often confused with Apollo.

30 Lustrations: libations.

31 Usurer: money-lender.

32 Myrtil: short for Myrtilus; helped Pelops win a chariot race to win Hippodamia’s hand in marriage. He was later killed by Pelops and as he died, he cursed Pelops and his family.

33 Justice: Klytemnestra’s argument in regards to Iphigenia. She believes Menelaus’ children should have been sacrificed, rather than her own.

34 Menelaus: Agamemnon’s brother. The Trojan War was fought to regain his wife Helen after she was taken by the Trojan Prince, Paris.

35 Rotter: British slang for bastard.

36 Bounder: boisterous, vulgar fellow.

37 Artemis: virgin goddess of hunting. She prevented Agamemnon’s troops from sailing to Troy because he bragged that he was a better hunter. She would not allow the winds to blow until he sacrificed a maiden.
38 Aulis: east coast of Greece where the Greek fleet assembled in the Trojan War.
39 Achaeans: a name Homer used to refer to the Greeks.
40 Ilion: Troy.
41 Sophistry: misleading argument.
42 Whelp: pup or cub.
43 Virgin: Artemis, goddess of virgins.
44 Patron: defender.
45 Lykeios: Apollo, wolf-killer. Also see Wolf-god.
46 Atreides: House of Atreus.
47 Phoibos Lykeios: Apollo.
48 Gruss Gott: good God.
49 Na poo: no more.
50 Delphic prize: prize at the Pythian Games.
51 Sparta: city in the Peloponnese.
52 Achaia: on the southern coast of the Bay of Corinth.
53 Libya: general name for North Africa.
54 Thessalian: person from the territory north of Greece called Thessaly.
55 Aetolian: person from the north shore Bay of Corinth (central Greece) called Aetolia.
56 Megara: city west of Athens (north coast of Syranic coast).
57 Aeneian: person from the islands south of Athens.
58 Athenian: person from Athens.
59 Bocian: person from large plain north of Athens, east of Delphi (east central Greece).
Barcaens: person from from Barca, an ancient town in Libya.

Envoys: chosen men of Phocis, honorable warriors.

Light/lightning: reference to Zeus' thunderbolt and Apollo as the sun-god.

King Amphiarion: married to Eriphile. He refused to fight in the war at Thebes because he knew he would lose. Amphiarion's brother bribed Eriphile with a necklace, in order to convince Amphiarion to fight. Amphiarion went to war and was swallowed into the earth by one of Zeus' thunderbolts. His son killed Eriphile for revenge.

Hearth-stone: house altar.

Blotto: drunk.

Buck up: have courage.

Themis: goddess of Justice and order, married to Zeus.

Rumor: message carrier.

Philomel: Procne's sister who was turned into a swallow because she could not sing. Also see Nightingale.

Sire's shade: Agamemnon's ghost.

Old Stroffy: Orestes' name for Strophius, the ally of Orestes and Elektra, and father of Pylades. He lives in Crisa.

Compels: enslaves.

Mars: god of war.

Bumptious: conceited, arrogant, forward.

Twig: British slang for "to know".
76 Jake: satisfactory or fine.

77 Pikers: slackers.

78 Ineluctable: inescapable.

79 Presage: prediction.

80 Sextons: in charge of digging graves.

This chapter included a description of my acting methodology, my scored script of *Elektra*, definitions of key terms in the scored script, and a glossary of terms important to my research on the role of the Chorus. The next chapter contains my rehearsal and performance log and records my process while creating my thesis role in *Elektra*. 
CHAPTER 4

REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE LOG

This chapter takes the form of a journal and documents my discoveries during the rehearsal and performance of Elektra. The writing style is informal and the documentation begins on the day I was assigned my thesis role. The log is divided into five sections: pre-production information, the early rehearsals, the working rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and the performance log.

4.1

April 25, 2001

Today I had a meeting with Sue about my thesis role. I will be playing the Lead Chorus woman in Sophocles' play Elektra, translated by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming. I was informed the role will be half in English and half in Greek, or Pound's version of the Greek language. Sue said I would have a leadership opportunity in terms of sharing what I learn from my research over the summer. The role seems like it will be a huge challenge. I have never performed in another language. Sue performed the role herself several years ago in a production in Washington, DC and said that the play has a more modern edge to it, combining ancient Greek elements with contemporary slang language.
This sounds like something that I would be very interested in performing. I am looking forward to the process.

May 9, 2001

Today Carie and I had meeting with Stratos Constantinidis, a faculty member in the department whose specialty is Greek theatre. He gave us some basic information we need in order to begin our research. We received a list of books written by Ezra Pound and some that are about his life. Stratos advised us to research only a little bit at a time so we do not become overwhelmed by all of the reading and writing. I think this was very wise advice because after seeing the huge list of books, both Carie and I started to feel slightly panicked. But I know we have a long summer ahead of us to finish the readings and chapter one of the thesis.

Summer 2001

I am reading about the Greek Chorus, Greek mythology, and a little about Ezra Pound. I have procrastinated for too long on researching Pound–there is so much written about him that I do not know where to begin. But I love the character analysis aspect of the research. There is so much that I have read that will be helpful in making choices during the rehearsal process. The text The Sophoclean Chorus by Cynthia Gardiner outlines very clear reasons for the Chorus’ responses throughout the play. Her book is really helping me to understand the action more.

I have also been reading other translations of Elektra and comparing the text to Pound’s version. The extra reading is also clarifying the text and is making me realize the great economy of Pound’s translation. Writing chapter one has been very difficult to
jump into because I am still narrowing down the topics I should include. I only want to incorporate what is absolutely essential to performing the role in terms of my thesis question. I know that I want to focus on Pound's style of language. I guess I should also include the basic points about his life that might have influenced his translation of Elektra. I also want to write about the information I have found on Elektra's family tree and Greek mythology to give an overview of the world of the play. It is so easy to want to write about everything, but I keep reminding myself to focus only on the essentials. I think I have a better idea of what I want to write about than I give myself credit for, but when you are surrounded by piles of books, it is easy to get distracted by so many topics.

September 28, 2001

Fall quarter departmental auditions. Fall auditions were reduced this quarter to only one night. Even though the third year MFA students are pre-cast in their thesis roles, we are still required to audition. Since I am auditioning my thesis quarter, I could watch the other auditions. I performed a piece from The Food Chain by Nicky Silver, and a piece from Shakespeare's Othello. My audition was scheduled for later in the evening, so Carie and I watched everyone before me. I was a little disappointed I could not see all of them, particularly the undergraduates. I helped to prepare one of the undergrads, Liz Snyder. I thought she was very professional and did very well. A lot of new faces that I have never seen in the department before. Casting should be interesting.

September 23, 2001

Callbacks in room 107. For some reason, both Carie and I were terribly nervous about reading for callbacks. We were not the ones being watched, but I think we both felt
a responsibility to read well, since we spent our entire summer researching Ezra Pound. I was very impressed with the undergraduate women who read for the other Chorus roles. Sue also is experimenting with the idea of a “mute” Chorus member, who is an empathic and feels everything Elektra feels. Many were asked to basically viewpoint around the rest of the action and to just listen. I was amazed how they jumped right in, did not ask questions and were so ready to work. It is funny because I was reminded of my first college audition. There was no fear, just diving into the work. The text is complicated and I was amazed with their willingness to take risks with the text. The last girl I read with this evening, Dana Spurlock, was asked to work with me outside the room on playing with the text. I think we worked pretty well together and she has a very strong voice. Others who stood out to me were Amanda Buffington and Leah Reddy. I am usually not very good with predicting casting because there is always something unexpected, so I will just wait until the list goes up.

September 26, 2001

The cast list went up today. A few surprises. Originally Tarahai Lee was supposed to play Chrysothemis, but she is now Klytemnestra. I think this is a wonderful choice. There were few women who read last night who I felt could handle the text in that role, so I am glad for Tarahai. I was also right about Dana Spurlock. She is playing the other speaking Chorus woman and Leah Reddy will be the mute. Amanda Buffington will be playing Chrysothemis. The cast contains six grads and six undergrads. So many new people to work with which is nice to see. Our first read through is tomorrow night. I am curious to see how it goes.
4.2

September 25, 2001

Tonight was our first rehearsal. The cast was introduced and the designers presented their ideas. I was the most affected by Brad Steinmetz's set design. I glanced at it earlier during the day, but did not really see what was in it. In the center of the playing space is a broken airplane wing which Elektra hides under. My stomach dropped. The wing is too powerful of an image for me right now. I wanted to cry on the spot. I feel like at some level it is disrespectful of those who died September 11th. Sue wrote in her director's concept about how the Chorus women are similar to Las Madres de la Plaza in Argentina. Those women remind me so much of the people in New York holding pictures of their family members, day after day, hoping they might still be alive. God only knows what the state of our country will be in a few weeks and how people will respond to these images. I am scared to think about it.

On a lighter note, I loved the costume designs. I like the 1950s American style combined with Greek elements. We also had our first read through. Sue wanted the cast to just talk and listen to each other, but it is difficult when you do not know what you are saying. But that will get easier in time. All in all, it seems like a very warm cast and environment. I am really looking forward to working with Dana and Leah (my other two Chorus women) and the rest of the cast.

September 26, 2001

First night of table work. We only got through about 25 pages of the script because of all of the Greek mythology references. There are so many stories that need to
be explained in order to understand Pound’s script. I am really in the early stages of “acting” when I read out loud. I need to get more comfortable with what I am saying before I feel like I can act. But it is so nice to have done the research during the summer. I actually feel like I fully understand the background of the story. All of the points about Pound Sue brought up are covered in my research. Same with the mythology. There are still gaps in my knowledge, but I know what is going on for the most part. Researching truly helps. I know I will need to go more in depth later, but I feel like I am on track right now.

September 27, 2001

Finished table work in a read through of the script. There are fewer references as we go along, but the text is so dense in spots that it is still difficult to understand Pound’s abbreviations. Sue handed out some nice quotes about Pound. They talked about the rhythms built into his text. In The ABC of Reading Pound says, “Rhythm is a form cut into TIME, as a design is determined SPACE.” (198). Rhythm, I am noticing, is present everywhere in his translation of Elektra. The speech patterns tell so much about who the characters are and how they are feeling in a given moment. This is something definitely worth exploring in rehearsals.

I need to get a map of Greece to add to my thesis as an appendix entry. So tired tonight. Focusing is difficult. My lines in the script are not set yet. They will be shared with Dana (Leah is a mute Chorus member) and will not be split up until we get into rehearsal. That makes sense but it scares me a bit, not knowing, especially with the Greek text. But we will work it out.
September 28, 2001

Tonight we worked on the Greek text pronunciations with Eleni. We did not get through everything, but it was so helpful getting started. I have never heard the Greek language spoken. It is so beautiful. The sounds will just soar once we know what we are saying and feel comfortable speaking. I recorded the session and tried to write out some of the sounds phonetically. I want to take ownership of the language and to make the Greek sound as natural as possible.

September 30, 2001

More table work on Pound. Sue asked us for the next rehearsal to think about the play in terms of metaphor. The play seems to hold a lot of metaphors for Pound’s life. Many characters are metaphors for his political and economic views. I am discovering that it is a scary thing not knowing what this role is going to be like. The role has such beautiful language and has a lot of interesting research, but I am feeling a little like this is not necessarily what I want as a personal challenge right now. I feel like I need a role that has more head on conflict with another character. I know there is conflict in this role, but it is more tricky than just that. The Chorus is more of a watchful mediator in this show. On the surface, they seem to observe more than really taking part in the action. I do not want the Chorus to become passive and dull. How do I stay active in a role whose job is to bear witness?
4.3

October 1, 2001

Sue wants us to approach the rehearsal process for Elektra in a different way. She talked tonight about how words are a weapon for Elektra and said that we need to find a core metaphor for ourselves within the world of the play. She wants the cast to take ownership of the show and explore the script bravely so we can create. We have to be willing to not know what will happen.

We then worked on an Anne Bogart improvisation exercise. Sue gave us a list of guidelines to put into our pieces: a meeting, something happens, a loss, and a reconciliation. We also had to use a minimum of 10 “whats” (some kind of doing), 5 lines of text from Elektra, a sustained moment where everyone looks up, a surprise entrance, a broken expectation, a gesture repeated 15 times, 20 seconds of consecutive silence, 15 seconds of top speed talking, 15 seconds of simultaneous action in unison, use of sound other than voice in 3 contrasting ways, something must be sung, something must be very loud, explore shape, explore gesture, and use no additional objects. All of this had to be incorporated into a piece in one hour. I was the “director” for our group. We had a lot of chatting so I tried to prompt people to do something rather than think or plan. I think ideally this is a fabulous way to work, but I am not sure how it will work on this piece. There is a limited amount of time for this rehearsal process and I am concerned.

October 2, 2001

Our first working rehearsal in Mount Hall. We worked on scenes 1, 2, 3, and 5. I am not quite sure how I feel about this way of working yet. The process reminds me a
little of the work we did with Caridad Svich on *Alchemy of Desire*. In some ways it is very freeing. Of course I am worried about answering questions, but I want to feel more liberated from that worry. I want to be free enough to try things. But right now I do not feel like I own much of anything. I seem to be going to rehearsals very excited and leave feeling bad. I do not feel like I have "discovered" anything yet. There is such a feeling of pressure when we are exploring that a discovery must be made in the 15 minutes reserved to work on the scene.

I feel like anything I do does not match at all what Sue wants. She wants stillness from the Chorus which can create a great amount of strength. But when I yell out a line of text, I get the response that I just displayed strength the faculty has never seen from me, and it makes me feel worse. Why does strength and power have to be equated with yelling or being loud? Why does strength have to have that quality? I do not think the Chorus has to be loud and overbearing. Powerful, yes, but there has to be another way of achieving that strength that is so vital to the role.

**October 3, 2001**

Worked on scenes 5 and 6. You know, this journal is supposed to be documenting my rehearsal process in terms of my thesis question. But nothing has progressed for me yet in terms of language and style. It is all about the confidence. I feel like a moron. Everyone is diving into their scenes and exploring the space. I feel so completely removed. I am told to move as I wish, and to think in pictures and compositionally, and to make choices. And when I take a single step, I find that I need to be in a different spot. I guess I am too slow—I take more time than other people in my
process. Sometimes I am told, "You need to be on the upper level. I don't know how
you get there, but just go." I do not mind following the direction, but at the same time, I
do not feel like I am allowed to follow my impulses.

We want to explore physical distance between the Chorus and Elektra, but I feel
so completely disconnected with her. My impulse is to run and hold her and back her up,
to be part of her experience. But I really just need to play the actions. I feel like I need
permission for everything. I also feel like I am constantly being reminded that I have
"confidence issues." Reminding me only makes me feel worse.

October 4, 2001

Work on scene 10 through the end of the show. OK, I am in better spirits tonight.
I feel more activated, but I am still so cautious about everything. I am doubting my
instincts. I am stuck. But as the play progresses, the actions become more clear for the
Chorus. We can become physically closer to Elektra. Tomorrow we are working on all
of the Chorus scenes. I want to be excited and look forward to it, but I do not want to
walk away frustrated and upset. After looking at the script again, it is still hard to clarify
some of my actions. Some lines are still unclear to me. What am I doing in each
scene???

October 5, 2001

Chorus work with Elektra--worked on Scene 2. Sue had us read an article from
Stratos on lamentation which was extremely helpful. We spent the first hour and a half
going through the play and defining the actions of the Chorus. I honestly think there is
not a clearly defined path for the Chorus yet. Sue admitted to us that when she did the
show ten years ago in Washington DC, there was no real through line for the Chorus. She felt silly (as did I the other night) waiting with Elektra’s keening, when it did not make sense in the whole journey of the Chorus as a character. I feel bad, like I should have some master vision planned out, but I feel lost. I have my own opinions about our relationship with Elektra, but it is difficult to make decisions right now.

It was so helpful to go through the script. Right now, it does not make sense for us to lament with Elektra during the keening section. We have just praised her for her decision to take action on her own as opposed to damaging herself with excessive behavior. So it is necessary to step away from her, literally and figuratively. It is her turn to act and make decisions on her own.

We only got to our first scene tonight. We worked on the first section of text for a while. Sue wanted Dana and I to try singing the text, overlapping it, whispering, etc. I do not think we have found the exact way to introduce the Chorus yet. And I feel guilty and responsible for that. I felt stuck in my head. I am trying to make a foreign language sound natural, use different vocal dynamics, and act all at the same time with intentions. I feel like I am letting Sue down. She is also concerned about the way I move. There is nothing “soft” about these women. I tend to either focus on the movement and forget about the text dynamics, or I get so caught up in the language that I forget I am moving with my habitual light and floaty quality. Once I get completely off book, I know it will be easier to incorporate all of the dynamics. Frustrating right now!

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October 7, 2001

Work on scenes 2, 3 and tried 4. We did a lot tonight. We only worked fully on two scenes, but it was a lot. I wish I had everything set, but it is a slow process. I need to have more patience with myself. The process is improving right now. The relationship of the Chorus to Elektra is slowly clarifying. I need to establish more of a relationship with Dana and Leah. We talked a little about it. We are some kind of family, not related to each other biologically, but after the Trojan War all of the men are gone. We are left with nothing and have to bond together to survive.

I am discovering that the Chorus has definite opinions about Elektra and Chrysothemis. We favor Elektra, but still have concern for her sister. I feel like I am not being specific enough. Sue pointed out that the whole “He, is Aegithus here?” section is very general right now. I know there are other spots that need clarification as well. I wish I had a better system of memorizing the Greek text. Certain syllables are just not sticking in my brain.

I am also trying too hard to be “strong.” I know I cannot play that, but I am trying to find that upright strength that is a distinct contrast with Elektra who is so close to the ground. Tall and upright, not soft. Gritty and earthy. Trying to find those qualities vocally too—so far it feels like I am shouting a lot. I know there are sections where I am playing the emotions, but I think it is because I am trying to keep the energy and urgency up in those spots I am unsure of. It is too easy to fall flat. I need to find more variety and communicate better with my fellow Chorus women. I want to create a character with
depth. In this world, I am the adult. The Chorus is the voice of reason—we need to keep Elektra in line and on track, to guide and protect her.

October 8, 2001

Worked on scene 2 AGAIN, and I know it will keep changing as we go. Also worked on the Chorus’ prayer. We explored sound tonight. The cast found some great background sounds, blowing into bottles, rattling metal, etc. The Chorus has its actions for the prayer, but we are very still physically in terms of the staging. Sue wants the text to build, but I am having difficulty. How do I find vocal variety and play an action with my voice, in a sense? How do I get to a natural sounding place and have variety, build, and play objectives? It is almost like there is no obstacle in the scene, but that is a dangerous statement. I know that we are all there to support Elektra. We are there to evoke the gods. There is a contrast between her and us. She is running around constantly while we are still. I keep thinking about Suzuki and the powerful stillness that comes from the statues in that work. Less is more for these women—the simpler, the better. Scene 4 (The Dance of Delight) needs to be worked on and these questions apply to it physically: how do I stay upright, be giddy, but celebrate and still be in contrast to Elektra? So many questions that I have not been able to answer yet.

October 9, 2001

Ran scenes 2 through 8. Yuck! OK, lots of problems and discoveries for me. Today I feel weak. I did not feel strong tonight. I felt detached. My work is too general. I have a bunch of verbs to play and I do not know what to do with them. I feel fenced in,
confused, like power and strength do not live in my body. I am in my third year of an MFA acting program and I cannot act.

We have a designer run through tomorrow night and then a few days off. I am still memorizing Greek. I am trying to figure out why I feel like this tonight. Lack of specificity, maybe. But the physicality of the role makes me feel so vulnerable, not strong. I feel quite naked actually. So how can I translate that into strength and power? The movement makes me feel stiff and boxed in. I am not listening because I am too self-conscious about how I move.

I do not feel connected to my other Chorus women. I need to take the lead in solving that. I am going to ask Sue for some separate time with the other Chorus women, to do some mirroring exercises, listening exercises, so we can feel a bit more connected. Trust each other more as be more aware of each other. Hopefully something like this might help.

October 10, 2001

Designer run through tonight. Mo Ryan, our new voice teacher, was there to give us vocal notes. Busy day today. I ended up spending a half an hour in Sue's office this morning after I realized I needed to voice how I have felt in the rehearsal process and what I would like to see for the Chorus. I told her about my vocal concerns, my physicality, how vulnerable it makes me feel, and my fears. I do not know if we solved anything. I said that I would feel better if the Chorus could be a more unified unit, but Sue said that in saying this I am avoiding the issue. My issue is that I need to be more comfortable with being ALONE. To feel like I have the right to take up space and have
attention, even in my stillness. She said that I may never find this comfort. I think that is a terrible thought. But this might be an on-going struggle for me. I also talked about how I need to find where the character is in my body and to find more things to do in the action. But she said she is suspicious of that need because the challenge of the role is in just being, bearing witness, and being still. My natural way of finding comfort is to DO something, to keep myself busy. But to just be there and listen... not an easy task.

She talked to me about self-sabotage, how we all do this to ourselves. She shared with me some of her experience from the director’s conference this summer and some quotes from Anne Bogart: “Life is unbearable; rehearsals are beautiful and make life possible.” And how scientists try to explain, but artists try to describe. And how the work in rehearsals is about finding shapes that describe a condition. This last concept led to us discovering that the Chorus could start to experiment with different shapes physically, which could create more freedom. There was something else Anne Bogart said about how her career was fueled by anger at her parents for telling her she could not do theatre and so instead of choosing to turn the anger inward, she made plays. That is so valuable. I have stumbled across stuff in the past two years that I have buried in my soul and I do not think I have owned up and faced. Sue said it is time that I do that—I am getting a Master’s Degree. I need to accept that and feel validated.

At rehearsal Mo came to give vocal notes. She recommended that the cast look at Pound’s choice of consonants and language. There are quiet moments in the script too that need to be explored. Interesting... that is what I have thought too. She also said that I do not need to push vocally (I guess that is me overcompensating for feeling like I
am not DOING) and that I have a beautiful rich sound that I need to trust. But to hear that made me feel better. I need to trust and find that variety. Maybe if I work from that place, other problems in the work will be solved.

October 14, 2001

I worked with Dana and Leah on the listening exercises that Caridad Svich used in rehearsal for Alchemy of Desire. I thought they were helpful in "bonding." The three of us laughed and were silly together and felt a bit more connected. It was nice that Sue gave me time to work with them. In rehearsal, we tried working on the Dance of Delight (scene 4). I think there is some verb confusion. Some possible actions that we came up with for the scene were to conspire and to celebrate. However, to conspire and to celebrate are two completely different things and a distinct choice must be made. But Sue is going to block the scene now. Problems have not been solved and I am kicking myself for it. I feel like I have not done my job coming up with a solution for the scene, but I am at a loss. There are scenes right now we have not touched at all and we open in 2 ½ weeks. I am a little concerned . . .

October 15, 2001

Ran scenes 1 through 6. Stratos came to rehearsal. He clarified some of the Greek text which was very helpful. I am starting to get sick, sore throat, etc. It is hard to concentrate when you feel kind of lousy physically.

October 16, 2001

Worked on Dance of Delight. Sue decided to block it—so much better! It has the feel of Macbeth's three witches now. She added a song which we put the Greek text to
and it sounds good. I just need to make the text work a bit better. Still feeling sick today, a bit worse. I have to stop apologizing in rehearsal.

October 17, 2001

Started to stage scenes 12 and 13 but the palace is not built yet, so it was difficult. Alan Woods came tonight. He had one general note for everyone: CLARITY is missing. I know it. I am facing some personal problems in rehearsal that I need to solve because they are getting in the way of me taking ownership of this role and trusting my choices. I feel like I am not quick enough to catch on to this method of working, and therefore I am not good. I do not feel like I can be honest and speak my mind about what I am experiencing in this process.

October 18, 2001

I am pretty sick today. I showed up at rehearsal and Sue said I looked pretty bad. She did not want me giving the flu to everyone else. But if I missed rehearsal, I said I would feel guilty. She said making decisions like that are part of being a 3rd year MFA. She was right. I came home. If I stayed I would not be in a good place to work or be productive. So I am getting some rest and taking care of myself. And of course, I feel guilty . . .

October 19, 2001

We worked on several choral scenes and then ran the show. We are still making changes to scene 4 (Dance of Delight). Sue looked back at the rhythms of the four stanzas of speech and when they speed up, she discovered they have a "pow wow" feel. But they cannot be rushed. She wants them clear and full of intent and to gradually
accelerate. Right now all I am doing is rushing and getting frantic. It is a struggle. I said to Carie that I do not feel like I can act at all.

I was so looking forward to doing this show, especially after spending the summer doing the research for it, but I feel so uncomfortable at rehearsals. I am so disappointed. I have not felt secure about any of my work while I have been here at OSU. I really wanted an opportunity to break free from that and do something that I felt confident and good about. I am trying to solve acting problems, review the script, and clarify objectives and actions, but nothing is working right now. My confidence in this environment is becoming a problem that is getting in the way of my work. How do I solve that?

October 21, 2001

Blocked the end of the show. Today was a very quick process and mostly about fitting people into the final pictures of the play. Dana, Leah, and I had some extra time to work on the text in the hallway while we were not needed on stage. Dana and I went over the new rhythms for scene 4. I am enjoying the musicality of the text and I think we made a little progress in understanding the builds needed to move the text forward smoothly. We will see how it goes next time we run the scene.

October 22, 2001

Crew watch. At the end of the evening, Sue pointed out that I keep looking at her when I am on stage and that it must be a subconscious thing (I guess I am looking to her for approval—what else is new?) Her comment was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Two years of hurt wanted to come pouring out of me. I may have come here with some insecurities as we all did, but they have only been magnified and made worse. I have had
my confidence issues pointed out continuously for two years. That is all that I can identify myself with now. I can see nothing positive in my performance because I am the girl who is “too nice” and unsure.

I am reacting so strongly to Sue’s comment because I care. I respect her work and work ethic—of course I want her approval. All of the students do. But I never see anything positive. In my work in the past, I may have had some insecurity, but I was still able to take huge risks on stage. Rehearsal was the one thing I looked forward to everyday of college because I had so much freedom to try things. But recently, acting has become about pleasing other people and getting it “right” instead of creating for myself. It saddens me that I cannot bring myself to the work and not apologize for it.

October 23, 2001

I had an 8 am meeting with Sue. I spilled my guts to her, as best as I could. I needed to voice my feelings from the past two years, and I believe that I was heard. It was definitely not an easy task. But I did it and I am proud. I always try to seem like I am OK. I do not like to cause trouble for anyone. There have been very few times in my life I have had to be so direct about my difficulties, but my voice and feelings were heard today. And now that I know she feels focus is an issue because I want such approval, I can fix that. That is something easy to change. I need to do this for myself.

Sue was not at rehearsal tonight. I was able to get back on track. There was much less stress. I think more listening happened for me. Now that I moved forward personally, I can hopefully move forward in the work.
October 24, 2001

First tech rehearsal. Sue wants the Chorus to sound less “chorusy” and more natural on our opening Greek text together. Bad habit. I can break it. First tech went pretty smoothly. We had to do scene 4 for what seemed like 50 times, but it sounds pretty nice with Donald playing drums backstage. The drumming makes it easier to accelerate the pace. It is very dry in Mount Hall because of the fog machine, so I pushed vocally again. I need to drink lots more water during the day, before rehearsal.

October 25, 2001

Second tech. We got up to scene 9. A lot of time was needed to coordinate the blood dripping from the ceiling with text and sound, etc. But things are going smoothly. I am feeling more free, less boxed in. I did discover something tonight. I was sitting on the pile of sandbags with Leah and was kneeling, holding my staff under my chin. Sue said she liked the pose and I need to coordinate it into scene 8 when Elektra and Chrysothemis are arguing. The pose adds variety and the Chorus needs to find more natural poses. But she said it was a very active pose. That struck me: I was sitting, actively listening for the stage manager to tell us to continue the scene. It was that simple. I do not need to complicate things by pushing. I just need to be. I like that simpleness. It brings me some peace. Active stillness and honest listening—those are my goals for the rest of the show.
October 26, 2001

Finished tech to the final scene and ran the show. I think a lot of us did not want to run the entire show. We were tired. But I ended up being so glad that we did. I felt relaxed but attentive and, for the most part, in the moment. I also found out that I can in fact do this and remain focused.

October 28, 2001

First dress. Felt a little scattered. I think everyone was preoccupied with costumes and adjusting to them. So my focus was split. We also had callbacks for the winter quarter show immediately after the run today, so I know my thoughts were elsewhere. The show next quarter is The Shoemaker’s Holiday. John Fartis is directing and I would really like an opportunity to work with him. I think I can learn a lot about text work from him and about acting in general. I saw Sue at callbacks and she said the show was good this afternoon. She also said Friday was the most detailed and specific she had seen me. I felt that difference for sure these past two days. I am so glad she and I finally talked and really listened to each other. I am in a much better place right now to work.

October 29, 2001

Second dress—went a little better. I was really tired, but felt pretty connected. I got the role of Rose in The Shoemaker’s Holiday. I am pretty excited. I think I will learn a lot. We have a preview audience tomorrow night. It will be nice to have new people watching the show. We need an audience to laugh and respond.
October 30, 2001

Final dress/Preview night. Nice to have people there. A bit daunting at first because they are so close to us, but it was good to get us used to the close proximity of the crowd.

4.5

October 31, 2001

Opening night. Tonight we had a very quiet audience. I think there were a lot of students who were not sure if they were allowed to laugh. After all, *Elektra* is a tragedy, right? I think there might also be some discomfort for them because they are so close to the action. They feel like they are interfering with the action. The show felt a little awkward for me. My leg fell asleep while I was “sleeping” on the sandbags pre-show and I was distracted by the fact I could not feel my right leg for my first scene! However, I think that overall we did well for opening night. Things will become smoother the more we run the show each night.

November 1, 2001

Tonight’s show felt better. Better listening on my part. I am growing into the role more. When opening night happens, the cast truly owns the show. There were more responses to Pound’s wit which was comforting to the cast. This audience seemed to have a better sense of the text and the story in general, which helped. No other major discoveries. I am just growing more and more comfortable with performing this role.
November 2, 2001

Tonight I discovered how much I as a Chorus person want to appeal to the audience for help. I wish we could have somehow foreseen that in rehearsal. When I spoke to the audience in scene 4 (You can say that I never guess right . . .) I realized, “My God—they are bearing witness too! They are just like us. Isn’t there anything they can do?” I was swimming in their energy—so many others watching, waiting, and listening for an outcome. I only wish that I could connect with them more. There are other people in this tiny space who are taking part too. This reminds me of Anne Bogart. She is always looking for the role that her audience will play in her work. Could we have done something different with the scene? Or is it perfect because the audience is made up of voiceless onlookers witnessing Agamemnon’s avengement? Pound always spoke about those who do not have a voice. I guess it is the Chorus’ job to represent them in a way.

November 3, 2001

This morning the cast had to answer questions for the teacher’s conference. The teachers seemed pretty interested and we had two great shows today. We all warmed up outside and laughed and enjoyed ourselves before the first performance. The first audience was very quiet, but I was amazed at how they were listening and how we as a cast were all so tuned in with each other. I was really listening. There was no question about it. When we found out Orestes was “dead” and when Elektra was keening, tears were really flowing because I think we all were in the moment. I felt so connected to the high stakes and knew my function in the action from start to finish. Of course I was nervous about repeating this for the evening performance. Carie and I spoke about it.
But we decided that it is a whole new performance and experience. The students in
*Uncommon Clay* came tonight which energized everyone. Again, tears were flowing and
not pushed or forced and the cast all listened to each other. I found new moments with
Leah. When Elektra tells Chrysothemis “We’ve got to kill Aegithus ourselves,” she
became very agitated and I found myself moving toward her to calm her while observing
Elektra and Chrysothemis. The performances felt great. Not perfect, but real. I used my
imagination and listened with no excess effort.

**November 5, 2001**

Yuck. What a difference one day off makes. I was tired. I think we all were.
The show felt so forced and so not real to me today. But I guess we have to get back into
the groove. All I kept thinking of was Bruce in Meisner class saying “just listen one
time.” That is all I have to do to get connected. It worked in a few moments but not
where I really needed it to! I was thinking too much. But I am human and discovering a
lot about myself. I feel more myself right now than I have in two years. It is nice to feel a
bit more forgiving of myself finally in the work. I will try to do better tomorrow.

**November 6, 2001**

I was so tired tonight again. I needed energy before the show because I could not
quite get focused. I took a quick nap which helped a little. All I could do was warm up
and focus and listen and respond. And I got through the show. I did everything I could to
prepare myself to do the work.
November 9, 2001

Show felt good again—lots of talking and listening. I truly felt in the moment most of the time on stage.

November 13, 2001

First night back after three days off. Actually, after all of the worry about the break, we had a really nice show. Sue came and said the cast had pulled together. For the most part, I was pleased. It actually seemed to fly. We came to the last scene and I thought, “Wow, it’s here already?” There was no time to think about it all. Elektra just happened.

November 14, 2001

Yuck again. I said to Tarashai that I missed the boat tonight. The train left without me. I felt so not connected and so mechanical. I felt far behind myself. I had a lot on my mind before the show started, so that might have had something to do with being stuck in my head. Tomorrow will be better.

November 15, 2001

Tonight was pretty good. I felt a sense of ease physically, which is new. No tension, especially in the earlier scenes. I could breathe, I felt focused and I knew I was listening and responding. It made up for last night. I do not know what I did differently—I felt exhausted before the show and had to take a half hour nap at 6 pm before warm-ups, but whatever it was, I ended up feeling ready overall.
November 16, 2001

Tonight's show made me a little sad. Carie's parents, Tarashai's parents, and Kristin's (our stage manager) mother and brother were at the performance tonight. I could see them all sitting together at curtain call and they all looked so proud. I guess part of me was wishing that my family could be there. My mom has not seen me perform since I was eight years old. She has had multiple sclerosis since way before I was born. Traveling eight hours from Pennsylvania is physically too much for her. And my father has to teach. I know they want to be here too. But I think these feelings affected my performance without me realizing at the time. However, I did not let them take over me or stand in my way of playing actions. I was able to channel them into the work. I did not have to think about working so hard at "feeling" or "being." I just played the actions but felt emotionally invested in what I was doing. Interesting. I am so glad that we had a longer run with this show. I have learned so much from each performance. Every night is a different journey . . .

November 18, 2001

Last two performances. Today was rather stressful. Our cast was scheduled to have a 2 pm performance which ended at 3:30. We then had to be back at the Drake Union to see a 4 pm showing of Uncommon Clay. Their performance ended at around 5:45 and we went back to Mount Hall to eat a quick dinner (provided by the department) and got ready for our 7 pm show. However, it was soon discovered that the tickets sold to the public said the performance was at 8 pm! So we had to wait around for another hour. The last show felt very pushed, in terms of energy. I think the cast was ready to go

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at 7 pm and it was a let-down to have to wait around again. There was a lot of yelling and pushing vocally in scenes. Maybe we felt like we had to pour all of our energy into making this last show memorable. But it ended up feeling very “acted.” In any case, I am still glad that we ended the run in this way. Every show was so different and I learned so much about preparation and how to adjust to fit what was happening in the moment.

This chapter documented my discoveries during the rehearsal and performance of Electra. My next chapter will conclude my thesis and reflects on the successes and failures of my process, and what I learned from the experience.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The process of creating my thesis role in Elektra posed me with numerous challenges, both creatively and personally. Some challenges were met and others prevented me from using my full potential. However, my training as an actor provided me with tools which allowed me to approach any challenges in a more positive and creative way.

The research portion of my thesis work was most beneficial. To have the luxury of spending an entire summer researching Ezra Pound and Greek mythology gave me an advantage in approaching the role and the complexities of the text. After spending this much time, I felt invested in the project and a connection to the material. I cannot imagine preparing a role without researching the necessary elements, before the creative process begins. I may not always have the advantage of time, but any information I can acquire on the material can only add specificity to my choices in the rehearsal process. The more I understand the circumstances and the world of the play, the more clearly I can define the character and her through-line. Research is a wonderful way to give an actor
ammunition before going into rehearsal and boosts his/her confidence level in making creative decisions.

Although I had the advantage of knowledge about the material, the rehearsal process was not as smooth for me in this particular instance. The process asked that the cast creatively explore text, sound, and gesture. Answering all of the questions about the given circumstances was not initially necessary. The actors had to be willing to take risks and not know the final outcome. In order to be successful in this type of creative process, trust must be present from the actors in order for them to feel safe enough to explore and fail. I unfortunately was not always able to trust my own instincts about my role. Much of this mistrust came from my own self. I discovered how much doubt could be destructive to the creative process and how it prevented me from voicing my opinions. It was not until a few days before opening that I began to trust my choices and have confidence again.

Ultimately, I learned that it is okay to not agree with someone creatively. Compromise is essential to the process. Not everyone has the same vision. I also learned how an actor's personal issues can enter the rehearsal room and hinder creativity. Often, I found it impossible not to judge my work in a negative way. However, I was ultimately able to speak up about my difficulties and once I did, I felt better and more positive about the process. My work improved because I believed I had the right to be present and make decisions about the material. I experienced a painful process, but it was necessary to go through in order to obtain the final results.
The performances for *Elektra* were the times I began to discover my role and own it. I learned from audience reactions and from listening to the other actors on stage. Every night was a different experience. The physical condition that I came to the theatre in each night affected how I prepared and warmed-up, and where the Chorus began its journey. I was so grateful for the long run of the show. In performance, I felt in control of my character. Anything that occurred on stage was my responsibility and it was my job each night to tell Elektra's story. Mostly, I learned how to "be" in the work and to listen more honestly. I have been told that I possess great honesty in my work on stage. I believe I found even more honesty working on *Elektra* and discovered how to relax, and enjoy acting again. I do not believe it is fully possible to give a good performance if the actor does not enjoy the work. Worry and discomfort add tension which gets in the way of being open to what is happening in the moment. I feel that I ultimately achieved these goals for myself.

In terms of meeting the creative goals outlined by director Sue Ott Rowlands, I believe I could have been more successful. I could have taken more risks physically, particularly in exploring gesture. Vocally, the challenges of Pound's text required variety and clarity in order to make the audience understand the circumstances. I believe I could have found more variety, especially in the Greek text, to make the sounds more effective. The tone of the Greek text was supposed to add to the emotional quality of the scenes in which it was included. Some audience members responded after performances, saying they were affected by the sounds, while others mentioned it did nothing for them. I wish I had used the text more effectively in the sound score and make an impression on the
audience. However, I do believe that I was able to make most of the text, both Greek and English, more natural sounding. I was also successful in finding the vocal strength needed to play such a strong and authoritative character.

During the rehearsal process, Sue Ott Rowlands mentioned the difficulties of playing the Lead Chorus Woman in *Elektra* several years ago in Washington, DC. She said there was not a clearly defined through-line for the Chorus and choices were not explored enough to develop their journey. Because of her care and desire to approach the material in a new manner, the Chorus' journey in the Ohio State University production was more visible. As a result of my research and Sue's creative vision, I was able to understand the importance of Elektra's cause to the Chorus women and to see their undying desire for revenge. Their dedication to Elektra was not an arbitrary choice. The reasons for the Chorus' commitment were clear and so real to me in my imagination. Finding more clarity in the Chorus' journey was a definite success.

If I were to go through the process again, I would change several things. I wish I had the bravery necessary to take the risks the director asked for in approaching this role. I do not think that I trusted myself enough for this to occur. I also wanted to define the Chorus' relationship to Elektra more strongly, within the world of the play. I would also have benefitted from taking ownership of my role earlier on in the process. In spite of my criticisms about my work, I am generally satisfied with the results that I achieved. After seeing *Elektra*, some of my classmates commented that I gave a strong and solid performance. The Lead Chorus woman was not my best work, but I am more forgiving of myself as an actor and can appreciate my accomplishments.
The creative process for an actor is a personal journey. Everything the actor experiences in life at the time of rehearsal is a small part of the role they ultimately create. Often, it is easy for personal issues to stand in the way of bravely making choices in the process. Through the creation of my thesis role of the Lead Chorus woman in Sophocles' *Elektra*, I discovered where I prevent myself from using my full potential in creative work and that I am capable of taking ownership over a role. Hopefully, I will remember in future projects how I dealt with the challenges on *Elektra* and be able to move forward in my work as a result.
APPENDIX A

DIRECTOR'S CONCEPT
ELEKTRA. a version by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming

Director's Concept

In Ezra Pound’s version of Sophokles’ Elektra, the emphasis is on the language of the play: earthy, immediate, and irreverent enough to lead towards black-comedy at times. Pound’s interest in the power of language and the notion of verbal deception through the manipulation of words permeates the world of the play. Carey Perloff, in her introduction to Pound’s translation, describes her desire for a playable American translation of Greek tragedy, a version that would utilize “an English as tough and vibrant and muscular as the ancient Greek” (Elektra, ix). In Pound’s Elektra, she found such a translation.

The story from Greek mythology centers around the murder of Elektra’s father, Agamemnon, a great warrior and king and leader of the largest Greek contingent at Troy. When Agamemnon went to war, he left his cousin Aegithus in charge. Motivated by greed and lust, Aegithus seduced Agamemnon’s wife Klytemnestra and the illicit lovers murdered the king upon his return from the Trojan War. It is now years later and Elektra continues to mourn her father’s death and swear vengeance on his murderers. Essentially a prisoner in Aegithus’ palace, she is able to fight for vengeance with words only while she awaits the return of her brother, Orestes. In Elektra, Sophokles tells the story of the return of Orestes and his ultimate revenge on Aegithus and Klytemnestra.
In choosing to adapt *Elektra*, Pound found a way to speak of his own situation as a prisoner/patient in St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Washington, D.C. Confinned there for 13 years (1945-1958) on charges of treason resulting from his regular radio broadcasts on shortwave from Rome to America and to American troops, Pound saw correlations with Elektra’s situation. His broadcasts, which he claimed to be in support of the U.S. Constitution, were highly critical of Roosevelt and the war effort, as well as antisemitic. Elektra, like Pound, is compelled to speak out against what she believes to be a treasonous and tyrannous government, and in doing so is labeled as mad. Again, as Perloff states:

*Elektra* is the story of a woman obsessed with her own past. The play explores the madness of incessant “remembering,” the terror of being unable to forget the past in a culture or household in which history is being deliberately erased . . . Words against words, true *logoi* versus false *logoi*, sanity versus madness - Pound reveled in these linguistic manipulations. But he also had a clearly emotional reaction to Elektra’s plight, to the tragedy of being deemed “mad” for refusing to forget. (xiv)

In order to embrace Pound’s version of the play, it is essential that we recognize the intent to bridge two worlds: the ancient Greece of Sophokles and the contemporary America of Pound. To that end, we can look again to the language of the play for inspiration and direction. Pound weaves together language that is distinctly American (the slang of Elektra, the cowboy lingo that Orestes uses as a disguise, and the compilation of dialects and slang used by the chorus ladies) with language that is distinctly, and specifically, Greek. By leaving some of Elektra’s lines and many of the choral sections of the play in the original Greek, he gives them a private language and
establishes a startling device that makes Elektra's grief deeply moving. The result is powerful: a pulsing, palpable language that juxtaposes slangy English with ancient Greek.

Several other linguistic characters should guide our production choices. Pound emphasizes Sophokles' clear distinction between public and private language as seen in the interactions between Elektra and the Chorus, and her use of the public forum for protest and debates with Klytemnestra versus her private debates with Chrysothemis. As well, the use of disguises by both the Tutor and Orestes in order to seek revenge for Agamemnon's murder emphasize Sophokles' theme of concealing and revealing through verbal "masks." The true identities of Orestes and the Tutor are kept hidden until the appropriate time: the Tutor in his role as a messenger disguised as an "archetypal Irish horse trader/hustler/bookie/quick-talking con man" and Orestes as a "smooth-talking Cockney" (xi). Pound also utilizes repeated images in the language of the play: darkness and light, fragments of memory, repeated sounds, and most of all the jagged stresses of someone crying, gasping for breath" (xix). Finally, Pound employs economy of expression by condensing language into its most essential form.

These elements then are at the heart of Pound's version and my artistic vision for the production: the weaving together of contemporary America and ancient Greece, the juxtaposition of the public and private, the use of disguises, repeated images of darkness and light, images of fragmentation, the repetition of sounds, and the economy of expression. I would like to utilize images of 20th century war as the representation of the "contemporary America." Although this country has been spared, for the most part, wars on its own soil, we should look to images of bombings, post-World War II destruction in
Europe, and even the ruins of ancient Greece. The world of the play is post-Apocalyptic, but not in a futuristic sense. Rather, I would like to create an imagined world of crumbling statues, a palace in ruins, individuals forced to live outside. Within this world certain pre-destruction elements must remain, most notably an altar of some kind. This would be an ancient altar that has survived the destruction and continues to be the place for the pouring of libations and praying to the gods. Perloff's description of the altar in the CSC production should be examined, particularly her description of it as a metal grate out of which shone "a murky green light evoking both the dank underground of any modern city and, more abstractly, the vengeful underworld of the ancient Furies whose imminent presence is constantly felt in the play" (xxii).

My desire is to configure the space in the round with elevated walkways behind the audience along both walls of the room. Three exits are needed: into the palace, towards the city, and towards the burial grounds. I do not wish to use the hallway door at all. Ideally, the floor of the playing area would be dirt; I understand that is problematic so I would hope for a dirt-like treatment. Elektra needs to be able to "wallow" like a pig in a pen. I would like to see a simple scenic element in the center of the playing space: perhaps a slab of concrete that has fallen and under which Elektra now lives. As well, a metal treatment on the walls could be effective for actor-generated sound and also as a reflective surface. The end of the play must also be considered in the scenic design; there is a need for a "revelation of the body of Clytemnestra." Although this might be realized through the opening of giant palace doors in another space, I assume it will have to be solved some other way in this production. The overall feeling of the scenic elements
should be fragmented, formerly fabulous but currently in disrepair, a glorious palace interior juxtaposed with a desperate street-life outside, and a place where everyone else passes through but where Elektra and, essentially, the Chorus ladies live.

Lighting should emphasize the contrast between the public and private, light and shadow, truth and disguise. Sharp contrasts, harsh edges, and non-realistic effects should be considered. Elektra’s journey from rage at the injustice of Agamemnon’s murder to despair at the fading hope for Orestes’ return to her elation at the murder of Klytemnestra (and the implied murder of Aegithus) should be supported by lighting design choices. Sound, likewise, should evoke images of isolation and despair. Effects such as dripping water, echoing footsteps, and non-realistic rumbles of war could be explored. Music could be employed at the beginning; selections should be chosen for their evocative qualities rather than conforming to a specific period or style. I would also like to explore actor-generated sounds, particularly with the Chorus (metal rumbling or pounding, for example).

The costumes should be mixed-period but with elements of the Greek woven in. Since Aegithus can be seen as a usurper of power, perhaps military garb for him and his bodyguard would be appropriate. Klytemnestra has retained queenly garb of some sort; she should look out of place in Elektra’s “yard.” A servant girl for the queen might reflect her clothing in a simpler way. Chrysothemis, who is attempting to “play by the rules” in order to get along, wears what she considers to be finery although it doesn’t quite work. I would specifically like to see her in a pink, tattered prom dress circa 1950s. Orestes is an American cowboy type in Pound’s version and the Tutor, who has some
kind of long hair or beard according to the text, should be older and somewhat professorial in look. Both should be more contemporary than ancient in look. Pilades, Orestes' sidekick, would be reflective of Orestes and must be able to carry a concealed handgun. Elektra is probably the most classical in dress although whatever she wears has been drug through the dirt for 10 years or more. She is dirty and distressed and doesn’t care. I would like for her to have a very large, very loosely woven piece of fabric that she uses as a shawl, cape and blanket. The weave could be almost as large as a fishing net. The Chorus are women who remain outside the palace seeking answers about lost sons and daughters; they are reminiscent of “las madres de la plaza” in Argentina.

In all design choices, I would like to see a sense of post-World War II America coupled with elements from ancient Greece. I would like to see economy and simplicity in the visual elements to support the harsh, uncompromising precision of the language. The world of the play is, in a sense, situated on a large garbage dump: evidence of decay surrounds us but, more importantly, a fire burns underneath that is threatening to break loose and can not be extinguished until the house of Atreus has been cleansed. And, we musn’t forget . . . it's a comedy!

Sue Ott Rowlands
June 27, 2001
APPENDIX B

HOUSE OF THEBES
The Royal House of Thebes and the Atreidae

Zeus = Io
Epaphus
Pamidus = Lybia
Aegina

Cadmus = Harmonia
Zeus = Europa
Rhadamethus
Minos = Pasiphae
Pelops = Hippodameia
Niobe

Achilles
Iop
Agave
Zeus = Semele
Polydorus

Achilles
Melicertes
Phoinix
Labdacus
Androgmos
Arietes
Pasiphae
(= Theseus)

Orestes
Iphigenia
ELECTRA

Creusa
Jocasta = Laocoon

Menoeceus
Iphigenia

Orestes
Iphigenia
Electra

Hermione
Theseus


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APPENDIX C

MAP OF GREECE

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APPENDIX D

FLOOR PLAN
SOPHOKLES' ELEKTRA

A version by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming

Mount Hall Studio Theatre
October 31 - November 18, 2001
A version by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming

Directed by
Sue Ott Rowlands

Following the 8 PM performance on
Thursday, November 8
in the Mount Hall Studio Theatre.
(1050 Carmack Rd.).
Approximate starting time:
9:30 PM

Featuring Guest Speakers

Dr. Bruce Heiden,
Dept. of Greek and Latin

Dr. Steven Yao,
Dept. of English

Moderated by Peach Pittenger, Dramaturg

call 292-2295 for tickets to the performance
department of theatre
In Greek fashion, ‘Elektra’ full of murderous deceit

By Kurt Beckschelder
Lantern arts writer

Soap operas are not the only form of entertainment whose plots involve deceit, greed, adultery and murder.

These themes also provide the backdrop for the play “Elektra,” presented by the Ohio State Department of Theatre.

Originally written by the Greek playwright Sophocles, famous for “Oedipus the King,” the play was modified in 1931 by Ezra Pound, who was placed in a hospital for the criminally insane the same year. The Department of Theatre presents Pound’s version, which tells the same story Sophocles did, but is set in the United States just after World War II.

“He adapted Elektra during a period of his life when Elektra’s story of grief, bordering on madness, resonated with his own situation,” said Sue Ott Rowlands, director of “Elektra.”

The main character, Elektra, grieves over the loss of her father, Agamemnon, who was murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, and his cousin, Aegisthus, because they were involved in an adulterous affair.

Elektra displays great disdain for her mother and Aegisthus, while seeking revenge for the murder of her father. All the while, she anticipates the return of her brother, Orestes, who has been in exile.

Carie DeVito plays Elektra and gives a remarkable performance, aptly conveying the anguish Elektra is experiencing, while at the same time exuding anger toward Clytemnestra.

DeVito’s dominating stage presence is impressive, shouldering the majority of the script.

The script calls for Elektra and some of the other characters to switch between speaking English and Greek, which takes away from the show because it is confusing unless one speaks fluent Greek.

Orestes, played by Donald Clark, is a somewhat arrogant individual who also wishes to avenge his father’s death. Clark gives an adequate performance capturing the tough-guy image, but at times could have given the role more emotion.

The intimate setting in Mount Hall Studio Theatre, where the performances of “Elektra” are held, allows the audience to sit close to the action and become involved in the lives of the characters.

A broken airplane wing is the centerpiece of the set and reflects the tragedy which psychologically tears Elektra apart.

“I enjoyed the play and thought the cast did a great job, especially the woman who played Elektra,” said audience member Emily Spehek. “The seating in the theater was also pretty neat. I have never been to a play where I could sit that close.”

Overall, the play is appealing and a bit suspenseful, but the transition between English and Greek dialogue causes confusion. It also raises the question of what it would be like to see the production the way Sophocles would have intended.

“Elektra” runs through Nov. 18 in the Mount Hall Studio Theatre.
Pound becomes Elektra

OSU Theatre masterfully recreates a translated classic

by Jay Weiss

In 20th-century American literature, there are few figures as divisive as Ezra Pound (1885-1972), the influential poet, critic, editor, and translator. His literary work was avant-garde when that term truly had meaning, and he was a champion of writers as diverse as James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot and Marianne Moore.

Politics got him into trouble, though. He exiled himself to Europe in 1908 and eventually settled in Italy in 1925. There, his enthusiasm for Benito Mussolini grew during a period when the new dictator still enjoyed considerable sympathy in the US and Britain. But when, after Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, even his most ardent admirers overseas abandoned Mussolini, Pound remained loyal.

During World War II, Pound broadcast pro-Axis and anti-Semitic commentaries on Italian radio, prompting the U.S. government to indict him for treason. Later in the war, he was arrested, treated terribly in a concentration camp in Pisa and was finally brought to Washington, D.C., for trial. Judged to be incompetent, he was confined to Saint Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane from 1945 to 1958.

Among the numerous works he wrote while incarcerated, Pound also translated two plays by Sophocles: Elektra and The Women of Trachis. His Elektra, which he translated and adapted with Rudd Fleming, a Maryland professor, was rediscovered only in the 1980s. It's a fascinating piece of work, given a powerful rendering by the Ohio State University Theatre Department in its intimate Mount Hall Studio space.

Do not be put off by Pound's reputation for literary obscurity or by his reprehensible ideology. Director Sue Ott Rowlands has staged an always involving, often funny, and startlingly modern version of this 2400-year-old Greek tragedy.

Elektra involves the return of Orestes after his sister Elektra has spurned the past decade following the murder of their father, the warrior Agamemnon, by their mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. Together, Elektra and Orestes avenge the killing. Like so much of our Greek mythological heritage, the story in isolation is fairly simple, but its background, and especially its implications, are enormous.

Like many translators and adapters before and since, Pound perceived parallels in his own situation with Elektra's defiance of unjust authority, the assumption of others that she had been mentally unhinged by her predicament, and the conflicting claims of conscience and community. No matter Pound's intention, this production resonates through the ages and in some ways that are not obvious.

The translation ranges over considerable ground, proper and formal English here, slangy and informal there, suggesting a sampling of techniques through time, class and geography. Even more surprising, many passages are left in the original Greek, to be intoned in the rhythms and voices of the English. Rather than interrupting the flow of words we can understand, the Greek has the intriguing effect of heightening the surrounding emotions.

None of this would work without a committed cast of actors. In the title role, Carrie DeVito wields rails and evokets in turn, riding Elektra's wave of fortune. She clearly projects the self-confidence and the sense of irony that Elektra expresses in a line such as: "It's a hard life, but my own. I honor the dead, if the dead get any joy out of that."

When in a moment of hope she resorts to an exuberant spray painting of "Orestes losses" on a nearby wall, it arises from character, not as an awkward anachronism.

Donald Clark's swaggering Orestes, clad in worn leather jackets and boots with spurs, is a rebel whose cause is thrust upon him, but who takes it on with relish. In the midst of his mission, he tells Elektra: "You won't have any more trouble with mother," dropping with sarcasm, pride and self-awareness.

"Darman Bowettman is impressive as Orestes' tutor, especially in the scene where he explains the fictional circumstances of Orestes' 'death' in a racing accident. Dressed like a singing Barlow doll, Amanda Baffington makes the case for compromise as Orestes and Elektra's sister Chryseis. She has the thankless task of defending self-preservation in the face of overwhelming political power; "I must obey to keep my freedom of action," she says, to Elektra's disgust and decision.

Heather Lee brings a dream's data and elegance to Klytemnestra, who defends her part in Agamemnon's death without apology. Brad Stemmert's was-ripped-silk costume design is the perfect place to play out this timeless battle.

As an educational institution, OSU may be obligated to present the classics. That they do so with such evident mastery is the Columbus theater audience's great good fortune.

OSU Theatre's production of Elektra by Sophocles, in a version by Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming, is performed in the Mount Hall Studio Theatre through November 18. For ticket info, dial 292-2295 or click to the ohio-state.edu.
APPENDIX G

PRODUCTION PHOTOS
Aegisthus' Murder

The Chorus
APPENDIX H

PRELIMINARY COSTUME RENDERING
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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