

5-21-2004

The Process and Challenges of Creating An Evening of Greek Theatre

Shane Stewart
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Stewart, Shane, "The Process and Challenges of Creating An Evening of Greek Theatre" (2004). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 79.
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/79>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

THE PROCESS AND CHALLENGES OF CREATING *AN EVENING OF GREEK
THEATRE*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
The Department of Drama and Communications

by

Shane Stewart

B.A. Southeastern Louisiana University, 2000

May 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Script Selection.....	4
Translation Selection.....	7
Chapter 2.....	12
Character Analysis and Biography: Lampito.....	12
Character Analysis and Biography: Kinesias.....	15
Character Analysis and Biography: Epigenes.....	19
Character Analysis and Biography: Jason.....	21
Character Analysis and Biography: Agamemnon.....	25
Character Analysis and Biography: Oedipus Rex.....	28
Playwright’s Intentions.....	32
Playwright’s Intentions: Lysistrata.....	33
Playwright’s Intentions: The Sexual Congress.....	34
Playwright’s Intentions: Medea.....	35
Playwright’s Intentions: Hecuba.....	36
Playwright’s Intentions: Oedipus Rex.....	37
Chapter 3.....	38
Memorization.....	38
Rehearsal: Blocking.....	39
Ritual.....	42
Rehearsal: Other Challenges.....	45
Rehearsal: Technical.....	49
Production.....	53
Scored Script.....	56
Video Selections.....	126
Bibliography.....	129
Vita.....	131

Abstract

A series of scenes taken from Greek theatre were collaborated and chosen to form what became known as *An Evening of Greek Theatre*. Along with the normal challenges of creating a production, such as memorization, blocking, costuming, and others, came challenges that were unique to this particular one. The training we are most familiar with is in the confines of realism, and this particular production had little to do with realism. The stylization created an amalgamation of techniques, which became a functional process used to create *An Evening of Greek Theatre*. Along with these problems were other ones, such as dealing with the mythological significance of the characters and the stigmas that go with them. This, too, provided a breeding ground for creativity and experimentation. All this came together to form a successful and rewarding production.

Introduction

“An Evening of Greek Theatre”, which is an amalgamation of timeless scenes cut from classic Greek texts, was selected for performance at the University of New Orleans in the final slot of the Fall 2003 season. In this, I performed many roles, including Oedipus, Agamemnon, and many others. The following is a list of my roles in each scene performed:

Lysistrata-Lampito
Lysistrata-Kinesias
The Sexual Congress-Epigenes
Medea-Jason
Hecuba-Agamemnon
Oedipus Rex-Oedipus Rex

The cast and the director began meeting months before rehearsals began two days a week to discuss what research we had obtained as well as scripts we would use. We also discussed staging, makeup, and costuming. We met and rationed out topics to one another about which we were to obtain information. The next time we met, we compared what we had found and discussed possibilities for production. After completing this stage, we began the arduous task of rehearsing and, finally, performing.

The goal of my thesis was to research Greek style and technique, Greek theatre through the ages, and rituals performed in Greek culture in order to gain some understanding of their society. I found that the Greeks’ production had many similarities to ours. For instance, they used three actors, eventually narrowing their chorus down to three actors as well. This provided us with a golden opportunity to “intimate” the Greek theatre. The Greeks used their productions as a ceremony of sorts to worship the god Dionysus. We of course did not worship this god, but

we used our ritual and structure to “suggest” to the audience what a ritual of this sort might be like. Also, the Greeks held festivals in which many plays were performed. We too performed many different segments of plays in our “intimation” of Greek theatre. All roles, including women’s roles, were played by men in Grecian times. I, too, played a woman’s role in *Lampito*. We noted that there was a clear difference between the tragic and comic stylings of the Greeks. Comedy seemed less formal, and tragedy seemed ceremonial. We used these aspects to inform decisions about the show from costume to ritual to blocking. Based upon our research of Grecian production, I believe that we “intimated” many aspects of their theatre without actually “imitating” it. We provided our audience with the same type of spiritual experience one might obtain in ancient days.

I utilized the techniques forged by Constantine Stanislavski such as “magic if” and the elements of an action. Furthermore, I used Sanford Meisner’s moment-to-moment reality technique. Because I played so many different roles, I also challenged myself to switch from character to character believably without retaining remnants from previous characters. This, coupled with our attempt to intimate rather than imitate Greek theatre, proved to be quite a challenge to my craft as an actor.

Playing some of the most well-known characters from Greek history and giving them a new life through my eyes proved to be incredibly difficult tests of my abilities as an actor. Being something of a comic actor throughout my career, it was quite a challenge to play the nobly tragic Oedipus, then turn around and play in the sexual comedy of *Lysistrata*. Another challenge was the fact that there is a minimal setting that functions for every scene. As an actor, I had to create and establish the set with what I said and how I moved. Costuming and make up also challenged me in other areas of theatre production in which I have little experience.

Basically, I had to create many believable characters from roles that people know and love and be able to recreate a believable performance night after night. I honestly believe that this “evening of Greek theatre” turned out to be one of the most challenging and rewarding things I have ever done as an actor.

When I first approached this project, I was overwhelmed by the amount of work we as actors were being asked to do. Usually, the actor is given a script, memorizes his or her lines, beats the script, and places actions for every beat. This is the extent of what the actor is expected to do. The director takes care of any other decisions. However, this particular project insisted on close actor-director relationship in creating many of the aspects of the production. Things like makeup, certain moments in the blocking, set, and even the scripts used were placed in our hands. It became our production in the truest sense of the term. We had ultimate power over almost all choices. Our director was there to guide us and help us, but we were in control. This was a great experience, but it was also very challenging. We as actors were not aware of what would take place. We had to find a starting point for this experimental adventure on which we were embarking. We began this process by choosing the scripts themselves.

Script Selection

Choosing a set of scripts to perform seemed at first glance as if it would be the easiest part of the entire process on which we were embarking. Needless to say, we were very incorrect. The process of choosing a script engulfed a month of meetings, three months if you include our research during the summer months as well. The problems we faced had little to do with availability of scripts, because there was a plethora of them to navigate. We searched libraries, the Internet, bookstores, and our personal collections. We were searching first for plays that intrigued us, but more importantly for scenes and monologues that fit us or would challenge our skills as actors. I found that finding a monologue for myself was one of the easiest things to do and came to the table with many of them. The problem I ran into was the lack of women's roles in Greek Theatre. That sounds odd considering I am a man, but I had to find scenes for myself and for Jane McNulty and Heather Surdukan. The women's roles in Greek Theatre were either too small to support an entire scene, too heavy on the woman's side of the script to justify it being a two person scene, or between two women. None of these were appropriate.

I naturally gravitated toward one script in particular: *Oedipus Rex*. This is a role that I have dreamed of playing for quite some time due to its epic quality. I knew exactly which scene I wanted to do as well. Oedipus's discovery scene with Jocasta is one of the most famous scenes in all of theatre. After finding this gem, I searched through some of the Greek "classics," such as *Electra*, *Medea*, *The Bacchae*, and many others. I kept running into the same problem: the size or dominance of the women's dialogue. I decided to explore the genre of comedy. Perhaps that would yield better results. It did indeed, but I still had some of the same problems. I was able to

use one scene with which I was very familiar. It was a scene from the comedy *Lysistrata*. After collaborating with my partners, we found something very interesting: a three-person scene with exactly two women's roles and one man's role. This was perfect. It was from a play entitled the *Ecclesiazusae*, or, translated into English, *The Sexual Congress*. It is a lesser-known play, which led me to delve into other lesser-known tragedies. I was always intrigued by the myth of Agamemnon, and I stumbled upon a rarely produced play called *Hecuba*. In it I found a scene featuring Agamemnon and Queen Hecuba. This scene worked well for both me and Heather Surdukan as well.

We decided not to perform monologues and go completely with scenes. This was mainly after many discussions with our director about how the monologues interfered with the structure we were attempting in the play. Originally, we intended to contrast comedic scenes and monologues with tragic ones. We discarded this idea and decided it would be more efficient to perform a first act of only comedy and then a second act of tragedy. After this decision, the monologues just didn't seem to work any longer. They broke the flow of the action because we had trouble finding truly funny comic monologues and because the tragic monologues fit nicely inside of the scenes, creating a unifying quality. If we had stuck with performing comic monologues in between the comic scenes it just wouldn't have worked right. We finally decided on four comic scenes and four tragic scenes. I have already mentioned two of the comic scenes, in *Lysistrata* and *The Sexual Congress*. The women came up with the idea of performing yet another scene from *Lysistrata*. I was confused, because I thought we had sapped all the male-female scenes from the play. They had something else in mind. They had found a three-person scene in it, but the three people were all women. They wanted me to cross gender. I scoffed for a moment, then decided this would be yet another challenge in the ever-growing list of

challenges I already had on my plate. I accepted. We had also found a comedic scene from *The Clouds*, but we all agreed that it was quite boring and inconsequential, so we dropped it. This brought our total of comedic scenes to three. Half of our selection was over. On the tragic side of the play, Heather and I had decided adamantly on *Oedipus Rex* and *Hecuba*. With some resistance, we finally sold our case. We both felt like these roles were two of the most epic and challenging roles we had ever played. They ran the gamut of human condition and carried with them much expectation. The third scene we chose for tragedy had little to do with me. It was *Antigone*, and it included the two women. The final choice became quite a debate. It was from *Medea*. This particular scene, I felt, was too monologue oriented and didn't include enough dialogue. Jane felt that it was her one challenge, much like *Hecuba* and *Oedipus* were for Heather and me. I finally seceded, partially because I could tell how passionate she was about playing *Medea*, but also because Jason has some quality monologues in the scene that would once again challenge my acting capabilities.

Translation selection

It seemed after selecting these seven scripts with which to work that our play search was over, it was just beginning. Perhaps one of the hardest parts of this entire process was finding the correct translation to perform. The number of translations that were available and the differences in each one amazed me. This presented a new set of problems very distinct to itself. Some scripts we found were just too archaic. For example:

“And I myself
Pronounced this malediction upon myself!
Think of it: I have touched you with these hands,
These hands that killed your husband. What defilement!”

This is taken from a translation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* that we decided not to use. Note the use of words like “malediction” and “defilement.” Not to downplay these words, but they just don’t have the same power or the same effect on audiences as they once did. I would venture to say the average audience member cannot even define “malediction.” This is what I mean by archaic. Some translations even used “thee” and “thou” in them. We wanted to avoid this completely. We were already stung with a certain stigma that goes with “Greek theatre,” and this would have reinforced it for the audience members. It is the same prejudice that follows Shakespearean plays. If this could be avoided, we would have to find a way to do it. Luckily, in this particular case, our director stumbled upon an excellent translation of *Oedipus Rex*. This is that same bit of text from before but with the new translation:

“And these, these curses, with my own mouth I spoke
these monstrous curses against myself. These hands,

these bloodstained hands made love to you in your
dead husband's bed, these hands murdered him."

As you can see, this translation rolls more freely off the tongue, it even has a Mametesque quality about it with the repeated "these." A modern audience will more easily identify with something like this than they will with "malediction" and the like. It all returns to our attempt to "intimate" rather than "imitate" Greek Theatre.

Of course, not all translation issues were solved so easily. Sometimes it was hard to find any good translation at all. Sometimes we ran into the opposite problem from before. Rather than being archaic, sometimes the scripts were too contemporary. Here is a short example:

"UGLY OLD BROAD: ...I'll get you, my pretty!

NYMPHET: And my little dog, too?"

This is from *The Sexual Congress*. Now it is quite obvious that the translator was taking liberties with the script that he should not have been taking. It is unfathomable that any Greek would ever had said this, since it is a quote from *The Wizard of Oz*. The problem was that we didn't want to scrap the entire text because the translator had made many good decisions in translation elsewhere. Therefore, we decided to take the "cut and paste" approach. We did cut this little moment out of the scene, along with many other ones. Often we would simply take one line from one translation, then a line from another, until we had the ultimate translation we wanted. One time we even took an entire character. In *Lysistrata*, as I mentioned before, I was asked to play a woman. The problem was that this woman was interpreted in many different ways. The situation was that she was a Spartan woman, and apparently these were the lower class of Greece. Translators tried their best to relate this to Americans by giving the character a heavy dialect. It became simply a matter of what dialect I felt most comfortable speaking. I narrowed

it down to two particular ones: Bronx woman and the other a lower class Southern woman. Since I had already decided to use a New Jersey accent for another character I was playing, I decided to go with the Southern accent. This worked twofold, because it gave Jane an opportunity as well to use the Bronx dialect. Finally, other times we would simply rewrite the dialogue to make it sound more fluid. We never changed the meaning of anything, however.

We had found our seven scripts and had found the translations we were going to use, now we had to figure out the most cryptic part of the entire process, the ritual. This from the start was a point of confusion for all of us. Even the director was not quite sure about the direction to go. So we decided the best thing we could do was to figure out what the Greeks actually did. That is where we ran into trouble. Apparently, there is not much known about Greek ritual other than the purpose it served in the society. So, once again, we as actors were left with a challenge in which we had no experience, choreography. We decided that we would look at the instruments the Greeks used and build upon that. Most of their instruments were percussion and simple wind and string instruments. We focused mainly on the percussion and toyed with the idea of actually using an instrument in the rituals. Eventually we decided against this, concluding that we could make the percussion sounds with our feet and hands. We decided that we needed a “ritual blessing of the theatre” to begin the show and another to close it. I briefly toyed with the idea of performing a Native American ritual in place of the Greek ritual, but quickly realized I could not “intimate” Greek ritual simply by “imitating” Native American ritual. We finally decided that we would create our own ritual in which we would take text we had written and translated into Greek and somehow form movement. We could not foresee the challenges that lay in wait, but I will discuss that later.

We also briefly discussed makeup and what we would like to do with our faces. Masks were suggested but quickly rejected by our director who had the foresight to realize that we would never have enough time to train ourselves to use the mask properly. Once again we used the “intimate not imitate” adage to guide us. We decided that we would suggest mask on our faces using cosmetics and face paints. This would prove to be a challenge in itself, but more on that later as well.

After we had the loose outline and scripts of what we were going to perform, it came time for us to do our “homework” on our characters. This included character biographies and character analysis. I approached this just as I would a conventional play with one minor exception. In a conventional play, I would only write one character analysis and biography. Since I played six different characters in the course of this, I had to write about six different characters. My initial response to this was to reduce the amount of information I usually put into one character biography, but I realized that would not do justice to these rich characters. Analysis is an important tool for an actor to use in his work, because it gives him insight on what other characters think about him. It tells him, or me, what to project as a character. Whether it is confidence, bashfulness, or any other quality, analysis will inform me on what the playwright’s intentions for this character were. I believe that actors often forget to think about what is said about them and what they do to others. Their world becomes very egocentric and non-inclusive. Analysis prevents such things from happening, at least for me. Biographies do much the same in allowing the actor to get a taste for what it truly is like to be in the character’s shoes. An actor can make choices, but if he knows why the character would do certain things and can support that in a biography, those choices are clearer. As a parallel to this I would simply say look at Strindberg. One can read his plays, but to truly understand where he is coming from, one must

understand his life. In other words, a person can read lines, but to truly get the meaning behind them he has to know the character. The character biographies also assisted me in giving these characters the proper motivation. I learned what in their past has led them to the point they are at right now. There are three things an actor needs indefinitely. These are motivation, objective, and actions. These analyses gave me characterization as well as motivation.

The comedic characters were much harder to write about than the tragic ones, simply because they were less developed by the playwright. Furthermore, the tragic characters are often the stuff of myths, so there is much more on which to base a biography. Despite this, I pressed forward and used my imagination as to what I thought would lead these comedic characters to their present stations in life.

Character Analysis and Biography: Lampito

The first character is Lampito, who appears in *Lysistrata*. As for the analysis, she is a strong woman with little formal education. She speaks in a thick southern hillbilly dialect, often mispronouncing words. The other women obviously trust her and depend on her, based on the fact that they are surprised she is not at the assembly yet. That being said, she is very womanlike in the fact that she is always late. Being a Spartan, which is widely known as an area renowned for their warriors, she is handy with a weapon, and backs down to no challenge, not even the challenge of abstinence. Physically, she is fit and has wonderful breast, based on what the women say about her. In this particular production, we added another twist. She is indeed a drag queen, which is one of the reasons she is so physically fit. Her breasts are so perfect because they are fake. With this qualifier put on the character, it is unclear whether the other women think she is beautiful or if they are just being sarcastic. She obviously gets along with people and is willing to join the cause. She is full of compliments for everyone. She is also quite the accomplished dancer and is willing to put on shows for people. She loves her wine and her men. This begs the question of whether or not she is gay, since “she” is really a “he”. I answer with a resounding yes. If she were not, this fight would mean nothing to her. She could easily do without sex from a man. So with that said, yes, she, or he, is gay. She is also wise beyond her education. She asks many questions of *Lysistrata* that the other women didn’t think to ask. She asks questions like, “what if the men keep all the gold?” and “what about their ships in which they can sail away and have intercourse in?” This shows that she is a thinker, despite her dialect and outward appearance. She is also a leader. She follows *Lysistrata*, but she leads

the entire group of Spartan women. If this truly is a warrior class, then it must take a strong leader to keep them in order. She is much like a general in an army. If Napoleon had been weak, his army would not have been as successful. The same goes for Lampito.

Now, moving on to her character biography. I believe that character biographies are very important in my work as an actor. Even if I fabricate much of a character's life, it gives me insight on who the character is that I can use later in production. This particular biography was a little tricky to write because of the sex issues. Regardless, Lampito was born to a Spartan soldier and a Spartan woman. His mother was not a soldier. Since Lampito's father was often in the battlefield or training, his mother raised him. Her name was Androgynous. She and her son had a good life together, and she tried to raise him in a manly way, but it was just too difficult to do. An interesting anomaly of Spartan culture is that the men are often gone to battle, and the women are always alone together. Therefore Lampito was raised to know how to do stereotypically female tasks. By the age of seven he had already helped three women give birth and he had crocheted his entire wardrobe. His father saw the way his son was being reared and frowned on this. When Lampito turned thirteen, Jacobus, his father, forced him to join the army of Spartan soldiers. This was quite a confusing time for poor Lampito. He was used to being around women and now he was forced to be around men, and not just any men, Spartan men. These men were warriors. They belched and farted. They ate raw meat. They cursed. This was all new to the impressionable Lampito. All of these factors, coupled with the fact that he was going through puberty, caused something to happen inside of Lampito's head. He decided that he was indeed not a man. He was trapped inside a man's body. At the tender age of sixteen, Lampito escaped the army and became a drag queen. He never spoke to his father again, and his father never knew about the transformation. His father was upset about him leaving the army and

disowned him altogether. Lampito lived his teenage years as a drag queen, making a living on the streets of Sparta. He let his mother in on his little secret because he had no money and needed to borrow some. His mother was glad to hear from him and suggested that he join the Spartan women's army. He was scared of this suggestion at first, because he never thought he would be able to pass as a woman. His mother helped him with his hair and makeup, and he went through with it. Lampito joined the women's army, and no one was any wiser. If the army did know, they never let Lampito know they knew. With his masculine strength, he (or she, now) quickly ascended up the ranks and was soon in charge of the Spartan women. War broke out amongst the men, and the men would not allow the women to join in the fight. This made Lampito angry, and she searched for an answer. It was about this time that Lampito received word from Lysistrata to meet her to discuss an end to this war. She set out toward Athens, not knowing what lay in store. This is where the story of *Lysistrata* begins. This character biography proved to be instrumental in my approach to Lampito. The fact that I was playing her as a man in drag needed some justification. There was little textually to back it, so creating this story made it credible to me.

Character Analysis and Biography: Kinesias

The next character I had to approach was Kinesias, a male soldier from *Lysistrata*. This, too, presented certain problems unique to Kinesias. Even though the problems were not as distinct as Lampito's, they were important. My main obstacle to overcome was the fact that Kinesias had a one-track mind. His objective, which I will discuss later, is quite obvious, and my challenge as an actor became to keep from steam rolling through the scene. When an objective is strong, it is the actor's tendency to almost ignore his partner onstage and go straight for what they need. By writing a detailed analysis of this character and forming a believable character biography, I was able to establish levels of the relationship between Kinesias and Myrrhine that were not readily available in the text.

To read the text one might gather that all Kinesias wants is sex, but there is more to him than that. To play only that would be death. Kinesias is married to Myrrhine, who I have to believe he loves very dearly. If he did not, he would simply rape her. This sounds a bit harsh, but he is so driven toward his objective that he is likely to do something like this. The fact that he loves her keeps him from it. He is a bit manipulative at times, using the baby to coax Myrrhine into coming to him. Notice I said coming to him, not having intercourse with him. This leads me to believe that Kinesias is a bit arrogant and overconfident about his power over her. He believes that if he can get her to come close to him, he can get her to have sex with him. His treatment of the child tells me a few things about him. The first thing is that he has no idea how to raise one and has not spent much time with the child. This leads me to believe that he is very dependant on Myrrhine in his everyday life. The second thing the treatment of the child

leads me to believe that he is not a very caring person. This is reinforced by his treatment of Myrrhine. He seems very unconcerned about how she feels about anything. This could be taken as a negative, but I took it as the power that sex has over him. I, as an actor, must believe that he does the things he does out of love for Myrrhine, but his love is overpowered by sex. This is evident in his final line of the scene. He says, "Does anyone know a good whore?" Now this could be taken literally, as if he wants a whore, but I took it sarcastically, to mean that he really wants to have sex. It is obviously about sex with Myrrhine, not a whore. If he wanted sex with a whore, he could have had it by now. Myrrhine is his love and objective. This was very helpful to me as an actor, because it made his objective seem less farcical. His love for Myrrhine is only reinforced by his tolerance for her ploys to delay sex. He becomes very frustrated, but he never gives up. He continues to wait and to vent his frustration in the form of asides to the audience. Now, this could be written off to lust, but you must ask yourself if he would have been this patient for anyone else. He says, "This is the girl I married," and that sums up how Kinesias feels about the situation at hand.

For Kinesias's biography, I once again had to fabricate much. The fact that he is a fairly nondescript character provides for a perfect opportunity to create a better idea of who he is. Kinesias was born in Athens to a single woman who became pregnant after a fling with a soldier. His mother, Artemetius, raised him as a single parent scrounging for money on the hard streets. Now, during these times, single parenting was almost the normal mode of function. The male rarely took interest in the child. His mother raised him just as a normal mother would. The thing that took its toll on Kinesias and his life was their poverty. It forced him to rely on thievery and swindling at a very young age. He grew up knowing how to trick people. Now this is not to say Kinesias was a smart man, because he most certainly was not. He had no education, except what

the streets provided him. He did, however, have the gift of knowing exactly what people's weaknesses were. He knew what made people tick. He used these skills to take advantage of people, especially women. When he reached his teenage years, Kinesias was quite popular with the ladies, especially the older ladies. He began pimping himself out to them, living off of their generosity. He took care of himself and his mother in this way until something happened. His mother died, and he was left all alone. He had no one to turn to. That was when he met Myrrhine. She was the daughter of a senator and way out of his league, but he was in love. He gave up all of his "sugar mommas" and focused directly on courting her. Myrrhine requited, but the family would not allow such a low ranking person to be with their daughter. That is when Kinesias came up with an idea. He decided to join the army and build himself up in rank. During this time he lost almost all contact with Myrrhine, mainly due to her parents, but he never forgot her. He finally received the ranking that he needed to be with Myrrhine. Granted, most of this rank was gotten by trickery and swindling, but that is what Kinesias does best. The problem was that Myrrhine's parents still did not approve of the situation. But Kinesias and Myrrhine had to have each other. Myrrhine left her parent,s house and married Kinesias without her parent's permission, but that did not matter to these two lovebirds. They had a child, and a cycle started for Kinesias. He resented the child and refused to have much involvement with him. He thought that since he did not have a father, his son did not need one either. Kinesias was never known for his unselfishness. Though Myrrhine did not understand, it made perfect sense to Kinesias. Now, this is not to say that Kinesias did not raise the child, but he did have very little to do with it. Despite the child, Kinesias and Myrrhine were inseparable. They were constantly copulating. They could not keep their hands off one another. Then the unthinkable happened. Kinesias was called off to war, and Myrrhine was left all to herself. They stayed in contact with

one another and had sex as much as possible whenever Kinesias came home from a campaign. But one time Kinesias came home to an empty house, greeted by nothing but his own erection. Myrrhine had teamed up with the abstinent women, and this is where we enter the story. I feel that giving myself this back-story enriches my portrayal of Kinesias. I know him better as a person, and that is important, considering that he is from a different time. My connection with him comes in the form of universals though. It comes in the form of things that every human being has experienced throughout time. We have all felt “horny” or in love, only the circumstances may have been different. By writing this biography, I feel that I can identify with Kinesias on more than a surface level.

Character Analysis and Biography: Epigenes

Now, the final character that I have to approach on the comedic side of things is one of the most underdeveloped characters I have ever played. This makes the analysis and biography even more important to explore. The nature of *The Sexual Congress* in its playwriting is farcical, which provides for one-dimensional stereotypes of characters. Instead of denying this, the director and I decided it would be more beneficial to embrace it in all its glory.

The character of Epigenes is faced with quite a dilemma in this scene. Much like Kinesias, he is a sexually frustrated man in search of fornication. From the other characters, we determine that he is a catch, especially since all three of the women want him. Also, in analyzing his lines, we can see that he is also something of a jokester. Despite the precarious situation that is presented to him of having to sleep with a withered old woman in order to sleep with his “hot vixen,” he finds time to slip insults and jokes in between being pulled back and forth on stage. He is a likeable character. Most audience members could definitely identify with him. He is confident and brave, at least as far as I can deduce. He gives off the air of these two traits, and he does nothing to make me believe otherwise, so he must be. He is also quite the experienced lover. When he finally exhausts all options of getting out of sleeping with the “ugly old broad”, he spouts off a list of things that he needs to have for proper love making. There is little hesitation in it and it is quite detailed. Furthermore, he says to himself that he will literally kill the lady because he is so masterful at lovemaking. If this is not confidence, I do not know what is. I do not necessarily think the characters like him, but I do think they like his phallus. It

is clear that he also has no real emotional connection to anyone else, because he is only interested in sex. As important as I felt it was for Kinesias to have a true emotional attachment to Myrrhine in *Lysistrata*, I think just the opposite here. I am attempting, as I said earlier, a stereotype because the character is under developed.

Despite having a stereotypical character, I have written a biography for this character based mostly on generalities. I think he was born to a working class family with little income. He was raised with little education, mostly by his father. His mother was probably very promiscuous and had no time for a child in her life. Since he was raised by his father, he picked up many things. Most importantly, he picked up how to treat women. His father was a womanizer, and Epigenes picked up on this. He decided this was the best course of action for his life. He began sleeping with many women and reached quite an impressive number of mates. The gods saw how often he had intercourse and decided to “curse” him with a huge penis. After this addition, he slept with even more women all the time. This continued until one day when all the men were tricked into signing something that gave the old women power. He signed it in exchange for a meal. Once again, he was consumed with his own gluttony. It was not until later that he realized what he had signed, when some ugly old women for sex approached him. This is where the story begins. As I said earlier, this biography is less detailed than the other one, because I think it should be. I wanted Epigenes to have a one-track mind, so I consumed his back-story with one thing: sex. In doing so, it allows me to capture some of the farcicalness of this character.

Character Analysis and Biography: Jason

The next character to analyze was one of epic proportion. He is the first of the tragic characters. From the story of *Medea* comes Jason, a character with a trail of myth behind him. Before I start talking about Jason, I would like to discuss why I think it is important to so closely analyze and give a biography on a character with whom everyone is already familiar. These heroes of legend are often gods, or on the scale of gods in their tales. Only in the Greek plays do we get to see the human side of them. However, we don't get the back-story in the plays. With these biographies I wanted to mesh the two together. I wanted to take the mythology of these people and layer on human condition. I wanted to give Jason, for instance, a better reason for searching for the Golden Fleece than just heroism or a throne. Not that heroism is not valid, but it does not tell me how the character thinks. With that said, I would like to discuss textual clues to the character of Jason that helped me get inside of the character's mind and identify with him.

From the text, we get certain clues to his personality. Most notably, we see that he is quite skilled in the art of rhetoric. He seems to have an answer for everything that Medea throws at him. This tells us that he is very educated and cunning. However, we learn from what Medea says that he is quite inconsiderate of her and her children. He also has an answer for this, but as an actor I must believe that his answer is more out of self-preservation than true feeling. I think Jason is looking out for himself, and I would compare him to a famous Shakespearean character. Iago thinks that what he is doing to Othello is justified because of how he is treated. In similar fashion, Jason believes the way he is acting is justified as well. This gives me a clue as an actor to play the scene earnestly, instead of against Medea. He is not out for blood, he is just doing

what he thinks is best. This realization was key to me as an actor because initially one would read this scene and instantly hate Jason. I think this is indeed what the playwright intended, but if I am to play Jason, I must identify with him.

Something else we learn about Jason is his loyalty to this new royal family he is a part of through his marriage. This, too, is probably self-serving to an extent, but I do believe he is a very loyal person in most regards. I think that Jason realizes that he has failed Medea in his loyalty as well. This is why he offers Medea what help he does in her exile. Let us also not forget that Medea has caused herself this exile. Despite the fact that Jason is cheating on her, he never intended for Medea to be sent away. He wanted her and the children to stay. I do also believe that he loves his children, and I believe him when he says that he would be “willing to do anything for [Medea] and for the boys.” Jason has very interesting and cruel things to say about all of womankind. He says that “men should find some other way to procreate, the female sex should not exist.” Now, this comment caught me a bit off guard, and I was unsure about what to make of it. He is not a womanizer like some of the comedic characters, so what do I do with such a comment? Well, in the context of what else is being said, I think he says this out of anger toward Medea. He does not truly mean the things he says, but says them rather to get a rise out of her, or perhaps to shut her up. This justification made it a lot easier to play that particular line.

With these clues from the scene about Jason’s character, I set out to write a character biography based on the myth of him. I thought of abandoning the myth, but it is such an integral part of why the character exists that I think it would be impossible. As mentioned earlier, I took the things I deduced from the analysis of his character and transferred them into the myth with a little creativity. This allowed me to have the best of both worlds. I could have a human character with real emotions, but I could also have an epic hero and use both to my advantage.

The biography of Jason begins in Thessaly, where he was born a prince to King Aeson. He enjoyed a happy life until the age of nine, when Jason's older brother Pelias overthrew King Aeson. Pelias was ten years older than Jason. Despite this, they grew up resenting one another and competing for their parent's affections. Obviously, Aeson and his mother favored Jason, which Pelias could not fathom. This is what caused him to take the throne. When Pelias did ascend to the throne, Jason's mother sent him away to Mount Pelion where Chiron, a Centaur, raised him. This is where Jason received his education and also much of his personality. Centaurs are a proud race of half-horse half-men. They believe that they are truly the most noble of the gods' creatures. Jason grew up learning that he, too, was worthy and noble. These were good traits, but he also inherited the pride and arrogance of the Centaurs. After eleven years with Chiron, Jason decided to make his way home. On the way, a life-changing event happened to him. He helped an old woman across a river. This seems small, but the old woman was indeed Hera in disguise. Hera assisted him throughout all his adventures and made sure he always did well as a result of this act of kindness. Little did Jason know how much he would actually need her help.

In his helping Hera, Jason lost a sandal. When he arrived in Iolcus, he had only one shoe. This was significant because Pelias was warned by the gods to watch for a man with one shoe who would try to overthrow him. Pelias saw Jason and challenged him to a mission. If Jason was successful in this mission, Pelias said he would give up the throne to him. Shortly before this, Jason fell in love with a strange woman that many misunderstood. She was a sorceress, and her name was Medea. Everyone told him to avoid her, but in his arrogance and pride, he ignored their warnings. This same arrogance led him to accept the suicide mission of Pelias's. The mission sounded simple enough. All Jason had to do was obtain the Golden

Fleece. The problem was that it was all the way on the other end of the Black Sea, which was full of danger. He completed the mission with the help of Medea and Hera, but of course denied that he had any help from Medea at all, because that would lessen his accomplishment, and he was a proud man. Upon returning to Iolcus, Jason found that Pelias had slaughtered his father Aeson. His loving wife Medea, in turn, had Pelias slaughtered in a most gruesome way. She convinced Pelias's daughters that if they chopped him up and ate him Pelias would be young again. They did so, and for this, Medea and Jason were banished to Corinth, where King Creon offered up his daughter to Jason. The prospect of once again being respected was too much for Jason to turn down. His lust for fame drove him to ask for a divorce from Medea since he was to marry the princess of Corinth and be royalty. This is where the story of Jason and Medea as we know it begins.

This biography is much more detailed than any of the comedic ones, but it is because there is so much mythology surrounding the tragic characters that is important to them. The comedic characters have no myths surrounding them, and therefore their stories are less consequential. The tragic characters demand that you know their myths. They demand not only that you know them, but also that they become part of your character. The Greek audience would have known these myths by heart, as would the Greek actors. Therefore, I think it is my responsibility as an actor to know them as well, so that I can make them part of who I am onstage. I believe with a rich knowledge of a character's past and personality, I will be one step closer to recreating a true depiction of the Grecian myth that is Jason.

Character Analysis and Biography: Agamemnon

The next character to look at is the great warrior Agamemnon. The particular scene from *Hecuba* is really less about him and more about Queen Hecuba, but he still has a vital role. It would be easy as an actor to simply play him as a device for Hecuba to say what she needs to say, but I did not want to do this. I wanted to make a rich character full of doubts and confidences. The script gives us clues, just as all scripts do, and his myth gives us even more clues. The most interesting thing about Agamemnon's mythology is that it is not as fantastical as Jason, or Oedipus Rex, or someone like Hercules. His myth is focused on wars and murder plots. Thanks to this, we can learn a lot about his character from these and how he deals with them.

The script tells us that Agamemnon is loyal to many things. Right at the beginning, he becomes a bit angry with Hecuba because of the "Trojan corpse" that is laying outside her door. He is very loyal to his Greek heritage, and this is why he becomes upset. But Agamemnon is a thinker, so he can differentiate when something else is more important. His relationship with Hecuba allows him to forget about his allegiances for a moment and listen to the plight of this poor woman. His loyalty to her is tested because of his loyalty to his country and his soldiers. He finally decides that he will do what he can, but "if the army mutters" he can do nothing. Just the fact that this was not an easy decision for him tells us much. He is a man of integrity, he is a warrior. If Agamemnon has any flaw, it is in the fact that he is truly powerless to help Hecuba. Although he is a great warrior and leader, he is still under the rule of the King. Something else that peaked my interest is that Agamemnon has a relationship with Cassandra, Hecuba's

daughter. This in itself is not strange, but the fact that he is married is. This took everything I said about loyalty and turned it on its head. I did not know what to do with this bit of information. What I decided to do to overcome this dilemma was to remember the time frame that he is away from his wife. I know men get lonely and must have companionship. I imagine that he struggled with the decision of whether or not to take Cassandra but in the end decided it was okay. With this I felt that I had a good basis for characterization. Agamemnon is a confident and strong warrior and leader with a heart of gold.

His biography is, like Jason's, a mixture of the mythology and my own personal analysis. It does not take us through the entire myth, just the events leading up to the scene from *Hecuba*. It left out many things that happened with Clytemnestra and with his children Orestes and Electra. These aspects are the most well known of the mythology. I learned much about the rest of Agamemnon's life by finding the rest of his myth. He was born the son of King Atreus and Queen Aerope of Argos. Agamemnon lived happily in Argos until his cousin Aegisthus murdered his father so that Aegisthus's father Thyestes could take the throne of Argos. When this travesty took place, Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus were forced to flee Argos. They were teenagers at the time. They fled to Sparta, and their impressionable minds learned the ways of the brave Spartan soldiers. This is where Agamemnon learned how to fight and about honor. He met the Spartan King Tyndareos, who became instrumental in Agamemnon's life.

The first thing the great king enabled him to do was to take back the throne that had belonged to his father. They invaded Argos and sent Thyestes into exile. After Agamemnon had established the rule of his brother Menelaus, King Tyndareos was instrumental once again. He gave Agamemnon his blessing to marry his daughter Clytemnestra. They barely knew each other, but because she was beautiful, he instantly fell for her. They married and had a daughter

named Iphigeneia. Menelaus then placed the now legendary warrior Agamemnon in charge of his campaign in Troy against the Trojan forces. Just as he was about to leave on his ship, the Goddess Artemis inexplicably made a tempest in the ocean so they could not leave. Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia to Artemis to calm the storm. This is clearly a show of the loyalty Agamemnon had to his country and his brother King Menelaus. How many people would be willing to sacrifice their child? This, however, did grieve Clytemnestra much. Agamemnon finally arrived outside of Troy and began the fight. It raged on for ten years before Agamemnon finally took the city. This is where Hecuba enters the story. She was turned into a slave, but Agamemnon and she have so much respect for one another that he tells her she can have freedom whenever she wants it. She offered her daughter Cassandra to Agamemnon, and he accepted. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He had not seen his wife in many years and decided to take Cassandra as a reward for his conquest. Hecuba had many children, and the war was claiming them. Her son Polydorus was just slaughtered by Greek troops. This is where we enter into the scene.

This biography was very enjoyable and helpful to me as an actor in my process. It gave Agamemnon much more personality in this scene and led me to make decisions about the type of character he was. This man went through a lot of turmoil and war to get to his present station in life. I feel like I would be able to play Agamemnon in *Agamemnon*, so I definitely think this helped me play Agamemnon in *Hecuba*.

Character Analysis and Biography: Oedipus Rex

The next and final character I will examine and analyze is the legendary Oedipus Rex. He is perhaps one of the most well known figures in theatre, behind only Hamlet, in my opinion. Just like playing Hamlet, there are many stereotypes and prejudices that go along with playing Oedipus. I have seen endless numbers of wailing and whining Oedipus Rexes. I wanted to avoid that at all costs and make him much more human. I wanted to bring him down to earth and make his suffering real. I think that is one of the main problems with the way people view Oedipus. They see him as a sort of fairy tale. He has an interesting story, but those things are the stuff of myths. That's what the majority of people think about him. They forget the roots of theatre. They forget about human condition. This is what should intrigue us about Oedipus. This is what makes him a vital character in the year two thousand and three. We all hurt and we all feel confused and betrayed. We all have dysfunctional families. Just like I did with all the other tragic characters, I wanted to make Oedipus seem human. I started the process of doing this just like I do every character I play and just like I have done with every character in this play. I perform a character analysis and write a character biography.

Oedipus's analysis is very tricky because the script appears to deal more with his given circumstances than with his character. However, if we look at how he deals with these circumstances, we can divine his character. First and foremost, his reaction to Creon and his statements tells us a few things. It tells us that he is very prone to outburst of anger. He literally begins this scene in a fit of rage. He is not good at controlling his emotions. In fact, they seem to boil over in many parts of this scene. They run the course from anger to fear to hope. Now,

keep in mind that I am only discussing emotions in regards to character, I had no intentions of “playing” these emotions on stage. Emotions are often states of being and they cannot be used for an actor’s performance. However I do think they can be used in characterization. In this scene Oedipus’s outburst of emotions gives us a clue to his mental state. He is very fragile and tormented. The things he is going through are very real. We can also deduce from these outburst that he has a very short fuse. In fact, the thing that got him in the situation in the first place, the killing of the traveler, reinforces these deductions. Tragically, we can also deduce from what he says that he truly loves Jocasta. He feels she is the only one in whom he can confide. This loyalty and love for her will, of course, prove to be his undoing, but that is inconsequential here. The playwright paints a picture of a man that has fallen out of the grace of the gods. We can all identify with that feeling. That gives me something on which to base a character, because if he fell out of grace with the gods, he must have at one point been in grace. Therefore, this character is a happy, successful man whose short temper is destroying his life. He is out of control, both figuratively and literally.

It is now time to justify these deductions in a biography that gives them legitimacy. This biography is, of course, based on the myth. The myth is inescapable. Interestingly, the fact that the myth is so well known probably makes this particular scene the most like true Greek theatre. Like ancient audiences, these modern audiences will know the story too.

Oedipus was born to King Laius and Queen Jocasta in Thebes, but he was born to strange circumstances. The Oracle at Delphi told Laius that he would be killed by his son, who would then marry Jocasta. With this information, Jocasta and Laius decided to abandon Oedipus and leave him for dead on a mountainside. The only problem was that Oedipus was discovered by a shepherd who took him to Corinth. King Polybus and Queen Merope of Corinth adopted the boy

as their own. They raised him as royalty and never told him of the strange circumstances under which he was found. Being raised as royalty, Oedipus became quite proud and pompous. The citizens of Corinth were very irritated with his behavior. One day at a feast, a drunken citizen shouted insults at the hated prince, telling him he was a bastard and that Polybus was not his father. Oedipus, of course being proud and arrogant, was ignited by this claim. He went to his parents, who refused him an answer. His short temper was now flaring. In a fit, Oedipus went to Delphi to speak with the Oracle there. All the Oracle would tell him is that he was fated to sleep with his mother and kill his father. Believing that the Oracle meant Polybus and Merope, Oedipus acted rashly, as he always did, and fled Corinth. On his way to Thebes, where he had decided to exile himself, something life changing happened to him. Much like Jason with Hera, Oedipus did not fully realize the repercussions of what he did. On the road, he met a traveler who tried to force him off the road. In a typically oedipal fit of anger, Oedipus killed him and his group over such a small thing. Little did he know that he had killed Laius that day. He continued his journey to Thebes, where he then met with a Sphinx that had laid siege on the city. The Sphinx had a riddle, that if someone was unable to answer the Sphinx would eat him or her. Of course, Oedipus, being educated in Corinth, was a master of logic and easily solved the riddle. Unfortunately, he was not a master of fate. After defeating the Sphinx, the town honored him by giving him the hand of Jocasta and Laius's vacant throne. He was a wonderful ruler, using what he had learned from his adoptive mother and father to better the Theban people. His arrogance seemed to work in this town that needed someone strong to guide it. He and Jocasta fell deeply in love with one another, not knowing that they were indeed committing incest. They fathered four children, who would become their own myths and legends. Their names were Ismene, Antigone, Polyneices, and Eteocles. After time passed and everything was good, a curse

hit the city of Thebes. Drought and pestilence prevailed everywhere. Oedipus was ill prepared for any true hard times and did not know what to do. As the city rotted, Creon, who was Jocasta's brother and Oedipus's brother-in-law/uncle went to Delphi to talk to the prophet. Unlike Oedipus, Creon was a man of action. The prophet told him that the only way to end the pestilence was to banish the killer of Laius from Thebes. Oedipus heard this and, of course, overreacted by declaring a reward for the killer of Laius. That is when Tiresius, the blind prophet, appeared to accuse Oedipus of this dastardly deed. The scene starts directly after Tiresius's bold proclamation.

This particular biography gave me insight on the rashness and immaturity of Oedipus. When things are good, he knows exactly what to do, but when they go badly, he reacts poorly and worsens the situation. I feel this will allow me to bring a richness to Oedipus that many actors lack in their portrayal of the unfortunate king. He fascinates me as a person because of his tragic flaw. As I mentioned earlier, I always wanted to play this role, and I am very pleased with the help this biography lent me.

Playwright's Intentions

Now that we have discussed the characterization of each of the six people I must become, it is now time to take a literary approach and try to gain some insight on what the playwright intended with the scenes as a whole. In doing this, we read between the lines. This is important, because it leads me toward a clearer more defined objective. I said earlier that an actor must have motivation, objective, and actions. Well, if the biographies helped me enrich my motivation, the themes helped me obtain a richer objective or helped me understand a fellow actor's objectives. This type of work also helps a great deal with subtext by allowing me to read between the lines of the script.

Playwright's Intentions: *Lysistrata*

We will start with *Lysistrata*. But before we do, let me preface by saying I treated these scenes as separate entities, just as we did in performance. I did not try to link them with any scenes that I did not perform. With that said, what is the first *Lysistrata* scene really about? What was Aristophanes trying to tell us about the human condition? Well, I think that he is saying that problems do not just fix themselves; rather, one must take action. I also think he was trying to tell us that sex is very important to humans. We see how Kalonike and Lampito squirm at the idea of not having any sex, and Lysistrata tells us what the men will do without sex. I think that Aristophanes is saying we are sex crazed as a culture. Does this theme still have relevance today? Of course. If you look at television, you see we are not that far removed from the Greeks. Another thing that Aristophanes is saying that is not quite as obvious is that humans need each other. He uses the theme of sex because that is humorous, but it seems like more than that. In the second *Lysistrata* scene, we get a clearer view of this. We get a couple that is so lonely for each other that they can barely contain themselves. Again, it is presented as merely sex, but there is a love taking place as well. There is a true longing for one another, it just manifests itself this way. I said earlier that this informs my objective. Well, if you take these two scenes and give them a surface objective, it might be to "stop the war." That, in my eyes, is a weak objective. The true thing these women and men want is companionship. They want their spouses. They are lonely. If I had to give these scenes an essence, it would be companionship versus loneliness. However, there is another way of looking at this text. If we look at it from a political point of view, it can be seen as more of an anti-war campaign. I picture in my head the

message “make love, not war,” or some other cliché. If you want to take it in this regard, fine.

Personally, I get more mileage out of the previous interpretation in my process.

Playwright's Intentions: The Sexual Congress

Next, let's talk about *The Sexual Congress*, another play by Aristophanes. I would venture to say that this one closely parallels *Lysistrata* thematically. The only difference here is that Aristophanes adds another tangent to the equation. He asks, "Don't older people get lonely too?" This seems like a very chilling question. One could almost picture some tragedy just by looking at that question. However, Aristophanes does the obvious and turns it into a sex joke. In my eyes, it is about the elderly and their wants and desires. It is also about the way we treat old people. We see the Nymphet and Epigenes being very cruel to the old woman, who is just looking for the same thing as them. The only difference is her age. So, how is this for a theme: "Respect your elders, because one day you will be that old, too"? In regards to objective, it would be very easy to say their objective is to have sex. I prefer to say that Epigenes' objective is to not have sex. This follows along with the disregard for the old. Sure, Epigenes wants to have sex with the Nymphet, but first and foremost, he must avoid sex with the "crumpled old bag." I do not see any other way to look at this scene thematically. I feel that Aristophanes was fairly juvenile in his writing here and that the characters are very under-developed. Regardless, it has value. As before, I will give this scene an essence, and it is, "Age equals unhappiness." This sounds odd, but it applies to every character in the play in one way or another.

Playwright's Intentions: Medea

Next, we will delve into the tragedies, and we will start with *Medea*. This script deals with many thematic issues. One can look at it as the battle of the sexes, or just a plain power struggle. It can be a look at the effects of marriage on a relationship. It can be any number of things. We are presented with a feuding couple dealing with issues of loyalty, childrearing, and infidelity. This is quite a contrast to the comedic scenes we have been analyzing. But what do these people really want for each other? Medea seems to want what is best for the entire family, as long as that family includes Jason. Jason seems to want what is best for him. Does this mean that Jason has no regard for Medea? Not exactly, but it could be argued that way. I believe the text supports Jason's point of view, as well as Medea's. So, perhaps Euripedes is trying to tell us that no one is completely right, and relationships are about compromise. These two people are not willing to compromise on anything; therefore, they fall apart. If I gave this scene an essence, it would be, "Come together or die." Now, how does all this translate into an objective? Well, the objective I have given myself is to justify my choices. This is the exact opposite of the essence I have given myself, and that is because these two people cannot come together on anything. If Jason is trying to tell Medea why he is right and she is wrong, he is not compromising with her; therefore, he must die. I use the term "die" loosely; I know Jason does not actually die, but he has his family destroyed because of his arrogance. Medea, too, is arrogant. These two people must come together or fall apart. They choose the latter, but it is Jason's task to try to get his angry wife to understand why he is doing what he is doing. It is indeed futility, but Jason must do it.

Playwright's Intentions: Hecuba

Hecuba is the next scene to analyze. This one is full of diverse themes. We are presented with the death of a child at the very beginning of the scene, so the theme could easily be “dealing with the loss of a loved one.” All of this happens amidst the Trojan War, so perhaps the theme is “the ravages of war and its toll on the family.” There is also a class issue being presented to us because Hecuba used to be queen, and now she is reduced to begging for the help of Agamemnon. I like dealing with this class issue, because it makes for an interesting dynamic. Here, we have the fallen queen made a slave by Agamemnon. In Greek culture there was an idea of respect that is not lost in this scene. Although Agamemnon has taken her as a prisoner, he has come to love and respect her. Equally, even though Hecuba is a prisoner, she gives Agamemnon her daughter. Hecuba is being forced to ask someone who was an enemy for a favor. This is true conflict and obstacle. Agamemnon must decide how indebted he is to Hecuba and if it is worth his position to help her. This is what this scene is about. If I gave it an essence, it would be “how far would one go to help another.” Notice I do not call in the issues of class into this essence. It is because I think this is the base of the scene. The rest is thrown in by Euripides to create obstacle and to keep things fresh. It truly is an ingenious bit of playwriting. As far as objective, I think I would say that Agamemnon's objective is to help Hecuba without betraying his country. The qualifier is the most important part. As I said in my biography, Agamemnon is a very loyal man. He does not like to let anyone down. This is why this decision is so hard for him. He has so many obstacles. He has his army, the King, Hecuba, and his own morality to deal with. This is a full plate if there ever was one.

Playwright's Intentions: Oedipus Rex

Finally, let us look at *Oedipus Rex*. The themes here are quite obvious. We have the theme of the lack of knowledge about one's past and what that can do to a person; we also have the theme of a relationship between a husband and wife and how much stress that can take. We have the theme of the relationship between a mother and son and how much that relationship can take and still stand. We have the theme of not being able to overcome your fate. We also have a lot of irony. Taking all this into account, I decided that I would approach this scene in context of itself and pretend that I did not know the future of Oedipus. Thus, this scene is about not knowing enough about your past and how that can destroy you. I believe the old adage is, "If you don't know where you came from, then you don't know where you're going." This never rang truer than in this scene. The question then becomes, how do you translate that into an essence or even an objective? I think the answer lies in what Oedipus is trying to do in this scene, which is to remember his past. So, in that context, an essence might be "the struggles of a man trying to come to grips with his past and what that means." If all of these things are true, then it is fairly obvious what his objective in the scene is. It is to figure out what happened to him. It is to figure out where he went wrong.

Memorization

Now that I had analyzed the scripts and written biographies, it was finally time for the physical work to begin. I started, of course, by memorizing the scripts. I tried a new technique that I had never used before this production. I copied all the scripts separately so I could hold them in my hands, and I memorized them as I drove down the road. I do not suggest anyone do this, because I did get a speeding ticket because I was not paying attention to my speed. Despite this, the technique worked better than ever. A friend suggested it to me. I would take a line and repeat it aloud as I drove. Once I felt I had this line, I would add another to it and say both of them. I would continue this until I had an entire scene memorized. This sounds like a typical way to memorize, but the fact that I was driving altered the process dramatically. Usually I would only be able to memorize a page at a time, but with this new technique, I could remember two and sometimes even three pages at a time. The lines seemed to stick with me better as well. I have some theories about this, but I think the main reason is because I was driving. I was trying to concentrate on more than just the lines. Driving is something that almost becomes reflex. By adding these lines to my daily trip, I think they became part of my reflex. They committed themselves more deeply to memory than usual. There are techniques similar to this that I have used before, ones where you associate a line with a movement, but none have worked nearly as well as this. The only downfall, in retrospect, is that I would often think of driving and passing cars for no apparent reason during rehearsals. This however, was a small price to pay for such a great reward. This is definitely a technique that I will add to my process in future productions.

Rehearsal:Blocking

With the lines memorized, it was time to rehearse. We will start with the blocking, but before I do that, I would like to preface by saying that these parts of my process were not as cut and dry as they sound in this thesis. They often overlapped, with memorization analysis and character choices happening during blocking. If I were to write this way, however, this thesis would be unreadable. Therefore, I have broken them up for better understanding both for myself and for the reader.

With that said, let us discuss the blocking of the play. This was definitely an aspect of the production that changed the way we did things. Everything I have discussed to this point has been in a certain realm of realism. This is the way I was trained, using the methods of Meisner and Stanislavsky. When we began blocking, I realized at an early stage I would not be able to use these in the ways that I have in previous plays. This applies to the blocking of the tragic scenes more than the comedic ones. The main problem I had with the comedic blocking was the physicality of it and the fact that I am out of shape. This was quickly solved by performing the blocking over and over, coupled with a dance class I was taking that was instructed by Dollie Barkum. In fact, this dance class helped me in many ways, in tragedy, comedy, and especially ritual. As far as tragedy is concerned, we decided to stay with our concept of “intimate, not imitate.” The Greeks moved in a very stylized manner, mostly for two reasons. One reason was because their drama was indeed a ceremony that dictated a style of movement. The other reason had to do with the volume of people to whom they were playing. We decided to intimate some form of this ceremonial grandiose movement as best we could. We decided what would be best

would be to move very deliberately. One problem I came across that seemed to come from my modern training was that this movement often seemed unjustified. I overcame this mindset simply by giving myself justification, whatever that might be from scene to scene. Most of the time I told myself that I am noble and I had to conduct myself in a certain way. That is what led to these movements. We moved ourselves in various geometrical patterns on the stage, limited later by lighting. From this movement another problem arose. I often moved too quickly and in a modern gait. I was once again forced to overcome this. I began concentrating very closely on my walk to the point of forgetting everything else. Soon, however, the walk became natural and I no longer had to think so much about it. With that said, I do not think I completely mastered it until I was adorned with the heavy robes. They seemed to force me to walk in a certain way. Another problem with the blocking is that it was very timed out. We had to be in certain positions on certain lines. As I got more comfortable with the blocking, I learned to speed up and slow down if I were not in the right place in order to get there. I learned to do this so well that it was hardly noticeable that I had sped up or slowed down. Another problem I faced in the blocking was staring off into a space in order to achieve a certain “look” that went with the style. This most often happened when I was onstage during someone else’s monologue. I overcame this by simply using subtext to keep me in the scene. I do not know if it was quite what the director wanted, but he had his look, and I kept it in the realistic world I needed it to be in by just imagining things in my head. This also worked very well because the text demands that a character sit for a long period of time, then pick his or her argument up where he left off. By creating blocking and scenarios in my head, I was able to imagine what it would be like if I were performing these scenes in the bounds of realism and not stylistically. This helped much with the confinement of style. Some of the blocking, such as in *Hecuba*, called for movements that

were not only strange, but very unrealistic. This does not mean the others were not, but in *Hecuba* my regular techniques did not work. I formed a new technique to deal with a specific line in the play and the blocking that corresponded. The particular line begins with, "I pity you deeply Hecuba for the tragic death of this poor boy," and the blocking requires that I walk behind Hecuba, look down at her, then look into the audience and talk to her. As this is happening, she is reacting by looking up at me and slowly dropping her head. What I did to make sense of this in my realistic training, was pretend that I was performing a monologue and that she was not on the stage. I pictured her directly in front of me. After I saw what she was doing, I imagined that she was doing the same. This worked well for me. As before, it allowed me to keep the actions and intentions the same without short changing the style. As far as the stylistic blocking is concerned, I think it worked well. I would be interested to see how someone who does much theatre like this works and how their process differs from mine.

Ritual

The blocking for the ritual and the performance of the ritual itself was much harder to relate to, because I have done presentational styles before such as restoration styles and French farce. I am also used to working on a proscenium stage where the actor is forced to cheat out. Cheat out meaning to face out to the audience. This is much different than what we had to do for the blocking of this production, but it is in the same ballpark. However, the ritual was like nothing I have ever done. I discussed the “creation” of the ritual earlier when I was discussing research, but now it is time to talk about the ritual itself. As I said earlier, we came in with little and were planning to choreograph it ourselves. This proved to be a mistake on our parts. We did indeed try to choreograph it, but we soon found that we were without skill when it came to this. For two nights, we fumbled around stomping on the floor and clapping our hands with little movement. The movement we had created was awkward to say the least. We realized that we would not be able to do this alone. Jane and I were in a dance class at the time with a friend of the director’s named Dollie Barkum. We suggested to Heather that we get her to help us and she whole-heartedly agreed. All three of us knew how ridiculous we would look on our own. The three of us brought the idea to the director, and he agreed that we were truly pathetic. We were going to have Dollie, who has much dance training, choreograph a ritual for us. Once having decided on this, we talked for a while and realized that the scenes needed something to link them together. Our director had this notion at the beginning of the process of us speaking in Greek, so he decided that we would do miniature rituals in between the tragic scenes. We felt the comedy did not need them. We would use the Greek sayings that we had created to make a patchwork

blessing. These Greek lines were quite a problem for me. I found them very difficult to memorize, simply because I had nothing which to relate them . I cannot say that I had some miracle for solving this problem, but I can say that once I linked them to the blocking in the ritual, they became much clearer in my head. With that said, it was time to work with Dollie. She worked with us for about an hour before each rehearsal, and some rehearsals were devoted completely to ritual. Now, as I said earlier, this was new to me. I have never danced on a stage before in my life. I had taken the occasional dance class, but nothing could prepare me for what I was about to enter. We danced, clapped, stomped, chanted, slung each other, fell on top of one another, spun, and just about whatever else you can imagine. It seemed like a lot of information to digest, especially since I had never memorized this much choreography before. This was my dilemma. It became even more of a dilemma when we added Greek text to the ritual. I overcame this by simply practicing as much as possible. We would get together outside of rehearsal and run the rituals for hours at a time. I would imagine myself performing the steps in my car. I would see them in my sleep. I rehearsed it so much that there was no way that I would forget it. Now another problem I had was making it crisp. I do not know the proper dance term for this, but I do know that when I watched Heather perform the ritual, she had a certain grace and “crispness” about her movement. It seemed to come easily for her. It did not come so easily for me. I solved this problem by simply knowing the choreography as well as possible and trying to forget it when I got on stage. This sounds odd, but when I would not think about it I felt freer, and my movement seemed less stilted. I am sure I had nowhere near the amount of grace as Heather, but I felt like I accomplished the grace that I could. I also had exhaustion problems because we were rehearsing such long hours. I had Dollie’s dance class directly before rehearsal some nights, so I would literally dance for five or six hours straight. This was grueling,

but I think it prepared me for the run of the show, because I could never feel as exhausted as I did those nights. I also studied basic dance techniques just to get a better understanding of Dollie's terminology during rehearsals. The final and most crucial thing that allowed me to get through the ritual was the constant encouragement from Dollie. Her "tough love" really drove me to want to dance better, and it kept me from getting too frustrated even when I thought I could take no more.

Rehearsal: Other Challenges

Now that I have discussed blocking and the ritual, I would like to discuss other problems I faced during rehearsal. These problems encompassed everything from characterization to investment to set problems. It is inevitable that an actor will face problems in rehearsal, but I must say that I was very surprised at how smoothly these rehearsals went. One of our main problems was sickness and injury. All three of us were incapacitated at some point during the process. It almost became a joke amongst the cast. We all persevered through these problems and moved on thanks to healthy doses of Suphedrine, Ben-Gay, and back pain medication, not to mention a lot of will power.

However, this was not the only problem, as I said. I had major characterization problems with some of the comedic scenes. In the first *Lysistrata* scene, I could not get the man-woman Lampito to be quite womanly enough. I had the man part of her down, but she just was not feminine. Now, of course, this is comedy, so I was not looking just to be simply somewhat feminine. I wanted stereotypes. Early in the process, this was a struggle for me, but as it went on, I found a few things that helped me. Stanislavsky believes that a character starts with a walk; well, this was true of Lampito. I attempted to sway my hips furiously while walking, and this seemed to solve so many questions. She had become what I wanted her to be. I also added in some womanish gestures, and the character was completed. I wish I had made these discoveries of her earlier in the process, but I guess the old adage “better late than never” rings true. I did not make these particular discoveries until right before opening.

I tend to go through these stages in my process: self-doubt, self-reassurance, abandon, more self-doubt, and realization. Sometimes the steps fall in different orders, but I feel each one of these at some point during a rehearsal process. I usually start with much confidence, then begin to doubt myself early in the blocking rehearsals. I think this is because I am not completely off book, and these rehearsals are very tedious. I learn to accept that I cannot be perfect this early on and then I enter a stage of making bold choices. Few of these choices actually stick because they are so over the top. However, in this show, one in particular did stick because of the stereotypes we were playing. In *The Sexual Congress*, Epigenes' character is fairly bland. I decided in this early process to spice him up with some bold characterization. At first I was stuck on what to do, and I started with an urban accent and movements. I quickly realized this did not work. I don't think I made it through one page like that. I then tried an Elvis impersonation. I ditched that too. It took me three rehearsals and much experimentation to finally come up with the characterization I wanted for Epigenes. I went for an Andrew Dice Clay type of character. I was still in my bold choices stage and decided to add some insane non-verbals to go with him. I created a "catch-phrase." I actually stole the catch phrase from Tony Danza of *Who's the Boss*. Tony Danza's character often says "ay oh" and so I adapted to my character. Ed McMahon also used a similar phrase on the Tonight Show. This worked well because Andrew Dice Clay often says "badabing" after a joke, so Epigenes said "ay oh" after a joke. I had a lot of fun creating this character. I did not, however, expect much of him to stick around by the time production rolled along, but, alas, he was still there.

Continuing with the stages of my process, I often go into another stage of doubting my choices and myself after the bold choice stage. I do not think I completely entered this stage this time, though. I think because I was too busy to think about it. It became more about "just do it

and make some choices” rather than “I make horrible choices.” I found that this was very liberating. Much like the ritual, I was able to let go and not think about what I was doing because I had rehearsed it so well. It became reflex in a way.

Another major problem in rehearsal that I faced was a certain line in *Lysistrata* that I am sure I never completely figured out. At the end of the first *Lysistrata* scene, Lampito looks into the distance and proclaims, “What’s all that bodacious ruckus?” The line itself was not as much of a problem as the punch line. Our director insisted that this was some sort of joke, so we came up with an elaborate production that would happen offstage in order to cue me to say this particular line. At first, it started with a low noise, I would say the line, and the noise would get slightly bigger. I would repeat the line, and the noise would get slightly bigger. Finally, I would give up and return to the scene at hand. The joke was supposed to be that the backstage workers had performed a sound cue wrong, and I was trying to correct them onstage. The problem was that it just was not that funny. I don’t particularly know why it was not, but I know it was not. We tried to fix this in many different ways: by cutting the noise until the last time I say my line, by having me give them a physical cue with my hands, or by having me look into the audience so they would know that a cue had been missed. The problem was that none of these solutions worked. I even came up with my own ideas about running offstage myself to make the noise, and that clearly did not work. I do not think the director and I completely overcame this problem, I think we eventually just gave up on it. In retrospect, I think it would have been funny if the backstage crew had actually been saying “bodacious ruckus, bodacious ruckus,” and then I chimed in with, “What’s all that bodacious ruckus?” We may never know if this would have worked or not, but I think it would have.

There were other cue problems that I had, but they were simply timing issues that I overcame by learning how to communicate with the backstage person. For instance, there is a moment in *The Sexual Congress* where I knock on an imaginary door. At first, this cue was always off. Then I started indicating much more that I was about to knock so that I could alert the backstage person that it was coming. This solved the problem, but occasionally we still were off with it. In that case, I created a bit of comedy to perform so that it would look purposeful. If the knock happened too early or too late, I would simply look at the audience and shrug to them indicating that I too did not know what was happening. This seemed to work and solved all the problems with this cue.

I think these were the biggest problems I faced in rehearsal. There were others, such as changing from one space to another, battling with wet paint, and other small things, but nothing that really messed with my process or how I create a character. There were small choice changes here and there as well, but for the most part my choices were nursed along by the director and remained correct till the end. Jason from *Medea* had some small changes in strength and aggression, but nothing that was not solved by mastering the blocking. In fact, I think the blocking and learning it exactly solved much. However, as I said, the main problem that I face in any rehearsal is myself. My doubts always creep in and it is just a matter of time and effort that alleviated these doubts.

Rehearsal: Technical

With these few problems during rehearsal discussed, I would like to move on to the time during technical rehearsals. There are four specific things I would like to discuss. These are costuming, makeup, lighting, and set. These four things in some way I think all hindered or helped my performance. In one case, makeup, it was my responsibility, but the others all fell in someone else's lap.

I would like to begin with the costuming. When we first received our costumes, a few things stood out to me. The first, of course, was the giant penis to be worn during *The Sexual Congress*. Now, I felt this particular costume piece was very beneficial to the amount of laughs we received from the audience. Laughs are also a good way to gauge how well you are doing during comedy. However, I did not feel like the audience completely understood why we did such a thing. It of course was to "intimate" the giant phalluses worn by the Greeks during their productions, but I think many thought we were being lewd. Still others, I think, missed most of the action after that. It became about my giant penis. So, as far as this particular costume piece hindering or hurting me, I think it equally did both. In the end, though, I think it was a good costume choice, albeit a bit on the heavy side. In the same vein as this is the wig and breasts I wore as Lampito. These did not hinder me in any way, and rather became something I used as a character choice. Lampito would now constantly readjust her breasts to be straight. This was mainly because they would not stay that way on their own.

The second group of costume pieces I noticed were the giant robes used for tragedy. Now, I thought these were perfect in almost every regard. I did dislike the gold at the top, but

that is just an aesthetic choice, and I am not the costume designer. I have already mentioned how I think the robes helped me. They allowed me to fully embrace the blocking that the director laid out for us. It forced me to walk slowly and methodically simply because if I did not, I would trip over my robe. There were many nights where I almost did. It also created an effect in the ritual, which I think was purely unintentional, but worked nonetheless. Whenever I would swing my arms while dancing, it would make a loud swooshing sound. This definitely enhanced the mood of the ritual.

I would now like to talk about the set and how it affected our movement. First, it was very hard to work on a set that was rarely functional. We had many problems rehearsing because floors and curtains were often wet, and the fountain was hardly ever ready. This is quite obviously a hindrance, and I think in a lot of ways stunted our growth during technical rehearsals. Even though they take place right before performance and are supposedly performance quality, one can learn much during them. On the other side of that token, however, I do realize that is why they are called technical rehearsals. These things happened in regular rehearsals as well. Regardless, it definitely hindered us. One specific instance that the layout itself hindered us was during the ritual. We had rehearsed a certain entrance at the top of the stage for three and a half weeks. When the curtains were finally put into place, we had to alter the entrance dramatically and even change some of the choreography. Correct me if I am wrong, but isn't it the job of the set designer to help rather than hinder the production? Regardless of these few things I thought the set was adequate. It gave us space to move around and perform scenes but not much else.

Moving on to lighting, I felt like it very much enhanced our performances. Rusty Tennant created patterns of light on the stage, which were symbolically representative of

whatever scene was taking place. These divisions, coupled with our stylized blocking, increased the effectiveness of the scene as well as the urgency I felt as an actor. A specific example I can give of this is from *Medea*. On the stage are two squares of light separated by darkness. I found it to be quite an interesting thing to deliver my lines across that void. It truly made me feel like I was not getting through to this person, like Medea was in another world. As far as the lighting in comedy, it was decent. I had no major problems one way or another. However, the lighting in tragedy definitely helped me as an actor while doing its job of allowing me to be seen.

Next I would like to discuss a major point of controversy: makeup. The reason this became such a problem is because I was supposed to create a makeup design. I was unaware of such a plan and found out about it later. Regardless, Tony French tried to help us based on a photograph I had found of a past production of *Antigone*. In it, the characters were wearing masks devoid of any features. Their eyes were black holes, and their mouths were the same. Of course, as I said earlier, we were not wearing masks, and we decided to “intimate” masks with makeup. This process spanned a few nights and never quite came to fruition, even at close of the production. We started with white cake makeup and black makeup around the eyes. We quickly discovered that this was too bleak for comedy, but it was right for tragedy. Our task then became to figure out an acceptable design for comedy that could be switched easily to the black and white of tragedy. We decided the best thing would be to go colorless, using only powder on our faces and using colors around our eyes. We also decided that these colors around the eyes needed to be in designs. I was put in brown with bright red lipstick. The reason for this is because the color could be quickly wiped off and the black and white applied with speed. The problem that arose was one that was inevitable. We were sweating too much, and much of our makeup ran. We tried some anti-sweat products and heavy powders, but none of those really

seemed to work. What I decided to do was embrace the sweat. One night after a run of the show, I memorized what the sweat had done to my makeup. I used this image as my design around my eyes. This night, when I checked my makeup, it had indeed run, but I had painted with the natural sweat flow, so there was very little smearing and streaking. It looked almost as fresh as when I first put it on. These were the challenges I faced in trying to create a functional makeup design.

Production

Finally, I would like to discuss the production itself. It felt a little strange at the beginning, because we opened the show on a Wednesday rather than a Tuesday. Regardless of that, our comedy needed an audience. You can only perform comedy so long in a vacuum before it becomes stale. Opening night, we were energized and surprised by how much the audience laughed at our antics and how attentive they were during the tragic scenes. We figured that this was just an opening night occurrence, but it continued night after night, and it actually got bigger. People really seemed to enjoy this production we had created. I am not so sure that they completely understood the ritual, but I think they did understand the point of the ritual existing. I think they followed along with our concept to “intimate rather than imitate.” If audience reaction is any key to the success or failure of a production, I think this was successful.

As far as problems that I had to overcome in production, there are a few. First and foremost is the issue of stage fright. It is not an overwhelming fear, like I am sure it is for some people. It is more like a good case of nerves. It is butterflies in my stomach. I do not think that I am alone in getting nervous before going on stage, but I do think what makes an actor successful is how he utilizes and overcomes these nerves. It is acceptable to have some nerves before you go onstage to be in a mindset of relaxed readiness. I accomplish this relaxed readiness by a few means. I stretch myself out before going onstage, I get in place extremely early, and I perform breathing exercises to calm myself. The most important part of this is definitely the breathing exercises. I take deep breaths on the count of ten and then release them on the same count. This gets me ready to perform.

Another problem I faced during performance was completely out of the control of us as actors. On the set is a fountain that emits both flame and water. On a Saturday night, something malfunctioned with the fountain. I first noticed something was wrong during the *Medea* scene when I saw that the flame was a bit out of control. Then I started smelling something burning. It made me nervous, but I wrote it off and tried not to think about it. The next scene in the production is *Hecuba*, and I only leave stage for a moment, so I had no time to voice my concerns. Well, during this scene, all hell broke loose. The fountain began making a hissing sound, and the orange fire became a blue electrical fire. I kept hoping that someone backstage would come out and end the show, but that never happened. All I can remember saying is “What the hell,” and then, “Keep going, no matter what, keep going.” I looked into Heather’s eyes, and I could see that she was as scared as I was. As blue sparks and rocks from inside the fountain shot at us and the hissing almost hid our voices, we continued performing the scene. I was aware, as I am sure Heather was, that no one in the audience was listening or watching us. It is very hard to compete with a flaming torch of electrical death. I think the audience began to fear for us, but we were in an almost robotic state of muscle memory. Words and movements were rolling out of our bodies, but we had no recollection of what we actually did. I only mention this as a challenge because I always wondered if I would be able to overcome something like that onstage. I feel that what we did was perfectly right. I felt like we took a problem that was thrown at us on the fly, and we made the best of it. That is what live theatre is all about. Perhaps what we did was not the safest thing to do, but it got us through the rest of the play, and the audience soon forgot about the fountain during *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex*.

In conclusion, I believe that this production was indeed a success and that I have given a clear account of my process as an actor and my process specific to this play. I have shown the

amount of work and effort that went into this project called “An Evening of Greek Theatre,” and I showed where I had shortcomings as an actor and where I had to overcome them. I have shown how much research and table work helped me create the rich characters that I believe I have created for this production. This particular process was more rewarding for me as an actor than other plays I have done. I think that I obtained many things from this that I will carry with me for years to come. I have obtained a level of stamina I had previously thought impossible. I have obtained new memorization techniques. Perhaps most rewarding is the sense of spirituality I feel I have obtained from this production. It is hard to put into words exactly what I mean, but in comparison to other plays, this seemed to go back to the roots of theatre and remind me why I do it. It is easy to get caught up in modern realism and contemporary theatre. These are the plays we most often perform, and they lull an actor into a sense of comfort. This sense almost makes one lose the artistry involved in theatre. By performing rituals and actually having a ceremony, I think that I obtained a connection with the true meaning of theatre. I think it is what Brooks was describing in his book *The Empty Space*. Finally, I believe I have shown why I think I was successful in what I was trying to accomplish onstage.

LYSISTRATA (the first scene)

LYSISTRATA:

Announce an orgy in honor of Dionysus, Pan-pipes and Drinks, and traffic stops. The streets would be clogged with crazy women banging on tambourines, ready for a wild party. But today there's not one here.

(Kalonike enters)

Correction, one, my neighbor Kalonike. Good morning Kally.

KALONIKE:

Morning, Lys. How come you're so hot and bothered? Quit knitting your brows-you'll get wrinkles.

LYSISTRATA:

Oh, Kally darling, this just burns me up. What a Disgrace! That women won't turn out to save their Reputations! Menfolk say we're just a pack of Conniving schemers.

KALONIKE:

Ain't it the truth!

LYSISTRATA:

And now, when I invite all the girls here for an important conference, the dumb clucks stay home dozing.

KALONIKE:

Don't worry your head, honey, they'll show. You know how hard it is for housewives to get out in the

(Kal. cont.)

morning. Aren't we always bending over backwards to serve our husbands' needs? Giving some lazy slave a kick in the ass, giving the baby a bath, feeding it?

LYSISTRATA:

I know, I know, but other things count more.

KALONIKE:

So why did you call this meeting? Whats up?

LYSISTRATA:

Something huge.

KALONIKE:

Hmmmm, the plot thickens.

LYSISTRATA:

It's thick, all right.

KALONIKE:

Thick? Stiff? Sticking straight out?

LYSISTRATA:

Nothing of the kind. If it were, all the girls would be here in a jiffy. No, this thing is worrisome. It's cost me many a night of turning and tossing.

KALONIKE: *(to herself)*

Obstinate thing, to need whole nights of diddling!

LYSISTRATA:

Listen to me, Kalonike. The fate of the Greek world rests on us women.

KALONIKE:

Oh no! Then the Greek world is a goner!

LYSISTRATA:

It's up to us women to govern, pass laws, make treaties. Either we take matters into our own hands, or Sparta will be destroyed-

KALONIKE:

Now you're talking! Trash the bastards!

LYSISTRATA:

And the Boeotians, every one-

KALONIKE:

Only lets save those yummy Boeotian eels. They're great on crackers.

LYSISTRATA:

And, unthinkable though it is, Athens itself will perish. But if the women of our cities unite- Boeotians, Spartans, and ourselves- we can still save greece from catastrophe.

KALONIKE:

Us? Be practical. There's nothing cosmic about

(Kal. cont.)

cosmetics. And glamour is our only weapon. All we can do is sit. primped and painted made up and dressed up in exquisite negligees and those sheik expensive little slippers from the east.

LYSISTRATA:

Yes, by the gods, and that's exactly what we'll save Greece with- silks, slippers, rouge, peek-a-boo bras, perfumes, and see-through shimmies.

KALONIKE:

But how-?

LYSISTRATA:

No man in Greece will lift a warlike lance-

KALONIKE:

I'll help! I'll get me a new low-cut gown-

LYSISTRATA:

Nor buckle his shield-

KALONIKE:

And a lacy negligee-

LYSISTRATA:

Nor draw his sword###

KALONIKE:

Persian sandals, maybe. Paint my tonails gold.

LYSISTRATA:

So you see, these women really should be here.

KALONIKE:

They should, if they know what's good for 'em.

LYSISTRATA:

Isn't this just like Athenians? Always late.
Where are the women from the Coast? And those
from Paralus?

KALONIKE:

Something tells me they've been mounted and
saddled since the crack of dawn.

LYSISTRATA:

And where's that true-blue friend that I expected
to be the first one here?

KALONIKE:

I think she's flying the red flag this time of the month.
I can imagine why she'd stay at home. Hey, look,
here comes a flock of people now.

LYSISTRATA:

At last!

KALONIKE:

P-U! Where are those trollops from?

LYSISTRATA:

From Anagyra.

KALONIKE:

Of course. I should have guessed. I smelled their cheap perfume a mile away.

LYSISTRATA:

Let's wait a minute more. The other girls from Sparta and Boeotia should arrive.

KALONIKE:

Ah, so they should. Why, here's Lampito now.

(Lampito Enters)

LYSISTRATA:

Lampito, darling, I'm so glad you came. Why, you're the picture of health! What a tan, what muscles! I suspect you could strangle a bull bare-handed.

LAMPITO:

¹I calklate so. ²Hit's fitness whut done it, fitness and dancin'. ³You know the step?

(Demonstrating)

⁴Foot it out back'ards an' toe yore twitchet.

1. To agree
2. To explain
3. To question
4. To demonstrate with great pleasure

KALONIKE:

Wow, what a bust. Is all that for real?

LAMPITO:

⁵Shuckins, whut fer you tweedlin' me up so? ⁶I feel like a heifer come fair-time. ⁷The womenfolk's all assembled. ⁸Who-all's notion was this-hyer confabulation?

LYSISTRATA:

Mine.

LAMPITO:

⁹Git on with the give-out. I'm hankerin' to hear.

MYRRHINE:

Yes, Lys, what's so urgent?

LYSISTRATA:

I'll tell you. But first, one question. All of you have husbands away at the war. Don't you miss them?

KALONIKE:

Damn right we do. My old man has been at the front for the last five months -- at the front of General Eukrates' long retreat.

5.To retain modesty

6.To end fondling

7.To state the obvious

8.To question critically

9.To command excitedly

LAMPITO:

¹⁰My man's no sooner rotated out of the line than he's plugged back in. ¹¹Hain't no discharge in this war!

KALONIKE:

And lover-boys? Scarcer than hen's balls. Besides, ever since the Miletians broke with Athens and shut down the sex-toy trade, you can't find a decent dildo in the shops for love nor money.

LYSISTRATA:

What if I have a plan to end the war? Will you support me?

KALONIKE:

Honey, count me in. If it would end this crummy war I'd sell the shirt off my back. Might have to buy a few drinks out of the proceeds, though.

LAMPITO:

¹²Me, too! ¹³I'd climb Taygetos Mountain plumb to the top to get the leastes' peek at Peace!

LYSISTRATA:

Now here's the plan. Ladies our husbands will have to end the war if we will just--

KALONIKE:

If we will just *what*?

10.To wholeheartedly agree

11.To complain

12.To exclaim agreement

13.To prove willingness

LYSISTRATA:

You'll do whatever I say?

KALONIKE:

Darned right we will! We'd even *die* for peace.

LYSISTRATA:

All right then. What we must do is stop letting our husbands lay us. Wait--what's the matter? Aren't you still with me? Why this head-shaking, pallor, sad looks, tears? Won't you do it?

KALONIKE:

I--I don't know. Maybe the war ought to just keep on going. That's too high a price to pay. Even for peace.

LYSISTRATA:

Buy Kalonike, weren't you ready to sell the shirt off your back?

KALONIKE:

Sure, I would. For peace, I'd walk through fire. But give up sex? There's just no substitute. I'd sooner walk through fire than give up fucking.

LYSISTRATA:

Weak as water, weak as water, that's what women are!
The tragic playwrights painted us quite right. Our lives are nothing but pathetic tales of love and babies.

(Lys. Cont.)

And you, Lampito, my dearest Spartan, would you fail me too? Stand fast with me--the two of us can triumph!

LAMPITO:

¹⁴Hit's right onsettin' fer gals to sleep all lonely-like withouten no humpin'. ¹⁵But I'm on your side. We shore need Peace, too.

LYSISTRATA:

Oh, Lampito, gods bless you, you're the one true woman of the lot!

KALONIKE:

Now, look here, Lys, supposing we did give up-- just shut it off--quit putting out? How would that end the war?

LYSISTRATA:

It's simple. Here's exactly what we do: We go home, get made up, and slather on sweet-smelling oil, put on see-through gowns, and, pussies plucked, we sit without our panties. Our men get horny as hat-racks. We refuse. Mark what I say, they'll make peace in a jiffy.

LAMPITO:

¹⁶Menelaos he tuck one squint at Helen's bobbies all nekkid, and plumb throwed up. *(pause)* ¹⁷Throwed up

14.To voice deep concerns

15.To concede

16.To provide a good example

17.To rethink words

(Lamp. cont)

his sword.

KALONIKE:

Yeah, but what if our men divorce us?

LYSISTRATA:

How could they be such fools, to throw away something that they've already been denied?

As Aristophanes puts it in a play, "It makes no sense to skin the same dog twice."

KALONIKE:

What if they rape us? Haul us off to bed by the hair?

LYSISTRATA:

We'll hang on to the door-handle.

KALONIKE:

And what if they start beating up on us?

LYSISTRATA:

We'll give in, but just lie inert as stones. They'll quickly see the error of their ways. No fun for men if women don't take part.

KALONIKE:

Well, Lys, if you insist--Ok, I'll do it.

LAMPITO:

¹⁸Hain't worried over our menfolk none. We'll bring 'em round to makin' a fair, straightfor'ard Peace withouten no nonsense about it.

(incomprehensible)

¹⁹But take this rackety passel in Athens: I misdoubt no one could make 'em give over thet blabber of theirn.

(slower, but still incomprehensible)

²⁰But take this rackety passel in Athens; I misdoubt no one could make 'em give over thet blabber of theirn.

(understandably)

²¹These Athenian blabbermouths, how you gone make them quit talkin' war?

LYSISTRATA:

Ah, we'll find methods, dear. We know them well.

LAMPITO:

²²Not likely. Not long as they got ships kin still sail straight, an' thet fountain of money up thar in Athene's temple.

LYSISTRATA:

True, I've thought of that, and so right now, our Senior Citizen Ladies' Auxiliary are on the march

18.To boast confidence

19.To voice concerns

20.To slow down speech

21.To rethink in order to better understanding

22.To doubt

(*Lys. cont.*)

to the Parthenon as if to worship. Once inside
they'll occupy it.

LAMPITO:

²³They way you put them thengs, I swear I can't see
how we kin possibly lose!

LYSISTRATA:

Very well then, let's bind ourselves together with an
oath.

LAMPITO:

²⁴Just trot out thet-thar Oath. We'll swear it.

KALONIKE:

I've got it. Set a bowl on the ground and fill it full of
wine. We can all swear on it. We'll drink it straight,
not even water it.

LAMPITO:

²⁵Let me corngratulate you--that were the beatenes'
Oath I ever heerd on!

LYSISTRATA:

A bowl! Some wine!

KALONIKE:

Now *there's* a decent drink. I'm getting crocked just
from a whiff of it.

23.To admire

24.To reassure

25.To congratulate

LYSISTRATA:

Sisters, let's kill this sacrifice! Persuasion, heavenly goddess, hear our plea, and you, O wine who numb if you fail to cheer, receive our solemn sacrifice and grant glorious success to the women of Greece!

LAMPITO:

²⁶Hit shore do smell mighty purty!

KALONIKE:

Let me be the first to swear.

LYSISTRATA:

Hold on. Let every woman of us here touch right hand to the bowl. Repeat the oath after me.

LYSISTRATA:

From this moment forth, I shall let no man, whether husband or lover--

LAMP & KAL:

²⁷From this moment forth, I shall let no man, whether husband or lover--

LYSISTRATA:

Come at me with prong protruding in front of him--

LAMP & KAL:

²⁸Come at me with prong protruding in front of him--

26.To catch a whiff of

27.To repeat

28.To repeat with hesitance

KALONIKE:

Ye gods, Lys, this is a terrible thing to swear. I'm getting the shakes!

LYSISTRATA:

I'll lock my loins and stay home looking pretty--

LAMP & KAL:

²⁹I'll lock my loins and stay home looking pretty--

LYSISTRATA:

Made up like Venus in my sexiest gown--

LAMP & KAL:

³⁰Made up like Venus in my sexiest gown--

LYSISTRATA:

To drive my man out of his mind for me.

LAMP & KAL:

³¹To drive my man out of his mind for me.

LYSISTRATA:

I shall not yield to him, unless I'm forced--

LAMP & KAL:

³²I shall not yield to him, unless I'm forced--

LYSISTRATA:

And if I am, I'll lie cold as a fish and passive

29.To repeat while admiring my beauty

30.To repeat sexily

31.To repeat while showing my confidence

32.To repeat with hesitance

(Lys. cont.)

as a cheese beneath a grater.

LAMP & KAL:

³³And if I am, I'll lie cold as a fish and passive as a cheese beneath a grater.

LYSISTRATA:

I shall not point my slippers at the ceiling--

LAMP & KAL:

³⁴I shall not point my slippers at the ceiling--

LYSISTRATA:

I shall not crouch above him like a lioness.

LAMP & KAL:

³⁵I shall not crouch above him like a lioness.

LYSISTRATA:

To seal this oath, I set lips to this bowl.

LAMP & KAL:

³⁶To seal this oath, I set lips to this bowl.

LYSISTRATA:

If I should break this vow, may all my drinks henceforth be only water.

33.To repeat while struggling with the words

34.To repeat

35.To repeat while showing passion

36.To repeat excitedly

LAMP & KAL:

³⁷If I should break this vow, may all my drinks
henceforth be only water.

LYSISTRATA:

Do all of you swear?

LAMP & KAL:

³⁸We swear!

LAMPITO:

³⁹What's all that bodacious ruckus?

LYSISTRATA:

What did I tell you? The old ladies have done it!
The Parthenon is ours! And now be off with you,
Lampito, go work on your Spartan men. Let's bar the
gates.

KALONIKE:

But won't the men soon organize a charge and try
to throw us out?

LYSISTRATA:

Who cares? Their empty threats will prove of no
account. They'll fight with fire, but we shall never
yield. We'll dictate terms, and triumph in the field!

37.To repeat speedily

38.To agree aggravatedly

39.To wonder

LYSISTRATA (the second scene)

KINESIAS:

¹What a drag it's been since Myrrhine ran out on me. ²
It hurts to go home to an empty house. I eat my dinner
alone, go to bed alone. All the time alone--³except for
this extra limb.

MYRRHINE:

Oh, Goddess Venus, how I love him, love him! But
I'm not supposed to love him. Oh no, I'd best not see
him!

KINESIAS:

⁴Myrrhine, honey! ⁵What are you doing to me? ⁶Get
your sweet ass here on the double!

MYRRHINE:

No. I won't.

KINESIAS:

⁷Don't you know me, cookie? This is your husband
asking you! ⁸ I need you bad!

MYRRHINE:

You don't really need me.

KINESIAS:

⁹Don't I? Just look at me, honey--I'm a nut case!

MYRRHINE:

Bye bye. I'm going.

1.To fret

2.To gain sympathy

3.To illustrate

4.To see enthusiastically

5.To try to understand

6.To command

7.To plead for affection

8.To illustrate

9.To beg

KINESIAS:

¹⁰Hold on--stop! ¹¹Listen to your baby! ¹²Come on kid,
holler.

(imitating child)

¹³Mama! Mama! Mama!

(returning to normal)

¹⁴There you are. Myrrhine, dearest, has your heart
gone hard? The poor little kid hasn't had a change
or a square meal in practically a week.

MYRRHINE:

I'm hard-hearted? Me? You big oaf, you're the one
who's neglected the child.

KINESIAS:

¹⁵Well then, come over here and take care of him.

MYRRHINE:

I'm weak. Gods help me, mother-love forces me to
give in every time.

KINESIAS:

¹⁶Oh, wow, she's younger--lovelier--sexier than ever!
She's the girl I married. Her little frown--oh, gods,
it just fires me up all the more!

MYRRHINE:

Poor little sweetums, is bad old Daddy mean to oo?
Ummmmm! Mommy's gonna kiss you, lambie-pie!

10.To halt

11.To come up with idea

12.To force

13.To imitate

14.To play heart-strings

15.To offer a solution

16.To fantasize

KINESIAS:

¹⁷Honey, will you kindly tell me why you're treating me this way? Why lock yourself in the Acropolis, holed up with all those dames? ¹⁸You're only hurting the both of us.

MYRRHINE:

Get your big meathooks off of me!

KINESIAS:

¹⁹And the house is going to Hell in a handbasket. It's all your fault.

MYRRHINE:

I should care.

KINESIAS:

²⁰Doesn't it even matter that the chickens are pooping all over your best bedspread?

MYRRHINE:

Let 'em poop!

KINESIAS:

²¹And what about you and me? We haven't had any Venus-worship together in a dog's age.

²²Please, honey, come home!

MYRRHINE:

Not till you men stop fighting and make peace.

17.To demand an explanation

18.To rationalize

19.To blame

20.To disgust

21.To seduce

22.To beg

KINESIAS:

²³Oh. Is that all you want? We'll do it!

MYRRHINE:

Then do it. But I'm not coming home until you do. I've sworn a sacred oath.

KINESIAS:

Well, can't you give me a little loving? It's been forever.

MYRRHINE:

Sorry, No way. Kin, dearest, it's not that I don't love you, you understand?

KINESIAS:

²⁴Then how about doing it? Now!

MYRRHINE:

What, you big jerk? In front of the child?

KINESIAS:

²⁵Oh, yeah. Hey, I didn't mean--

(throws child)

²⁶Ok, sweetpuss, now Baby's bound for home.

Let's you and me hop to it!

MYRRHINE:

Are you nuts? There isn't any place to do it here.

23.To appease

24.To stutter in confusion

25.To calm worries

26.To boast

KINESIAS:

²⁷How about Pan's Grotto? There's a back room--

MYRRHINE:

And if we did it there, how could I reenter the shrine? I'd need to get re-purified.

KINESIAS:

²⁸Just douche off in that spring, the Klepsyora.

MYRRHINE:

Surely you wouldn't make me break my oath?

KINESIAS:

²⁹Break the damned oath! ³⁰You can blame me.

³¹Don't fret about it.

MYRRHINE:

Wait here. I'll get a cot.

KINESIAS:

³²Don't even bother, honey. Let's just flop right here in the dirt.

MYRRHINE:

In the dirt? Darling, you know I love you like my life, but---ugh!--not in the dirt!

KINESIAS:

³³Hot damn! At least she love me!

27.To stop refusal

28.To fix the problem

29.To demand

30.To offer an excuse

31.To care for

32.To give a better way

33.To proclaim

MYRRHINE:

All right now, dearest, you stretch out on this.
I'll slide my slip off--just you wait. Oh, darn.
Where's the mattress?

KINESIAS:

³⁴Mattress? Who needs a mattress!

MYRRHINE:

Well, we can't do it on a bare cot.

KINESIAS:

³⁵The hell we can't! Give us a little kiss.

MYRRHINE:

Don't go away. I'll only be a second.

KINESIAS:

³⁶Yum! Hurry back! Honey, I'm dying for you!

MYRRHINE:

There, that's better. Now lie down, darling, get
all comfy. Oh-oh. No pillow.

KINESIAS:

³⁷God damn the pillow! Who needs a pillow anyway?

MYRRHINE:

Well, I need a pillow. Hold on, be right back.

34.To question emphatically

35.To beg for love

36.To prove need

37.To protest

KINESIAS:

³⁸My poor dick is starting to feel like Heracles
robbed of his dinner.

MYRRHINE:

Now. Let's just slide this pillow under your head.
Anything else you need?

KINESIAS:

³⁹Nothing but you dammit! C'mere!

MYRRHINE:

I'm getting ready! I'll slip my undies off! Now
dear, don't forget about that peace treaty.

KINESIAS:

⁴⁰May the gods blast me blind if I do!

MYRRHINE:

Hold on--we don't have a blanket.

KINESIAS:

⁴¹Screw the blanket!

MYRRHINE:

Poor darling, I must take good care of you. Back
in a flash!

KINESIAS:

⁴²Cot. Mattress. Pillow. Now it's blankets. ⁴³This

38.To sympathize with penis

39.To force

40.To gain trust

41.To vehemently disagree

42.To list in disgust

43.To complain

(kin. cont.)

woman is driving me bonkers!

MYRRHINE:

Here we are. Now let me just arrange it nice.
Get up a second, dear, will you?

KINESIAS:

⁴⁴Get up? I've been up for days.

MYRRHINE:

How about a nice long rub-down with some oil?

KINESIAS:

⁴⁵Oil? Oil? OIL, you say?

MYRRHINE:

Well, I'm going to give you a nice rub-down,
a little teensy-weensy one.

KINESIAS:

⁴⁶Father of the Gods, make her spill the damn-blasted
oil!

MYRRHINE:

Now hold out your hand and I'll give you some.
You smear it on good.

KINESIAS:

⁴⁷Yuk! This oil stinks!

44.To crack a joke

45.To swirl with angry astonishment

46.To pray

47.To smell

MYRRHINE:

Oh, dear. I brought the fish oil by mistake.

KINESIAS:

⁴⁸I don't give a damn, it smells great!

MYRRHINE:

No, no, darling, this won't do. I'll just go get some lovely aloe lotion.

KINESIAS:

⁴⁹Great Zeus and all the gods! Won't you send to everlasting Hell whatever sill bastard invented rub-downs!

MYRRHINE:

Here we go, dearest. A nice fresh bottle of lotion all for you.

KINESIAS:

⁵⁰I've already got a lotion bottle, and it's ready to pop its cork. ⁵¹Woman! will you kindly stop running around and plant your butt down here on this cot?

MYRRHINE:

I'm coming, darling. See, I'm taking off my shoes. You will support the peace movement, won't you?

KINESIAS:

⁵²Don't worry--I need a peace, all right! ⁵³Hey, where

48.To appease by lying

49.To curse

50.To kid flirtingly

51.To demand

52.To conceal true intentions

53.To call for longingly

(kin. cont.)

are you going? Come back! ⁵⁴Good gods,
I've just been pussy-whipped! ⁵⁵After all that
fuss she runs out on me!

(singing)

⁵⁶Now what'll I do?
I haven't a clue.
My heart--and my privates--are sore.
I'm down in the dumps
with an ache in my lumps--
doesn't anyone know a good whore?

54.To realize

55.To bitch

56.To sing

THE SEXUAL CONGRESS
(ECCLESIAZUSAE)



UGLY OLD BROAD:

Whats keeping all those men? The dinner's got to be over by now. And here I stand, ready and waiting ready to pounce on the first to pass by. O Muses! Touch my lips with a lewd Ionian air.

NYMPHET:

You think, you rotten old thing, that you've gotten the jump on me. You thought to strip the vines when everyone's back was turned and hook a man.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Take this, little sweetie, and go play with yourself! I hope your hole seals up, and when you're ready to fuck, no one can find the seam! I hope when you're kissing with your hand on his jake...you'll discover that it's a snake!

NYMPHET:

Oh, what's to become of me? There's not a boy in sight. And I'm here all alone, my mom has gone out and nobody cares for me. And where's my dear Nanny with her toy, "Big Dick," that makes her so wet and so slick?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Poor little baby's so hot that she's begging for a dildo, or maybe a lady from Lesbos where with women there is sucking! But you'll never take my fun away or lure a man from me, for I'm quite

(ug. brd. cont.)

as young as I feel. No man will ever get to you
before me.

NYMPHET:

At least not for my funeral. That's one on you!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Oh, sure, as if I haven't heard it. It's not my age
that's your problem.

NYMPHET:

What, then? Your wonderful makeup job,
Pink-cheeks?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Are you talking to me?

NYMPHET:

That you, skulking there?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Me? I'm waiting for my boyfriend, Epigenes.

NYMPHET:

You have a boyfriend? Apart from that geezer,
Geres?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I'll prove it even to you. He's on his way. And look

(ug. brd. cont.)

he's coming now.

NYMPHET:

But not for you.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Oh, yes he is, you snotty little brat!

NYMPHET:

We'll see who's right, you withered old fig.
I'm going back inside.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I'll step inside myself. I'm sure we'll soon find out
who's right and who's wrong.

EPIGENES:

¹If only I could tumble a hot little vixen and not
have to ball an ugly old broad when I do it.
It's no way for a free man to have to behave!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

You'll ball and you'll like it, by God! You're
free alright: to obey the law. But I'll slip out of
sight and see what he's going to do.

EPIGENES:

²And now to my hot little vixen.

1.To complain

2.To inform

UGLY OLD BROAD:

What's that knocking? Looking for me?

EPIGENES:

³No way!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

But you just knocked me up!

EPIGENES:

⁴I'm damned if I did!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

What else could you be doing? You're carrying a torch!

EPIGENES:

⁵I'm looking for a jerk from Friggonia.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

By what name?

EPIGENES:

⁶Not Diddleus, whom you're looking for.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

By Aphrodite, you'll diddle, like it or not!

EPIGENES:

⁷I don't take on cases that are dated over sixty.

3.To run

4.To deny

5.To explain

6.To insult

7.To justify

(epig. cont.)

They must be carried over to another session.
I only examine cases under twenty.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

That was when the men were in charge, Sweetcakes,
but now you've got to handle the old cases first!

EPIGENES:

⁸In the game of hearts, you can always pass.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

You sure weren't playing hearts when you sat down
to dinner.

EPIGENES:

⁹What do you mean? ¹⁰I've got to knock on this door.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Knock on any door, but this one's first!

EPIGENES:

¹¹I really have no need for a colander.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

You know you love me. You're just surprised to
see a lady at her door. So, give me a kiss.

EPIGENES:

¹²I can't; I'm afraid of your lover.

8.To escape

9.To question

10.To ignore

11.To degrade

12.To give excuses

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I wonder who you mean?

EPIGENES:

¹³The grim one who paints the funeral urns. You'd
Better hustle, or he'll find you out of doors.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I know what you want.

EPIGENES:

¹⁴And I know what you want, by God!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

For Aphrodite, who sent you to me, I will not let
you go!

EPIGENES:

¹⁵You're a senile old bat!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Don't be silly. I'm taking you to bed.

EPIGENES:

¹⁶I'm not yours unless you've paid the tax.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

By Aphrodite, there's nothing I like better than
fucking a boy your age.

13.To insult with a joke

14.To confess

15.To slap

16.To rationalize

EPIGENES:

¹⁷And I hate fucking someone like you. I will never agree to do it.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

The law says, by God, you'll do it.

EPIGENES:

¹⁸What's that?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

The law that says you've got to come with me.

EPIGENES:

¹⁹I dare you to read it out loud.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I certainly will: "The women have decreed that if a young man desires a young woman, he shall not have intercourse with her until he first services an old woman. Should he refuse and go to the young woman, then the old lady had the legal right with all impunity to catch and drag him away by the most obvious handle!"

EPIGENES:

²⁰Woe is me! I'm to be stretched out like Procrustes!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

The law's the law. you must obey the law.

17.To reject

18.To question

19.To dare

20.To panic

EPIGENES:

²¹What if one of my brothers or a friend puts
up my bail?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

No man can now enter into a deal where the
money's more than the price of a bushel and
two pecks of barley. The tables are turned!

EPIGENES:

²²I swear I'm sick!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

You'll not wiggle out.

EPIGENES:

²³I swear I'm a merchant, exempt from the law.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Slacker!

EPIGENES:

²⁴What can I do?

UGLY OLD BROAD:

When Duty whispers low, thou must...

EPIGENES:

²⁵Oh, well. Begin by spreading asafetida leaves over
the bier and broken vines for firewood. Decorate

21.To offer alternatives

22.To lie

23.To run

24.To secede

25.To Give up

(epig. cont.)

it with ribbons, set the urn beside it, and the jug
of holy water outside the door.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

And what about my wedding bouquet?

EPIGENES:

²⁶A waxen funeral wreath, by God, is what you'll
need, because you will fall to pieces once I start.

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

Hey, little missy! Just where do you think you're
going? That's against the law. It says specifically
he's got to fuck me first!

EPIGENES:

²⁷Oh, no. What hole did you pop out of? She's
uglier than the first. This dog has got to be the
Hound of Hell!

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

You! Come here! Move it, chicken! This way.
Step it up. That's more than enough clucking!

EPIGENES:

²⁸Hold it! I need to go to the crapper first. I've got to
get myself together. ²⁹If you don't let me, something's
going to happen. I'm so scared, I'll strike mud
right here!

26.To brag

27.To gag

28.To bide time

29.To threaten

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

Just you hold it. You can let it go indoors.

EPIGENES:

³⁰I'll have to let go in more ways than I want to, I'm sure. ³¹Look, I'll put up twice whatever you want in the way of ransom.

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

I don't want ransom, just you!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

You come with me.

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

Not so! This way!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

I'll never let you go!

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

And I won't either!

EPIGENES:

³²You're going to tear me in two, you crazy bitches!

UGLY OLD BROAD:

According to the law, you've got to come with me.

30.To admit

31.To bargain with

32.To scream

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

Not if an even uglier and older woman comes
along.

EPIGENES:

³³Now, listen. If you two kill me, how'll I ever get
to my hot vixen?

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

That's your problem, but this is your legal duty.

EPIGENES:

³⁴Okay, which of you two do I do first in order
to go my way?

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

That's plain to see; you come with me.

EPIGENES:

³⁵If she'll let go of my arm.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Step right this way.

EPIGENES:

³⁶But first she's got to let go!

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

I won't by God!

33.To reason with

34.To give in

35.To explain

36.To begin to panic

UGLY OLD BROAD:

Me neither!

EPIGENES:

³⁷You two are rougher than ferrymen!

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

How so?

EPIGENES:

³⁸You tear your passengers apart before you ever get them in the boat.

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

Enough joking! Come with me.

UGLY OLD BROAD:

This way!

EPIGENES:

³⁹This is just like Cannonus' law: I'm shackled before the cour, but I've got to fuck my chains!

⁴⁰And how am I going to row two boats at once?

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

You can do it. Just have some oysters and Ginseng.

EPIGENES:

⁴¹Woe is me! They've dragged me to the door.

37.To whine

38.To gasp

39.To compare

40.To sigh

41.To cringe

UGLY OLD BROAD:

There's no saving you now! There's room for three.

EPIGENES:

⁴²God, no! Not the toothless twosome together!

UGLIER OLD BROAD:

By Hecate, your fate is sealed. We've got you now.

EPIGENES:

⁴³I must fuck one crumpled back all night and then all day, but once she's done, another one is waiting to begin, a toad with lips as slick and slimy as an urn of embalming fluid. I am cursed by Zeus himself!

42.To panic severely

43.To cry in agony

MEDEA



JASON:

¹This is not the first time I have realized what a train of trouble a churlish temper brings! ²You could have stayed here, kept your home, if you'd accepted without fuss the decision of our rulers. ³But, because of your stupid talk, you are banished. ⁴But it doesn't bother me. Go on calling me the vilest names you like. ⁵But after what you said about the royal family, consider yourself lucky that your punishment is merely exile. ⁶ They are furious. ⁷ I've tried to calm their royal temper, I wanted you to stay. ⁸But you go on being foolish, endlessly abusing your masters, and so you are banished. ⁹Despite all this, I don't let my loved ones down. ¹⁰I've come, thinking of your needs, my dear: I wouldn't want you sent away with the children penniless or lacking anything. ¹¹Exile brings with it many problems. ¹²Even if you hate me, I could never wish you harm.

MEDEA:

You vile coward! Yes, I can call you that, the worst name that I know for your unmanliness! You've come to me, you, my worst enemy, come here? But that's not bravery or courage, to betray your loved ones, then look them in the eye. It's utter shamelessness, the worst disease that mankind suffers. However-you've done well to come. Abusing you will do me good and you will smart to hear it. I saved your life-as those Greeks know, who sailed with you in the Argo, when you were sent to yoke the fire-breathing

1. To lament
2. To expose foolishness
3. To slap
4. To acquiesce
5. To frighten
6. To shock
7. To befriend
8. To chide
9. To comfort
10. To care for
11. To warn
12. To make peace

(Med. cont.)

bulls and sow the field of death. It was I who killed the sleepless serpent, which within its tangled coils guarded the Golden Fleece. I lit the way for your escape. I betrayed my father and my home. With you I went to Iolcus under Pelion, with more loyalty than sense. I killed King Pelias-an agonizing death at his own daughters' hands-and destroyed his whole house. All this I did for you. And you, foulest of men, have betrayed me. You have got another woman, when I have borne you sons. If you had no children, this lusting for her might have been forgiven. Gone is all faith in oaths. I don't understand-can you really think the gods by whom we swore no longer rule? Or that now there is a new ordinance for men, when you know you have betrayed your promise to me? My poor hand, which you so often clasped, and knees you touched in supplication: All false! My hopes dashed by a traitor! But, come, I'll deal with you as if you were a friend-though what good do I think I'll get from you? Still, if you answer me, you'll show yourself in yet a baser light: Where can I now turn? To my father's house, my country, which I betrayed when I came here? Or to Pelias' wretched daughters? A fine welcome they would give me, who killed their father. The fact is, to my loved ones at home I am now an enemy: Those to whom I should have done no harm are-because I supported you-my sworn enemies. As my reward, you made me seem fortunate indeed in many Greek

(Med. cont.)

women's eyes! But what a marvelous husband I have!
So loyal and true! I shall be cast out, an exile
bereft of friends, alone and lonely with your sons.
That's a fine reproach you take into your new
marriage, that your sons and I, who saved your life,
are beggars on the road! Zeus, you granted men sure
signs to tell when gold is counterfeit. But when
we need to tell which men are false, why do our
bodies bear no stamp to show our worth?

JASON:

¹³I will ride out the tempest of your stinging tongue,
my dear. ¹⁴You build up your services to me; ¹⁵but I
consider that my only guardian on my travels, god or
man, was Aphrodite, she alone. ¹⁶You have a subtle
mind, but the unpalatable truth is it was Eros with his
inescapable darts who drove you to save my life.
¹⁷But I'll not make too fine a point of that. What help
you gave me I am grateful for. ¹⁸But in return for
saving me, you gained more than you gave, as I will
demonstrate. ¹⁹First: the country you left is primitive,
but now you live in Greece. You now know what
Justice means, enjoy the benefits of law, not the rule
of force. ²⁰All Greece has come to know your talents:
you are famous. ²¹If you still lived at the end of the
world, no one would mention you. ²²As far as I'm
concerned, I wouldn't pray for gold or skill to sing
better than Orpheus, if these did not bring me
celebrity. ²³So much for my exploits, in answer to

13. To ride out
14. To agree
15. To knock off pedestal
16. To rub in face
17. To change subject
18. To lessen importance
19. To contrast
20. To praise
21. To contrast
22. To identify with
23. To gloat

(Jas. cont.)

your challenge. ²⁴As for your spiteful words about my marriage with the princess, I'll show you that what I've done is wise and prudent; and I've acted out of love for you and for my sons. ²⁵Keep quiet! ²⁶When I moved here from Iolcus with a trail of problems and misfortune, what more lucky chance could I meet with, as an exile, than to marry the king's daughter? ²⁷It's not-as you are galled to think-that I am tired of your bed or smitten with desire for my new bride-nor keen to be a champion at fathering many sons. ²⁸The children which we have are enough. I have no complaint. My chief wish was that we should live well and not be poor- friends vanish when one's poor-and that I could bring up the boys in a manner worthy of my family; and, if I did have other sons, I could join them as brothers with my sons by you, and, uniting the family together, I could prosper. ²⁹What need have you of more children? ³⁰But it makes sense for me to gain advantages for those we already have by means of those to come. Is that such a bad idea? ³¹ You wouldn't say so, if you weren't sexually jealous. ³²Man should have found some other way to procreate. The female sex should not exist: Then we'd be free of all our troubles.

MEDEA:

To me, an unjust man who is also clever with words deserves the greatest penalty. Confident that he

24. To boast
25. To bulldoze
26. To tell a story
27. To make look foolish
28. To comfort
29. To quiz
30. To illustrate advantages
31. To expose truth
32. To blow off

(Med. Cont.)

can dress up his wrongdoing with specious words, he is brazen in his wickedness. And yet he is not so clever after all. So don't you try your plausible and clever arguments on me! One point will floor you: if you'd been honourable, you should have won me over before you married, not kept if from me!

JASON:

³³I'm sure that if I had announced my wedding plans, you would have been most helpful! ³⁴Even now you can't bring yourself to give up the great bitterness you feel.

MEDEA:

That is not what stopped you. You thought, as you grew older, it didn't look quite right to have a foreign wife.

JASON:

³⁵Get this straight: it is not for any woman that I made this royal marriage. ³⁶I've already said I did it to safeguard you, to father royal sons, brothers to my children, a security for my house.

MEDEA:

I want none of your hurtful "prosperity"

33. To mock

34. To pity

35. To punch

36. To calm down

JASON:

³⁷You'd better change your attitude. You'll be wise to accept what's best for you is not "hurtful". ³⁸You're fortunate.

MEDEA:

That's right, insult me! You have a way out. I am alone, condemned to exile.

JASON:

³⁹It was your own choice. Blame no one else.

MEDEA:

What have I done? Did I make you my wife and then betray you?

JASON:

⁴⁰You called down unholy curses on the royal family.

MEDEA:

I am that curse, to your house too.

JASON:

⁴¹I won't debate this further. ⁴²If you need money for the children or yourself, to support you in exile, let me know. I am happy to give, generously. ⁴³You will be foolish my dear to refuse. It will pay you to give up your anger.

37. To warn

38. To tell it like it is

39. To tell the truth

40. To destroy

41. To end all

42. To calm oneself

43. To show fallacy of ways

MEDEA:

I would not take advantage of your friends or
accept a thing. Don't try to give me anything!
There can be no profit in a traitor's gift.

JASON:

⁴⁴Then I call the Gods to witness that I am willing to
do any service for you and for the boys. ⁴⁵But you
do not want kindness: In your stubborn pride, you
reject your dear ones and make your suffering worse.

MEDEA:

Go! You're lusting for your new-won bride, go
to her bed! Perhaps-with the god's help, it will be
said-this marriage will be celebrated with a funeral
dirge!

44. To talk to the gods

45. To spit at

HECUBA



AGAMEMNON:

¹Why this delay of yours, Hecuba, in burying your daughter? ²I received your message that none of our men should touch her, and I gave strict orders to that effect. I found your delay all the more surprising and came to fetch you myself. ³In any case, what's this Trojan corpse beside the tents?⁴ I can see from his shroud that he's not a Greek.

HECUBA:

O gods, what shall I do? Throw myself at his knees and beg for mercy or hold my tongue and suffer in silence?

AGAMEMNON:

⁵Why do you turn away Hecuba? ⁶And what's the meaning of these tears? ⁷What happened here? ⁸Who is this man?

HECUBA:

But suppose he treats me with contempt, like a slave and pushes me away? I could not bear it.

AGAMEMNON:

⁹I am not a prophet, Hecuba. ¹⁰Unless you speak, you make it quite impossible for me to help you.

HECUBA:

And yet I could be wrong. Am I imagining? He may mean well.

1. To confront
2. To inform
3. To inquire firmly
4. To criticize
5. To worry about
6. To analyze
7. To doubt
8. To demand
9. To state obvious
10. To warn

AGAMEMNON:

¹¹If you have nothing to say, Hecuba, very well. I have no wish to hear.

HECUBA:

But without his help I lose my only chance of revenging my children. So why should I hesitate? Win or lose, he is my only hope. Agamemnon, I implore you, I beg you by your beard, your knees, by this conquering hand, help me!

AGAMEMNON:

¹²What can I do to help you Hecuba? Your freedom is yours for the asking.

HECUBA:

No, not freedom. Revenge. Only give me my revenge and I'll gladly stay a slave the rest of my life.

AGAMEMNON:

¹³Revenge? Revenge on whom Hecuba?

HECUBA:

My lord, not the revenge you think, not that at all. Do you see this body here, this naked corpse for which I mourn?

AGAMEMNON:

¹⁴I see him very well, though no one yet has told me who he is.

11. To give an ultimatum

12. To care for

13. To question intentions

14. To get to the point

HECUBA:

This was my son. I gave birth to him.

AGAMEMNON:

¹⁵Which son, poor woman?

HECUBA:

Not one of those who dies for Troy.

AGAMEMNON:

¹⁶You mean you had another son?

HECUBA:

Another son to die. This was he.

AGAMEMNON:

¹⁷But where was he when Troy was taken?

HECUBA:

His father sent him away to save his life.

AGAMEMNON:

¹⁸This was the only son he sent away? ¹⁹Where did he send him?

HECUBA:

Here. To this country where his body was found.

AGAMEMNON:

²⁰He sent him to Polymestor, the king of Thrace?

15. To mourn

16. To drop jaw

17. To comprehend

18. To doubt

19. To wonder

20. To not believe

HECUBA:

And with his son he also sent a sum of fatal gold.

AGAMEMNON:

²¹But how did he die? Who killed him?

HECUBA:

Who else? His loving host, our loyal friend in Thrace

AGAMEMNON:

²²Then his motive, you think, was the gold?

HECUBA:

Yes. The instant he heard that Troy had fallen,
he killed.

AGAMEMNON:

²³But where was the body found? Who brought him
here?

HECUBA:

An old servant. She found his body lying on the
beach.

AGAMEMNON:

²⁴He must have killed him and thrown his body
in the sea.

HECUBA:

Hacked him, tossed him to the pounding surf.

21. To demand an answer

22. To sleuth

23. To pry details

24. To sigh

AGAMEMNON:

²⁵I pity you, Hecuba. Your suffering has no end.

HECUBA:

I died long ago. Nothing can touch me now.

AGAMEMNON:

²⁶What woman on this earth was ever cursed like this?

HECUBA:

There is none but goddess Suffering herself. But let me tell you why I kneel at your feet. And if my sufferings seem just, then I must be content. But if otherwise, give me my revenge on that treacherous friend who flouted every god in heaven and in hell to do this brutal murder. At our table he was our frequent guest; was counted first among our friends, respected, honored by me, receiving every kindness that a man could meet-and then, in cold deliberation, killed my son. Murder may have its reasons, its motives, but this-to refuse my son a grave, to throw him to the sea, unburied! I am a slave, I know, and slaves are weak. But the gods are strong, and over them there stands some absolute, some moral order or principle of law more final still. Upon this moral law the world depends; through it the gods exist; by it we live, defining good and evil. Apply that law to me. For if you flout it now, and those who murder in cold blood or defy the gods go unpunished, then human justice withers, corrupted at its source. Honor

25. To pity

26. To pity in utter disbelief

(Hec. cont.)

my request, Agamemnon. Punish this murder
Pity me. Be like a painter. Stand back, see me
in perspective, see me whole, observe my
wretchedness-once a queen, and now a slave;
blessed with children, happy once, now childless,
utterly alone, homeless, lost, unhappiest of
women on this earth... O gods, you turn away-
what can I do? My only hope is lost. O this
helplessness! Why, why do we make so much
of knowledge, struggle so hard to get some
little skill not worth the effort? But persuasion,
the only art whose power is absolute, worth any
price we pay, we totally neglect. And so we fail;
we lose our hopes. But as for happiness, who could
look at me and any longer dare to hope: I have
seen my children die, and bound to shame I walk
this homeless earth, a slave, and see the smoke that
leaps up over Troy. It may be futile now to urge
the claims of love, but let me urge them anyway.
At your side sleeps my daughter Cassandra, once the
priestess of Apollo. What will you give, my lord,
for those nights of love? What thanks for all her
tenderness in bed does she receive from you, and I,
in turn, from her? Look now at this dead boy,
Cassandra's brother. Revenge him. Be kind to her
by being kind to him. One word more. If by some
magic, some gift of the gods, I could become all
speech-tongues in my arms, hands that talked, voices
speaking, crying from my hair and feet-then, all

(Hec. cont.)

together, as one voice, I would fall and touch
your knees, crying, begging, imploring with
a thousand tongues-O master, greatest light of
Hellas, hear me, help this woman, avenge her!
She is nothing at all, but hear her, help her even
so. Do your duty as a man of honor: see justice
done. Punish this murder.

AGAMEMNON:

²⁷I pity you deeply, Hecuba, for the tragic death of
this poor boy. ²⁸And I am touched and stirred by
your request. ²⁹So far as justice is concerned, god
knows, nothing would please me more than to bring
this murderer to justice. ³⁰But my position is delicate.
If I give you your revenge, the army is sure to charge
that I connived at the death of the king of Thrace
because of my love for Cassandra. ³¹This is my
dilemma. ³²The army thinks of Polymestor as its
friend, this boy as its enemy. You love your son,
but what do your affections matter to the Greeks?
³³Put yourself in my position. ³⁴ Believe me, Hecuba,
I should like to act on your behalf and would come
instantly to your defense, but if the army mutters,
then I must be slow.

HECUBA:

Then no man on earth is truly free. All are slaves
of money or necessity. Public opinion or fear of
prosecution forces each one, against his conscience,

27. To connect hearts
28. To cry together
29. To attack
30. To retreat
31. To remorse
32. To give details
33. To challenge
34. To identify but deny

(Hec. cont.)

to conform. but since your fears make you defer to the mob, let a slave set you free from what you fear. Be my confidant, the silent partner of my plot to kill my son's murderer. Give me your passive support. Then if violence breaks out or the Greeks attempt a rescue, obstruct them covertly without appearing to act for me. For the rest, have no fear. I shall manage.

AGAMEMNON:

³⁵How? Poison? Or do you think that shaking hand could lift a sword and kill? ³⁶Who will help you? On whom can you count?

HECUBA:

Remember: there are women hidden in these tents.

AGAMEMNON:

³⁷You mean our prisoners?

HECUBA:

They will help me get revenge.

AGAMEMNON:

³⁸But women? Women overpower men?

HECUBA:

There is power in numbers, and cunning makes us strong.

35. To make fun of

36. To deter

37. To double take

38. To hesitate

OEDIPUS REX



JOCASTA:

If you love the Gods, tell me Oedipus--
I implore you--why are you still so angry,
why can't you let it go?

OEDIPUS:

¹I will tell you, Jocasta. ²You mean more to me
than these men. ³It is Kreon-Kreon and his plots
against me.

JOCASTA:

What started your quarrel?

OEDIPUS:

⁴He said I murdered Laios.

JOCASTA:

On what evidence? Does he know something?
Or is it just hearsay?

OEDIPUS:

⁵He sent me a vicious, trouble-making prophet to
avoid implicating himself. ⁶He did not say it to my
face.

JOCASTA:

Oedipus, forget all this. Listen to me. No mortal
can practice the art of prophecy, no man can see the
future. I can teach you something from my own
experience. I can prove it to you. Long ago a

1. To recognize
2. To seek solace
3. To spit at
4. To astound
5. To insult
6. To challenge

(Joc. cont.)

prophecy came to Laios. It wasn't from Apollo himself but from his priests. No matter, it said that Laios was doomed to be murdered by his own son. A son to be born of him and to me. But Laios, so the story goes, was killed by foreign robbers at a place where three highways meet. As for the son, my poor baby was only three days old when Laios had his feet pierced together behind the ankles and gave orders to abandon our child on a mountain, leave him alone to die in a wilderness of rocks where there were no roads, no people. So you see, Apollo didn't make the son kill his father. Laios wasn't murdered by his own son. That terrible act that so terrified Laios never happened. The prophecies meant nothing, nothing. Don't pay any attention to oracle voices. Apollo creates. Apollo reveals. He needs no help from men.

OEDIPUS:

⁷While you were talking, Jocasta, something flashed through my mind. I can almost see it-some memory, an image that has hit my very soul.

JOCASTA:

What do you mean? What is it?

OEDIPUS:

⁸Did you say Laios was killed at a place where three highways meet?

7. To remember

8. To make sure

JOCASTA:

Yes, that's what the story was, and still is.

OEDIPUS:

⁹Where did it happen? ¹⁰Tell me. Where?

JOCASTA:

In Phokis. Where the roads from Delphi and Daulia meet.

OEDIPUS:

¹¹When? How long ago?

JOCASTA:

We heard the news here in Thebes just before you appeared and became King.

OEDIPUS:

¹²O Zeus, Zeus, what are you doing with my life?

JOCASTA:

What is wrong with you? What--

OEDIPUS:

¹³Don't ask me. Not yet. ¹⁴Tell me about Laios. How old was he? What did he look like?

JOCASTA:

Streaks of gray were just beginning to show in his black hair. He was tall, strong-built something like you.

9. To extract
10. To force
11. To panic
12. To beg for mercy
13. To shut down
14. To check the facts

OEDIPUS:

¹⁵No! ¹⁶Oh gods, it seems each hard, arrogant curse
I spit out was meant for me, and I didn't even
know it!

JOCASTA:

Oedipus, what do you mean? You are frightening me,
please.

OEDIPUS:

¹⁷It will be frightening if the blind prophet can see.
¹⁸I would know if you told me...

JOCASTA:

Told you what?

OEDIPUS:

¹⁹Was Laios travelling with a small escort or with
many armed men like a king?

JOCASTA:

There were only five, including a herald. Laios was
riding in the only chariot.

OEDIPUS:

²⁰O light. Now everything, everything is clear in the
daylight. ²¹Who was it that told you all this at the time?

JOCASTA:

A household slave. The only survivor.

15. To hope not

16. To realize

17. To frighten

18. To hesitate

19. To reveal

20. To panic

21. To make sure

OEDIPUS:

²²Can he be called back? ²³Now?

JOCASTA:

It can be done. But why?

OEDIPUS:

²⁴I'm afraid I've said too much. ²⁵That's why I want to see this man. I must see him.

JOCASTA:

Then he will come. But surely I have a right to know what disturbs you so, Oedipus.

OEDIPUS:

²⁶Now that I've come this far, Jocasta, I won't keep anything from you. ²⁷Wandering through a maze of fate like this, how could I confide in anyone but you? ²⁸My father was Polybos, of Corinth. My mother, Merope, was Dorian. ²⁹Everyone in Corinth saw me as its first citizen, but one day something happened, something strange, puzzling. Puzzling but nothing more. ³⁰Still, it worried me. ³¹One night, I was at a banquet, and a man-he was very drunk-said I wasn't my father's son, called me "bastard". ³²That stung me, I was shocked. I could barely control my anger, I lay awake all night. ³³The next day I went to my father and mother, I questioned them about the man and what he had said. ³⁴They were furious with him, outraged by his insult, and I was reassured. ³⁵But I

22. To insist
23. To hammer
24. To retreat
25. To explain hesitance
26. To confide
27. To caress
28. To state
29. To remember
30. To qualify
31. To reveal
32. To hurt
33. To continue
34. To like
35. To envision

(Oed. cont.)

kept hearing the word “bastard”-”bastard”- I couldn’t get it out of my head. ³⁶Without my parent’s knowledge I went to Delphi: ³⁷ I wanted the truth, but Apollo refused to answer me. ³⁸And yet he did reveal other things, he did show me a future dark with torment, evil, horror, he made me see-see myself, doomed to sleep with my own mother, doomed to bring children into this world, children no one could bear to see, doomed to murder the man who gave me life, whose blood is my blood. My father. ³⁹And after I heard all this I fled Corinth, measuring my progress by the stars, searching for a place where I would never see those words, those dreadful predictions come true. ⁴⁰And on my way I came to the place where you say King Laios was murdered. ⁴¹ Jocasta, the story I’m about to tell you is the truth: ⁴²I was on the road, near the triple crossroads you mentioned, when I met a herald, with an old, just you described him. The man was riding in a chariot and his driver tried to push me off the road and when he shoved me I hit him. ⁴³ I hit him. ⁴⁴The old man stood quiet in the chariot until I passed by then he leaned out and caught me on the head with an ugly goad-its two teeth wounded me-⁴⁵and with this hand of mine, this hand clenched around my staff, I struck him back even harder-so hard, so quick he couldn’t even dodge it, and he fell out of the chariot and hit the ground, face up. ⁴⁶I killed them. Every one of

36. To confess
37. To justify
38. To horrify
39. To crumple
40. To reveal
41. To warn
42. To remember
43. To regret
44. To insult
45. To crush
46. To confess

(Oed. cont.)

them. I still see them. ⁴⁷If this stranger and Laios are somehow linked by blood, tell me what man's torment equals mine? ⁴⁸Citizens, hear my curse again-give this man nothing. Let him touch nothing of yours. Lock your doors when he approaches. ⁴⁹Say nothing to him when he comes. ⁵⁰And these, these curses, with my own mouth I spoke these monstrous curses against myself. ⁵¹These hands, these bloodstained hands made love to you in your dead husband's bed. ⁵²These hands murdered him. ⁵³If I must be exiled, never to see my family, never to walk the soil of my country so I will not sleep with my mother and kill Polybus, my father, who raised me-⁵⁴his son!-wasn't I born evil? ⁵⁵Answer me! Isn't every part of me unclean? ⁵⁶Oh some unknown god, some savage demon must have done this, swollen with hatred, hatred for me. ⁵⁷O gods don't let me see that day, don't let it come, take me away from men, men with their eyes, hide me before I see the filthy black stain reaching down over me, into me. ⁵⁸The only hope I have is waiting. Waiting for that man to come from the pastures.

JOCASTA:

And when he finally comes, what do you hope to learn?

47. To plead
48. To curse
49. To crumble
50. To cry
51. To seek solace
52. To force sight
53. To state
54. To spit on oneself
55. To demand
56. To seek scapegoat
57. To beg for mercy
58. To hope

OEDIPUS:

⁵⁹If his story matches yours, I am saved.

JOCASTA:

What makes you say that?

OEDIPUS:

⁶⁰Robbers-you said he told you several robbers killed Laios. ⁶¹So if he still talks about robbers more than one, I couldn't have killed Laios. One man is not the same as many men. ⁶²But if he speaks of one man, traveling alone, then all the evidence points to me.

JOCASTA:

Believe me, Oedipus, those were his words. And he can't take them back: the whole city heard him, not just me. And if he changes only the smallest detail of his story, that still won't prove Laios was murdered as the oracle fortold. Apollo was clear-it was Laios' fate to be killed by my son, but my poor child died before his father died. The future has no shape. The shapes of prophecy lie. I see nothing in them, they are illusions.

OEDIPUS:

⁶³Even so, I want that shepherd summoned here.

⁶⁴Now. Do it now.

59. To wish

60. To rejoice

61. To reveal

62. To sober

63. To remind

64. To beg urgently

JOCASTA:

I'll send for him immediately. But come inside.
Rest. You have nothing to fear. Not now, not
ever.

Video Selections

I have included a series of selections of the performance. There are seven clips from the play, all separated by titles. I chose these particular pieces because I think they show a clear picture of the performance. The first clip is the opening ritual, or the comedic ritual. I included this particular one because it shows some of the physical challenges we had to deal with during these rituals. It looks very free form, but every movement was well rehearsed and choreographed. It also illustrates the difference between the rituals that bookend the play. This particular one was before the comedy, so it was more light-hearted.

The next clip I have included is from *Lysistrata*. In this scene, I am performing the part of Lampito. It clearly illustrates the issues I talked of earlier. You can see the costume requirements, the movement requirements, and the voice requirements. Also, you can clearly see the makeup that we had to use onstage. Pay attention to the accent that I use. As mentioned earlier, this was one of the decisions that really shaped this character. You also get to see the modest reaction to the touches of the other two characters as well as the masculine tendencies in her.

Following this scene is the second *Lysistrata*. I have included a particular clip from this scene that illustrates the back and forth nature of the piece. In it, Myrrhine teases Kinesias. This scene shows the frustration level that Kinesias is brought to that escalates as the scene goes on. It also shows the timing that my fellow actress and I had to master to get the scene to flow.

Next is the scene from *Sexual Congress*. It is my first entrance, and it clearly shows the audience's reaction to my giant phallus as well as my characterization of Epigenes. This

characterization manifests itself in the form of a walk, an accent, and other nuances. Notice the grooming that takes place at the water fountain. This scene also illustrates the challenges faced in timing the sound cues. My “knock” on the door is out of synch in this clip. As I said earlier, this was a difficult moment to create. Finally, you see the reaction Epigenes has to the ugly hag. The instant disgust and the imminent chase are evident.

From *Medea*, I chose a piece that showed the extent of this domestic quarrel. In this clip, I am spit on and I break into a yelling match. This heightens the piece and raises the stakes of the scene. You also see for the first time some of the slow movement that was prevalent in the tragic scenes.

Next is *Hecuba*. I chose this clip because it clearly illustrates the style involved in the tragedy. My first movement in the clip is very deliberate and surreal. When Hecuba flees from me, notice that neither of us are looking at anything in particular. It is all very stylized. Also, notice the costumes and how heavy they are as well as the difference between the tragic and comic makeup.

This next clip is a transition. I mentioned before that we linked the tragic scenes together using ritual movement and chanting. This particular transition leads into *Oedipus Rex*. Notice the raw emotion that leads into the scene, tying everything together. This particular transition was very complex. The chanting I am doing at the top of the stage becomes a scream of agony that leads into *Oedipus*.

The next one is from *Oedipus Rex*. I chose this piece for its pure intensity and rawness. I think it clearly illustrates the work I did in creating this rich character. The proclamations at the end seem powerful to me for many reasons, but most importantly because of the way it tapers off

at the end. This shows the physical and mental state of this tormented character. He is in true agony.

Lastly, I have included the entire closing ritual from the play. Notice the difference between this and the comedic ritual. This ritual is much slower and methodical. It is also more menacing. This ritual was both functional and spiritual. It helped us to get our robes off as well as setting us up for a curtain call. I think it is beautiful and I think seeing it on this clip does not do the justice that seeing it in person does.

Bibliography

- Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*. trans. Dudley Fitts. San Diego: Harcourt, 1960
- Aristophanes. *The Birds*. Trans. Dudley Fitts. San Diego: Harcourt, 1960.
- Aristophanes. *The Congresswomen (Ecclesiazusae)*. Trans. Douglas Parker. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1967.
- Aristophanes. *Aristophanes, 2*. Trans. Slavitt and Bovie. Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Brockett, Oscar G. *History of the Theatre: Seventh Edition*. Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.
- Bruder, Mellisa, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeline Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Roberto Previto, Scott Zigler. *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. New York: Random, 1986.
- Epstein, Sabin R. *Acting With Style*. Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.
- Euripedes. *Alcestis*. Trans. Dudley Fitts. San Diego: Harcourt, 1960
- Euripedes. *Euripedes, 1*. Trans. Grene and Lattimore. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1955.
- Ferguson, John. *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Austin: U. of Texas, 1972.
- Karnell, Phillip. *Graduate Acting Supplement*. New Orleans: U. of New Orleans, 2003.
- Lever, Katherine. *The Art of Greek Comedy*. London: Methuen and Co., 1956.
- Meisner, Sanford, and Dennis Longwell. *Sanford Meisner on Acting*. New York: Random House, 1987.
- Menander. *The Plays and Fragments*. Trans. Maurice Balme. New York: Oxford Press, 2001.

- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Flies*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Vintage Books, 1947.
- Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*. Trans. Dudley Fitts. San Diego: Harcourt, 1960
- Sophocles. *The Oedipus Cycle*. Trans. Dudley Fitts. New York: Harcourt, 1940
- Stanislavski, Constantine. *An Actor Prepares*. New York: Theatre arts Books, 1989.
- Stanislavski, Constantine. *Becoming a Character*. New York: Theatre arts Books, 1989
- Stanislavski, Constantine. *Creating a Role*. New York: Theatre arts Books, 1989.
- Willis, Roy. *Dictionary of World Myth: An A-Z guide to gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, and fabulous beasts*. London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2002.

Vita

Born on May 16, 1978 in McComb, Mississippi, Shane Stewart grew up in rural Greensburg, Louisiana. Upon graduation from high school in 1996, Shane began his collegiate career at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Southeastern Louisiana University in 2000, Shane began graduate studies to earn his Master of Fine Arts degree in performance at the University of New Orleans. Shane intends to pursue a career in collegiate level education and playwriting.