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## It's All Greek To Me: Orestes 2.0

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It's All Greek To Me: Orestes 2.0

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  
Film and Theatre  
Theatre Performance: Directing

By

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B.A. University of Southern Mississippi

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## Abstract

“It’s a nightmare, really.” Orestes returns from exile to take revenge for his father’s death. From there begins a dizzying exploration into what it means to take revenge, what familial ties really mean, and what happens to a country after the long, drawn out war is finally over. *Orestes 2.0* takes a bold look into these ideas and more, using Euripides’ ancient play as a touchstone and putting a contemporary spin on it by borrowing from many, many different sources. The award-winning University of New Orleans’ production of *Orestes 2.0* strives to open the world of ancient Greek to a modern audience and make them realize that there are no new problems and we have been dealing with these basic issues since time immemorial.

Timothy O’Neal, *Orestes 2.0*, Orestes, Charles Mee, adaptation, Greek Theatre

## Chapter 1: Euripides and Chuck Mee

Euripides was one of the three great tragedians of Ancient Greece, the others being Aeschylus and Sophocles. It is assumed that he was born around 480 – 485 BCE on the island of Salamis and died sometime in the year of 406 BCE, possibly as the court poet to King Archelaus of Macedon. (Wright 10) One reason the year of his death is known is due to Aristophanes' play written in 405 BCE, *The Frogs*, about Dionysus descending to the Underworld to retrieve and honor Euripides. (Melchinger 36). It is not for lack of poor record keeping either that his birth date and death date are not necessarily known. The Greeks enjoyed moving events around in order to romanticize history and built a wonderful myth around the three tragic playwrights. Aeschylus was an officer in the war against the Persians in 480 BCE, Sophocles was 16 years old during the exodus to the island of Salamis by the Athenians as Athens went up in flames, and Euripides was born on the island that very same year. (Melchinger 7-8)

Of the three tragedians, Euripides was most probably the most influential based on the amount of plays that survived to the present, 18, versus Aeschylus's 6 and Sophocles 7. (Emory web) Not only are there 18 surviving plays, one of them, *Cyclops*, is the only example of a satyr play. Missing, though, is the trilogy that went along with the satyr play. Sadly, none of his trilogies exist completely; the only trilogy to survive the course of time is Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. Popular and influential he may have been, in his fifty years of playwriting, he only managed four wins at the Great Dionysian festival. (Walton 5)

We know that Euripides grew up on the island of Salamis and joined public life when it was time. He worked in the compulsory fields of the arts, politics, military and athletics. In fact, it is believed when his mother brought him to an oracle who prophesied he would wear a crown of laurel and his mother interpreted that as Euripides would have a great future as an athlete. Thankfully, that did not happen or we wouldn't have the rich and experimental plays we have today. Sadly, not much is honestly known of Euripides' personal life after he started writing as he withdrew from the public forum to become a thinker and a writer.

There was one main thing that influenced and shaped many plays of the time *Orestes* was written and performed, both his and Aristophanes: the Peloponnesian War. While it is a more overt foundation in some of the extant works of Aristophanes, such as the women of Athens and Sparta in *Lysistrata* holding out on sex until their husbands quit fighting, Euripides' extant plays mainly deal with the conflict through metaphorical retellings of classic tales, and *Orestes* is no exception. Set after the Trojan War, a ten-year long conflict that stems from gods-instigated wife theft, *Orestes* shows us what a long-lasting war can do to the ruling class and its populace. Before the war, Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia, his oldest daughter, to appease Artemis for having insulted her by hunting her favorite deer. This enrages Clytemnestra, who was told nothing about any of this. Agamemnon sails off with Menelaus to win back Helen. Clytemnestra, meanwhile, conspires with Aegisthus, the brothers' cousin from their father's disgraced side, to kill Agamemnon when he finally gets back to Argos. She also exiles Orestes, who heads to Phanote and meets Pylades. The eventual deaths of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus occur not too long after the end of the war and Electra and Orestes are left there to pick up the pieces of a history of distrust and betrayal.

Where the Peloponnesian War (roughly 431-404 BCE) comes into all of this is it had been raging for nearly 25 years by the time Euripides wrote *Orestes* in 408 BCE. (Wright 10) At this point there had been stalemate after stalemate, the Peloponnesian League, with Sparta as its leader, with their superior infantry would siege Athens, the main member of the Delian League, yearly and burn a chunk of their farmland in a scorched earth policy. The Athenians would be mostly unaffected by their infantry and siege due to a long wall that connected Piraeus, a port city, to Athens, thus ensuring goods still entering and exiting the city. (Hammond "Strategy; the Archidamian War")

Athens had been accused by Sparta of depriving other city-states within the Delian League of their right of autonomous rule. (De Souza "Outbreak") Corinth was particularly upset by the turn of events that occurred when the Athenians went to quell an uprising in Potidaea because Potidaea was friends with

Corinth and Corinth was fairly close with Sparta. The only thing that saved Athens in the beginning was the wisdom of Pericles to not meet Sparta on the battlefield and instead protect Athens interests. The Athenians may have even been victorious in the war over all had a plague not raged through the city from 430-425 which killed one-third of the population, including Pericles. (Hammond The Beginnings of the War) Athens set up a base on Peloponnesus; Sparta set up operations north of Attica after a peace was decided on 421BCE and attacked Athenian supporters. Meanwhile, Athens had a tumultuous attempt to capture Sicily and were unable to recover quickly enough both their losses from the Sicilian expedition and the plague that happened a while back. In 404BCE, with their walls razed and Athens occupied, the Delian League surrendered to the Peloponnesians. (History)

During all of this, the society of Athens appears to be trying to run somewhat normally. They still held City Dionysia, they maintained their democratic ways, still had all the things needed to run a city. There was still a great sense of fatigue and it came through the plays of the time. Most of the extant texts come out of the sordid political climate of so many years of constant fears of violence. *Orestes* is Euripides' last gasp at protesting the war in his way before his self-exile to Macedon.

Charles "Chuck" Mee is born into another period of war, this time one of cold and fear. Born Charles L. Mee, Jr. in Evanston, IL on September 15, 1938, he grew up in a normal family with his middle sister Bets for a best friend. He enjoyed football and was heartbroken when his father demanded he throw out his comics after he finished grammar school because he was too old for them at that point. Dad worked for the Commonwealth Edison Company of Chicago as a vice-president and mom was a housewife. Nothing out of the ordinary affected his life until 1953 when he rode with his mom and middle sister out to Colorado to visit his older sister Sookie. Fourteen days after he got back from that visit, he started feeling bad. He went on a date that night and almost did not make it home the eighteen blocks and up the stairs. Not being able to sleep and barely able to walk, his parents rang up the doctor, who

recommended they rush him to the hospital. Very shortly after being seen in the emergency room, the diagnosis was handed out: polio. (*A Nearly Normal Life* “one”)

During this experience, he went from 160 pounds to 90, weak and delirious. When things got extraordinarily bad, a Catholic priest was called in to give him extreme unction. He decided that since they gave up on him, he would no longer count himself amongst one of the Catholic religion. (*A Nearly Normal Life* “two”) As he came out of the delirium and fever, he was moved to a regular area of the hospital. One day, some friends of his brought a Life magazine that detailed the Kinsey report. “As I read it, I could feel the stirrings of an erection. And so I could check that off the list I hadn’t known I was making in my head: My ability to have sex was intact.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “three”)

As he started back into his nearly “normal” life, he realized his life had forever changed. “It was as Mrs. Jones had known: Being in the hospital had protected me from understanding what had happened to me.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “twelve”) He tried to adjust himself physically, emotionally, and mentally to the “new” world the disease had entered him into. His family and friends also tried to adjust. His oldest sister helped him change his clothing style to his new place in the world: “...Scotch plaid beret, and then a red vest, and then gray flannel trousers, a plaid bow tie, a red striped silk tie, a handkerchief for my jacket pocket.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “thirteen”) He initially went back to school using a new two-way telephone intercom system, now known as a speakerphone, and had to be clever when trying to find the answers in his textbooks while not letting the teacher know he was flipping pages. He found interest in the *Broncho*, his school’s newspaper, thinking about all the things he could and no longer could do. Scotch became his drink of choice; “not for the pleasure of it, but to get drunk.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “sixteen”) This will come back to haunt him later in life.

His senior year he was taken under the wing of Alan Peshkin, his history teacher and faculty advisor to his role as president of the Northern Illinois District student council. After the first meeting in Chicago, Peshkin asked if he wanted to go along with him to some secondhand bookshops. Peshkin gave him ten

dollars, told him he could buy whatever he wanted and in the future, he should bring his own money. Histories, biographies, philosophy, *Woyzeck*, things he thought were written just for him. This started his interest in history, a career path he would stay on for more than 25 years. *Woyzeck*, in particular, is one of the more inspirational pieces of dramatic literature that explains his dramatic style. (*A Nearly Normal Life* “eighteen”)

He started his writing career with his high school’s newspaper covering the sports at the school. He branched off from sports and started trying his hand at short works. He soon realized, too, that his circle of friends was changing from the mainstream to the “the world of the people who read books, the nonphysical people, the strange people, the deviants, the eggheads, the queers.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “nineteen”) The badge of intellectual deviance was having a file with the FBI. While he was in Miss Sheel’s American History class, he wrote a paper on Soviet-American relations, which ended with a supposition that the Soviets would not offer a friendship treaty again as they had been rejected twice in the past. Miss Sheel requested a source for the statement, so he got on the phone and called Premiere Bulganin to ask him personally. He got his source, and he got his FBI file. (*A Nearly Normal Life* “nineteen”)

He decided he wanted to go to Harvard and his father would have none of it. It was a hotbed of Communism and not a place for a good Catholic boy. Chuck would not change his mind, so his father asked if he would go talk to a Jesuit priest about his life choices. As he summarizes it “I just out-Jesuited him a little bit.” He performed the role of his father’s son for that last summer, but he could not live it anymore. At the end of that summer, he boarded a plane and that took him to a world where he could choose to drink martinis and cheer on the football team, but it was no longer a requirement. He was amongst his people: “people who loved books and all the life they contained.” (*A Nearly Normal Life* “twenty”)

He got married while at Harvard to his “Good Woman of Setzuan”, Claire Lu. It was a brief, sordid affair done more out of expectation than for real love. They divorced soon afterwards, he left her in 1962

during a theatrical performance where he realized if the Cuban missile crisis culminated in the end of the world he did not want it to be with her, and he found his second wife, Suzi, soon after. They stayed together from the sixties through parts of the seventies and had two children, Erin and Charles. Theirs, while being a wonderfully free time, was one of too many excesses. He tells a story in particular of receiving a reward for one of his first history books, *Lorenzo de Medici*, and drank the amount of the “obligatory drunken-poet, creative-genius-writer.” Then returned home: “Suzi and I were due to drive to the country that evening for the weekend. I arrived home to drive—drunk. Suzi and I and our three-year-old daughter in the car, on the West Side Highway out of Manhattan: Suzi asks if I would rather stay in town for the weekend; I, defensively, ask if Suzi would like to drive; she, passive aggressively, says she only asked if I would like to stay in town for the weekend; the argument escalates. I pull off at 125th Street, get out of the car. Suzi follows. In the headlights of the car, as our child watches, Suzi knocks me down to the street.” (*A Visit with Haldeman* “one”) The relationship did not last too much longer. He married thrice more, to Kathleen Tolan, with whom he had two more children, to Laurie Williams, whom he speaks very fondly of in the epilogue of *A Nearly Normal Life* but was not meant to last, and finally Michi, with whom he adopted a daughter from China. (Hartigan 14)

After writing some one-act plays in the 1960s, he turned his back on theatrical writing and wrote histories. His most famous, *Meeting At Potsdam*, afforded him a decent life off of royalties while he continued his historical writings. In 1985, Martha Clarke invited him to write the libretto for *Vienna: Lusthaus*. He continued writing his historical works, but by the time *Orestes* was produced he was winding down his historical non-fiction career. (Cummings 68)

*Orestes* (later retitled *Orestes 2.0*), having had its first workshop in March 1991, comes out of a time of massive upheaval. (Cummings 285) The mammoth collective known as the Soviet Union is still slowly being dismantled, the formal dissolution having yet to have occurred on December 26, 1991. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm have very recently completed, its main focus being the



liberation of Kuwait from a December 1990 Iraqi invasion, with a formal ceasefire being agreed on March 3. (Finlan "Chronology") The world has many, many upheavals that can displace civilizations. Mee sees this and similar to the reasons why Euripides sets his play in a long ago time, Mee uses Euripides as a starting point to tell his story. These invasions make and remake life and civilization and it is more about the gods, or the royalty and the generals, it is about all of us. (Cummings 67)

## Chapter 2: *Orestes* and *Orestes 2.0* – A Comparison

"There's nothing terrible one can describe,  
no suffering or event brought on by gods,  
whose weight humans may not have to bear."  
(*Orestes* Lines 1-3)

"You could say:  
"There is no form of anguish  
however terrible  
that human beings  
might not have to bear."

Well.  
There's a way of putting things in order."  
(*Orestes 2.0* 2)

The beginning of both the original (translated by Ian Johnston) and Mee's adaptation start off very similarly in tone and text. Even with that being said, you can see the flourish of Mee's language already creeping in. He uses Electra to comment on Euripides's own words. This sort of thing happens throughout a majority of *Orestes 2.0*. Also, while both scripts live in the world of figurative realism, one where the actions are still grounded in real emotion and idea while the structure of the world includes gods and curses, *Orestes 2.0* dips in and out more of the colorful, symbolic world with the introduction of oracles and making one of the speaking roles in *Orestes* the physical manifestation of a doll amongst other things. Mee plays with setting and characterization as well as he never referring to where we are exactly or the time frame in the slightest. It does indeed live up to its "2.0" moniker as it is an update to Euripides's work in all manner.

One of the first things shifted in Mee's work is the less exact history that Electra gives us. She still tells us the story of Tantalus and how they got into this predicament, but while the original tells us that all hope lies in Menelaus, Mee's Electra shows us more backbone, setting the stage for a stronger character. One who's willing to pull up her "pajamas" and get dirty too, as Orestes did before his collapse and the start of the play. "So it's up to me to, you know, bring the family back together." (4)

Soon after Electra psyches herself up, in comes Helen, with hair and libations for Clytemnestra's grave. Unlike her need for Electra to bring the libations for the grave immediately, Mee's Helen is completely oblivious to the situation at hand, even that she is the cause of it all, and instead goes into a beauty product explanation. "First of all, I cleanse my skin with products that cleanse but don't dry, products that are natural..." (6). After letting the audience understand her secrets of beauty, she does have the face that launched a thousand ships after all, she finally notices the bloody and broken Orestes and gets back on topic. She does not get to the libations before one of Mee's other major insertion character groups comes in.

The soldiers are a group that does not exist in Euripides's original script in the slightest. They are a new chorus brought in to help show the gritty, visceral horrors of war. Euripides's *Orestes* is more focused on shocking the Greek audience with a new look at this tale within the grand tapestry of the Oresteia, the audacity of the belief that gods can make everything better and guide all our fates, and his own feelings about the Peloponnesian War through metaphorical tale. Based on the soldiers' role in the play, Mee decides to take that useless, hopeless feeling about the never-ending cycle of violence and gives it an active voice in this adaptation. "Or they will bring you in, five or six men, and say: this is nothing but the introductory exercise, and they will burn you with cigarettes." John informs Helen of example of torture, possibly describing some of the torture he may have endured trying to bring her back to their present location. Nod then continues on with "And then, of course, if they have your wife, too, they will fondle her hair, whatever they want, while you watch. Just to show you they can do anything they want." Much of the soldiers' dialogue is this hyper-visceral, bleak picture painting dialogue, between each other and with the rest of the cast. Both about themselves, John's monologue about the slaughter of his sister and her family and his resultant realization or William's monologue about the camp in the marsh, and about the other characters, the nurses being called sluts and Nod's entire "deposition" to the court. Their language is never positive and never seems to be on the same psychological level as the other characters.

Only the Tapemouth Man seems to speak anything with any positivity, but it comes from a place of having finally found peace with himself. Mee even gives the stage direction “Cheerfully, like a smiling Buddha” as he tells about how the imagination is a glorious place where you can trace “a penumbra of remembered or intimated possibility around present or past settlements” (49) before he is murdered by his fellow soldiers. Tapemouth Man is the only one to actually focus his anger on the cause of their pain: Menelaus. Soon after Menelaus steps on stage, he starts in immediately with a eulogy for the dead, pointedly focusing on Menelaus until he is shut up again and the reason for his namesake is placed over his mouth again. He also tries to guide Orestes through accepting his mother’s murder through use of metaphor about how changes to your ancestors’ bodies are like changes to nations through war time: both leave lasting impressions that can be inescapable.

Helen and Electra scuffle a bit and Helen finally calls for Hermione to come, so she can place the libations for her. She is described as “a doll on a tricycle. She wears a white, floral Betsy Johnson sun dress with matching leggings” in Mee’s script, externalizing Euripides’s treatment of her where she says nothing at all when Helen gives her the libations for the grave. (10) While she only comes back in Mee’s version at the very end of the play when Orestes is threatening “her” with death, Euripides’ gives her a little more to do. It does slow down the plot a bit, although it does paint a more sympathetic picture of the feminine chorus, nurses in *2.0*, maidens in *Orestes*, which we will get to momentarily. Electra and the chorus try to tug on Hermione’s heart strings when she hears Helen scream out her murder. Electra fibs and tells her “it was poor Orestes. He was begging not to die—and for me, as well” (lines 1614-1615) to try and keep her out of the way of the murder so she will not go tell the others what is transpiring in the palace. Hermione even promises that she will try to keep Electra and Orestes safe. (lines 1628-1631) She is then rendered mute for the rest of the original text by Orestes’ sword.

Helen wanders off after another beautification lesson and we are introduced to our other group of chorus members: the nurses. A counterpoint to the soldiers to, the nurses are the nurturers of the

script. However, they are not the most nurturing people in the world. They occasionally tend to the soldiers and Orestes, but they are usually seen playing cards and gossiping with each other or mocking the other characters for their wants, such as Electra's pleas that Orestes be left alone or nonchalantly announcing Tyndereus' arrival. They do so little in the play that they seem to be a reminder of the ineffectual nature of the locals when soldiers come home from an unpopular war. Although the chorus in *Orestes* speaks up a bit more and plots with Electra, when push comes to shove, they are as ineffectual as the nurses in *2.0*. They throw in little jabs at other characters (such as taunting Tyndareus with "Women by nature always interfere in the affairs of men, with bad results" (716-717) or "Tyndareus' daughter disgraced her sex and justly earned the hatred of all women" (1410-1411) to get on Orestes' good side and let him know what they think of Helen) or have their one moment where they get to tell how they really feel when no one else is on stage and actually be a truthful organism about how it was wrong for Orestes to kill Clytemnestra, yet how miserable it is for him to be hunted by the furies. (lines 994-1029) They are about as useful as the nurses; Euripides just keeps them around longer and uses them more because they were a requirement of Greek theatre, and the audience's insertion character, at this point.

Orestes himself wakes up at this point and both Orestes are fairly similar in each script over all. Mee's Orestes does not bring up the furies, in fact they do not come into play at all in *2.0*, but he is very obviously tormented by something when he breaks from what tone Mee calls "also archaic; this is a ruined fragment of the Greek play in the midst of the modern world". (13) After chasing "something" off from his shoulder and being calmed down again, he goes into a monologue about a past love or perhaps a manifestation of Electra, although it does not end well. Throughout most of this play, if there were a character that does not angle too far out of Euripides' vision or manner, that would be our title character, Orestes.

Menelaus, Tyndareus, and Pylades as well do not branch too far off from the original's vision either. Menelaus's basic vacillations between helping and not helping are there, as is his not realizing

Helen is in grave danger when she screams and the Phrygian runs into the courtyard. Tyndareus comes in raging about his daughter and, more importantly about how Menelaus has been derelict in his duty of care for not only his family, but the people of the city. He has already taken a 10 year leave of absence with his brother to get his wife back. Now his brother has been killed, his sister-in-law and cousin have been killed (no big loss on his cousin), and he is thinking of siding with his sister-in-law's murderer. Tyndareus will have none of that, and chastises him for even being there: "Here's that dragon snake who killed his mother, right outside the house, with his eyes flashing that sick glitter—an abomination to me. Menelaus, you're not talking to him, not to that impious wretch?"

A minor shift in the Tyndareus/Orestes relationship comes in Mee's lack of Orestes trying to defend himself. Orestes is given lines 639-715 in the original text to try and explain himself. In Mee's text all he is given is a simple "Grandfather, if you would speak to me..." before being shut down by Tyndareus's rage. It makes Tyndareus all that more powerful because he is not expected to listen to all of the excuses Orestes has, as he has probably thought them all through for the past 6 days.

Pylades has the same basic intentions in both versions. Save Orestes, and by extension himself, from death at the hand of the populace by any means necessary, even if it means more murder. He convinces Orestes in both versions to stand up to the populace in a trial and murder "the nastiest of women" as revenge strictly for not supporting them in the trial. He is there at the end as well to be handed off to Electra by the "wisdom" of Apollo.

The other major shift in the two versions really comes from the handling of the trial itself. Euripides goes with the Greek standard of the time: a messenger character comes in not too long after our heroes have left, knows how the whole situation went, and spends pages explaining to us how the claims and the counterclaims between the various parties and who supported and did not support Orestes and his actions. Mee decides instead to bring the court scene onto the stage, which makes it far more interesting and engaging. He uses the nurses and soldiers as various defendants and prosecutors, with

Nurse 1 taking the main defendant role and Nod taking the main prosecutor line. What this also does is bring Electra into the court proceedings, which did not happen in *Orestes*. She is active in her own sentencing which is a better impetus for her breakdown with Orestes after the court scene and Tapemouth Man's slaughter. She and Orestes are left on stage alone; Orestes having "pissed" himself from fear of the crowd and the soldiers and the realization of the verdict. It sets a much more personal scene than Orestes and Pylades returning and still having the Chorus there and shows us the real vulnerability of their situation.

Moving past these scenes, there lies another minor change between the two versions: the Phrygian slave. Brought up previously when discussing Helen's "demise", the slave actually serves as some comic relief in the Euripidean tragedy. He comes running in, singing his lines, speaking stilted Greek, hoping that someone will understand him and no one will kill him simply for the fact that he is from Phrygia. A fact that he repeats many times and takes being called a coward from other characters and even refers to himself as a barbarian. He is more interested in saving his own skin.

"ORESTES

Where's that man who ran out of the house  
to escape my sword?

PHRYGIAN [throwing himself on the ground]  
I bow to you, my lord,  
making obeisance, as is the habit  
of we barbarians.

ORESTES

We're not in Troy.  
We're in the land of Argos.

PHRYGIAN

But everywhere  
life is more welcome to wise men than death.

ORESTES

Those shouts you made—you weren't calling out [1510]  
for Menelaus to bring up help, were you?

PHRYGIAN

No, no. I was helping you, the worthier man.

ORESTES

So it was just for Tyndareus' daughter  
to be put to death?

PHRYGIAN

It was most just,  
even if she had three throats to slit.

ORESTES

Your cowardice makes your tongue pleasing—  
that's not what you think inside." (lines 1795 -1809)

The final change comes in the very end of the story. This comes after the threats in either script. Orestes is threatening to slit Hermione's throat and Electra and Pylades are burning down the palace. We reach an impasse in the story moments before. No one can do anything. Down from the heavens comes Apollo in the biggest example of what not to do with a *deus ex machina* in any script, which is the point Euripides was exploring in *Orestes*. So many Ancient Greek plays depended on the gods coming down and fixing all the problems. Euripides has Apollo do the same thing, but his solutions are so far reaching, it is almost laughable. Orestes and Hermione get married. Pylades and Electra are suddenly a couple. Orestes is banished for a year, he will have a trial from the gods and be exonerated, and come back to Argos to rule after that. Where does that leave poor Menelaus? He gets to go rule Sparta because Helen's from there and it is a "dowry from her". Helen's fate? She did not die; she was instead spirited away by Apollo and she will now guide sailors' out at sea as a constellation. Menelaus is totally fine with that outcome, as is Orestes. No quibbling. They back down and almost bound off the stage in delight. Apollo heads back up into the clouds with Helen, the chorus leaves us with three more lines: "O great and holy Victory, may you take possession of my life, and never cease to crown me with your garlands" (lines 2044-2046) and end. It is a conclusive ending, but it leaves things a little unsatisfying. Again, as Euripides seems to have intended his ending to be.



Mee leaves us very similarly. Apollo comes in, drags Helen (as a blow-up sex doll; like mother, like daughter) with him, reassures everyone that he is in control and has got the whole situation figured out. He leaves our characters with the same rewards and “his bodyguards pick him up unceremoniously like a piece of furniture—and carry him out” ending his glorious moment of repair. Unlike the chorus praising him for his great glories, everyone has departed the stage, including the nurses at that point. The soldiers have gone back to bed, but Nurse 3 comes back to William, our grounded philosopher, to take care of his dressing. Mee is reminding us at the end of the piece that even when the “gods” tell us the battle is over, the people it affected are not suddenly alright. There is always detritus and debris left over from the conflict, both property and people. Conflict always begets conflict. It is a vicious circle that is repeated over and over again.

WILLIAM

If you were married to logic,  
you'd be living in incest,  
swallowing your own tail.

Every man must shout:  
there's a great destructive work to be done.  
We're doing it!

William leaves us with that final moment to ponder before collapsing again from extreme exhaustion. This is one of those moments that truly shines in *Orestes 2.0*. It might be almost as an unsatisfyingly frustrating conclusion as *Orestes*, but it beautifully fits the overall futility of the show as a whole. You cannot escape conflict and the resultant damage it brings. It cycles beautifully back to the Tapemouth Man's monologue to Orestes: “It is because political learning is deeply embodied that the alteration of the political configuration of a country, continent, or hemisphere so often appears to require the alteration of human bodies through war.” (38)

### Chapter 3: Expectations

I must admit I was pleased when David approached me about submitting scripts for this coming season. I was not sure how the thesis production selection occurred, so I was worried I was going to be given something my heart was not initially in. You do always find something in a script that becomes your silver lining, but everyone has styles they like to jump into immediately versus treading the water until you find the drop-off into enjoyment. I presented some Strindberg, Martin McDonagh's *Lonesome West*, and Shepard's *True West* as primary ideas. To my surprise, he then asked if I had any Charles Mee I had considered doing, since he knew how much I respected Mee's work. So I submitted *Wintertime*, *Iphegenia 2.0*, and *Orestes 2.0* each for their own reasons.

*Wintertime* I chose because it was easily relatable to college-aged actors. That Charles Mee figurative language is in there and the characters have odd relationships, but the basic idea of "love trumps all" is very prevalent in that script and that is something college-aged actors can easily get behind. *Iphegenia 2.0*, on the other hand, delves into Mee's world of the Greeks, but with a more contained cast and, again, boiled down, self-contained ideas of honor versus sacrifice and love versus duty. The cast being made of mainly young soldiers, bridesmaids and Iphegenia and Achilles did not hurt much either. Last, but certainly not least, was my personal favorite choice: *Orestes 2.0*.

*Orestes* has been a favorite of mine for years now. Ever since I was in a production of *Big Love* and discovered that Charles Mee posted his catalog of works online for people to mangle, mob, and tear to shreds and rebuild from their own words and his, I have been a voracious follower of his work. The raw descriptions in *Orestes* have been something that have stuck with me since I read it the very first time. The soldiers and their constancy, the "crazy court" with the three things going on all at the same time, the post-trial realization and final dance before suicide scenes are all scenes I could see vividly from the moment I read it. There are very few plays that stick with me so brightly for so long. It is use of the Trojan War as a mirror for whatever quagmire our country is in militarily has always struck a chord with me too.

From Vietnam, which Mee was active against, to the first Gulf war, which is the time frame the play was written in, to current day where we are still in two countries where we have been for more than a decade and finally our society is getting tired of the spending and the death toll rising. It mirrors the tiredness the Argosians felt toward the end of the Trojan War and their complete lack of enthusiasm for the ruling class.

There are many challenges in *Orestes* that I and the production itself faces. The major thing with this show is Mee's figurative language. It looks funny on the page alone, which can already be a turn off to many people. But once you decide what the rules, or the lack of rules, are, it can make for a beautiful music that floats off the page or punches you in the gut. You must as a director, however, be able to firmly articulate those rules to a large group of actors that range from decades of experience to they took an Acting I class at UNO last semester. Fielding so many different vocabularies can make the process more difficult, but it is just something you have to deal with regardless of whether it is a realistically-styled play of Arthur Miller or a script full of figurative language like one of the many in the oeuvre of Shakespeare.

Another challenge facing the production is working toward a cohesive design and technical language. Since the production and script seem to transcend the world of "ancient Greece" when the original piece was written, I have decided to try and set it as close to modern day as possible. The fact that, at this moment, the modern Greek people are strongly rising up against the ruling class is very intriguing to the structure of this play. Although it is more a financial crisis than the crisis that faces the ruling class rather than when they come home from war, it is still the proletariat who are tired of the "aristocrats" and want to bring them down. Thankfully for the current government of Greece, the general public is not allowed to end the lives of politicians that they do not like, unlike in the days of yore.

Bringing that all up leads to this idea: in a country like Greece, the architecture of the past and present live side by side. So, the idea of a mosaic that has been covered more and more by whatever is currently the government in charge or religion in vogue and then is peeled back slightly intrigues me and

is the central image I am using for this production. I think the path that Anthonyka and myself are on hashing out what the production wants on stage is heading towards something that will give the audience something that will interest and fascinate them, will facilitate the script's needs, and something that will be enjoyable for the actors to play around on and live in as their world. A mixture of present day furniture, old style pillars and a somewhat crumbled art piece either within the floor or somewhere else on the stage. Also, a bit of falling apart over all things. Dust and unsettlement reign on the court of the house of Atreus. Props will also, hopefully, fit into the same realistic realm that matches the scenic elements, save Helen's re-entrance when she appears with Apollo having brought her down briefly from her place in the constellations, which Mee writes as being a blow-up sex doll.

Costumes are on a similar path as the scenic elements. A lot of the classic and contemporary will play through Menelaus' costume as there will hopefully be various insignia and styles from different time periods and location. Also, we will be able to set Helen up for counterpoint to the situation that the rest of the town is in. While this whole war was fought over her, she had very little to no physical interaction with any of the battles taking place. As both Euripides and Mee tell us, she is disconnected from the whole ordeal, other than understanding that the populace of either country is not particularly fond of her at this juncture.

Another thing Mee sets up for us in the realm of costume is the two sets of chorus that did not appear in the original. The nurses did exist, but the masculine chorus of mentally, physically, and psychologically wounded soldiers did not. While keeping both choruses in the realm of realism, it could be fun to play off their occasional outbursts as "fates" by making them a bit ethereal somehow. I am not quite sure how, particularly with the soldiers, but I trust Tony (French, costume designer) to make something interesting happen. I trust his years of experience will see the costumes in this production through to grand realization.

Lighting is really where there can hopefully be a superb juxtaposition between the power struggle of the setting and the absurdity of the situation. While this play steadfastly lives in the world of people, be they human or doll, when Apollo comes down, it is as though the curtain is ripped from the humankind “holy of holies” and we bring in the gods to solve our problems. While it was very much Euripides’ point to do that, as he wanted to show the futility and uselessness in trusting the gods to solve the problems of humanity, which is why he only appears in the last few seconds, there has to be some very subtle way of coaxing us from our comfortable bed of realism. Mee’s script does some of the work with the introduction of Farley and other disembodied voices, his “circus court”, and the various voiceover monologues that dot throughout, but there has to be a design element that can help in displaying that fluidity too. That, to me, is most effectively done with lighting. Intensity, color choices, haze and fog, and focus can take all the other physical design elements and highlight and minimize areas and characters and manipulate the audience’s minds in a way that other elements cannot. Diane Baas made some interesting choices in *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*, so I look forward to seeing her choices here.

Sound, being the last of major design elements to discuss, is a major component in this script as well. There is a tremendous amount of choice to take place on how sound/audio functions in *Orestes 2.0*. The aforementioned Farley, other disembodied voices, and voice-over monologues are only the tip of the aural landscape in this show. This show being as large as it is, I do not want to be the one responsible for this element as I have been in majority of the previous productions I have worked on. Justin Guidroz, an undergraduate student, approached me last fall about being the sound designer on this piece and I decided I would give him a chance. I already had three other designers with whom I had personally worked with on other shows or had seen their work and knew I could trust them with everything, so I figured I could give another student a chance to work in a position they had never held before. This is a university after all and one of the primary tenets is giving students opportunities they might not have beyond these doors and it was an element I was familiar with so if he faltered along the way, I could guide him again.

Back on to the actual design, though, there are many decisions that Justin and I are beginning to hash out. How much live sound versus canned sound? What songs do we use when music is indicated in the script? Stick with Mee's or change it up to fit our production? Can the actor playing Electra sing? While there is a worry that the sound needs to blend in with the other production elements, there's a certain amount of play since so many of the other elements are focused on the visual, and sound is so very focused on the aural that this, like lighting, can ebb and flow a bit more than the more physical designs. I think the decisions we are playing with at this juncture are the radio voices and Farley should be live, which means we need microphones, and the other disembodied voices can be canned to plan them more easily. Also, we may use microphones throughout the chorus areas to amplify certain aspects of their characters and for use during the "circus court" since at one point we've got three distinct scenes going on at the same time.

Although not a "permanent" design, this production does require some staged violence. I have asked Michael Krikorian, whom I have worked with in other productions, to choreograph some heinous beat downs. While I completely trust him to do it taking all precautions necessary, as I know my casting pool is a very wide gamut of talent, I hope the actors can either do it satisfactorily or not get overzealous and know and feel the difference between making it look like violence and actually laying down violence on someone, even accidentally. Michael is a great communicator though, so I do not have any fear that he will have any issue on that side of instruction.

*Orestes 2.0*, far and away, is one of the biggest undertakings I have embarked on so far and I may not see a something like it for a long time in my career. The professional theatre seems to favor smaller casts, with simpler, less challenging themes and language at the present time. All things ebb and flow, though, I am sure we will see a return to larger casts with more intricate designs and more challenging material. Thankfully, we still have colleges and universities willing to put this genre up for public

consumption. I am glad David took a chance on this script and I hope I represent the department to the best of my abilities.

## Chapter 4: Production Journal

01/07/13

First read thru and I can't begin to exclaim how excited I was to finally hear this play out loud! It's been a dream of mine to direct this show anywhere, and I can't be happier than to be directing as my thesis project. I worry that it will wipe some of the shine off the script, the old adage of don't work intensely on something you cherish and love or you may grow to hate it not only pertains to research topics but also theatrical productions. But with that mild trepidation, I go into rehearsal... with a sore throat.

We start with a brief explanation about the family of Atreus to make sure everyone is on the same page and understands the setup for the play as whole. Thankfully, Electra fills us in at the beginning of the play. We read the play (with our ASM filling in for Robert and Marino, and Kit filling in for Betsy) and only stopped every once in a while for questions about words mainly. I wish we had some design presentations, but rehearsal being before the semester started, the design staff couldn't make it, understandably. It was thankfully a fairly uneventful read which is sometimes something of a luxury at UNO. After reading the script and answering some questions, I decided to break. Although I would have loved to have read it a second time with a bit more tablework, as we read the script I began to feel worse and worse and had to drag myself home by the end of the read. I was not doing well in the slightest. I really hope I'm feeling better tomorrow because I want to come back and do some tablework.



01/13/13

I had to cancel the rest of last week's rehearsals I was very sad to say. I was far too ill and had to use the rest of the vacation to get myself back up to fighting form. It is believed you should just power through it sometimes and if I were already into runs I may have tried to do that myself. However, since we were at the beginning of sketching/blocking, it makes it a little more difficult to give direction when you can barely speak. No fun at all. I'm finally getting better, though, and now it's time to kick this rehearsal process into high gear.

We started for the first hour with Electra's opening monologue. While I have minor sketches in my mind and scribbled down, I like to ultimately see how the actor's deal with the words and "how the spirit moves them" as it were. We did a read-through of it first, looking at Mee's punctuation and line breakages. Then we "put it on its feet". At first, she moved a bit with it doing more pleading to the audience that made sense for the character and the verb, but we felt a disconnect between the action and the words. So I recommended she stay on the chair and try to connect to the audience while fighting through the utter exhaustion of the events of the last 6 days. Fighting against given circumstances. Duh, Tim. She tried it out and then we briefly discussed how the changes worked and then she did it a couple more times while we tweaked the tempo of the words. Another one of Mee's great challenges: taking very dense statements and making them understandable while still keeping the tension in them. We'll keep working on that and I think some of it will come when we can get something of an audience in here. I might have some cast members sit out in the house the next time we run this just to play with the energy people to play off of actually brings.

The next part of rehearsal brought the awakening of Orestes. We didn't get to rehearse this as much as I'd have liked to due to actor comfort. It's hard to rehearse a bed with chairs when you have to thrash on it. But we at least got to start it and play some with Orestes waking up. This scene (and the one

towards the end with the dancing) is a little bit of a challenge to me. This pairing is, oddly, the most romantic of the entire show, and there should be a hint of romance. The catch is they're siblings, so that does leave a tenuous cliff to perch on. This was something we discussed as we read the scene: how much "romantic" love should there be versus siblings caring for siblings. Also, what is Orestes freak out which I am thinking is guilt over how he's treated other people in the past before the slaughter of his mother. Although he does also bring up 3 women following him later in the script, so it could still be invisible spirits. But, at the least, we decided this was something that did happen and Mason played with that for a bit. Mason brings an interesting energy to the table. I'm curious to see what happens in the future with him. After we worked that for a short bit, we decided to call it a night.

01/14/13

More than just Orestes and Electra, hooray! Sometimes it's the little things that excite you. We are working the big initial confrontation scenes between Orestes, Menelaus and Tyndareus. This is one of the pivotal moments of the show, and Tyndareus carries so much of it. Coming into this rehearsal, I poured myself particularly into Tyndareus's monologue being as it's one of very few rehearsals I get to rehearse with Robert before we get into runs and tech because he's also in a production outside of school that opens in a couple of weeks. I'd be lying if I said that didn't make me a little nervous, but we make do with what we have because it's theatre and that's the nature of it sometimes. Before we got into that we had to get into Menelaus first. John is great to work with. I just first want to get that off my chest. He usually needs very little direction, more guidance, which makes it more fun to work with him because we can get past the surface circumstances and dig deep into the creamy nougat of text.

First time I get to work with all the soldiers as well. I'm a little more reticent with that though. Not because any of them are bad, I cast them out of an actually large casting call due to an acting class requirement, but because none of them are students I've worked with in the past. And they all come from classes I didn't personally teach which, while isn't a bad thing, means I have to figure out how to communicate with them. Thankfully, they're all very chill and down to earth, easy to communicate with. Peter seems pretty unsure of what he's saying which is understandable with a character like this, although I do wish he'd come in with an idea. We worked a bit with his monologue, but moved on since the primary mode of the rehearsal was getting through with blocking and the Tapemouth Man doesn't move at all. The nurses, on the other hand, I knew from past productions and Betsy, Nurse 3, I'd had in my own acting class. Also pretty helpful today in that neither of them have any great movement needs as they're more background characters than focus points. That's a danger for me to think that way even at this point though, because I need to somehow get them into the world at large. I need them to think about what they're doing at all times even now, but I'm trying to focus on the movers of the scenes. So that balance

is messed up a bit. Interestingly, this is the largest group of actors I've had yet to direct, which also makes it a very interesting challenge that I didn't necessarily consider when I brought this play forward. It's fun to have so many voices, but it makes more complex for those simple stage pictures I'm used to building. Thankfully I don't have any divas in this process though. That makes it way easier to just try things and simply makes me want to come to rehearsal. I always want to come to rehearsal, if I didn't I should just walk out that door right now, but sometimes it makes it more of a struggle when in that position. I'm truly thankful everyone is into this and mostly excited to be here.

Moving on, rehearsal continued with Robert. Robert came in guns blazing which was great to see. I wasn't sure about his connection to this production since I'm sure for him *Avenue Q* is more of a challenge and his focus was on that primarily. We focused a connection more on the audience than people on stage this time around. It feels like a piece where Tyndareus is really trying to let the audience know how he feels. And when he's not, and he's focused on Menelaus and Orestes, he's got laser focus on them. Robert also being a comic actor who loves a character, I thought maybe he'd bring some silliness to the part. But nope, it was very very grounded and almost frightening. I'm excited to see where we can take this in the future. With that, time to depart!

01/15/13

We started tonight with VIOLENCE. Michael Krikorian came in and taught the fellows how to pulverize someone without actually pulverizing. It was interesting watching the big, tough guys treat this with kid gloves, but at the same time, also glad to see them so concerned about not hurting their fellow actors. Doesn't always happen, particularly on the college stage (I know, I've been "poked" with a "dagger" before by an overzealous fight partner in the past).

Everything began with Michael and I talking through a basic sketch of what was going on in the scene, which again, makes it easy when Tapemouth Man is stuck to his chair until he's pulled up. It also means that the other three gentlemen control so much of the combat. The only thing Peter has to do is react. Michael gives them a throw down and teaches Peter how to fall correctly, and teaches the others how to punch and kick to make it look as real and safe as possible. We stage all of that, take a break and then head into the crazy court scene.

Here's the scene I've been dreading since starting the rehearsal process: 3 separate scenes going on at the same time. We read through them separately so everyone has the basic idea of what they're saying. I decided I would start with the nurses to give the soldiers a little more time to rest after the fight session we had before break. Sarah Chatelain did well, but I discovered that something she did in the callbacks wasn't something she just accidentally did then. A lot of her monologue is about pleasuring herself and she would get hung up on the word "masturbation" referring to it as "masherbashun". It was just something she'd picked up when younger. So after we all had a chuckle about that we moved to more of the monologue, which she struggled with getting the frustration a bit and we worked on bringing some of that out before moving on to the others.

We worked the "royals" sections next, Menelaus and Pylades, very briefly. Let them get a feel for the lines and the actions. Jesse got a good work out trying to read along with his monologue while figuring

out who he was even talking to and what the lines were for. It's not easy to personalize "the playwright is attempting to show the audacity of the court system by mocking it" so we stuck with the action verb to mock. It was a good jumping off point for him and I look forward to seeing where he goes with it. Kayln with her "breaking faggots" moment (the one moment where Nurse 1 gets to show some strength) was up, followed by the second soldiers' moment (the pubic hair coke can), and then we ended on "good people of Argos". Orestes breaks in and the order of the stage is finally restored. We attempted to put it altogether. That proved to be far more difficult and showed the actors how much they had to be in tune with one another and their characters. It's really hard to make everything seem natural, while starting a conversation about something ridiculous, while trying to pace yourself properly, while trying not to be too loud without being too soft. I discovered that it's hard to take notes on three things going on at once. So just as much of a challenge thrown at me as there was thrown to the cast. After we stumbled through it a couple more times to get their bearings straight, I decided to let them go a bit early as it was an arduous night for many of them.

01/16/13

The first night I really get my soldiers together. Sadly, without Jesse due to sickness, though. I wanted to work through their basic moments in the play. They don't have too many of them where they're not dealing with Orestes, Electra, etc... but they do have the moment to lead us in after the bottom drops out of the story and our main plot decides to kill Helen. So we need to bring them on to amuse us. We started with William and Kyle and the monologue about the slaughter of John's family, which is not terribly amusing. Since we're focusing in on sketching the movement at this point, I'm more curious to see how they play off of each other. Kyle was getting too stuck in the stutter, so we took it away for a little bit and let him do it in his natural voice. When we did that, he started to find a bit more of the vulnerability when asking William for forgiveness. We'll focus more on that when we play with it after we do the first stumble thru and can focus on individual moments even more. We also had to skip over the next moment with the actual humor from Nod and his beautiful scene about soap operas. With that scene blocked I let them go to focus on the Tapemouth Man.

Tapemouth Man is a hard nut to crack and seems to be for Peter too. We read through the monologues a couple more times and since there's not much blocking, we really dug into the meanings behind the monologues. WHY is he shouting out people's names from a book? What is tort reform? While he answered these questions, we decided to personalize it. People who he knew that would make him feel terrible if those things happened to them. Teaching the audience about tort reform and, when he's there, comforting Orestes with the explanation too.

Then I let him go and moved onto Apollo. Matt came in and we played with many presidents voices. We started with Obama and it didn't get very far. I had him pull out a "Dubya" and it was fun and played with the blocking while doing that. He seemed a bit Texan. However, we decided to bring it one more time as Bill Clinton and suddenly everything clicked. It was laid back, confident, smarmy to a point

and we decided we would stick with the Arkansas governor turned President. Besides, bringing in a sex doll seems more of a swagger from “Slick Willy” than George W.



01/20/13

This is going to be a fairly short and slightly annoyed journal entry. Turns out Mason had a movie shooting this weekend and didn't inform any one until Friday. So most of the things I had planned for this rehearsal were tossed out the window. In fact, the only thing we could rehearse was a full run of Matt's final Apollo monologue. Since I had worked that with him, we just did some adjustments with the bodies on the stage and once that was all said and done, we went our own separate ways.

01/22/13

Please let your theatre director know when you're going to dye your hair bright and unnaturally red for a student film before you actually do it. Particularly when the publicity department is going to take a couple of shots for... well... publicity. My Orestes choice is losing its sheen. Of course, this all took place before rehearsal (and I also had to deal with a somewhat irate costume designer who got angry with me for 5 seconds because he thought I okayed this shock red dye job to go along with his red pajamas), but it informed about how I felt about a lot of rehearsal, so it's something worth bringing up.

This is also another short rehearsal, but it's at least not as short as Sunday's. We started with Franny the Phrygian. Right now it's just helping her find that manic fear of not being killed while almost peeing yourself because your protector/boss just disappeared in front of you and you're a strange person in a strange land. But you still have to be a good communicator while finding that energy and Franny doesn't quite have that control. She's just got to feel herself and make sure she knows how it feels to make sense and how it feels to be in control while appearing "out of control". Also be specific about who you're talking to. We picked specific nurses and soldiers to talk to at specific times. It helped focus her a little bit more.

We took a quick break and moved onto the Soap Opera scene we didn't get to run last week. Jesse was back and we were ready to get this done. We were supposed to work Helen's scene after this but Kaitlyn got sick and couldn't make it into rehearsal. I was a bit more understanding since I've already had to take about a week. Back to the scene, though, they didn't quite know how to approach this. It was another one of those strange Mee things. Who talks about a soap opera after someone else tells us they killed people? Again, the simplest way to approach this was to try and show them something similar to what I gave to Peter: personalize it and decide WHY it's important to you. We discussed it and decided that Nod simply wants to brighten the mood. John brought it down and Nod wants to turn it back up and

at least make it “fakedly” bright... like a soap opera. So we played with it and turned up the distraction from the depressing and brought out the cheerfulness of “escandalo”! And Kayln being the confused nurse and Sarah being the excited one about how awesome soap operas could be. The nurses are pretty fun. I wish that they’d figure out some more things while they’re on stage. I think I might give them a card game or something. Make them learn how to play rummy or something along those lines. The script recommends mahjong, but none of them had the slightest clue and... well... cards are cheaper and easier to find. And since we didn’t have Electra and I let Helen go, we ended rehearsal there.

01/23/13

We started with the Medical Examiner as one of the last things we needed to get through before tonight's stumble-thru. The stern Blair as "Dr. Tabitha Whitlock" or the medical examiner works well. My two recommendations for her were to remember how this is a post-mortem and use something even more professional and detached and also know how to speak the more difficult Latin words. Also decided to use Nurse 1 as her assistant/Clytemnestra carrier. We never got to go through any of Helen's scenes. We decided to stumble thru her scenes in the stumble-thru and fix it in the next few days. We took a minute to quickly sketch the actual skeleton of the soldiers' scene with her so she would know what was basically going on. I felt bad to shove her into this so suddenly, but with so many people and she getting lost in the shuffle, I should have controlled the schedule better. I take the blame on this one and apologized profusely.

We had Diane and Kevin in the stumble-thru. I really, really wish they hadn't decided to come to the very first run of everything. It probably didn't leave the best impression on them because of how horribly bad it ran tonight, but it was the very first time and we were missing Sarah Chatelain, so we didn't even get through certain scenes and others, like the circus court, fell apart. A lot of scenes fell apart. I took some notes for myself while I partly hung my head down and put my face in my hands when nothing went right. And it wasn't out of shame about what the cast was doing and how confused they were, more that I felt like a complete failure as a director. I usually do feel that way after first stumble-thrus, but I don't usually let it get to me so much. And I usually don't let designers/technicians come into stumble-thrus because I consider the cast to be particularly vulnerable because, well, they'll be stumbling thru and screwing things up. It was a particularly bad decision I made and I hope I can get some of the cast's trust back.

01/24/13

Thankfully last night didn't go as badly as I thought. I meditated on it a bit and feel better about it. The cast has also told me about how they felt and they didn't feel so bad either. They actually talked about how it helped bring some focus into the show and some of the newer actors didn't realize how much energy it takes to do a show, particularly one without an intermission. It was a good time in the rehearsal process for them to feel about how much energy they really need even minimally to make it through. When you're on stage all the time, a lot. We decided to start with Helen's scenes tonight.

I felt pretty bad yesterday that I threw Ashton (Helen) out there with very little work. There also wasn't as much need to work as I thought there might be. The main thing I had to do was crank up the terrorizing by Nod and John with her. Once I told them, and got an okay with Ashton, they could touch her within reason, they got it. The way John lifted her hair and whispered to her about torture was a very creepy moment that Kyle found and then Jesse taking the "pills" to calm himself down was another good, interesting character choice. They're starting to find things that individualize them and separate them as different individuals even though they seem very similar. William gets a pass because he's asleep through half the show and then he's philosophically existentialist and not too focused on the violence. We combined all of the scene together and moved on to Tyndareus.

Robert brought it again as he usually does and having gone through the stumble, he felt the need to bring some of the monologue to the nurses at least since they're my most racially disparate part of the cast (sadly) and being the angry old man he is, he's going to want to yell at the women, but with some class. We didn't have them there but we worked some of that movement in and Kit and Tim stepped in to give him a body for reference at least. I really like where Robert is taking Tyndareus, which is excellent given that he was one of the people that made me the most nervous.

Last we worked Electra's monologues again. She used this more as an off-book moment at this point. I'm glad to see she's doing so well with all this. We talked a bit more about connecting with the audience and balancing the morose, the fear, and the control that has to come through with that opening monologue. Also, simply the energy we need to kick the show off. Since we decided to start the show in a preshow with Electra, the soldiers, Orestes, and the Clytemnestra doll, it just elevates that energy and that tension so much more. We moved on to her Orestes monologue where she's begging the nurses to leave Orestes alone. She was struggling a bit with connecting to her desperation and fear of losing Orestes and we connected it to someone she personally loved. I felt that her other monologues were actually pretty good, so I gave her the option to run them or not and she chose to go and work on some things herself and I felt good about that decision.

01/27/13

This was a little bit of an off day today. I was supposed to work John's monologue first, but Kyle didn't show up. Then John Neisler showed up because he saw "John" on the rehearsal list and thought it meant him for some reason. Since Kyle wasn't contactable, and Neisler wanted to work on his monologues to Orestes, we shifted gears and worked them. He was having trouble connecting to who Orestes is and we went through some people he could be thought to be. I thought through some and, knowing the generation John comes from is further back than being born in the 90s, I recommended thinking of Orestes as Billy Carter and he's got to deal with him launching Billy beer but he still has to be cordial to him. This delighted him immensely and the idea landed with him. It excited me as well too and I consider it one of my favorite moments in any show's rehearsal. After running that for a bit, we decided to pack up and, as we were leaving, Kyle came in apologizing profusely. Since we were just about packed up, we worked his monologue a couple of times to see how he felt about it but decided we'd work it more at a later time.

01/28/13

This week is focusing on the intentions. Making sure actions actually land, people are listening, and letting them stumble a bit because they're now off-book as of today. Thankfully Ashton could come in tonight, so we decided to run the entire Helen scene a bit more and add in even more of those nuances that we didn't add in before. Making sure Ashton knows why she's doing what she's doing and to make sure that Electra doesn't touch her in the white or any of her fabric as commanded by the costume designer. Everyone is continuing to improve so after running it and working some moments, like Electra and Helen's slap moment and "Hermione's" scene, we let them rest and continued on.

We moved on to the final confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus with Electra and Pylades as well. This one took a bit more work. John was very worried about being on one note, which he was, but Menelaus is already there. This is the end of the play. Orestes has his daughter with a dagger to her throat and having "killed" his wife and there's nothing he can do. There's not too much he can do but bluster and thunder while trying to get Orestes down unsuccessfully. It was a bit of a struggle for him and we worked a good while on connecting him with this ending moment before the Apollo descent.

I excused everyone else after this but the nurses and Tapemouth Man and had Orestes get into his suit so we could run the sponge bath. We spent the last bit of rehearsal getting the timing right so it would work the next time we ran the show. Wow, figuring out who does what and how to pace monologues strictly to make sure that they work to cover up an on stage change. It was more a lesson of getting it right than working on the moment to moment work. A little frustrating, but also a necessary evil.



01/29/13

After a brief fight call, time to focus on the middle of the play. A good bit of this early rehearsal, after running the Tapemouth Man's final monologue into the Orestes/Electra sadness scene, was centered around trying to get Pylades up to the level of his acting partners. We spent a good bit of time discussing his actions again, making sure he understands what he playing in each scene, and what he wants from Orestes and Electra. He seemed to get it to a point, but there's still some kind of block he's got. He understands it; he gets it. In his head, he grasps it. In his body, in his mannerisms, in his actions, there's just something not landing and he's not grasping where he needs to be. It's coming off as a petulance that Pylades doesn't have. But the urgency, the desire to save his friends, the boat they've put him in and the words Mee wrote and assembled for him can lend themselves to that idea. We worked him until I could see it wasn't going to work tonight so I gave up and moved on for the moment. Sometimes, it's all you can do.

Once we got back from break and let the royals go, we focused on the soldiers and their monologues. John's killing monologue actually felt very vulnerable tonight. It was well beaten out and landed with everyone on stage. We left it alone and continued on. The rest of the rehearsal was just making sure everyone was still running on the same level during the soap opera scene into Nod's monologue about the sparkly uvulas. He had NO idea what to do with this monologue. Since the last bit of the show was a comedy bit about how soap operas were a bit like real life, just more fake, take this monologue to the next logical step. He has a connection to the nurse he's talking to and he's trying to be nostalgic about things earlier on the ward and really freaking her out. He didn't quite grasp it but I let him go with it for a bit after running it a couple of times. He seems to get flustered sometimes, and this was one of those times. So I decided to end it there and let everyone go. It was good enough time.

01/30/13

Because we seem to be getting a bit sluggish again, I decided to combine the next two rehearsals into one so as to ease the time by lumping the next two nights together. I feel very good about the beginning of the show now. It's really one of those things that finally "just needs an audience" but it's not that they're not putting forth effort until an audience comes. They're actually doing really well, with the exception that my medical examiner needs to learn the body part names. They're hard but they need to come off flawlessly. We ran through a lot of this stopping only for the occasional line flub. Continued on from there through the Helen scenes, through Menelaus, Orestes and his change into his suit on stage in front of everyone, and into the crazy court scene, where it all fell apart again. Not the acting, just more the timing. So we went through and worked the timing over and over again. It was a bit maddening, but this is something we have to go through. After working on this for a good hour, we took a break and came back for the ending.

Starting again, we basically began at the Menelaus freak out and took through to the end. John seemed to have grown from the last run of the scene and Hunter, as his guard, also turned on and became a real character I understood and could tell what was going through his head. Apollo came in, gave us his speech, first time it was a little... bleh, so we ran it a couple more times to make sure it would work and his guards were also fun. Matt having "Helen" was also a great improvement to the scene. Sometimes props can actually be a good thing instead of being an actor hobbler while they complain that things aren't working on stage because they now have a prop. After we worked through the monologue and skipped the very ending because Betsy wasn't here, we decided to take a bit of time off.

02/04/13

David came to tonight's run and had some good notes that I had been thinking about as well, but couldn't figure out exactly. His main notes were about the general goings-on on stage. The nurses and soldiers seem to be fairly disconnected to the plot as a whole. Use more of the set and give the nurses more of a reason to move over to the soldiers. Let them play off of each other, which will take some time but is a very good note at this point. I was afraid that movement would detract too much from the story, which he told me was understandable (the story, that is, not the idea of movement being too distracting), but now it was time for the show to have a full life. Also, William was a bit hard to understand and Franny was much too active with too little diction which are also good notes to get at this point. When you've spent so much time with the script, you learn the lines and know what they're going to say, so having a fresh ear to go "what?" is a great thing to have at this point. David's notes are always on point and things I've stopped thinking about because I'm looking at so many other things and fretting about too much.

02/05/13

Short rehearsal! I wanted to incorporate some movement into the world of the “world-building” actors. The interesting ones that have so much time on stage but aren’t necessarily the ones who are continuously forwarding the plot. I also wanted to give some time to William and Franny on their monologues. After I gave the nurses some times to cross more over to the soldiers (probably not as much as David was thinking, because where they’re moving from/to is pretty distracting based on where they live) giving the soldiers the occasional physical move and playing with the nurses when they’re over there more.

To help Franny and William, I first had them run their monologues at a normal speed (particularly in Franny’s case), and then when they were understandable (or in William’s case loud) enough, I had them run it in full speed mode. It was one of those rehearsals I know as an actor that can either frustrate or transcend the issue. But notes don’t help. Repetition. Every time I don’t understand you, stop and start again. Every time I say louder, stop and start again. Once you’re able to get through it, commit that to muscle memory so you can rehearse it that was for later, you’re done. I think it helped Franny a lot. She seemed to take the idea and the frustration of failure seemed to move her forward. William, on the other hand, seemed to take it a bit in stride, I’m not sure if it was something that really sunk in with him, but he did get a little louder, so we’ll take victories where we can get them.

02/06/13

Let's have another run! My major feelings on this run were every one really brought it today, the people who were here for the rehearsal at least, which for the first time was JUST ABOUT everyone! I think the night off after the run on the 4<sup>th</sup> helped and the excitement that another break is just around the corner and you just need to keep your energy up was there too.

Since I needed to work the Pylades/Orestes/Electra "cut Helen's throat" scene last night but decided to give them the time off, I decided to move that to tonight. I need to work Aaron's Pylades mainly. There's something about his intentions that seem off. His actions he's playing seem to be not immediate enough. Also the discovery of "cutting Helen's throat" in the moment. We need to do something so that Menelaus will know we mean business. Ah! Cut Helen's throat! We discussed a little about the situation at large but when we got to the rehearsal it was very similar to the way he's been playing it earlier. He pretty much got stuck in that style of saying those lines. I wish I had more time to work it, but we just had to move on.

I wanted to have Michael come in one final time in the rehearsal period just to check up on the soldiers and their VIOLENCE because it had become a little sloppy although there wasn't any injury that took place. They had almost gotten "too nice" to him. So we ratcheted and tightened up the motions and officially declared a fight call from now until the end of the show every night before anything. Having Michael there soothed some of their misgivings about the fight too. It's younger actors and they don't want to hurt a friend and I'm quite thankful that's the tact they take with it instead of "I'm angry soldier, must bleed to be real".

02/07/13

I'm not looking forward to this day too much. This is basically my third to last run, which is all well and good, but there's about a week in between this and the next run. All the momentum built up between now and then the show having nearly a week off, I hope doesn't lose itself somewhere. I decided to just let them run it without notes since even giving notes may not be the best, but I'll use what happened to plan my Mardi Gras rehearsal.

2/13/13

Second to last run before tech. One more to go. Great. It will give me time to solidify the soldiers and nurses more and eek out that little more ensemble play that's been missing overall. William, who was supposed to start with work tonight didn't show up (at all, kinda worrying) so I worked John's monologue for a bit and then took a 10 before starting, hopefully with all sound at the least.

The show ran fairly well tonight. Everyone was ready to roar. I almost hope we don't lose this forward momentum when we get into tech. Kaitlyn in particular brought it in her opening monologue and the soldiers in the fight scene choreography look really solid, we should probably work a little more on the accuracy. There's that sweet spot of it's very obviously fake violence and actually hitting your target and, while I'm glad they're erring on the side of caution, we need to tighten it up a bit. But the energy and the passion are there.

We got to notes:

Can we run full preshow with explosions today?

Lx Can we start with haze too?

Sx Louder Curtain call

SM faster call post curtain

Med Geni"toe"

Lx Slower fade up on Electra?

E Remember how I said story was wrong? It's right, but make after Pelops was murdered a new thing

H Do you have a handkerchief?

E side slap

N3 Hit the side and pretend like she hit a ramp.

N3 Don't drop the noise.

H "Go out to lunch" out to us.

Lx Can we get a smidge brighter in the upstage corner.

O Beautiful 'S'. Shakespearian.

J Maybe find solace in your book.

O "Reaches over and touches my "leg"".

Ns Don't shuffle during O monologue

Sx What happened to the backstage mic?

Sx Cleaner break from radio voices into Menelaus. Maybe radio static?

Cx What is M guard jacket dress?

T Think on the line a little bit more. Pick up the pace.

T Warm up? Or dust.

T Stop center, then turn.

O Much better tantrum

M X to bed on the Summer sails stuff

MG Stop at the bottom. Never pass him.

W Up tons quicker. The you rising like Frankenstein was fine. The gasp wasn't.

SM Mic cue.

Sx Why is the mic crap?

Py UH-restes.

N Don't forget radio

Lx Can we get a light on wispy Electra.

E Stay there for the whole of the scene.

Can we get the water a little warmer? Or at least keep it outside until moments before unless it's adverse conditions?



TMM LOUDER! Remember, it's more oratory. You're like the parson at his funeral. This is the sermon. Out to us

TMM/SM Wrap him lower on the arms. Wrap him

Ns Project more.

MG Stand behind TMM

N1 Don't forget to give O stank eye.

Sx Start lower, fade it in.

N Why did you give

O Shiver a little more.

Lx Is there a pissing Orestes/Violence look?

Sx pissy mcspeaker

Sx Can we start dance music louder and actually bring her down too.

Py How easy is it to suggest cutting H throat?

Py Stage whisper to O.

N1 Help N with chair.

W Thanks for the save or you were the issue?

W Project This is Helen's servant!

A You gotta be totally quiet up there.

Turn on the mic immediately post undone.

A Connect understand to the previous line.

Sx I'm not sure if he's cutting out because of power or himself?

O Hang out like you did for a second longer.

Sx Turn down No Rain.

W Stinger on we're doing it.

Everyone was receptive for notes, and I left it open for any questions and I got a hand up from Mason. "I'm not going to be in rehearsal tomorrow." My interest piqued. He proceeds to explain to me that he's going to go to dinner with his girlfriend for Valentine's Day and anyone else who feels the same way should do the same. The second he invited other people to join him, my blood began to boil. We had a very heated back and forth about professionalism and how there are other people here who would love to do that, but they made a commitment. My mother is in town at this moment and I'm not visiting with her. I saw her once on Mardi Gras because I'm fully committed to this process more than just for the fact that it's my thesis. Also, this is why we have conflict schedules. He told me to stop yelling because it wasn't going to change anything. I called rehearsal at that moment and sat there for a short bit to gain myself.

I could have handled it better. Me yelling and then sitting there after being challenged like that did no one favors, particularly not me. The audacity was deep though. To not only do that to me, but even more so to his cast, everyone who has spent all this time working on this project up to this point. The lackadaisical mood he had for the art because it wasn't his main focus just insulted me to no end. This is the thing I want to do with my life and for someone to treat it so callously just got very deep under my skin. More than anything else in quite a long time. I should probably have not raised my voice and verbally chastised his integrity. Still, I'm doing a run tomorrow, whether Orestes is there or not.

02/14/13

After last night, there were a few meetings about last night's situation. I came out of last night's rehearsal wanting to replace Mason. I was dead set on it. Then I calmed down a bit, chatted with David and realized for the benefit of the show as a whole, unless he refused to continue himself, and see if he even shows up tonight...

...which did not happen. Quelle surprise. We did still do a run thru of sorts though. We just did a working session. It was fairly successful too, surprisingly. I was not in a good mind coming into this rehearsal, still carrying the baggage from the night before. But everyone knuckled down and did their work. And you know what? The show was actually fun again. It's a danger that comes with running often. We worked William's diction a bit more so his monologues were more clear, and we worked Franny's for the same thing. Kaitlyn played with her top of the show monologue and we saw what it was like with the brightness turned up a little bit, Robert's Tyndareus came alive again tonight even when not having Orestes to play off of and John's Menelaus was as usual tremendous. I did feel bad for poor Aaron though, since so much of Pylades' work is to bounce ideas off of Orestes.

While I was still horribly displeased with the whole situation the night before and for a chunk of the rehearsal period and the displeasure focused inward that I brought that situation in again tonight, I think this whole situation was a sort of success. It's a terrible way to do it, but it breathed new life into the show. People started reacting honestly to each other again and it wasn't a go-through-the-motions run because when you're missing the title character, you have to be ready to adapt to the abyss on the stage and try and keep your energy up with someone reading in the lines.

02/15/16

No rehearsal today. Had a useful dry tech with lights and sound after having a heck of a day gathering microphones and making sure speakers and said microphones were patched into the board at the right spots. It was quite a bit of running around today that I didn't expect to need to do, but I'm glad I checked in on things. Robert Racine was an immense help in gathering together the extra mics and the patching. I'm sending him a shout out and promising we will take immense care of the pieces of equipment that we're borrowing.

We also worked Rigdon coming down from the catwalks as Apollo again today as well. That moment excites me probably as much as it worries him. He'll get used to it though the more he does it. He's still a good sport to do it as well. It might sound like I'm not concerned for his well-being and I am, but I'm balancing the good of the show with his initial comfortability and putting complete faith in Kevin and Diane.

02/16/13

Today was supposed to be the start of tech. Note that “supposed” to be the start of tech comment in there. I brought in the donuts and coffee and got everyone there 9. Kit stayed on top of the set up and technicians’ work. Hour 1 passed, 2 passed, 3 passed, saw some cues, heard some cues, but we still weren’t ready for tech. The actors sat around longer than they should have and I take the blame in letting them do that. Kit finally recommended we should send them home after lunch, so that was the consensus for the day. I was a bit embarrassed for the wasting of time and the turn of events, but the actors were good sports and understand this happens in tech rehearsals sometimes.

02/17/13

After yesterday's false start, we finally got a run in the evening with all the lights and sound, and most importantly, the costumes! Which are some of the most fabulous things to come out of the shop, I must say. Helen's hula-hoop bag almost steals the show! It's nice to bring in new elements after all the times we've run (which hasn't been too much, but still). It breathes fresh life into the show. We also worked the blood and on-stage "urination". It was just nice to see a finally full cast in rehearsal today. And it's pretty helpful when you want to tech to have the entire cast.

The run itself was a bit rusty. Not too surprising given all the start/stop this late period of the rehearsal process. The soldiers, however, brought it tonight to this run. I'm proud to see where all four of them have come from and look forward to their continued growth. The less experienced actors in this whole process in particular, even William to a point, have come leaps and bounds to this second to last rehearsal. It's also nice to have part of a cast that doesn't have the "understanding" that tech dresses can mean "mark the play". Not to say that all the stalwarts did it, but it's still really nice to see unabashed optimism and excitement at tech.

I took notes, but outside of the very obvious get in your light or questions about tech (Diane and I chatted a bit about the final cacophony moment since it still wasn't fully ready and I wanted to know where she was heading with it, Tony asked some about the blood, and Anthonyka and I chatted about the rubber chips entering into stage right). I decided to just let the actors go. It had been a long weekend, and they just need to find that click for tomorrow and I have faith that they can.

02/19/13

Final dress! Woo! And as such, here are my notes for the final run before opening:

Sx Memory bombs? Where'd they go?

Sx Roundabout after Comfortably Numb. Puppet or Birdhouse might come post show

Sx Volume lower

Sx Someone touching it?

Sx Maybe a little static over the sound

SM Can you call the curtain call a little post end of radio?

E Now you can come in sooner.

J Don't wake until post mention of Menelaus.

H Give him a harsher look after wolf whistle.

E Tuck O back in.

H react to bloody arms

N Don't cross to H until 27 months

H Let soldiers affect you

E One slap

N3 Okay, fly over the chair, land and spin

N Don't forget you have a line

N 2-4 months later

Ns Take a second longer to enter

N1 Be a little harsher with TMM

E Enunciate during your Hookers

Ss CRY OUT! LIKE ORESTES!

N2 Don't start cards the moment O wakes up.e

N You're alone in your O terror.

E I liked you asking the nurses "going to be" Ns, respond accordingly

Sx Fix ringtone put out of onstage speaker

Sx P Menelaus can be shit tons louder.

Ns Betsy totally cheated

N1 what happened to the tape?

Cx Can we tone down T's face some?

N3 Him saying speak of Black residence of a southside neighbourhood is not good.

O Stay at the end of bed when T scares you off.

TMM Just look up. Don't give us a "suasion bitches" look.

O Slime! Harsher, more stinging

Cx Does M need his hat after the first scene?

W "It's" a nightmare really.

E Take a little longer to get out.

Sx "Is it okay" lower.

SM I'm sure that's a note you've got.

TMM Give me more projection.

TMM That's unlike you. What happened? We need that monologue in time for timing.

N1 Louder slap

N Make sure your monologue is in order

N2 I know you're doing sexy smoking, but make sure the ciggie isn't pointing at the audience.

Ns LOUDER!

Ss Fight. TMM Tape action.

Ss and all in Vom QUIET! Not even back pats until you get out. Only the faint faintest of whisperings.



Lx Can we get a little softer post pissing/violence.

O Wow, wet knee is striking.

O Can you pee during the start of the violence?

W you can't sneak backstage through the house.

O and E Find joy in the dancing. But the dance was really nice. Until we went to

Sx Bring Electra up

Py Gotta project even when being sneaky.

Py Would the act itself give you pleasure?

Ns No cards during soldier monologue.

N If you want to join on W's bed, go ahead.

N2 Okay, take out a couple of your yeahs.

W SAY THE DAMN LINE!!! H's servant

N Connect the lines of the monologue. Check in with N1. N1 react.

SM This is just a question: Can we position A and deal with all that during the Menelaus freakout.

O Jump in on M's lines. Boom boom boom boom. Daughter

A and A Guard Keep H to your chest.

A You don't ever know that people are

Sx I do want it playing still

I gave these notes out to everyone, with minor alterations as these are my short hand, and then sent everyone away hoping no one would party too much the night before opening. Opening is tomorrow night, holy crap.

02/20/13

What's that? It's opening night? No more journals because we shouldn't make any more corrections to the production and we should turn it over to the PSM and cast? Why didn't you say so!

## **Chapters 5 and 6: Character/Script Analysis**

Being that one of my major weaknesses as a director is my ability to be very cerebral and long-winded about ideas, when I do character and script analysis I prefer to use a modified version of Frances Hodge's breakdown in his book *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*. (57-58) It forces brevity in communication in rehearsal or at least forces me to think in more succinct thoughts instead of being wildly descriptive. Since Hodge's analysis has a section built in for characters, I chose to combine chapters 5 and 6 into one solid chapter.

### **1. Given Circumstances**

#### **A. Environmental facts. Discuss under the following numbered headings:**

- 1. Geographical location, including climate**
- 2. Date: year, season, time of day**
- 3. Economic environment**
- 4. Political environment**
- 5. Social Environment**
- 6. Religious Environment**

1. The play takes place in the political boundary of the city of Argos. Based on the fact that Zeus, the Furies and Apollo are both mentioned/appear in the play, we are in some territory of Ancient Greece or a presupposed facsimile of Athens. If we extrapolate that idea, it's a Mediterranean climate and since no one mentions the temperature it can only be assumed to be a comfortable level.

2. The year is at least 10 years post the abduction of Helen and the beginning of the Trojan War. We aren't sure how long Menelaus has been absent or how long Clytemnestra ruled after the murder of Agamemnon. It is 6 days after the murder of Clytemnestra.

**3.** There is a distinction between those who are royalty and those who aren't. Orestes and Electra claim the "house" that Helen and Menelaus are currently residing in. Orestes demands a helicopter from Menelaus, insinuating Menelaus has power, be it economic or political. Helen sums up the differences between the have and have-nots: "First of all, I cleanse my skin with products that cleanse but don't dry, products that are natural. I exfoliate my face once a week with a product that contains oatmeal, honey, and nuts. The toner I use is alcohol-free, and I moisturize all the time and use eye cream. So I cleanse, tone, moisturize, and exfoliate... And I drink a lot of water. And I relax. I find time to meditate, put my feet up and do a facial mask and just think about the great powers of the universe and all that we have to be happy about and grateful for... I get my eyelashes dyed--that helps—my eyebrows waxed, get a facial and get my hair done, and then I go out to lunch."

**4.** Politically, it's a time bomb ticking. The house of Atreus is falling to pieces. Agamemnon, King of Argos, was slaughtered by his wife, Clytemnestra, when he returned from the War with Troy. Clytemnestra took control of Argos with Agamemnon's cousin, Aegisthus, and reigned for an indeterminate amount of time. Electra, Clytemnestra's daughter, returns to visit Agamemnon's grave and Orestes, Clytemnestra's son/Electra's sister, returns soon after with his friend and Prince of another country, Pylades a little more than 6 days ago. 6 days ago, Orestes, Electra and Pylades schemed to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and Orestes did the deed. So, Prince Orestes and Princess Electra, who should ascend to the royal realms, are instead surrounded by the common folks and awaiting trial to see how they will be sacrificed for the murder of Clytemnestra.

**5.** The people of Argos are tired and restless. It's a war-torn community, although the war took place thousands of miles away. The leaving of Agamemnon and Menelaus left a power vacuum that Clytemnestra tried to fill, but she could only do so much with Agamemnon's arrival. The

soldiers have returned home but a majority are unable to readjust to public life due to the horrors they witnessed in the wars.

6. The Greek gods of old are in full effect here, although they are not very revered. The Furies torment Orestes on and off through the start of the play and fade out. Apollo is mentioned by Electra and Helen early on as blame for what is currently taking place and also appears at the end as an ineffectual *deus ex machina*, doling out people's fates somewhat easily and without regard for what happened moments before.

## **B. Previous Action**

### **FULL TEXT**

Clytemnestra's throat was slashed. (2)

Clytemnestra died from heart failure. (2)

Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon just returned from war (2)

Orestes murdered Clytemnestra 6 days ago. (3)

Orestes has been delirious since then. (3)

Martial law in the town is declared. (3)

Tantalus fed Pelops to the Gods. (4)

Atreus and Thyestes, sons of Pelops fought with one another. (4)

Atreus fed Thyestes' children to him. (4)

Atreus's second wife gave birth to Agamemnon and Menelaus. (5)

Agamemnon married Clytemnestra; Menelaus married Helen. (5)

Helen is cause of Trojan war. (5)

Menelaus is just returned home. (5)

Electra and Orestes are going to trial today. (5)

Apollo, in a way, ordained Orestes' action. (6)

The “Furies” have been tormenting Orestes these past 6 days. (20)

The citizens of the city surround the courtyard. (20)

Pylades has been thrown out of his house. (29)

**C. Polar attitudes of the principal characters, both in the beginning and ending**

Electra-Beginning-I must make everything right again and repair the house of Atreus.

Electra-Ending-I must simply survive, no matter the cost.

Orestes-Beginning-I was just in my actions and continue to be.

Orestes-Ending-I must protect my sister, no matter the cost.

Menelaus-Beginning-I must make sure my family is taken care of.

Menelaus-Ending-I must make sure my lineage is taken care of.

**D. Significance of the facts in the total meaning of the play**

It keeps us constantly aware that these two children are acting against forces that they have absolutely no way of controlling. From the giant war that the whole society is still trying to come to grips with, to the reason why their mother killed their father, to the whole issue with the curse placed on their family by the gods. So much of their distant familial past is controlling their present, so much of what the past immediate generations has done and still does and they just can't do anything about it. But still, Orestes and Electra rail against it futilely.

## Dialogue

- A. Choice of words**
  - B. Choice of phrases and sentence structure**
  - C. Choice of images**
  - D. Choice of peculiar characteristics, for example, dialect**
  - E. The sound of the dialogue**
  - F. Structure of lines and speeches**
- A.** Mee considers this a collage play, so a lot of his choices of words either come from books (i.e. Tapemouth Man's speeches from *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* By Elaine Scarry or pieces of John's slaughter story from John Wayne Gacy's biography, or Nod's monologue from Bukowski's *Septuagenarian Stew: Stories & Poems*), magazines (i.e. Helen's beauty tip monologues), and, of course, Euripides' original piece.
- B.** "I don't know." "I don't remember." "It's a nightmare really." Three phrases that are repeated constantly by Electra, Orestes, Pylades, and the soldiers usually when someone is talking about the past or about possible futures. It shows how the past can be so easily forgotten or a cheating memory that makes up better ideas of what things should be like.
- C.** Discussions of dismemberment and murder used by Charles Mee to focus the audience when something important is coming upon us. Shock value is the blinking neon light to important point. Brechtian in a way, but not quite so overt. Electra uses the thought of travel to escape her current troubles. Helen uses her talk of moisturizers and other such things to try to connect with us on a level she's comfortable at. Orestes uses violence to women to distance himself from others. The Tapemouth Man is justice itself bound and

gaged for all to see and when he begins calling people out on their injustices, through war stories of old and passages from books, he is beaten back into submission.

- D.** The “royals”, in particular Orestes and Menelaus, speak in what Mee calls “archaic language”. (“Oh sweet sleep. Sweet savior of the sick.” Orestes, pg. 11 “But where is our nephew Orestes? We’ve come to comfort him.” Menelaus, pg. 18) It contains more robust classical figurative language, less modern prose. Also, there are many names in the piece that are not of our time. I’ve attached a pronunciation chart to the end of this analysis.
- E.** Dialogue is very deliberate. It is highly controlled by the punctuation and line endings.  
When we get into most story monologues
- F.** Depends on your choice between main character “verse” and secondary character prose. Mee controls the pace and rhythm by use of line endings and specifically chosen punctuation not based in English, but instead as a pace and comprehension controller which makes decisions as a director manipulating the text into something understandable easier.



### **III. Dramatic Action**

**A. Titles of the units. Number the units in the scene or play and give a nominative phrase as a title for each unit**

**B. Summary of the action. Summarize the action of each unit by following the number of the unit with a compound sentence expressing reciprocal action.**

**Example: A (present-tense verb) to B and B (present-tense verb) to A.**

**A. SEE UNIT BREAKDOWN**

**B. SEE SCRIPT**

#### **IV. Characters**

- a. Desire**
- b. Will**
- c. Moral Stance**
- d. Decorum**
- e. Summary list of adjectives**

**Initial character-mood-intensity at the scene-opening expressed as:**

- 1. Heartbeat: rate**
- 2. Perspiration: heavy, light, etc.**
- 3. Stomach Condition**
- 4. Muscle tension**
- 5. Breathing: rate, depth**

#### **ELECTRA**

- A.** To be with her brother in life or death
- B.** Weak-willed. She lets us know what's going on and tells us she's got to keep everything together just to do nothing.
- C.** Life isn't worth living if my brother isn't here.
- D.** A dishrag, full of words and desires for the future and full of memories of the past, but very little for the present.
- E.** Weighty, decrescendo, frail, undecided
  - 1.** Fast and passionate
  - 2.** Heavy, fevered
  - 3.** All in knots
  - 4.** Highly tense

5. Shallow and tense

**HELEN**

- A. To pretend like nothing ever happened.
- B. Again, weak-willed, but unlike Electra, spoiled and needy.
- C. She dances to her own beat. She hasn't done anything wrong.
- D. She's like a will-o-th'-wisp. She floats into situations, says her piece, and leaves without much weight behind her words.
- E. Floaty, self-obsessed, needy, helpless
  - 1. Even, with a slight increase of worry
  - 2. Light (better not perspire, she's Helen)
  - 3. Completely free
  - 4. It's all been massaged away
  - 5. Unrestricted

**NOD**

- A. To come to terms with the atrocities of Troy.
- B. Strong-willed, one not afraid to stand up to anyone, be they Helen or Orestes.
- C. If you cross me and threaten my brothers, I'll take you down.
- D. Crude, not taking much thought as to who his audience is.
- E. Stern, sarcastic, grounded
  - 1. Like clockwork
  - 2. Regular
  - 3. Sick from the past
  - 4. Tense
  - 5. Measured

## **JOHN**

- A.** To be set free from memories of the war and his past
- B.** In thought a lot of the time, not pushy
- C.** Don't cross me.
- D.** Doesn't handle loud noise well, shell shocked. Quiet but follows the lead of Nod.
- E.** Shell-shocked, sharp, quiet
  - 1.** Slower
  - 2.** Varies from average to heavy
  - 3.** Varies from nothing to tense
  - 4.** Tense
  - 5.** Deep

## **NURSES**

- A.** To care for their patients
- B.** Their patients had better not bother them too much
- C.** Get them in, get them out.
- D.** As long as the patients are taken care of, how doesn't matter
- E.** Gossipy, impositional, vapid
  - 1.** Unconcerned
  - 2.** Light
  - 3.** Tension? What's that?
  - 4.** Light
  - 5.** Heavy when working

## **TAPEMOUTH MAN**

- A.** To light the other characters' path

- B. Just wants to get free and help people with their issues
- C. Probably the one person who has a true sense of moral that no one wants to hear.
- D. Polite, takes his licks, speaks when he gets the chance.
- E. Long-suffering, quiet, wise beyond his years
  - 1. Controlled
  - 2. Nothing out of the ordinary
  - 3. Incensed
  - 4. A little knotty from the occasional abuse
  - 5. Relaxed

#### **MENELAUS**

- A. To quickly insert himself back into power
- B. He believes his actions are true until someone else in power tell him otherwise, at which point it's whatever that person advised him.
- C. He has his moral code and stance, but it's quickly easy to change.
- D. Militarily, orderly, caring
- E. Bombastic, put together, charismatic, tired
  - 1. Orderly
  - 2. Constant
  - 3. Unphased
  - 4. Uneasy
  - 5. Deep and loose

#### **TYNDAREUS**

- A. To seek justice for the death of his daughter
- B. Very secure in his actions, very calculated with his words

C. He believes the public's justice should be upheld

D. Harsh, upright, strict

E. Kempt, dark, mature

1. Savage

2. Slight, but controlled

3. Upset from the crime

4. Flashes of tension

5. Controlled and stable

#### **WILLIAM**

A. To escape the war

B. Like an oracle, one who speaks in riddles but what he says has great meaning to what's going on.

C. Very worried about others, be they a murdering prince or a murdering soldier.

D. Light, fleeting

E. Solid, weak

1. Light

2. Feverish

3. contracted

4. weak

5. shallow but slow

#### **PYLADES**

A. To impress Electra and Orestes.

B. Very strong-willed almost to a fault

C. So long as Electra and Orestes appreciate it, he's fine with it.

**D.** Regal, flighty, fantastical

**E.** Flashy, fey, ungrounded

**1.** Flighty

**2.** Slight, but it's wiped up

**3.** Nerved

**4.** Tired out

**5.** Fast and breathless

### **PHRYGIAN**

**A.** To inform anyone possible about the spiriting away of Helen

**B.** Get it out! Get it out!

**C.** Innocent, just scared for her mistress

**D.** Fast, frightened, confused

**E.** Speedy, weak

**1.** Racing!

**2.** Streaming!

**3.** So twisted!

**4.** So tense!

**5.** Out of breath!

### **APOLLO**

**A.** To tie all the storylines up

**B.** Make everything right, even if it comes out of left field

**C.** He is the supposed moral base, being a god, but some of this is his fault to begin with

**D.** Standing tall, stature, bright

**E.** God-like, large, energetic

1. Staid
2. None
3. Gods don't have stomach knots
4. None here, he's in complete control
5. Diaphragmatic and slow



## **V. Idea**

### **A. Meaning of the title**

### **B. Philosophical statements in the play: Cite actual quotations**

### **C. How does the action lead directly to the idea (meaning)?**

**A.** *Orestes 2.0* is a fairly simple title. It is, in essence, Euripides play *Orestes* modified or upgraded for a modern audience. Now in the world of software engineering, where this numbering scheme comes from, a version number does not always mean improvement (Windows 5.1 or XP did not yield great improvements when upgraded to 6.0 or Vista), but it does means some change or overhaul. Enough change that at least merits a new version as Charles Mee did to Euripides' original work.

**B.**

#### **FULL PLAY**

"There is no form of anguish however terrible that human beings might not have to bear." (2)

"It's a nightmare really." (3)

"I think there are some things that are close and distant at the same time: Paradise for example." (4)

"I don't know." (5)

"I don't remember." (5)

"Some people say murder is a terrible thing, but then you hear of other things that make you think murder is a blessing." (6)

"The world has become more difficult nowadays, not as it was when I was a child." (9)

"How wise the gods are, if they give us life, to give us sleep." (11)

"How hard it is to wake up, and wish you were asleep." (12)

"Now there is nothing that can redeem what we have made of our lives." (14)

"There was a time I might have had a life of many choices." (15)

"And this is how a man looks these days if his conscience is still alive." (19)

"I'm sinking deeper and deeper into a world of remorse and madness. There's no bottom to this." (19)

One doesn't try to govern another man's imagination, another man's emotions, another man's personal preferences, idiosyncrasies, indulgences, passions, tastes, whims, so long as they do no harm to the bodies of others; but, as for actions, these we govern all the time, and should. This is what it is to be a man, and nothing else." (21)

"...the belief that if one disposes of a word, one disposes of all the dreadful or disagreeable things that have become attached to it." (22)

"And yet, one can commit murder and find the words to justify it. This is your sort of civilization, then. It speaks nicely and behaves barbarously. Indeed, it thinks that speaking well, putting a nice face on things, will transform the very stuff of life on earth. No..." (23)

"You flatter yourself that you are an old-fashioned sort of man, but you've no idea what it is you ought to be old-fashioned about." (23)

"Was her wrong meant to go unpunished?" (24)

"...even as though their behavior had nothing to do with us, and yet, if we watch them closely we sometimes learn a thing or two." (26)

"The arms and legs that are, in peacetime, lent out to the state for a few seconds and then reclaimed may in war be permanently loaned in injured and lost limbs." (33)

"The record of the war survives in the bodies, both alive and buried, of the people who were hurt there--just as, from day to day, the nation is embodied in the gestures and the postures, the customs and behavior of its citizens." (33)

"I try to explain to my boyfriends that, for me, masturbation is not the same as cock sex. And oral sex is not the same as vaginal-cock sex or masturbation. It's like the difference between beef and ham." (35)

"If you sanction the murder of husbands by wives, you might as well go kill yourselves right now or accept the domination of your women." (39)

"You think: when you die, you never come back. And you don't know where you are." (43)

"When it comes to it, we all have a preference. Some people cut their wrists.... Some people tie their hands with wire...." (43)

"...thinking I can do nothing right, not even when I'm not trying I must be just incorrectly positioned, I think I always was, from the start, the way it is when you can never get the right grip on anything because you're at the wrong end, or on the wrong side of it!" (44)

"The way is there. We only have to take it." (45)

"Some people think: well, I can always take it back. But that's not the case." (47)

"Uh, primarily, uh, uh, the, uh, the...primarily the question is does man have the power to forgive himself. And he does." (49)

"If I forgive myself I'm forgiven. You know that's essentially the answer. I'm the captain of my own ship. I run my own ship. Nobody can crawl in my ship unless they get permission." (50)

"We've done a lot of violence to the snivelling tendencies in our natures. What we need now are some strong, straightforward actions that you'd have to be a fool not to learn the wrong lessons from it." (59)

"If you were married to logic, you'd be living in incest, swallowing your own tail." (60)

C. People's inability to move to the future and leave the past behind seems to haunt all of our characters in this play. The only forward moving suggestion comes from Pylades when trying to convince Orestes to kidnap Hermione. Electra is completely frozen to the past and unable to

make a move for fear of hurting Orestes; Orestes feebly tries to rail against the past but it ends up being nothing more than a spineless tirade and then kowtowing to the court enough to be permitted to take his own life; Menelaus trying to pretend like he holds the reigns still in Argos and quickly being shown that he holds no power with the people or even with his own family by the end. Everyone is frozen by how things were and how ancestors reacted and nobody wants to fight for a new future.

## VI. Moods

A. A list of mood adjectives for each one of the senses

B. A mood image

## VII. Tempos

After the number of each unit, designate the rate of speed for that unit by using a rate word. Examples: fast, medium-slow, largo.

A, B and VI.

Unit 1	Title	An Autopsy
	Touch	cold and dry
	Taste	Sterilizing cleaner
	Smell	Hospital
	Hear	A slight murmur of onlookers
	See	Mutilation
	Mood Image	A scene from CSI: Argos
	Tempo	Clinically staccato
Unit 2	Title	Introducing Orestes
	Touch	clammy hands
	Taste	6-day old black coffee
	Smell	stale cigarettes and fear
	Hear	whimpering
	See	An animal backed into a corner
	Mood Image	Something cute that you shouldn't touch for fear it might be diseased

	Tempo steady	
Unit 3	Title	A History of Violence
	Touch	metallic
	Taste	blood
	Smell	fruit and meat pies
	Hear	Anguished screams
	See	Small child against a sea of things beyond her control
	Mood Image	A blood splattered genealogical chart
	Tempo Wavering in speed	
Unit 4	Title	Brief fantasia to forget
	Touch	Soft
	Taste	Foreign, yet still nostalgic
	Smell	Cologne you've smelled before
	Hear	Faint, laughing children
	See	A crackling fire
	Mood Image	Meeting your lover secretly
	Tempo languid	
Unit 5	Title	Electra Vittoria!
	Touch	Overly firm
	Taste	Gunpowder
	Smell	The smell of the house of your youth
	Hear	A stirring of strings
	See	Victory
	Mood Image	A general pouring over maps

	Tempo	Allegretto
Unit 6 (SKIPPED)		
Unit 7	Title	A Daily Regimen
	Touch	Baby-skin smooth
	Taste	A nice jelly
	Smell	A lovely cucumber-melon lotion
	Hear	The clink of silverware in a swank restaurant
	See	Bright beam of sun in one small area
	Mood Image	A woman sunning herself in a long beach chair
	Tempo	Allegro ma non troppo
Unit 8	Title	Elongated Murder
	Touch	Short, sharp shocks
	Taste	Metal
	Smell	Burning flesh
	Hear	Screams
	See	Shadows closing in on the sun
	Mood Image	The moment before the ants start stinging when you step in the ant pile
	Tempo	Veloce
Unit 9	Title	Ummm... A Favor?
	Touch	Awkwardly delicate
	Taste	Orange juice after brushing your teeth
	Smell	Slightly burning toast
	Hear	Light gasps

	See	Clouds covering a part of the sun
	Mood Image	The moment before someone tells you your zipper's down
	Tempo	Stop-start
Unit 10 Title		Hermione, dear!
	Touch	Course cloth
	Taste	Fabrics, cotton
	Smell	Decomposing earth
	Hear	A call with no response
	See	plastic shine
	Mood Image	A throne room with a puppet king
	Tempo	Andante
Unit 11 Title		A Daily Regimen Redux
	Touch	Silk
	Taste	Honey
	Smell	Fragrant Roses
	Hear	Giggling
	See	The sun as it crosses the horizon
	Mood Image	The sun smiling on us on final time
	Tempo	Light and free
Unit 12 Title		I'm glad THAT'S gone
	Touch	A whip sting
	Taste	Stale air of prison
	Smell	Unfamiliar surroundings
	Hear	Silence with occasional howls



	See	Nothing
	Mood Image	Frighteningly nothing
	Tempo	Presto
Unit 13 Title		Do Not Disturb
	Touch	Slap
	Taste	Sour
	Smell	Sickness
	Hear	Flies
	See	Ghastly apparitions
	Mood Image	A coma patient
	Tempo	Gatheringly
Unit 14 Title		You're Awake!
	Touch	Tender
	Taste	Sleep mouth
	Smell	Home
	Hear	Distant cries
	See	Love
	Mood Image	Two halves become a whole
	Tempo	Adagio
Unit 15 Title		FUCKIN' BITCH!
	Touch	Repetitively harder and harder
	Taste	Bitter
	Smell	Car fumes
	Hear	Great shrieking!

	See	Giant pillars of men
	Mood Image	The walls are closing in
	Tempo	Rapido
Unit 16 Title	Are We Screwed?	
	Touch	Cold, blankness
	Taste	Salty
	Smell	Tears
	Hear	The screams of Clytemnestra
	See	Dim light
	Mood Image	Light two miles to the entrance of a cave and that flickers in and out
	Tempo	Set back
Unit 17 Title	Let me... comfort you?	
	Touch	Awkwardly gentle
	Taste	slightly sweet
	Smell	A light touch of cologne
	Hear	Peaceful sighs
	See	The light getting closer
	Mood Image	Trying to comfort but using all the wrong words
	Tempo	Serene
Unit 18 Title	A call from beyond	
	Touch	Static
	Taste	ion-charged air
	Smell	fresh ozone

	Hear	a faint buzz
	See	nothing
	Mood Image	An old ad for AT&T's "Reach out and Touch Someone" campaign
	Tempo	clipped but flowing
Unit 19 Title		Hey buddy.
	Touch	comforting
	Taste	something full of emotional memory
	Smell	your favorite dinner from childhood
	Hear	deep, rich cello tones
	See	child you winning something
	Mood Image	Relaxing on a cruise
	Tempo	relaxed
Unit 20 Title		The Lite FM
	Touch	The rays of the sun
	Taste	A coconut drink
	Smell	Sea air
	Hear	Seagulls
	See	Sandy beaches
	Mood Image	A gauze covered window with the light breeze tickling at the gauze
	Tempo	Like the crashing of waves
Unit 21 Title		A bulletin... The man, the legend!
	Touch	A gloved hand

Taste            The faint taste of gunpowder

Smell            The faint smell of trenches

Hear            Uproarious crowds

See              Throngs of people

Mood Image    Ticker tape parades after WWII

Tempo Upbeat, jaunty

Unit 22 Title            War changes people

Touch            syrupy and viscous

Taste            Iron

Smell            blood

Hear            faint cries

See              Blood-stained hands

Mood Image    Small splatters of blood around a town's perimeter

Tempo Forced calm

Unit 23 Title            My fellows

Touch            Short, sharp shocks

Taste            bile

Smell            unbathed after 6 days Orestes

Hear            distant uprising

See              the gleam of pitchforks

Mood Image    Pitchforks gleaming over the wall

Tempo Largo with an accelerando

Unit 24 Title            Grandfather!

Touch            appendages slowly regaining blood flow

Taste	6 days of sleep
Smell	Old Spice
Hear	A barking dog
See	Red
Mood Image	A parent sending a child to the corner
Tempo	Larghetto

Unit 25 Title                      The older generation

Touch	wrinkly hands
Taste	vegetable beef
Smell	stale air
Hear	scolding
See	someone standing in a deep hole or floating above it
Mood Image	Grandpa harping on political correctness
Tempo	Staid

Unit 26 Title                      The worst for last

Touch	A slap
Taste	bitter
Smell	sour
Hear	chastising
See	fire in the eyes
Mood Image	A general dressing down an inferior
Tempo	Poundingly moderato

Unit 27 Title                      Should I have said this before?

Touch	prickly
-------	---------

Taste	blood
Smell	sweat
Hear	your own pumping blood
See	fire
Mood Image	Someone standing over a bloody corpse with pride at the accomplishment.

Tempo Throbbing

Unit 28 Title I STAND WITH ORESTES!... That's good, right?

Touch	fishy
Taste	victory with a bitter aftertaste
Smell	whatever YOU want to smell
Hear	the subjects' adoration
See	greased back hair and a suit and a wry smile
Mood Image	politicians kissing babies

Tempo regal

Unit 29 Title And... ninja vanish!

Touch	the faintest fabric
Taste	exhaust fumes
Smell	fire embers
Hear	fast clacking getting softer
See	A blur of motion
Mood Image	A liar running away before the truth hits

Tempo staccato

Unit 30 Title SLIME!

Touch grease  
 Taste mud and dung  
 Smell a latrine  
 Hear mutters of discontent  
 See weary futures  
 Mood Image World War One bunker  
 Tempo andante

Unit 31 Title The oracle, part two

Touch hard plastic  
 Taste slight static  
 Smell nothing  
 Hear crackles  
 See cloudy visions  
 Mood Image prenatal charts  
 Tempo easily followable

Unit 32 Title Enter the fabulous Pylades

Touch silks  
 Taste fancy wines  
 Smell fancy aftershave  
 Hear foreign buskers  
 See nervous handsomeness  
 Mood Image Your always put together foreign friend  
 Tempo hurried with purpose

Unit 33 Title I'll do (just about) anything for you

Touch	firm grasp
Taste	meat
Smell	determination
Hear	a soothing song
See	the beginnings of revolution
Mood Image	Tennis Court Oath
Tempo	resolute

Unit 34 Title            Don't involve her

Touch	bricks of a wall
Taste	acetaminophen
Smell	a drifting fruity soap
Hear	a light breeze
See	a figure in gauze backlit
Mood Image	a shutting door
Tempo	even

Unit 35 Title            Getting dressed physically and psychologically

Touch	rough
Taste	salty kisses
Smell	chlorine
Hear	squishing
See	someone dressing
Mood Image	therapy session
Tempo	largo

Unit 36 Title            Tort reform



	Touch	old documents
	Taste	old paper
	Smell	musty rooms
	Hear	judge announcing a verdict
	See	a lone orator
	Mood Image	court proceedings
	Tempo	pomp and circumstance
Unit 37.N.1	Title	Classified love
	Touch	wallpaper
	Taste	coffee
	Smell	cigarette smoke
	Hear	café crowd
	See	gossip circle
	Mood Image	women sitting outside having a confab
	Tempo	allegro
Unit 37.N.2	Title	“Masherbashun”
	Touch	deep and sweet
	Taste	something acidic
	Smell	sour
	Hear	low moans
	See	spots
	Mood Image	A ruffled, messed up bed
	Tempo	off-tempo
Unit 37.S.1	Title	War stories

	Touch	burns
	Taste	sand
	Smell	B.O.
	Hear	screams
	See	gun wielding paramilitaries
	Mood Image	FARC militants
	Tempo	Shots firing out of a gun
Unit 37.O.1	Title	The surprise inside
	Touch	strong
	Taste	bread and water
	Smell	dust
	Hear	banging gavel
	See	judge robes
	Mood Image	You on the witness stand
	Tempo	reverent
Unit 37.O.2	Title	Stand up defense!
	Touch	punches
	Taste	alcohol
	Smell	a dive bar
	Hear	glasses tinkling
	See	a darkened room
	Mood Image	a comedian in a small club
	Tempo	punchy
Unit 38.S.1	Title	Pubic hair

	Touch	cold aluminum
	Taste	hairy coke
	Smell	flat drink
	Hear	life going on around
	See	an argument out in the open
	Mood Image	friends arguing at a park
	Tempo	clipped
Unit 38.N.1	Title	Break 'em!
	Touch	warm touches
	Taste	good kisses
	Smell	after a good time in bed
	Hear	soft moans
	See	a seductive dance
	Mood Image	a sunbeam breaking through the bedroom window
	Tempo	hurried and then... slowed
Unit 38.O.1	Title	This is my man friend!
	Touch	harsh pokes
	Taste	acrid
	Smell	pungent crowd
	Hear	hushed crowd
	See	a lone defender
	Mood Image	the defense lawyer for the child molester
	Tempo	languidly staccato
Unit 38.O.2	Title	Classical Men of Argos

Touch	firm
Taste	familiar flavors
Smell	antiquity
Hear	ancient strains of music
See	togas
Mood Image	A scene of greek theatre in togas
Tempo	grandiose

Unit 39 Title                      Dr. Tabitha Whitlock

Touch	like a scalpel
Taste	embalming fluid
Smell	bleach
Hear	loneliness
See	medicinal corpses
Mood Image	The medical examiner in the morgue
Tempo	clinical and staid

Unit 40 Title                      Classics redux

Touch	firm but sad
Taste	fear
Smell	blood
Hear	clanging of pitch forks
See	men raising up
Mood Image	a man hanging his head, guilty, post trial
Tempo	sad

Unit 41 Title                      Happy Buddha

Touch                      comforting

Taste                      your strongest desire

Smell                      your most admired thing

Hear                      your most dulcetly enjoyed tone

See                      the darkness creeping in

Mood Image      the gang encroaching on the guy under the hanging light

Tempo      light and full of air

Unit 42 Title                      What the hell?

Touch                      a family member's embrace

Taste                      dry mouth

Smell                      urine and feces

Hear                      sobbing

See                      broken people

Mood Image      two people crumpled on the floor

Tempo      very, very slow

Unit 43 Title                      Please let this not be this

Touch                      soft

Taste                      memories of a favorite, but only air remains

Smell                      whatever can get through the runny nose of tears

Hear                      muted songs of old

See                      the fading of a dream

Mood Image      Someone fighting for the past

Tempo      languishing

Unit 44 Title                      Kill me

Touch                      very light

Taste                      the skin of a loved one

Smell                      your sibling or significant other

Hear                      light strings

See                      resolution

Mood Image      lovers planning a double suicide

Tempo   melancholy

Unit 45 Title                      It's not even a John Paul!

Touch                      Dance-y

Taste                      cake

Smell                      autumn

Hear                      your own inner dance music

See                      shafts of light and a couple dancing through them

Mood Image      A twisted father-daughter dance

Tempo   slowlier

Unit 46 Title                      We're dead... Maybe?

Touch                      tired, empty

Taste                      dirt

Smell                      freshly dug ground

Hear                      a hateful eulogy

See                      almost no one

Mood Image      staring up from your own grave

Tempo   largo

Unit 47 Title	Take the way!
Touch	still a little limp
Taste	washing some of the earth out
Smell	returning
Hear	crowds of people
See	you taking your future
Mood Image	someone helping you up after a crash
Tempo	lento
Unit 48 Title	Cycle cycle cycle...
Touch	feeling returns
Taste	the most refreshing thing
Smell	bread
Hear	choir of angels
See	clarity
Mood Image	Saul on the Road to Damascus
Tempo	pitched a little faster
Unit 49 Title	I killed someone
Touch	pensive
Taste	sour
Smell	sister's cooking
Hear	a buzzing
See	happiness that makes you angry
Mood Image	the thing that infuriates you the most, staring at you
Tempo	andante

Unit 50 Title	I stabbed them...
Touch	Sharp and hard
Taste	anger
Smell	brimstone
Hear	the chorus of voices lightly speaking
See	red
Mood Image	the lone man on his bike on a mission
Tempo	allegretto
Unit 51 Title	Forgiveness?
Touch	limpness
Taste	nothing
Smell	fighting the smells out
Hear	all the voices
See	bodies in the dark
Mood Image	the killer slumped over the lifeless body
Tempo	lentamente
Unit 52 Title	Soap opera digest
Touch	bon bons
Taste	sweet and salty snacks
Smell	dinner cooking
Hear	dramatic chords
See	brightly light people
Mood Image	the old opening to <i>Days of Our Lives</i>
Tempo	moderato



Unit 53 Title	Helen's gone, girl!
Touch	everything with firmness
Taste	bitten tongues
Smell	Helen's perfume disappearing
Hear	servants screaming and being threatened
See	an entire retinue in panic
Mood Image	the king's court being flooded with revolutionaries
Tempo	vivacissimo
Unit 54 Title	Ahhhhhh...
Touch	relaxing pats
Taste	injected medicine
Smell	breezes of Troy
Hear	the faintest of confused cries
See	your master just disappear
Mood Image	the relief drugs kicking in
Tempo	adagietto
Unit 55 Title	The old shoebox
Touch	slimy
Taste	fleshy
Smell	rancid
Hear	giggling
See	confused men
Mood Image	your secret box of collectables from life
Tempo	andante con moto

Unit 56 Title	What's going on?
Touch	indirect thrusts
Taste	the fading of your lunch
Smell	the beginnings of a conflagration
Hear	things you never thought you would
See	a collage of disjointed images
Mood Image	
Tempo	
Unit 57 Title	I'll have his fucking ass!
Touch	burning flames
Taste	your own saliva as it rises in your mouth
Smell	burning
Hear	police, helicopters, fires, yelling
See	mayhem and chaos
Mood Image	Branch Davidian standoff gone wrong
Tempo	prestissimo
Unit 58 Title	APOLLOOOOOOOOO!
Touch	regal
Taste	ambrosia
Smell	heavenly scents
Hear	choirs of angels
See	confusion
Mood Image	The presidential candidate that people don't support
Tempo	maestoso!

Unit 59 Title

Nursely duties

Touch	soft and deliberate
Taste	another medicine
Smell	antiseptic again
Hear	the same questions
See	familiar nurses
Mood Image	a patient done with the rigmarole of healing
Tempo	morendo

Unit 60 Title

Let's dance the dance again

Touch	pained
Taste	the war all over again
Smell	men huddled in a boat
Hear	screams of your fellow soldiers
See	visions of the battles and your fellow members battered and bruised
Mood Image	Fading into another battle scene
Tempo	deliberately up

## **VIII. Tone**

**Summarize the analysis by finding a word or phrase to declare the play as a whole.**

A dilapidated fresco.

## Chapter 7: Post-Mortem

Everything considered, all the road bumps that all productions seem to face, *Orestes 2.0* was a guarded success. Like any production there are cogs that were not as greased up as they could be, some directorial stumbles that could be seen. Ultimately, it was a production that hopefully the entire team working on it can view as something that sparked a curiosity in the public while allowing them to enjoy it. Those things are at the heart of theatre: the need to educate and to entertain.

Looking first at the acting side of the production, they all deserve praise for getting through it and doing it with the energy that will still keep an audience engaged after 90 to 100 minutes. Each of them worked together as an ensemble, giving and taking as best as they could. I am quite honored to have worked with so many first-time actors. Many of them especially blew me out of the water once we got out the kinks of how scripts worked and the basic ideas of a rehearsal, such as you are allowed to carry your script until the off-book day and calling for line. Many of their impulses seemed very natural on the stage and their characterizations were pretty solid.

Chronologically, apart from the preshow actors on stage, the role of the Medical Examiner/Defense Lawyer as played by Blair Pourciau was the first to grace the stage. When I auditioned her, it was between this role and Electra. Either way, she brought a grounding force to the production even in just her two scenes. It was a great way to start off the production and focus the audience on the situation at large.

Electra, played by Kaitlyn Heckel, was a stalwart force in the cast. She came in always prepared, was always ready to work, and had some fine instincts. Her ability to play with the words and the other actors was nice as well. I noticed in the final product though that I may have directed some of the playful urgency out of Electra though. The opening story monologue, in particular, got a little heavy with no levity in the absurdities going on. It was about two notes and while Electra does have a lot weighing on her,

with 6 days no sleep, the public threatening to kill her and her brother for being an accomplice to the slaughter of/killing their mother, the fact that everything has frozen for six days should bring a bit more mania to the depression in the situation. Once we get past that, her monologues about secret lovers and other things that could be happening if this were not going on play a good counterbalance to the top of the show. She brought the vulnerability to the main plot of the show in a way that Orestes cannot. She and Mason played especially well off of each other, which is helpful when they are supposed to be siblings who have a connection that transcends location and physical togetherness.

Then came the yellow goddess floating down after all the exposition from Electra. Ashton Akridge as Helen was a natural fit. She comes, naturally, with a bubbly personality with an edge of maturity. Translating that into Helen seemed a very easy fit. She played well off of the advances of the soldiers and the audacious reactions to her actions from Electra. Although there was not a scene written between Helen and Menelaus, I wish Mee had written a passing scene between the two of them just to see how John Neisler and she would have played off of each other.

The soldiers, Nod, John, William, and Tapemouth Man as played by Jesse Stephens, Kyle Woods, William Watkins, and Peter Smith respectively, were one of the biggest gambles in the show based on their presence on stage for ninety percent of the production. Jesse, William, and Peter were all coming straight out of Acting I, and, for all three of them, this was their first production ever. I thought I would at least balance them out with Kyle, whom I had seen perform previous to *Orestes* and cast him as John who, to me, is the most nuanced of all the soldiers. Kyle, after finding that balance in rehearsal between William's (the character's) quiet style and Nod's aggressiveness, was very effective in his portrayal of the damaged John. Peter struggled some with the Tapemouth Man's very overt philosophical statements, the Tapemouth Man's main *modus operandi* being to call out characters on their choices and giving esoteric advice. In a way, the Tapemouth Man is similar to a standard Greek chorus using metaphor and parable to guide the characters and the audience. Being the only character on stage to use that

communication style, it is difficult when others are in one mode and you are in another. He did a decent job at trying to convey his actions and needs in unconnected lines to the plot and grew a lot from the beginning of the process.

Nod, as played by Jesse Stephens, was a wonderful surprise. He had a charisma and natural aggressiveness that lent itself to Nod. He was also one of my most green actors, but he threw himself in to the role and became one of the most interesting people to watch on the stage. He never broke character and, yet while being animated, came off as natural and never pulled focus. He had a timing and delivery you cannot teach; it just came naturally. It may have come from his past military service, but he was one of the actors I was most proud of to see grow. William, on the other hand, was more difficult to pull actions and intentions from. I do not think I ever fully found that vocabulary to express what I wanted to see from him. He had a flicker during his monologue about the camp in the swamp, but seemed disconnected during a lot of it. I would like to have seen even more of an antithetical stance to Nod from him.

To counterbalance the masculinity of the soldiers, Mee gave use the original chorus of nurses to care for Orestes and split the chorus between three characters as played by Kayln Hepting (Nurse 1), Sarah Chatelain (Nurse 2), and Betsy Borrego (Nurse 3). I had previous experience with working with all three of these ladies either in my own Acting I class or on other projects, so it was not difficult in communicating what I was looking for from them with the characters. Casting Kayln as Nurse 1, I was looking to see more of a leadership role taken up with her, but I saw Sarah take up that mantle with her desire to make a name for herself after her role of the church pianist in *Holy Ghosts* the previous season. It is not to say that Kayln did not care, I would just like to have seen her take a more active role as she was a front runner for Electra. Betsy, being a fairly new actress, thrust herself wonderfully into the role of Nurse 3 and also with playing the role of “Hermione”, or the doll on tricycle. There were a couple of moments where she felt like she was trying to force things, but the nurses’ scene during the “circus trial” was when they all nicely

settled into their characters, which were distinctive from beginning to end: the battle-worn nurse (Kayln), the naïve, but experienced one (Sarah), and the new recruit (Betsy).

Then, after about 20 minutes or 13 pages into the script, having laid there “comatose”, our title character finally comes to life. I had high hopes for Mason Joiner as Orestes. He read wonderfully with Kaitlyn in callbacks. In my list I had called back, he very quickly settled to the top. We got through some rehearsals and everything was alright. Then, the mood changed and things got strange. He became more combative and less receptive to notes. Suddenly he starts working on film productions he did not mention in his conflicts and, without warning or consideration, dyed his hair a highly unnatural red color. Last came the straw that broke the camel’s back: the February 13<sup>th</sup> end of rehearsal incident. I considered switching him out with Kyle or with someone else. I decided since we were so close to the end of the process, it would be detrimental to everyone else’s work. His work was alright, but I found myself starting to direct people around him instead of focusing on his character because I did not want to deal with him, which is ultimately not healthy for a production. I consider the handling of Orestes, and Mason, to be one of my personal failures of the process.

One of the great highlights was John Neisler’s Menelaus, though. John’s care and handling of Menelaus was, hopefully, a character lesson to the other actors. He would question me on some of my suggestions, but never inappropriately, and worked hard in getting into Menelaus. He never rested on his laurels or his age and experience to coast through with a cast younger and less experienced than him. He was a true cornerstone to the production, and every time he stepped on the stage, the other actors seemed to try and rise to his level. He did not look down on his fellow actors, though. He was a true member of the ensemble and one of the most enjoyable people I have had the experience of working with on any production.



Another surprise that came out of the show was Robert Facio's Tyndareus. He was initially cast because he was another mature actor and could work opposite John's Menelaus and Mason's Orestes. He had many conflicts with another show during this one, so the fact that Tyndareus is only featured in one major scene was actually very helpful too. I had not expected the turn he brought to the role. Robert Facio is a very light, easygoing guy. He can play grounded characters, as we had seen in *Holy Ghosts*, but even in that show there was a certain "lightness" to the character. I thought I might have another bit of a struggle to get him to the grounded rage that Tyndareus finds himself in, but Robert came in guns blazing. He connected to Tyndareus's feeling of betrayal by Menelaus and the disconnection of Tyndareus's generational understanding. Other than trying to connect that speech to the audience, which we worked with by connecting a chunk of the text to nurses, he was a force of nature and had a much different character than I had ever seen him play before, a testament to his versatility and growth in UNO's program.

Our production's voice over trio/guardsmen (Hunter Christopher, Justin Guidroz, and Marino De Leon) were all efficient and easy to work with. I still question my choice of going with a gender-neutral "Miss Cleo"-type voice for Farley. As I watched it, I was not sure if I crossed any politically correct lines but she is still what comes to mind for many people when you think of phone psychics, either her or Dionne Warwick's Psychic Friends Network, which is where I see Mee's addition of a modern day oracle coming from. Marino and Justin were also humorous in the Apollo triple-act. They felt like one group that had been together and this was not the first time any of this had happened. It was a nice penultimate button on the show.

Another one of the gambles was the casting of Aaron Polk as Pylades. I was comfortable in doing this because I had him in my Acting I class as well, so I knew his ability to take notes from class. He was fairly easy to work with, but there was a strong disconnect between the acting and the doing of his character. I could see the wheels turning, I could see the understanding, but when it came to actually

playing an action it seemed to stop at the brain and could not fully manifest in the body. I remembered that a little in class as well, but there was someone else opposite him on his level, so it did not register with me as much. When acting, it is something I have great trouble with as well, so I know it is a built up wall that you have to try and break down yourself and I do not think I gave him enough tools to do so.

Franny (Harold) the Phrygian was a captivating choice. The Phrygian was a gender neutral character, and since she is one of Helen's servants from Troy, I thought I would try to make her Helen's female confidant. She took a little coaxing, but we finally found her connection to the matter at hand and how it would feel if someone she knew could save her from death just suddenly disappeared. I was glad when I noticed that Mee wrote the character more as a warning than comic relief as the Phrygian was intended in Euripides original. It gives the character more immediacy and clears the list of actions for the actor. My only issue with Franny was she played into the hysteria so much that she was sometimes hard to understand and we spent rehearsal time on parsing out that speech, but she lost it in performance. Being a fresh actor, those things happen, but she has a great talent that I hope she continues to pursue.

Rounding out my actors comes the main god himself, Apollo. Having worked with Matt on *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*, I knew he could easily play this role, and I actually called him into callbacks after approaching him about this as he did not attend open auditions. He is physically striking, regardless of the role, and no matter how he enters all eyes go to him. That is how I saw Apollo; it helps with the overall useless resolution he brings to the play if he is an overbearing-looking bloke that is slowly ignored by all the citizens. He also did some studying of Bill Clinton and his mannerisms. That was one of the challenges with him was just finding which president "worked" for him, since I decided to take Mee's idea that Apollo is a caricature of the presiding president. Obama just did not mesh with Matt's overall mood, though, so we played with "Dubya" and then he brought in Clinton and it worked beautifully and tied into the time period the play was written in and also the core concept of modern timelessness. He was also a trooper,

willing to actually come in from the catwalks in a makeshift *deus ex machina*, which I found out later confused some of our audience because they did not know why this actor was coming in from the sky.

Based on the amount of time we had constraining the production's mounting amongst other things, I consider the acting portion to have been a successful aspect of the production. There were bumps and bruises along the way, but most of the cast muscled their way through it with style and panache.

Moving on now, let us look at the next aspect that greeted the audience as they walked in: the scenic elements. Anthonyka and the rest of the construction crew, under the guidance of Diane Baas and Kevin Griffith, built a spectacular visual interpretation of what was going on in the script. Anthonyka and I had originally discussed a more fancy, but dilapidated beach house, but we soon settled in on something that could have been a temple. A temple, which even had some pillars for a time, but we cut them due strictly to spacing issues, and she came up with the more ingenious idea of making it look like they had been ground down for parts. A pattern was carved into the floor that appeared to have been worn down by the ages and conflict. Upstage, on the proscenium lip, what looked like new construction to set against what was the emphasized past of the temple. It took the idea of peeling away the new for the old and utilized it well.

As a director on this process and previous, although I am still to this day trying to find the balance, I realized I am reticent to completely communicate a look. It is that counterbalance between collaborators both trying to serve the play but having different opinions about form and function. The furniture, I feel, detracted a bit from the aesthetic when I take a fresh look at it. In particular the chairs at the Nurse's station, but also the other desks and the soldiers' "beds". We had discussed the construction of things that resembled beds a bit more and then was presented at last minute with the monolith-looking things seen in the show. The chairs and the desks, on the other hand, just screamed we borrowed them from

the academic setting we pulled them from. They did not necessarily fit with the rest of Anthonyka's design, being uniform while the rest of the stage itself is crumbling, and I saw that, but decided to keep my mouth shut as there were more pressing matters at hand, namely Clytemnestra's "corpse" which came out of a last-minute suggestion from Diane that maybe it should be a doll just like the other two female characters in the show, which was a brilliant idea, but held our attention too long. Given the few resources Anthonyka and the crew had, though, I would definitely say the scenic elements were a success.

Costumes were a resounding success! The flourishes and attention to detail that Tony brings to any show showed in spades in *Orestes 2.0*. From the sleek all black dresses for the nurses, to the soldiers' camouflage hospital gowns, Electra and Orestes' changes, both sleek in their own way, all the way to suits that fit our larger cast members well (being a larger man myself, I know how this can sometimes be a struggle). There was only one actor who looked out of place in their costume. That was Mr. Pylades, and while I am still not too sure about its brightness, it might also have been the way the actor wore the costume versus the costume itself. Aaron did not really let his costume influence or inform some of his choices which may have actually helped him. It fit the jet-setting Pylades, but I am not sure that Aaron understood it. Again, that could also be a fault of mine and I would take full responsibility for it.

Lighting was another fairly rousing success. Diane did a tremendous job when we finally got everything up on the stage. The use of the cyclorama on the stage behind everything really brought a new depth to Anthonyka's scenic design. Also the timing was crisp and each character group seemed to have their own individual look. In particular, the snaps in and out of the Tapemouth Man and the final light cacophony into the Apollo reveal were very vibrant and helped enhance the story even further. It helped delineate the realism of the moment to the more fantastical element of the gods or philosophical comments.

Justin's work on sound showed me that a future design of his could be a great design full of imagination and creativity. He served me with a very functional design and initially started out with a great energy and tenacity but I think the semester got to him as time went on and work slowed. There was a moment that Electra was supposed to be singing a love song to Orestes that we had to cut since he had not communicated what we discussed about the song and gotten her the materials in time. Also, we almost didn't have microphones due to lack of communication with the film department when we discussed that at the previous production meeting, so I stepped in at the last minute to get all that set up. The idea of building a soundscape was also scrapped due to lack of time and preparation. What was ultimately realized on the stage was not bad in the slightest, though, and he should be proud of what he did accomplish. It taught me that I need to think about taking a stronger guiding hand with less experienced designers.

The final design element went off without a hitch, Michael Krikorian's fight choreography. It is not the easiest thing to choreograph a fight in a thrust configuration and Michael dealt with that on top of dealing with some of my more green actors as well. Everyone was patient and understanding and it went off splendidly after some more rehearsal and regular fight calls.

Looking at the visual elements and listening to the aural elements, it felt like a cohesive production. All the pieces came together and even with all the bumps previously discussed, I would like to consider this production a pretty rousing success. I, being a pessimist when it comes to my own personal work, actually feel like this was an all-hands on deck, everyone in it for everyone else full ensemble that came out as a positive experience for most of the people involved and I am proud of the entire production team's work on *Orestes 2.0*.

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Kindle.

## Appendix A

*Orestes 2.0* script with unit breakdown

Orestes 2.0 – 06/20/12

Orestes 2.0

by CHARLES L. MEE

Based on the play by Euripides

{Thrilling sounds of bombs, rockets, whistle flares, and other explosions and sonic marvels make the theatre rock and shudder.

A green fog covers the stage, gradually clearing, and revealing a palatial white Newport-style or Palm Beach-style beach house whose facade we see, across a broad expanse of grass, from the oceanside.

The lawn is ruined, with dug up sections of dirt and water.

And we hear a radio--as though it were the only thing still working in a backyard in which all life has been recently annihilated--going on with the weather report, local traffic, news, and music.

But the setting is both inside and out.

Four very bright white hospital beds are set out on the lawn, in two of which are damaged war victims--William and John--who wear camouflage hospital gowns. They have occasional nightmares. Nod, similarly dressed, sits nearby in a wooden chair, his head hanging down.

Orestes, in one of the other beds, hands covered in dried blood, wears a red satin hospital gown.

There are three nurses in attendance. They wear basic black.

A person is tied up in a wheelchair with tape over his mouth. From time to time he is able to work free of the tape to speak.

A yellow police line tape surrounds the stage. The stage is lit with yellow tungsten outdoor parking lot lights. Overhead operating room lights hang over the beds.

Chair and table center stage. A radio is on the table. Microphones are scattered about.

It is six days after the murder of Clytemnestra.

Electra sits at the table, smoking a cigarette, drinking coffee. Her hands are covered in dried blood. She wears an Armani-designed pink ensemble, which she hasn't changed for a week.



A forensics expert in gray suit stands downstage, pointing to a cut-up female corpse on a silver autopsy slab.)

---

FORENSICS EXPERT

White female, age 38, presented to pathology with a slashed throat.

The subject was in good general health at the time of death. Approximately 5'7", 110 pounds. Skin unremarkable. Breasts small, no masses, everted nipples. Lungs clear to P & A. Abdomen sound--no masses.

FE examines corpse

We made a circular incision with a sharp razor around the umbilicus, deep enough to penetrate the skin, then from the middle of the pectoral bone a straight, lengthwise incision to the umbilicus, and from the lower region of the umbilicus as far as the region of the pubic bone between the little mounds of the vulva. We found no abdominal abnormalities or complications of the genitourinary system.

The fatal wound to the neck was initiated with considerable force in the anterior and posterior triangles, in the levator scapulae and the scalene muscles and through the posterior belly of the digastric and the stylohyoid muscles. The blade proceeded through the carotid artery on the left side of the head and thence through the larynx and the vocal cords and on into the cervical vertebrae where the blade lodged and remained embedded.

Since the subject had presumably been in a warm bath, she hemorrhaged into the warm water and bled out rapidly.

The cause of death was heart failure.

---

ELECTRA

(Completely shattered and spent, having been awake for six days and nights drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes; long silence as she stares off into space; then as though speaking for the hundredth time to a jury, and/or to homicide detectives in a room at the stationhouse, way beyond exhaustion and control, or without any affect at all, taking her time; her job is to explain, make sense of it, make it cohere, and escape blame while accepting it.)

E informs Aud

You could say:  
"There is no form of anguish  
however terrible  
that human beings  
might not have to bear."

Well.  
There's a way of putting things in order.

You could say: my  
my father Agamemnon was murdered by my mother  
my mother Clytemnestra when he came back from the war.

And then my brother

Orestes  
murdered our mother.

This was six days ago.

And now Orestes,  
who would have been king,  
lies huddled  
there  
in bed,  
shivering, delirious, hallucinating.

(The following item strikes her as pointless and stupid.)

Martial law has been declared.

The people want to execute him for matricide--  
and execute me with him,  
as an accomplice.

Because:  
I--encouraged him to do it.  
I urged him to do it.

(Offhand.)

It's a nightmare really.

Who's fault is this?  
You could blame the gods for horror as absolute as this.  
You could say:

(Long silence; the exhaustion of going through the explanation again.)

E loses herself  
to Aud

this time, this country, these people

(Exhausted--long silence.)

are somehow cursed.  
You could say:

(Abstractedly, as though the idea came from somewhere.)

they're held in some web of history and civilization they can't  
untangle, even though they made it with their own hands.

(Silence.)

You could say:

(Shrugs)

it's politics.

(Silence.)

You could say:

(She begins to weep despite herself.)

these two children:

(Sobbing.)

it's all some dreadful abnormality from birth.  
You could say:  
look at the history of this family:

(Laboring to explain, as though diagramming a sentence or a family tree.)

it depends on where you start you could say  
Atreus--well, you could say Pelops murdered or:  
Tantalus, you could start  
Tantalus  
the son of Zeus,  
murdered his own son Pelops  
to feed him to the gods.  
To win the favor of the gods.  
Fed his son to them.

(Silence.)

Well, it's a common story.

Then after Pelops was fed to the gods, his two sons,  
Thyestes and Atreus,  
fought with one another  
and Atreus  
killed the sons of Thyestes--  
cooked them--  
and served them for dinner to their father.

(Lost a little in the bloodiness of this.)

What can be said about his?

(Without interest in her conclusion, dismissing it as she says it.)

A certain need for position, a certain  
homicidal rage  
runs in this family.  
The House of Atreus.

04  
E enlightens Aud

I think there are some things  
that are close and distant at the same time:  
Paradise for example.  
The relations between a man and a woman.  
The course a boat takes across the water.  
When I travel I like the sort of luggage  
where you can pack a metronome, or a piece of porcelain,  
and know it will be safe.  
And when it's snowing, I like to have a visitor.  
A secret visitor.

And as you wait for him, you wonder: did he forget?

I don't know.  
I don't remember.

VS

So it's up to me to,  
you know,  
bring the family back together.

(Still in the explanatory mode, but with tears welling up.)

The House of Atreus.  
Atreus, by a second wife, had two sons:  
my father Agamemnon,  
and my uncle Menelaus.  
And they married two sisters,  
Agamemnon married Clytemnestra  
and Menelaus married Helen  
whose love affair was the cause...

(Stops cold for a long time--looks off in space.)

or the occasion...  
of the war in Troy.  
Because

(Struggling with this explanation, trying to remember how it goes.)

the two were brothers  
--and they had married sisters--  
the one had to help the other--  
I don't know  
it seemed so at the time  
this was the reason that was given--  
then it slips away  
it happened very quickly.  
Now our uncle Menelaus  
comes home leading the soldiers  
in a parade  
to celebrate their victory.

(With no affect at all.)

And my brother Orestes and I go to trial today  
--before all the people--  
to see whether we should be stoned to death or have our throats cut.  
Only our uncle, the hero of the war against Troy, can save our lives.

(Shrugs. Then: offhand.)

Our lives depend at last  
on these people who brought us so much trouble,  
on this  
--man--  
and on his "wife" Helen....

And here she is: unrepentant, untouched.

(Helen appears. She wears a canary yellow Chanel suit, carrying flowers.)

HELEN

First of all, I cleanse my skin with products that cleanse but don't dry, products that are natural. I exfoliate my face once a week with a product that contains oatmeal, honey, and nuts. The toner I use is alcohol-free, and I moisturize all the time and use eye cream. I don't dry my skin out with products designed to clear up blemishes. This dries up your skin temporarily and sends a message to your skin to produce more oil in that area, so it just makes the problem worse. So I cleanse, tone, moisturize, and exfoliate. And I drink a lot of water. And I relax. I find time to meditate, put my feet up and do a facial mask and just think about the great powers of the universe and all that we have to be happy about and grateful for.

But Electra, my dear, here you are.  
I can't believe you murdered your own mother.  
How appalling.  
And you're still not married, a girl your age.  
Of course you've had--distractions.  
And your poor dear brother, how is he?

ELECTRA  
(Disinterested.)  
He's here.

HELEN  
(Turning to see Orestes.)  
Oh, my.  
How sad.

(Silence.)

Of course, you're not to blame.  
You're only children.  
One blames the gods for this sort of thing.  
It's up to them.  
I blame Apollo.

NOD

Some people say murder is a terrible thing, but then you hear of other things that make you think murder is a blessing.

JOHN

Sometimes the worst thing is just to be blindfolded for days on end waiting for someone to tell you why you're there. And then when they whip the blindfold off to question you, you're almost blind, the light is painful.

NOD

I know a man who spent 27 months like that. No one else knew what he was held for.

JOHN

Or they will bring you in, five or six men, and say: this is

H entreats E

N and J menace H

nothing but the introductory exercise, and they will burn you with cigarettes.

NOD

And then, of course, if they have your wife, too, they will fondle her hair, whatever they want, while you watch. Just to show you they can do anything they want.

JOHN

Or they can nail you to some boards, put electric shocks to your tongue and ears and penis, and you find you wake up in a pool of cold water and they start in again.

NOD

Or sometimes they'll use drugs to induce delusions or make you writhe, you faint and fall down and hit your head on the walls and floor.

JOHN

It's a nightmare, really.

HELEN

But Electra, dear, could I ask you a favor?

ELECTRA

Ask me a favor?

H urges E

HELEN

Will you go for me to my sister's grave?

E dissuades H

ELECTRA

My mother's grave?

HELEN

To take an offering of hair and a libation from me.

ELECTRA

I couldn't bear to see my mother's grave.

HELEN

Well, I can't go. I couldn't bear to show my face in Argos.

ELECTRA

Why not?

HELEN

For fear.

ELECTRA

Fear

HELEN

And shame.

ELECTRA

Fear and shame.

Right. These are things you feel.

HELEN  
Well, of course I do.

(This catches Electra's attention for a moment-she comes awake)

ELECTRA  
Well, of course you do.  
But then you've had such--distractions.  
Your life abroad.  
The vexations of the war.  
Of course you're not to blame  
You were only children.  
I blame Apollo.

HELEN  
Apollo?

ELECTRA  
What could you have done?

HELEN  
So, yes, well,  
so you understand?  
I couldn't go.

ELECTRA  
No.  
Then send your daughter Hermione.

HELEN  
Send a child?

ELECTRA  
Who else?  
It always seems to me there's something special  
between a mother and her daughter.

HELEN  
(Beat--uncertain.)  
Yes.

(Beat--makes up her mind.)

You're right. I'll send Hermione.

(Calling out.)

Hermione, dear, come to me, dear.

(A nurse brings out Hermione, who is a doll on a tricycle She wears a white, floral Betsy Johnson sun dress with matching leggings.)

Hermione, dear, do just as I say.

Take these clippings of my hair and this libation of honey, milk, and

H cuddles "H"

wine and go to my sister Clytemnestra's grave. Stand right upon the heaped-up grave and say these words:

"Helen, your sister, sends these libations as her gift, fearing herself to approach your grave from terror of the mob," and beg her not to harbor unkind thoughts toward me and my husband.

(Beat--an after thought.)

Or toward these two suffering children, who really can't be blamed either.

Do you understand?

HELEN  
(In Hermione's voice)  
Yes, mommy.

HELEN  
There's a good girl. Go quickly now. Don't dawdle.

(Hermione exits.)

HELEN  
(In Hermione's voice)  
Yes, mommy.

HELEN  
And come right back.

The world has become more difficult nowadays, not as it was when I was a child.

Of course, nonetheless,

(She straightens things in her purse.)

H instructs Aud

in the mornings I try to say nice things to myself, about myself, take better care of myself. And I get my eyelashes dyed--that helps--my eyebrows waxed, get a facial and get my hair done, and then I go out to lunch.

(She is gone.)

ELECTRA  
God, how vile human nature is.

NOD  
Sometimes I myself have a hunger just to let someone have it. I look around, I say: boy he really let him have it. Gee, he really got one off. And I'd like to get one off, you know, fast or slow, I don't give a fuck.

JOHN  
Sometimes you can take a man apart in a few hours. You know, like you can win a whole war in the first three hours, although it may take some days or weeks for the other guy to know he's lost it. You can just beat



N and J encourage E

a man on his shoulders for two or three hours and he's really come apart even though he doesn't know it yet.

NOD

Or sometimes you can take a woman, spend a little time with her, and send her away with a lot of pain in her breasts and wrists and ankles. Their genitals will become inflamed two, four months later; she'll start crying for no reason at all. And I have to admit, that makes me feel better.

(The nurses enter, fixing the beds and ministering to the victims.)

ELECTRA

(Going protectively to Orestes' bedside.)

Please.

Don't disturb my brother.

NURSE 1

Don't worry, dear. We won't touch him.

E protects O

ELECTRA

Let him sleep.

NURSE 3

We'll let him sleep, dear.

Ns placate E

ELECTRA

If you wake him up, you know, he could wake up dead.

NURSE 3

No, no, no. He'll be alright.

NURSE 2

(Under her breath, to Nurse 1.)

Where did she get that idea?

ELECTRA

There are certain people who, in earlier times we might think: well, these people are confused, they can't make up their own minds in a healthy way, we must stop them. Now, we think: no, if that's their way of thinking, what right have we to say ours is superior? We may think they are confused, but they have the facts as we do and they have their own way of reasoning, and they have to live with themselves, so it's up to them, really. The same thing with euthanasia: we say, well, if a person is suffering and would rather be released from the suffering, that seems only right.

And, take for instance the example of a person suffering but in a coma, a person who would decide on suicide if he or she were fully conscious, and if life in the future is going to be nothing but suffering: well, then, we say, the family ought to be able to make the decision for that person, to put her out of her suffering. We all accept that now, and I can see why. Or, take hookers. We all think that's a terrible thing to do, from our own point of view, but there's nothing less terrible, really, about putting your mind at someone else's service, even, when you think of it, it might be worse, but you can't despise it if that's what she has to use, you know, and not even for necessities, really,

but even if she wants to use it for getting some luxuries or pleasures or comforts. And I can see the point of view of terrorists, too. I don't happen to think you can say terrorists are all bad or that their actions aren't, really, in some sense, a form of political expression, who are suffering enormously and have no alternative, no way to get what they want, usually, and it seems to me that they are really, though they may not quite know it, in the same position as the terminal cancer patient, that if they were fully conscious that they would recognize that, and that since they aren't fully conscious, we ought really to make that decision for them, just as we do for others who are in pain, because these people are in pain, this is something I know, because I've felt pain myself all these years, and I know how they feel. And they ought to be put out of their suffering.

(Orestes wakes with a cry. All the other victims are startled awake and freak out, and then subside.)

This next scene between Orestes and Electra, is more than one of love between siblings; it is romantic. But it is also archaic; this is a ruined fragment of the Greek play in the midst of the modern world.)

V14

ORESTES  
(Quietly now, speaking each word as though it were a palpable object.)  
Oh, sweet sleep.  
Sweet savior of the sick.  
How good it was to sleep. How I: needed it.

(Silence)

O compels E

How wise the gods are,  
if they give us life,  
to give us sleep.

E consoles O

ELECTRA  
Orestes.

ORESTES  
Electra, oh  
my  
sister.  
Where are we now?

ELECTRA  
Shall I lift you up?

ORESTES  
Just hold me.

(She does.)

ELECTRA  
Shall I brush the hair from your eyes?

ORESTES  
Yes, and--  
my lips--  
are dry.

What is this at my lips?  
Is this foam at my lips?  
How disgusting sick people are.  
Can I sit up?  
Yes.

(Looking around, wrapped in his sheet.)

Here we are, then.  
I don't remember.  
How hard it is to wake up, and wish you were asleep.

ELECTRA  
Orestes, listen. There is hope for us.  
Menelaus has just come back from Troy.

ORESTES  
He could save us.

ELECTRA  
Yes.

(Suddenly, explosively, Orestes freaks out, shrieking--which freaks out everyone else in their beds and they, too, yell out.)

ORESTES  
No, you fuck! You fuck!

(Trying to get something off his shoulder.)

Get these cocksuckers off me, I'll fuck you up,  
you bitch!

O terrorizes E

ELECTRA  
Orestes!

(She tries to hold him down.)

ORESTES  
Let me go!

(Speaking in a rush in the voices of nurses or doctors.)

E restrains O

What's that behind that crazy talk? What terrible thing have you been  
thinking. Sick men should stay in bed!

(She slaps him; he stops)

ELECTRA  
It's nothing, Orestes!

ORESTES  
No.  
Right.  
Thank you.

(He leans back against the headboard, still in a daze.)

Or you could say, for example, I did love her, I did love her, and I knew she loved me, even though she was in a sense you know anorexic and blonde, that kind of girl, with creamy skin, pure that kind of thing so that in the bedroom on her mattress in the dark, the candles burning out one by one, listening to music and stone drunk, you know and passed out, wasted, really, face it, I couldn't wait, I couldn't wait to get back to my own place so I finished her off fast, you know, she's chewing my lips and panting and her hair is all wet I'm thinking this is a witch, this is a witch, I hate these fucking people with their faces all twisted like they've gone totally insane you find yourself hacking at them with the butt of your hand, she says to me, you're seeing someone else, I said I am not, this is a fucking lie, that's not true at all, she says swear it, I said I do, she said you're fucking lying you can't use the bathroom, and it's dark, it's freezing out the fucking car won't start, the cigarette lighter is broken that's when I slam the butt of my hand into the dashboard I say goddam you fucker goddam you fucker and she reaches over and touches my leg, that was her mistake, I saw it, just my forearm I saw it moving through the air but it was too late then, so I pushed her out behind the diner with the garbage cans, it seemed a good place at the time.

(The archaic style is restored.)

ELECTRA  
There's nothing here, Orestes.

ORESTES  
No, It's just: my mind goes off from time to time.

(Electra, with the help of the nurses, eases him back down; he lies back, breathing heavily.)

ELECTRA  
Oh, god, is he going to be helpless now until they come to kill us?

(Her eyes fill with tears.)

ORESTES  
What's the trouble?

ELECTRA  
These are nothing but--shadows in your mind, Orestes. They'll go away.

ORESTES  
Yes.

ELECTRA  
I'm sorry, Orestes.  
Here you are like this because of me.  
I think of nothing now but if I could just save you,  
my brother.  
I'm the one to blame.  
I don't care.  
There's nothing to be done.  
If only I could save you, Orestes,  
that's all I'd want.

E disarms O

V16

O assuages E

ORESTES  
 No. No.  
 You talked about it,  
 but I committed murder.  
 That much is clear.  
 So much is gone--  
 or things I didn't see--  
 but there are moments cut--incised in my mind--  
 my mother's eyes, so lost.  
 A servant's scream.  
 My mother's eyes...  
 And what was the point?  
 I can't remember.  
 Our father is dead still,  
 And now, over and over,  
 the thought keeps coming back to me,  
 if I had asked my father  
 what it is I should have done  
 he would have told me  
 not to harm our mother.  
 Now there is nothing that can redeem what we have made of our lives.

But never mind.  
 Don't cry.  
 We'll help each other.  
 I don't blame you.  
 I wish you'd never spoken to me.  
 But I don't blame you.  
 I don't know.  
 It's a nightmare really.  
 It's in our blood.  
 We've been so close to one another since we were born,  
 all our lives.  
 But you should go,  
 you need your rest.  
 Just stay with me.

My sister.

(He sinks back on his pillow delirious; he will be delirious through to the end of the play, white-faced, dizzy, ill and perspiring.)

V17

Ladies should never fall in love.  
 They become stars  
 no one can ever reach. To look taller  
 they cut their heads off and stand on them.

They carry their breasts  
 in gunny sacks  
 and unbutton their nerves at night  
 in front of vibrators  
 staring at pictures  
 of bearded men.

Some fall in love with foreign accents  
 and dark vowels.

You see them late at night  
in taverns, talking with dangerous criminals.  
Late at night, their voices  
are small animals  
waiting to be fed

(He closes his eyes.)

ELECTRA  
I could never leave you, Orestes.  
We're bound together now  
as we never were.  
I wouldn't have it any other way.

(The phone rings)

ELECTRA  
Hello?

FARLEY  
(Voiceover.)  
Electra, is this you?

F advises E

ELECTRA  
Yes.

(Beat.)

Farley?

FARLEY  
Yes!

ELECTRA  
I was hoping you would call. I've been thinking about what you said.

And I'd just like you to explain about conjunctions a little more,  
because I think I'm having some kind of trouble with mine.

E probes F

FARLEY  
Well, if you have too many conjunctions in your natal chart, as I think  
you do--is that right?--

ELECTRA  
Yes.

FARLEY  
Right. Well, then you often live with a fog or a veil. Remember the  
basics: a conjunction is where two planets come very close together in  
the sky. For example, conjunctions with Mars or Saturn can be very  
painful and confusing, especially if these two planets themselves are  
conjunct.

ELECTRA  
I see.  
Farley?

FARLEY  
Yes.

ELECTRA  
Farley?

FARLEY  
Yes.

ELECTRA  
Can I ask you a question?

FARLEY  
Sure. Go ahead

ELECTRA  
(Fearfully)  
What if I had Jupiter in my natal conjunction.  
You know, would that mean something about my mother?

FARLEY  
Wow. Well, there you would be adding expansion, philosophy, travel, and foreigners to the mix. So oftentimes if you add Jupiter you'll be pushing the panic button on the other planets, because of the expansion aspect, you know you could be pushing the button on sex or whatever. Or say you have Jupiter conjunct with Mars, you'd be in for some very heavy duty macho aggressive or hostile stuff. Because astrology is a science of combination. See what I mean?

ELECTRA  
Yes. Thank you, Farley.

FARLEY  
OK!

(She hangs up, starts to leave.)

ORESTES  
Electra?

ELECTRA  
You rest. I'm right here.

(Sits back down and after a moment speaks distractedly--at first as though consoling Orestes, then to herself.)

E holds O

I think that what happens is that we are put in places and situations in time, either Cleopatra on her barge, or someone in the galley rowing the barge, or out in New Guinea or in a space colony. We know where we're going, or we feel it, so it's not something we dwell on.

There was a time I might have had a life of many choices. You might say: well, what choice do you have? Being a woman of a certain position and so forth, so much seems given. And yet some people do have the privilege, the wealth, all those things to do anything they want to do. You think, well: if you had been born in some other country, under other circumstances, you might say you had no choice. But you, let's

face it, the life you have will be the life you make.

And then you think: can this be true? This is not what I had in mind at all. Or at least I didn't think I did.

U20

(Orestes is asleep; she exits. The nurses play mah jong. One of them hums a lullaby-like song. They speak an occasional phrase over the game. One of them turns on a radio, and we hear a warm, quiet voice on a radio talk show.)

RADIO VOICE

I think sometimes  
how nice it would be  
to go someplace like Sulawesi

RVs mollify All

2ND RADIO VOICE

Right.

RADIO VOICE

and spend some time among the orchids  
have drinks brought up by native women  
or drive along the country roads, past the goats,  
and spend some time on the beach.

2ND RADIO VOICE

Unh-hunh.

RADIO VOICE

People say they have good surf,  
and the natives on the seashore are always so much more easygoing--  
that's what they always say.  
You could spend some time fishing off a charter boat,  
look at the boutiques, the bars and dive shops,

2ND RADIO VOICE

Right.

RADIO VOICE

shop in their markets for peppers,  
see the local farmers with their machetes stuck in their belts,  
their daughters working at the cheese press.

2ND RADIO VOICE

Yes, I know just what you mean.

RADIO VOICE

I like an airy room, where you can hear the roar of the surf,  
get a nice burn by day,  
cool off at night.

This is the reward of hard work, after all;  
if you can't enjoy the pleasures that you've earned,  
what's the point of earning them at all?

(An explosion of static and then cheers and applause over the radio,  
and another radio and/or hand-held amplified bullhorn cuts over the first.)



U21  
M gladhands all

But here he is now, just coming into sight, Prince Menelaus, who returned from Troy last night and entered the city this morning.

(Enormous cheers and a riot of static. Menelaus enters. A man in a trenchcoat enters with him, stands at a distance, moves occasionally to be not too distant from him. Once again, there is a formality here, an archaic manner if not language, that is a ruined remnant of the classical world.)

MENELAUS

Thank you.

We're happy to be home.

Happy to be home.

Helen and I had a pleasant journey home.

And I couldn't be happier to be here.

And, at the same time: sad, of course.

The news of Agamemnon's death reached us on our journey back...

TAPEMOUTH MAN

(Having worked free of the tape.)

Pedaïos, son of Antenor, struck with a spear behind the head at the tendon, piercing straight on through the teeth and under the tongue, cutting off the power of speech learned at the knee of Theano who reared him carefully even as her own children;

Phereclus, son of Harmonides the smith, struck in the right buttock, the spearhead passing through the bone and into the bladder so that he dropped, screaming, to his knees, taking with him his father's knowledge of how to fashion intricate things with his hands;

Robert Gilray, dropped by artillery fire coming from the left, entering his body and beginning there its dark explosion, obliterating the standing crowd that each week watched his swift run across the playing fields of Chatham;

Manuel Font, around whose fragile frame the fire closed in, burning into his skin, skull and brain, even into the shy corners where he studied at school; shells and missiles, unmaking the terrain where pianos could be played and bicycles could be pedalled, unmaking customs, manners, knowledge, classmates, comrades, schools...

MENELAUS

Who is this?

U22  
M seeks out O

(The Nurse slaps the Tapemouth Man, stopping him, and she puts the tape back over his mouth with the help of the trenchcoat man.)

MENELAUS

But where is our nephew Orestes?

We've come to comfort him.

ORESTES

Here I am, uncle.

(He lurches from bed, staggers forward toward Menelaus.)

O entreats M

But first, before I tell you what I know let me hear you say you'll save us. She did nothing wrong, and I...I was driven to it by demons I don't understand.

(He falls at Menelaus' feet, grabs his foot, which Menelaus gently tries to extract.)

MENELAUS  
(Involuntarily, under his breath.)  
What a disgusting sight.

ORESTES  
Oh, uncle.  
Is my appearance offensive to you?

MENELAUS  
Well: you look like death.  
That matted hair. Those filthy clothes.  
What's this on your hands? Is it blood?

ORESTES  
We are blood relatives, you and I.  
And each of us, in our way,  
is responsible for spilling some.  
Are your hands clean?

(Takes Menelaus' hands and turns them over.)

Don't let looks deceive you.  
We are soul-mates you and I.  
At home and abroad.  
And this is how a man looks these days if his  
conscience is still alive.

MENELAUS  
This is not at all what I'd...

ORESTES  
I'm sinking deeper and deeper into a world of remorse and madness.  
There's no bottom to this.

MENELAUS  
Of course there is. What nonsense. When did this come on?

V23

O briefs M

ORESTES  
I was at my mother's grave.  
I put a handful of dirt on her fresh grave.  
And all at once I was surrounded by these phantoms.  
Three women, black as night.

N and J support O

MENELAUS  
(Stopping Orestes.)  
That's enough.

NOD  
Sluts!

MENELAUS  
What's this?

JOHN  
The sluts!

MENELAUS  
Who are these people?

ORESTES  
These are my fellows. You may speak in front of them just as you would  
speak to me in private.

MENELAUS  
So these Furies pursue you. Well and good.  
But how do you stand with the people?

ORESTES  
They shun me.

MENELAUS  
Who are your worst enemies?

ORESTES  
Everyone.

MENELAUS  
What's their plan? Have they a plan?

ORESTES  
They vote today to sentence us.

MENELAUS  
Either banishment or death.

ORESTES  
They've ruled out banishment.  
They vote whether to stone us or cut our throats.

MENELAUS  
Things have gotten far along.  
You should run.

ORESTES  
The city is surrounded by armed men.

MENELAUS  
Armed men. How many?

ORESTES  
Enough to ring the city.

MENELAUS  
A private army?

ORESTES  
No. All the citizens of the city, all armed.

MENELAUS  
I see. They're all against you.

ORESTES  
I don't feel well. A little dizzy.

NURSE 1  
Here comes Tyndareus, all dressed in black,

NURSE 3  
in mourning for his daughter Clytemnestra.

ORESTES  
Oh, no, this is the end for me.  
My grandfather, in a rage.  
My grandfather, who once considered me his favorite.  
Now wants me dead.

(Tyndareus enters.)

TYNDAREUS  
Oh, is this boy here?  
I hadn't supposed you kept company with matricides, Menelaus.  
How very liberal-minded of you.

MENELAUS  
He is my kin.

TYNDAREUS  
He was my kin, too.  
And loyalty is to be admired to a point.  
But blood ties are broken when a boy spills his mother's blood,  
even if that mother was herself a barracuda.  
Draw distinctions, Menelaus.  
Make judgments.

MENELAUS  
These things are never quite so simple.

TYNDAREUS  
Oh, yes, they are.  
One doesn't try to govern another man's imagination,  
another man's emotions,  
another man's personal preferences,  
idiosyncrasies, indulgences, passions, tastes, whims,  
so long as they do no harm to the bodies of others;  
but, as for actions,  
these we govern all the time, and should.  
This is what it is to be a man,  
and nothing else.

ORESTES  
Grandfather, if you would speak to me...

TYNDAREUS  
(To Orestes)

If I would speak to you, how should I speak?

I know one mustn't use certain expressions these days,  
among your generation.  
One mustn't call people barracudas, for example  
no matter how they behave.

Shall I apologize?  
This was your mother, after all,  
my daughter,  
even if she was a slut.

But one mustn't speak this way, I know.  
For this is rude and might offend one's feelings.

(He takes his time)

There are words these days, I know, that cause a certain pain--  
like "slut" or "sweetie" or "dear" or "peg leg," or--"watermelon."

There is some quality of magical thinking in this, a certain  
"primitive" turn of mind, if I may use the word, that seems to fly to  
the belief that if one disposes of a word, one disposes of all the  
dreadful or disagreeable things that have become attached to it.

T destroys O

So that if one simply doesn't use the word "articulate," in referring  
to a certain sort of person who is articulate, as though a certain sort  
of person's competence with language were an exceptional matter, then  
the exceptionality of this articulateness will disappear.

Or, if one will eschew the word "community," in speaking of a group of  
people, as though that group shared a monolithic culture in which they  
all acted and thought in the same way, then one's language would not  
create ghettos in which these groups are constrained to live. One  
should never refer to the black community, for example, or the gay  
community. One should refer, rather, to the black residents in a  
southside neighborhood.

Then, too, one ought not to say "oreo" in reference to black Americans  
who have abandoned their culture, or refer in a similar fashion to  
Asians as bananas or Mexicans as coconuts.

One ought not to say "illegal alien," when one has available such  
vocabulary as undocumented worker or undocumented resident.

One ought not to use the expression "qualified minorities," as though  
minorities were in general unqualified.

One ought not to use the word "swarthy."

One ought not to say "blonde and blue-eyed" unless one is prepared to  
use the expression "brown-haired and brown-eyed" as an expression of  
equal attractiveness.

One ought not to say "inscrutable" in speaking of an Asian.

One ought not to say "Dutch treat," as though to say the Dutch people

are cheap.

One ought not to say "fried chicken," under any circumstances as I understand it.

One ought not to say Jew--or I should say that some people prefer the expression Jewish person, and in any case that the word should never be used as a synonym for stingy. And that it should always be used as a noun, never as a verb.

One ought not to say buxom or fragile or feminine or pert or petite or gorgeous or stunning or statuesque or full-figured or in any other way refer to the physical attributes of a woman.

I can accept all this with equanimity.

And yet, one can commit murder and find the words to justify it.

This is your sort of civilization, then. It speaks nicely and behaves barbarously.

Indeed, it thinks that speaking well, putting a nice face on things, will transform the very stuff of life on earth.

No, no, no.  
You've come unhinged.  
You've lost your bearings altogether.  
You've assaulted the very foundations of your home.  
You've forgotten who you are, where you come from.

You remember nothing: not your parents, nor the values they held dear, not your country, nor the polity it once held in its grasp, or at the very least aspired to, not your history, nor your religion, nor even the most rudimentary tenets of ethics or gentleness.

And this is what you ask me to give my blessing to.  
No.

(To Menelaus)

As for you, Menelaus, I don't expect some form of civil behavior from a man who has just returned from rendering an entire civilization into a smoking ruin, while his own home sinks in rot and violence, husbands murdered by their wives, mothers murdered by their sons, sleeping children shot through bedroom doors. I know of a boy who poured kerosene on a derelict and lit him on fire and burned him to a crisp, not thinking he, the boy, had done anything wrong. That's the value they place on human life in the world that boy comes from. And soon enough such boys will fill your neighborhood. You flatter yourself that you are an old-fashioned sort of man, but you've no idea what it is you ought to be old-fashioned about.

And I will tell you this:  
for the murder of my daughter,  
I expect the murderer to suffer the punishment of the state.  
No more. No less.  
That's what I mean by a civil society.

T besmirches M

I'll hold you responsible.  
Let us begin there to put the world to rights.

(Tyndareus leaves.)

ORESTES  
This is a hard man, my grandfather.

MENELAUS  
Upright.

ORESTES  
Hard.

MENELAUS  
Strict.

U27

ORESTES  
But what could I have done?  
It's not so simple, as you say.

O implores M

I killed my mother. But, from a certain point of view, this is no crime at all, since I was duty bound to avenge my father-to whom my mother had been unfaithful when he was fighting for our country.

Was her wrong meant to go unpunished?

If all women thought they could get away with murder, where would we be then?

Are we to live from now on in fear of our own wives, no longer safe in our own homes?

You might say, I should have appealed to the civil authorities. But where are the civil authorities?

To tell the truth, civil society lies in ruins.

(Throwing in every argument he can think of: sick, frantic, over the edge, mopping his brow of perspiration.)

I've sent out a warning. I've set a precedent. In a certain sense, I should be rewarded.

I've done a service to my country, just as you have, Menelaus, by going to war against Troy.

It is exactly the same. Exactly.

When the law will not come to their rescue, when there are others so reckless or unscrupulous or evil that they disregard all law and all ethical restraint, then men do their duty.

That's what it is to be a man.

Not to be paralyzed and disarmed by the complexity of all human affairs, but to work through a thicket of moral ambiguity, and then,

with all due humility about the rectitude of one's own acts,  
nonetheless, to act.

Or else the world is left to sink of the weight of its own  
uncertainties.

Wallowing in crimes that go unpunished,  
sucked down by wrongs left unresolved,  
adrift in a world that feels sick  
because no one can decide what should be done  
or whether what it is that can be done  
exceeds the cost of doing nothing.  
I should be forgiven and rewarded for what I've done.

V28  
MENELAUS  
Orestes, my son,  
count on me.  
Because for you, personally,  
I have such a high regard.  
And also because I recognize it is my duty  
to lend a hand to any kinsman who's in trouble--  
if the gods provide the means.

M cuddles O

I only wish I had armed men at my disposal,  
to move in forthrightly with a show of force--  
not use it, mind you,  
necessarily,  
but show it--  
and put an end to this.

As it is,  
unfortunately,  
as you know,  
I've returned with my followers exhausted by their ordeal--  
to find, in fact,  
I'm not so popular even here at home.

And so,  
I think it's clear,  
to imagine we might rely on force,  
or even an appearance of force,  
would only be illusory.

But, in any case, in a situation like this, I've often found,  
one much prefers to rely on suasion.  
The power of the word:  
never underestimate it.  
And of patience.  
Of letting things just take their course.  
Of tact, and a sense of timing.

Because, when the people get swept away by some passion or other,  
they're like children.  
It is often hard to get their attention,  
let alone to change their minds.

But if you just let them get it out of their systems,



it passes like a summer storm--  
and soon enough  
they don't even remember what it was that so upset them.

This is the civil way.

The skilled public man,  
like the skilled sailor,  
trims his sails in a strong wind,  
and wins more by yielding than he ever can by force.

One must be attentive, of course.

Put in the right words where it counts,  
when it will do the most good,  
as I certainly will do for you.  
This is nothing that a little skillful politicking cannot put to  
rights.

(He gathers himself to exit.)

Shore things up.  
Have some feel for the shifting mood,  
what people need,  
what sorts of things they'll frankly trade,  
what's important to them and what isn't,  
what price they put on loyalty,

(He begins to walk out, talking.)

whether they demand it  
or can demand it  
or let it slide and miss their opportunity.  
Give shape and purpose to the formless urges of one's countrymen.

This sort of thing is second nature to a statesman,  
but we all can learn from the behavior of those we see in the public  
eye,  
their lives may seem remote sometimes,  
even as though their behavior had nothing to do with us,  
and yet,  
if we watch them closely  
we sometimes learn a thing or two.

(He's gone)

ORESTES  
Slime!

WILLIAM  
(Rising in his bed, speaking for the first time)  
One time I looked through a telescope and saw the words: "two of each  
of anything, one facing toward the other, put up as mirror images, to  
mark and mock a terminus."

This sign I saw by the edge of a brown lake lit by carbide lanterns,  
and in the shallows of the lake I could make out a crablike fish that

W forewarns O

stirred the surface now and then and released some bubbles that bore up the stagnant smell of swamp.

This was a soldier's camp.

One of them stepped forward and handed me an old Webley .455.

We were standing in front of what seemed to be an old abandoned barracks.

They lived there permanently, these soldiers, guarding a shack surrounded by razor wire.

They welcomed me, opening a path right through the wire, unlocking the door of the small cabin.

As I filed in through the door with them a terrible stench, of some unknown origin, filled our lungs.

I was overcome with nausea, and the captain said to me: welcome home.

It's a nightmare, really.

(The phone rings; Orestes answers.)

V31

ORESTES  
Hello?

FARLEY  
Hello?

F counsels O

ORESTES  
Hello.

FARLEY  
Hello, Orestes.

ORESTES  
Yes.

FARLEY  
This is Farley.  
I know your sister.  
I've talked to you before.

ORESTES  
Yes.  
Yes. I'm not feeling well.

FARLEY  
Do you wish I wouldn't bother you?

ORESTES  
No, no. I'm glad to talk to you.

FARLEY  
I thought you might be thinking of making a decision--in fact, of taking an action.

ORESTES  
Yes, in fact I was.

FARLEY  
Well, I might have some advice for you.

ORESTES  
Well, do you?

FARLEY  
Yes. I do.  
You know, we're about to enter into a moon wobble, and I always tell people, if you plan on undertaking anything new of a major sort--not just daily living, buying and selling that kind of thing, but if you're thinking of buying a new home, buying a car, any new business, any new enterprise, this is something you definitely ought to do before a moon wobble, because, you will hear people tell you that you get a 10 to 15% disappointment rate for new projects during a moon wobble, but in my experience some people get up to a 50 to 70% disappointment rate. Do you know what falling in love can do when it happens in the middle of a moon wobble?

ORESTES  
No.

FARLEY  
Well, I don't recommend it. These are very, very karmic times. Do you want to test the universe? I don't think so. So I advise people to act before the wobble occurs. So, if I were you, I'd act before the end of the month. Okay?

ORESTES  
Right.  
Right. Thanks for your advice.

(He hangs up. Pylades enters. He wears cobalt blue, Jean Paul Gautier suit with silver threads, powder blue shirt and a hand painted silk tie. His hair is slicked back. He wears an earring and smokes Gitanes cigarettes.)

V32

PYLADES  
Orestes. My friend. What's happening?  
I saw the crowds coming through the streets.

P questions O

ORESTES  
(Hyped up; speeding.)  
It's over. Menelaus has stabbed me in the back.

O apprises P

PYLADES  
You talked?

ORESTES  
Yes, I'd better run for it now.

PYLADES  
Did you talk to him?

ORESTES  
(Angrily.)  
Yes. Patience--caution--rot.  
I don't remember.  
And that bitch Helen is in my house.  
I don't know.  
And then Tyndareus.

PYLADES  
He was angry.

ORESTES  
Right.

PYLADES  
Refused to help.

ORESTES  
I don't know.

PYLADES  
Well, as matters stand--

ORESTES  
I don't remember.

PYLADES  
the city under siege.

ORESTES  
Right.

PYLADES  
Armed men.

ORESTES  
Right.

PYLADES  
in all the streets.

ORESTES  
(Impatiently.)  
Yes!

(Silence.)

PYLADES  
We're surrounded.

ORESTES  
Well, I'm surrounded.

PYLADES  
Well.  
I'm ruined, too,  
really.

ORESTES  
What?

PYLADES  
My father threw me out.

ORESTES  
For what?

PYLADES  
Aiding and abetting you.

ORESTES  
(Beat.)  
I'm sorry.  
You should run for it.

PYLADES  
I'm not a runner.  
And, you know:  
I wouldn't leave you now.

ORESTES  
I never meant to drag you in.

PYLADES  
Drag me, Orestes. Drag me.  
I'm in it with you.  
I'm your friend.  
I always thought: spending time with you.  
Getting to know some good people.

(A smile and a shrug.)

Let's face it.

We've shared some friends.  
Women.

Not that I'd do anything, you know.  
Not that I'd swallow blood.  
Not that I'd make candles out of human fat.  
Not that I'd suck the juices from a corpse.  
Not that I'd stick my tongue in an old man's anus.  
Not that I'd cut off a man's cock and let it grow out my ass.

But, we have a history together.

You know.

(We hear a song. Electra appears upstage wearing what appears to be an old cocktail dress of Helen's. They are silent for a moment and then, throughout the following dialogue, Electra sings.)

ORESTES  
Yes, well, the time has come to run.

P shoulders O

O discourages P

U33

PYLADES  
I thought you were the kind of person  
who would never run.  
And leave Electra behind?  
Not even speak in your own defense.

ORESTES  
Depend on the system of justice, you mean.

PYLADES  
People from a certain sort of privilege....

ORESTES  
Must be immune.

PYLADES  
Yes.  
Or able to make a case on its own merits.  
If you won't argue for yourself, you know,  
at the very least you can save Electra.  
You can make the point that you acted entirely alone.  
Am I right?

ORESTES  
Right.

PYLADES  
Is that right?

ORESTES  
Yes.  
And not just wait here for their word,  
not die cringing,  
without speaking a word in my defense.

(Calculating.)

You're right.

(Looking at Electra.)

Should we bring Electra with us?

PYLADES  
No. Leave her here.  
You don't want her volunteering to share the blame.  
The court is gathering now.  
There's no more time for talk.

ORESTES  
Why are you doing this, Pylades,  
staying with me now?

PYLADES  
I'm your friend, Orestes.  
People know we do things together.

O cautions P

P incites O

U34

Times like these are the test of whether a person has any capacity for friendship, love, loyalty. If I pass this test I won't care what other judgment anyone makes of me.  
I'm here to take care of you.

ORESTES  
But my mind--you know,  
the way that it goes off--  
if I were to start all at once to:  
go off the subject.

PYLADES  
I'll be with you.

ORESTES  
Thank you, Pylades.  
We've become good friends, you and I.

NURSE 1  
In just a moment.

V35

(The nurses grab Orestes before he can exit. They stand him in a white porcelain tub, strip him of his hospital gown and ritually give him a sponge bath. They dress him in a light gray agnes b. conservative suit. They comb his hair and spray it lightly. A dreamlike atmosphere. Electra continues to sing.)

O frightens Ns

ORESTES  
Well, we talked. We had a few kisses. She was in the pantry with me, and we went down the stairs to the beach. I said: do you want to go for a swim, but she said no, so I took off my clothes and went into the water. I thought, well: she'll wait for me, but then when I came up again she was running, so I grabbed her by the ankle, that's when she fell, if she hurt her back I don't know.

Well, she was in the pantry, you could call it the kitchen, or the mud room. I went in and found her there, and we went into the dining room together that's where we had some kisses. And I said, you want to swim? And she said, in the pool? No, I said, in the ocean. But she started running toward the pool, I thought it was a game, so I ran after her and caught her by the thigh, you know, or foot, whatever, she came down hard, I don't know what happened then, I don't remember.

I might have caught her rib-cage in my hand. You know, I might have grabbed her there. I, you know, we knew each other, I'd seen her around. You know, as far as that goes, I mean we had been kissing in the pantry, or in the dining room, I think she liked that all right. But then she was shaking, I guess she'd had a chill, I don't know, she might have hurt herself when she fell, because I don't think I did that to her, I don't remember. I might have, you know, held her down a little bit.

V36

TAPEMOUTH MAN  
(Speaking elegiacally.)  
In tort law, rulings about product liability first began with objects that entered the human body such as food and drink, or were directly applied to the body's surface, such as cosmetics, soap, before being

TMM advises O

extended to objects in less immediate relation to the body--as, for example, the container for food.

And the most obvious, continuous manifestation of the degree to which body and state are interwoven is the fact that one's citizenship ordinarily contains physical presence within the boundaries of that country.

It is because political learning is deeply embodied that the alteration of the political configuration of a country, continent, or hemisphere so often appears to require the alteration of human bodies through war.

While in peacetime a person may absorb the political reality into his body by lifting his eyebrows in a certain manner, by employing a particular kind of handshake or salutation, in war his agreement is registered by entering a certain terrain and participating in certain acts--and consenting to the tearing out of his forehead, eyebrows, and eyes. The arms and legs that are, in peacetime, lent out to the state for a few seconds and then reclaimed may in war be permanently loaned in injured and lost limbs.

There is a literalness about this, about the way the nation inscribes itself in the body, the literalness with which the human body opens itself and allows the nation to be registered in the wound.

And what is remembered in the body is well remembered, and quietly displayed across the surviving generations. The record of the war survives in the bodies, both alive and buried, of the people who were hurt there--just as, from day to day, the nation is embodied in the gestures and the postures, the customs and behavior of its citizens.

(A nurse replaces the tape over his mouth.)

(Here begins The Trial.)

WILLIAM  
The trial will come to order then.

(The participants in the trial all enter at once.)

The trial will come to order.  
Is there a speaker?

N2 enthuses Ns

(During the Trial, there are two levels of text: one delivered in the foreground, one in the background, sometimes simultaneously. The foreground text, which is mostly what we hear, is all about private--indeed, intimate--life. The background text, which we mostly don't hear, is the text of public life, the trial--which is treated as so irrelevant that even those speaking it sometimes neglect to listen to it. In short, the judicial system is in ruins. This is the Crazy Trial. First, here is the foreground text: the nurses are speaking. They sit at a table, where there is a microphone, as though they were on a radio talkshow, and we hear their voices over loudspeakers.)

NURSE 2  
This friend of mine met her husband through a newspaper ad?

U37.N.1



NURSE 1  
Right.

NURSE 2  
And so now he's beating her up,

NURSE 1  
What did she expect?

NURSE 2  
and threatening he'll commit suicide if she leaves.

NURSE 1  
She should leave.

NURSE 3  
Who's that put herself in a bag full of shit?

NURSE 1  
I don't remember.

NURSE 3  
Of course you do. Because of her stepfather.

NURSE 2  
Right.  
These people,  
you know,  
where I come from they still arrange marriages.

NURSE 1  
Can you believe it?

NURSE 2  
I wouldn't mind it.

NURSE 3  
You say so.

NURSE 2  
I wouldn't.

NURSE 2  
They say you marry for love, and then it's nothing but trouble.

NURSE 1  
It would be nice to have it settled.

NURSE 2  
And just live with it.

NURSE 1  
Have your family looking out for you.

NURSE 2:  
Oh, sure.

V37.N.2

N2 engages Ns

(Sarcastically.)

Then you could just relax and live your life.

(They all laugh.)

For me, I'm turned down 70% of the time I want sex now. It's been five years since I had as much sex as I want and I keep trying to adjust to less sex. Doing porno films really helps satisfy my appetite.

Right after I left my husband and was getting less sex than I wanted, I used to masturbate for 5 minutes in the morning when I woke up. Soon, I was doing it for 2 hours.

Same thing at night, soon masturbating for 4 hours before going to sleep.

I'm not saying this to brag, and I'm not making it up.

I had constantly repeating orgasms, one after the other. I was a slave to my orgasms. It took 6 hours a day out of my life that I could be doing other things. One time, I was playing with myself so much it was interfering with a job I had. My boyfriend pulled the vibrator cord out of the wall and said "You gotta get out of bed." I felt ashamed I was so attached to my body I would do something so awful. I never had that urge to masturbate when I was living with my husband, who was fucking me all the time.

So when I started doing films, that urge started to curb after 6 months. Now I hardly ever masturbate more than an hour. Usually I'm very happy with a half hour. I try to explain to my boyfriends that, for me, masturbation is not the same as cock sex. And oral sex is not the same as vaginal-cock sex or masturbation.

It's like the difference between beef and ham.

I get a different satisfaction from holding a person I love next to me than holding a person who is just an acquaintance. Different dildos and vibrators feel differently. So I get a different feeling when I have a vibrator up my vagina and somebody's fucking me in the ass, or if I have a vibrator in my ass and somebody's manipulating my clitoris with his finger. Even the orgasms are different for me.

Once I've masturbated I may stop at that, or I may feel like having something else next. I may want to go on to another thing. Or I may want to do only one thing for 6 months.

(The following dialogue--though it, too, is "foreground" text--overlaps the preceding solo, so that not much of it is heard.)

NOD

I'm not one of these guys who thinks you ought to hunt somebody down. But, you hear what some of these guys say who are coming back now.

037.5.1

N and J normalize Aud

JOHN

about what they saw on the ground--

NOD  
the atrocities, the horror stories you hear, I forget,

JOHN  
and about one of our guys who was captured and dragged through the streets, and you've got to believe the people who actually perpetrated these tortures are going to be held accountable.

NOD  
How are you going to find these people?

JOHN  
They'll be found.

NOD  
How are you going to find them?

JOHN  
They have ways of--you know,

NOD  
their neighbors know who they are.

JOHN  
Right, and people who protect them who will probably just get a little tired of protecting them.

NOD  
I think we're going to get satisfaction on the whole war crime aspect.

(And this dialogue from the Trial is spoken further in the background, underneath the foreground text, and is not heard at all.)

U37.0.1

M exhorts court

MENELAUS  
I must say, speaking as a man of Agamemnon's generation--there was a man of character I may say: in contrast, for whatever reason, to this younger generation which strikes one as being made of cheap, malicious stuff.

And I ask myself: shall parents never be safe in their own homes? Shall children be the judges, juries, and executioners of their parents?

JOHN  
(With indifference.)  
They should be stoned to death.

MENELAUS  
Both Orestes and Electra should be punished. But banished. Not killed.

NOD  
I think they should be stoned to death. Their throats slit. Their eyes gouged out. Their gold teeth pulled. Their flesh should be boiled off their skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts. And their bones should be carved into letter openers.

I'd like to read something into the record.

WILLIAM  
Go ahead.

---

NOD  
(Reads.)  
Manny waited until they were finished. "Now," he said, "I know you fellows are unhappy because your girlfriends are sleeping with the Arabs and you've had to sell your Volkswagens to meet next month's mortgage payment, but I'm here to make you laugh in spite of yourselves...."

N distracts court

"Go ahead and do it then, you kosher cocksucker!" yelled the big drunk.

"I wish to thank you for telling me like it is," Manny said very quietly. "Now, if you'll stop finger-fucking your lady under the tablecloth I'll get on with my act."

(Silence among the foreground actors. The action stops. This text is heard alone. Then the foreground speakers resume, drowning this out.)

"You better. It's almost sunrise."

"OK, then, have you heard the one about the chocolate soldier who went to bed with the chocolate mail order girl?"

"Yes!"

"All right, then, have you heard the one about President and Nancy's big surprise for him?"

"You told that one last night."

"You were here last night."

"Yes!"

"Well, fucker, that makes two of us who are stupid. The only difference is that I'm getting paid!"

---

JOHN  
(Speaking inaudibly.)  
-----

NOD  
(Almost inaudibly.)  
I didn't.

J challenges N

JOHN  
Somebody did.

NOD  
I didn't do it.

N deflects J

JOHN  
Well, somebody put pubic hair on my coke can.

V37.0.2

US.S.1

NOD

So, somebody put pubic hair on my coke can, too.

JOHN

I'm saying, somebody put pubic hair on \*my\* coke can.

NOD

I'm saying, somebody put pubic hair on my coke can, too.

JOHN

Are you saying I put pubic hair on your coke can?

NOD

(Backing off.)

I'm not saying anything.

JOHN

Is that what you're saying?

NOD

(Walking away.)

I'm not saying anything.

(The coke can conversation occurs under the following:

NURSE 1

I like it gentle, gentle as a lamb. That's why I like faggots a lot.  
Once you break a faggot they're one of the best lovers you can find.

V38.N.1

N1 excites Ns

NURSE 2

Break a faggot? How do you do that?

NURSE 1

You get into their trip and you understand them...while you're lusting over them, then you take too many downers with them...or rather you make them take too many downers....

NURSE 2

You mean while they're lying there helpless you just do your evil heterosexual thing with them?

NURSE 1

No, well, they have to move, that's the whole trip. When I was a lot younger my girlfriend and I would hitch over to the Gold Cup Restaurant, dressed up in male costumes. I had short hair then and we'd trap some young gay guy and we'd take him home and just flip him out. He'd scream. One was totally terrified when he found out we were really women.

But it's worth it, you know, because they're so sensual, and, of course, it's an ego trip, I mean, you know, a control trip.

(And, in the background.)

P guards O

PYLADES

Orestes deserves a crown! What he did was avenge his father's murder by killing a worthless whore. A woman, moreover, who kept men back from

V38.O.1

waging war, kept them at home, tormented by the fear that, if they left, those who stayed behind would seduce their wives and destroy their families and homes.

TYNDAREUS  
It's a nightmare really.

NOD  
And why should Clytemnestra not take a lover? All the wives did when their husbands were at war. These men were gone for \*years\*, whoring their way through the east, while Clytemnestra stayed at home.

(The following is a fragment of the archaic Greek world.)

O placates court

ORESTES  
Men of Argos, it was for your sake as much as for my father that I killed my mother.

U38.0.2

If you sanction the murder of husbands by wives, you might as well go kill yourselves right now or accept the domination of your women.

If you vote that I must die,  
then you are all as good as dead,  
since wives will have the courage of their crimes.

NOD  
A good argument, but not good enough, in fact, a sort of cheap, bragging blabber when you come down to it. Man talk.

I mean: Would the same argument apply if he had killed his father?

These men think they can get away with murder.

JOHN  
How's that?

J and N augments O

NOD  
Let's say he killed his father because his father had killed his mother.

JOHN  
Right.

NOD  
I mean, would there be any doubt? There's only a doubt because the person he killed was a woman.

JOHN  
Good point.

NOD  
So I say he ought to be stoned. And Electra with him, as an accessory to the crime.

ORESTES  
I'd like to call an expert witness.

WILLIAM  
Go right ahead.

(Foreground and background come together now.)

ORESTES  
This is Dr. Tabitha Whitlock.

V39

ME champions O

NURSE 1  
(Reading from Dr. Whitlock's testimony.)  
I'd just like to say that in a case hinging on the question of  
parentage, jurisprudence will take into account the possibility of in  
vitro fertilization.

(General uproar.)

NOD  
Are you saying that Orestes is the product of in vitro fertilization?

NURSE 1  
It may not be necessary to establish that he is, in order to establish  
certain apposite legal principles. Indeed, there is precedent in the  
common law, in any case, for regarding the mother only as the nurse of  
the seed implanted by the father--so that the father is the parent,  
sine qua non, and the mother merely the incubator. For without the  
father, there is no child; the father is the uncaused cause.

Then, too, on the question of parenting altogether, leaving aside the  
question of parentage, it was Clytemnestra herself who compromised or  
voided the sanctity of the mother-child relationship years before the  
event for which Orestes and Electra are now on trial--or certainly  
voided it by the murder of their children's own father.

NOD  
This is an argument more clever than true.  
The young man is guilty.  
His sister's guilty, too.

TYNDAREUS  
We're all agreed to that.

(The following is another fragment of the archaic Greek world.)

O condones court

ORESTES  
Men of Argos, we accept your verdict, having no other choice.  
But let it not be death by stoning.  
Rather let us take our own lives,  
and in that way we ourselves  
will end the chain of murder  
that has cursed the House of Atreus,  
and with our deaths let us restore  
the public order.

V40

NOD  
We accept your decision if there is no quarrel.

(Beat.)

Silence is assent.  
The trial is ended.

(Silence. Orestes pisses in his pants, and urine slowly runs over the stage. We hear a huge soprano aria from Berlioz' Les Troyens. As Orestes continues to piss, the others all leave. Lights darken to twilight.)

TMM rallies O

041

TAPEMOUTH MAN  
(Cheerfully, like a smiling Buddha.)  
The imagination  
is less a separate faculty  
than a quality of all our mental faculties:  
the quality of seeing more things  
and making more connections among ideas about things  
than any list of theories and discourses  
can countenance.  
The imagination works  
by a principle of sympathy  
with the suppressed and subversive elements in experience.  
It sees the residues,  
the memories, and the reports of past or faraway social worlds  
and of neglected or obscure perceptions  
as the main stuff with which we remake our contexts.  
It explains the operation of a social order  
by representing what the remaking of this order would require.  
It generalizes our ideas  
by tracing a penumbra of remembered or intimated possibility  
around present or past settlements.  
By all these means  
it undermines  
the identification of the actual  
with the possible.

(Nod, John, and William put the tape back over the man's mouth, pick him up, carry him, in his wheelchair, upstage, put him down sideways on the ground facing away from the audience; when John and William turn away to go back to their places, Nod kicks the Tapemouth Man in the head three times, or shoots him in the head.)

E nurtures O

042

ELECTRA  
Orestes,  
I don't think I can bear it.  
To die.  
To be gone forever.

ORESTES  
Electra.

(From here on, the piece takes on a slurred, dizzying speed.)

ELECTRA  
If only I could give my life in place of yours,  
Orestes.  
It makes me dizzy.  
It makes me feel a little light....



Not to see you ever again.  
 To be gone.  
 Not to be with you, or anyone,  
 or anywhere.  
 Not to see anything, or touch it,  
 not to know it's there.

To be here,  
 to see you,  
 to see the world around me,  
 to feel my body,  
 and to think then,  
 all of a sudden,  
 it will be gone.

E uplifts O

I like almost anything that falls from the sky--  
 you know, snow, hail--  
 sleet even, when the sleet is mingled with very white snow.  
 Or anything that's white.  
 Or duck eggs.

043

Or things that always give you a clean feeling, like  
 a new metal bowl,  
 or an earthen pottery cup,  
 or a new wooden chest.

Or things that give you an unclean feeling.  
 The inside of a cat's ear.  
 A rat's nest.

I've gotten involved with a lot of men I didn't like,  
 as odd as that seems,  
 so lately  
 I didn't know what to do with someone I did like.

And I never have come with a man,  
 always before or after,  
 and it gets more and more difficult  
 as time goes on.  
 Maybe it's just  
 the way I'm made.

On New Year's Eve one time,  
 I knew a man who kissed me two times--  
 kisses so sweet,  
 so remote,  
 so much of something from a different time.

I tell myself:  
 Well, our time has come.  
 This happens.  
 I've thought about it all my life;  
 it always used to seem  
 completely normal.  
 But now, you think:  
 it's inconceivable.

O rebuffs E

You think: when you die, you never come back.  
And you don't know where you are.

ORESTES  
I don't think about it.  
We have one choice left, that's all,  
to choose the way we have to die.

ELECTRA  
I can't do that.

ORESTES  
When it comes to it, we all have a preference.  
Some people cut their wrists....  
Some people tie their hands with wire....

(Silence.)

ELECTRA  
Then, I want you to kill me.

ORESTES  
What?

ELECTRA  
I want you to kill me.

E faces O

ORESTES  
(To himself)  
God....

O denies E

ELECTRA  
I can't do it myself,  
I can't let some stranger do it.

ORESTES  
My hands are still covered with my mother's blood.  
I can't do it, Electra.  
We'll each have to--  
take our own lives.

(Silence.)

ELECTRA  
Then promise me:  
Let me die first.

ORESTES  
I promise.

ELECTRA  
And let me hold you.

(They embrace.)

I love you, Orestes.

U44

(Beat.)

I wish we could share one grave.

(Music. They dance. We hear the following text, in Electra's voice, over the music.)

All I ever had in mind was to do the right thing. I got one or two things at auction, thinking they might be all right, a chair, and a few little paintings, nothing special. I hadn't even thought it might be a Constable, I only thought that it was pretty, and this man Keating came to dinner and absolutely berated me for it. I can tell you, he said, beyond the shadow of a doubt that this painting has nothing to do with John Constable. Well, I said...Nothing whatever, he said. If it were a Constable, it would be worth five or six million plus. But no, it's not a Constable. It's not even an F W. Watts. It's not even a John Paul! Well, maybe it's a Paul.

E supports O

I hadn't even cared until he said all that to me, but then I began to cry, thinking I can do nothing right, not even when I'm not trying I must be just incorrectly positioned, I think I always was, from the start, the way it is when you can never get the right grip on anything because you're at the wrong end, or on the wrong side of it! And I wanted everything to be just fragile.

(Note Orestes and Electra are still out of it at the beginning of the following scene and, while Electra comes to at a certain point, Orestes remains out of it to the end.)

PYLADES  
Orestes.  
What's happening?

P incites O

ORESTES  
We've been condemned to death, Pylades.  
It's over.

(This scene is on speed.)

PYLADES  
You're giving up?

ORESTES  
It's finished.  
You'll be the next to go on trial.

(Silence.)

PYLADES  
Well, if what you say is true  
--and there's no hope for us--  
OK.  
Then:  
Let's take Menelaus with us.

ORESTES  
What?

O rebuffs P

PYLADES  
These good men think this game is all played out,  
but there are some moves still to be made.

ORESTES  
Try to see it as it is: this is the end.

PYLADES  
Not at all.  
The end is when you're dead,  
your insides are torn out  
and your bones are scattered whitened on the ground.  
You mean to say you'll just stand by and watch your sister die?  
Menelaus could have saved her at least.  
Could have spoken up.  
Could have pleaded for her life.  
Could have argued leniency for her at least.  
The hero of Troy--  
could have spent some little credit on behalf of your sister,  
instead of hoarding it all for himself and for his wife Helen.  
But--tell me, Orestes--  
you wouldn't want to hurt him?

ORESTES  
I'd hurt Menelaus if there were any way.

PYLADES  
The way is there.  
We only have to take it.

U47

ORESTES  
What way?

PYLADES  
Cut Helen's throat.

ORESTES  
Cut Helen's throat.

P instigates E and O

PYLADES  
Right.

E compels O

ORESTES  
Now I feel dizzy.

(He sits.)

ELECTRA  
Cut Helen's throat....

PYLADES  
The act itself would give me pleasure,  
and whose fault is all this if it isn't Helen's fault?

ORESTES  
You blame it all on her?

O presses P

PYLADES  
No one would disagree with that.  
Who do you think they all gossip about?

ORESTES  
They gossip about everything.

ELECTRA  
Cut Helen's throat....

(Silence.)

ORESTES  
What sort of scheme is this?

PYLADES  
If justice is what's wanted,  
let's have justice.

ORESTES  
This isn't justice.

PYLADES  
This is a just revenge.

ORESTES  
Yes, you mean:  
if we're going to die,  
let's bring them all down with us.

PYLADES  
But then:  
Why speak of dying?

ORESTES  
(Shouting.)  
We are going to die, Pylades.  
Is nothing clear to you in your mind?  
We're going to die!

PYLADES  
(Shouting.)  
Not necessarily.

(Quietly.)

Think it through.  
Let's say, after we kill her,  
we kidnap her daughter.

ELECTRA  
(Musing.)  
Hermione.

PYLADES  
Lure her to us, hold her as a hostage.

ELECTRA  
(Coming alert.)  
Use her for safe passage out of town.

PYLADES  
For all three of us.

ELECTRA  
This is the way to save your life, Orestes.

ORESTES  
To save my life....

PYLADES  
This is the way to save your sister's life.  
It comes to this:  
you have a choice now between your sister's life and Helen's.  
Which one will you sacrifice to save the other?

P focuses O

ELECTRA  
I can't believe it's right,  
finally,  
after all this, for you to sacrifice your life to save Helen.

ORESTES  
This is my choice?

PYLADES  
You do something in the world. You take an action.  
That's a commitment.  
You have to see it through, you know?  
You bring other people along with you,  
you have an obligation.  
Some people think you can go through life saying.  
oh, I take it back,  
no, I apologize,  
that isn't what I meant at all.  
Let's start all over again.  
Some people think: well, I can always take it back.  
But that's not the case.  
Some things, it happens just like that--

(Snaps his fingers.)

And that's a done deal.  
That's where you are in your life.

(Silence as he lets this sink in, then:)

It's going to be all right. You'll see how fast Menelaus meets our  
demands, when he sees his wife in a pool of blood and a knife at his  
daughter's throat. And everyone who sees this will know that finally  
justice has been done.

ELECTRA  
This is so clear.

E urges O

ORESTES  
We start this all over again?

(Beat.)

ELECTRA  
This is the right thing, Orestes.  
This feels right to me.

(Long silence: slow motion.)

PYLADES  
I've tried to think of this as you would yourself.  
The kind of person you are--  
those qualities that first drew me to you to be your friend.  
I've tried to put myself in your place.  
And this is right for you.

ELECTRA  
Listen to him, Orestes.  
this is a person who knows the world and how it works.  
This is a person you can count on.

ORESTES  
I don't feel well.  
We've come full circle.  
We'll take some time to think this through.

PYLADES  
There's no time.

ORESTES  
I don't know.  
I'm not thinking clearly now.  
We need some time.

PYLADES  
There wasn't time after you made your first move!  
This is it.  
Make your next move.

ELECTRA  
Let's do it.  
Let's do this.

PYLADES  
(Quietly.)  
What kind of man would throw away his sister's life?

(Silence.)

ORESTES  
(Quietly.)  
I'll go along with it.

(They all exit. It is very quite. Silence. The men are in bed.)

249

W probes J

WILLIAM  
Do you think forgiveness is possible?

J opens up to W

JOHN  
Uh, primarily, uh, uh, the, uh, the...primarily the question is does man have the power to forgive himself. And he does. That's essentially it. I mean if you forgive yourself, and you absolve yourself of all, uh, of all wrongdoing in an incident, then you're forgiven. Who cares what other people think, because uh...

WILLIAM  
Was this a process you had to go through over a period of time. Did you have to think about it?

JOHN  
Well, no. Not until I was reading the Aquarian gospel did I, did I strike upon, you know I had almost had ends meet because I had certain uh you know to-be-or-not-to-be reflections about of course what I did. And uh,

WILLIAM  
I'm sorry, what was that?

JOHN  
Triple murder. Sister, husband. Sister, husband, and a nephew, my nephew. And uh, you know, uh, manic depressive.

WILLIAM  
Do you mind my asking what instruments did you use? What were the instruments?

JOHN  
It was a knife. It was a knife.

WILLIAM  
Knife?

JOHN  
Yes.

WILLIAM  
So then, the three of them were all...

JOHN  
Ssssss...

(points to slitting his throat)

like that.

WILLIAM  
So, uh, do you think that as time goes by, this episode will just become part of your past, or has it already...

JOHN  
It has already become part of my past.



WILLIAM

Has already become part of your past. No sleepless nights? No...

JOHN

Aw, no. In the first three or four years there was a couple of nights where I would stay up thinking about how I did it, you know. And what they said...they told me later there were so many stab wounds in my sister and I said no, that's not true at all, you know. So I think I had a little blackout during the murders, but uh...

WILLIAM

I'm sorry, they said there were many stab wounds....

USO

J surrenders to W

JOHN

Well, uh, they said there was something like thirty stab wounds in my sister, and I remember distinctly I just cut her throat once. That was all, you know, and I don't know where the thirty stab wounds came from. So that might have been some kind of blackout thing. You know, I was trying to re- re- uh, re- uh, uh, resurrect the uh, the crime--my initial steps, etc. You know, and uh, and uh, I took, as a matter of fact, it came right out of the, I was starting the New Testament at the time, matter of fact I'm about the only person you'll ever meet that went to, to do a triple murder with a Bible in his, in his pocket, and, and, listening to a radio. I had delusions of grandeur with the radio. Uh, I had a red shirt on that was symbolic of, of some lines in Revelation, in the, in the New Testament. Uh I had a red motor...as a matter of fact, I think it was chapter 6 something, verses 3, 4, or 5, or something where uh it was a man, it was a man. On a red horse. And, and, a man on a red horse came out, and uh, and uh uh, and he was given a knife, and unto him was given the power to kill and destroy. And I actually thought I was this person. And I thought that my red horse was this red Harley Davidson I had. And I wore...it was just, you know, it was kind of a symbolic type of thing. And and and uh, you know, uh after the murders I thought the nephew was, was the, was a new devil or something, you know. (This, this is pretty bizarre now that I think back on it. I thought he was a new devil and uh, uh. I mean basically I love my sister, there's no question about that. But at times my sister

W enlightens J

hadn't come through uh for me. You know and I was in another, one of these manic attacks. And uh, and uh, uh, uh, you know, uh, I was just uh, I was just you know, I mean I was fed up with all this you know one day they treat me good and then they tell all these other people that I was a maniac and watch out for me and etc. and like that. And uh, uh, so I went to them that night to tell them I was all in trouble again, you know, and could they put me up for the night, you know, and they told me to take a hike and uh so uh, believing that I had the power to kill, uh you know, that was that for them. You know. I mean when family turns you out, that's a real blow. You know. But uh, back to the original subject of forgiveness. If I forgive myself I'm forgiven. You know that's essentially the answer. I'm the captain of my own ship. I run my own ship. Nobody can crawl in my ship unless they get permission. I just (he nods) "over there." You know. "I'm forgiven." You know. Ha-ha. You know. (Laughs.) It's as simple as that. You know. You're your own priest, you're your own leader, you're your own captain. You know. You run your own show, a lot of people know that.

USI

NOD

US2

N distracts J

What do you think of the soaps?

JOHN  
What?

NOD  
The soaps.

JOHN  
You mean the daytimes?

NOD  
Right.

JOHN  
They're OK.

NOD  
I think they're wonderful. I think the clothes could be better, and they could use some comic relief, you know, but otherwise I think they're wonderful. Although, of course, I guess they could use some more fantasy. You know. In times like these, we need a little more "I wanna be," and not so much "I am."

JOHN  
Unh-hunh.

NOD  
I think it's incredible how much excellence you see in the scenes.

JOHN  
Unh-hunh.

NOD  
Although I think they could have more minority representation. And I think they should move faster. You know, they should have shorter stories--beginning, middle, end, like that, and not just have the same story go on for a year or something. I mean they get lost in the past, they don't quite catch up with the times. You know, I like to see some stuff going on, I don't just want to watch my next door neighbors.

Do you think they're too believable?

JOHN  
No.

WILLIAM  
Yes, I do. That's what I would say.

NOD  
I'm a little tired of seeing spouses coming back from the dead all the time and plots with missing babies. I think that's a little too obvious.

JOHN  
To me, my only complaint would be that most shows are overly lit.

NOD  
Too bright.

JOHN  
Exactly.

(Horrible cries from off. The Phrygian enters at a dead run shouting, first to the men in bed, and then, as they enter, to the nurses.)

US3

P penetrates all

PHRYGIAN  
(Speaking at breakneck speed.)  
Oh god, god  
Trojans, women, children, slaves--  
terror screaming  
fall upon you from the sky  
cut your knees  
cut women come home

NOD  
Who's this?

WILLIAM  
This is Helen's servant.

NOD  
Oh.

PHRYGIAN  
Oh,  
hill of Tigris,  
sacred city,  
poets, learned men,  
temples, courtyards,  
little, little fountains  
children play  
for pride  
more than rubble  
stone from stone  
courtyards,  
bedrooms opened to the sky  
graves and craters  
all for Helen

(The nurses grab him and hustle him to bed; he continues, taking his time to speak distinctly.)

These are men, mind you.  
They threw their arms around the lady's knees,  
begging for their lives.

And then, suddenly,  
they attack.  
Suddenly there is terror.  
Suddenly confusion.  
Suddenly the servants scatter  
in all directions, crying out:

(Resuming breakneck speed.)

Lookout, lady!  
too late too late.  
Lookout, lady!  
As they run.  
Lookout, lady!  
rush away, falling, stumbling stairs  
cry out: Treachery!  
Treachery!

And it is done.

(The nurses give him an injection.)

NURSE 3  
It's OK now.  
Tell me quietly.  
Where were you.

PHRYGIAN  
next to her, fanning her  
a round feather fan  
gentle breeze

(Smoke has begun to fill the stage. He is beginning to go to sleep.)

her hand reached up  
her fingers wound themselves around the fan  
caught up in feathers  
let her yarn fall to the floor

And Orestes shouting to the slaves to go  
They fell on her like wild boars  
like wild boars come snuffling through the woods  
and screaming  
Die!

(Spent.)

the lady screamed,  
snow white arms reaching out  
Her fingers caught in her own hair  
tearing out her hair  
collapsing to the floor

(He is close to sleep now.)

But then, just as she sank to the ground,  
Hermione came in

(More smoke.)

the men stopped--  
as for an instant  
from respect  
and shame

US4

But  
then they turned and seized the girl  
their new victim

When suddenly  
Helen vanished.

(He's very sleepy now, partly dreaming.)

Vanished.  
They turned around  
she was gone.  
As though she  
passed right through the roof.  
And she was gone.  
As though  
stolen by the gods.

The cause of war--  
has been removed--  
is gone--  
And all that's left--  
is  
ruin.

(He is asleep.)

N bewilders Ns

NOD

There was a guy checked in here once, were you on the floor then?  
who had this old shoebox full of female genitalia. Did you see that?  
He had nine vulvas. This is a true story. Most were dried and shriveled,  
though one had been sort of daubed with silver paint and trimmed with  
a red ribbon. Another one, the one on top, seemed really fresh.  
He had part of the mons veneris with the vagina and anus attached.  
And when you looked real close you could see little crystals on it,  
he had sprinkled it with crystals of salt.

U55

Another box, he had four noses, human noses, and there was a Quaker  
Oats box with scraps of human head integument.

And several pairs of leggings he had made, and a vest that he had made  
from the torso of a woman, tanned like leather, with a string on it so  
you could pull it up and wear it, breasts and all.

And masks that he had made by peeling the faces from the skulls of  
different women. Of course they had no eyes, just holes where the eyes  
had been. But the hair was still attached to the scalps. A few were all  
dried out, but some of them had been treated with oil, to keep the skin  
smooth and lifelike, and some had lipstick on their lips. If you had  
known them, and you had seen their masks, you would have recognized  
them.

(Menelaus rushes in--in a panic--his bodyguard behind him.)

MENELAUS  
What's happened here?

U56

Where is my wife?

M curses O

(The palace is in flames. Smoke fills the stage. Dimly visible through the smoke, Orestes and Pylades appear on the roof of the palace. They have Hermione between them. Orestes holds a knife at her throat. Further back Electra stands, holding a torch.)

MENELAUS  
Who let this happen?  
Is that my daughter?

O prods M

(Instantly out of control.)

What the fuck is this, Orestes, you fucking madman.  
Who let him up there?  
Get your fucking hands off her, Orestes.  
How did they get up there?  
Get him the fuck down here.  
What the fuck do you think you're doing?

ORESTES  
Do you want to ask your questions, Menelaus, or do you want me to give you some answers first?

MENELAUS  
What the fuck sort of question is that?

ORESTES  
In case it is of any interest to you, I am going to kill your daughter.

MENELAUS  
I am going to have your fucking ass, Orestes.  
You are dead meat, you fucking nut case,  
Who the fuck let him up there?  
You won't walk away from this alive.

ORESTES  
No, I'm not walking anywhere, until I've burned this fucking house down, and you've brought in a helicopter to fly us out.  
Otherwise, your daughter is dead meat.

MENELAUS  
What have you done with Helen?

ORESTES  
I don't remember.

MENELAUS  
Don't fuck with me!

ORESTES  
I think she's gone.

MENELAUS  
Gone where?

ORESTES

I think she's gone to heaven.

MENELAUS  
Don't fuck with me, Orestes.

ORESTES  
(Very offhand, chilling.)  
Really, I think she's gone to heaven.  
I meant to kill her. I really did.  
But then the gods came down and spirited her away.  
Something like that.

MENELAUS  
Where is she?

ORESTES  
You don't believe me?  
You don't think the gods would do that for her?  
I can't help what you think, Menelaus.  
She's disappeared.

MENELAUS  
You surrender her body to me for burial, or I'll fuck you up.

ORESTES  
(Screams.)

I didn't kill her.

(Controlled.)

Now your daughter: that's another matter.  
I'm going to cut her throat right before your eyes unless you arrange  
to get us out of here.

M menaces O

(Fire now everywhere.)

MENELAUS  
(Turning to the others on stage, in a quiet but urgent tone of voice.)  
Can't you get someone up there?

ORESTES  
What is your answer, Menelaus?

MENELAUS  
Haven't you had enough of killing?

O infuriates M

ORESTES  
I never get enough of killing whores!

MENELAUS  
I'll have his fucking ass!

(Sounds of helicopter. Police and fire lights. Loudspeaker voice with  
instructions to "stand back," "stand back from the car," "get back  
there!" etc.)

US7

MENELAUS  
Go ahead and kill her, then, you fuck.  
I'm giving you nothing!  
You think you can jerk me around!

ORESTES  
OK, I will!

MENELAUS  
No, no, for god's sake.

(Uncontrolled weeping and wailing and crying out.)

Oh, god, he's got my daughter up there.

(Collapsing to his knees weeping.)

This fucking madman has my daughter.

(The voice of Apollo over a loudspeaker.)

A redresses All

APOLLO  
All right.  
That's enough.  
Everyone stay calm.  
This is Apollo speaking.  
Put down your knife, Orestes.  
And listen, all of you,

US8

(Apollo enters. He wears a conservative gray suit. With him is Helen, now in the form of a giant blow-up fuck-me doll. Apollo's voice continues to be miked so that he can speak very quietly, in the manner and accent of the current American president, and his voice still fills the theatre.)

to what I have to say.  
Let's hope things have not gone so far  
that not even a god can put things to right!

(He smiles at his own little tension-relieving joke.)

You see, with me, I have Helen.  
Orestes, as you can see, did her no harm.  
I rescued her, at the command of Zeus, her father.  
Understand:  
because Zeus is her father, Helen could not die--  
although she has gone to heaven,  
having caused enough anguish here below.  
She will take her place there in the sky,  
like a beautiful, bright star,  
a guide to mariners forevermore.  
Such is Helen's end.  
You see how things work out,  
when you approach things with a little patience and goodwill,  
some thought to the long term good of all  
a sense of charity,  
respect,



a due regard for the good opinion of mankind.

Indeed, what you see written in the stars can as well be rewritten with a sense of what is right, with a sense of warmth and compassion.

That's why I say to all of you here:  
watch.  
and learn.

(The city goes on burning, even as Apollo speaks. And, one by one, those who listen to him become bored and stop listening. The nurses are the first, returning to a game of mah jong.)

Orestes, for example: henceforth, it is ordained that he will take a long trip. And when he returns to the city of Athens, he will be ensured a fair and impartial trial. I myself will preside. And see to it that he is not unduly punished.

(Looking around, hands outstretched.)

Let us not forget, after all, who he is, and the family that he comes from.

(Nod turns on the radio, and now we hear, under Apollo's voice, music.)

In time to come, Orestes will marry Hermione.  
And the two of them will live in great joy together.

As for Electra, a life of wedded happiness awaits her, too,  
with her husband Pylades.

(One by one, all but Apollo take seats, or lie down or wander out.)

And Menelaus will leave the rule of Argos to Orestes. Menelaus himself will reign in Sparta--the rightful dowry of his beloved wife Helen.

This is a land whose citizens have always believed,  
and still believe today, that they have a heritage,  
they have a civilization and a culture,  
a set of practices and well known customs  
values and ideals  
that are the rightful envy of the world.  
This is what I believe.

The traditions that help them make a world that will endure  
as long as their faith and their goodwill remain intact  
and they share their gifts with all those in the world born less  
fortunate than they.

Then may we say with confidence truly this is a blessed people, the  
rightful envy of the world.

(Apollo is left alone on stage. His bodyguards pick him up unceremoniously like a piece of furniture--and carry him out. The city remains a smoking ruin, a smoldering fire. The quiet of a hospital ward. The music on Nod's radio continues--like the music that continues on the radio after a car wreck. Nurse 3 goes to one of the beds.)

NURSE 3

US9

Are you William?

JOHN  
Over there.

NURSE 3  
I've come to change your dressing.

WILLIAM  
Oh, yes.

N nurses W

NURSE 3  
I guess you'll be dressing for dinner, eh?

WILLIAM  
Yes.

NURSE 3  
Do you have any pain?

WILLIAM  
Oh, yes.  
I'd say that's the least of it.  
I'd say:  
I'm not myself any more.  
My head wrapped in bandages.  
More like Lazarus gone into the tomb instead of leaving it.  
Listening to the sounds,  
someone's foot rapping on the ceiling,  
the jailer's keys,  
the sound of the water running,  
and someone washing their hands  
the incessant washing of hands.  
I hear city noises from time to time,  
they have nothing to do with me any more.  
I think:  
how beautiful the city used to be in September,  
going home after dark.

W enlightens N

Our senses ripened in the sun, they used to say,  
But now, you'd have to say, people know better how to mind their own  
damned business:  
the ability to distinguish between degrees of light,  
licking the twilight and floating in the huge open mouth filled with  
honey and shit  
horse piss collaborating with the heat of an animal  
incubating the baser instincts,  
flabby, insipid flesh multiplying itself with the help of computer-  
assisted gene splicing.  
We've done a lot of violence to the snivelling tendencies in our  
natures.  
What we need now are some strong, straightforward actions that you'd  
have to be a fool not to learn the wrong lessons from it.

W warns Aud

U60

N shuts down W

NURSE 3  
There, that's all now.

WILLIAM

If you were married to logic,  
you'd be living in incest,  
swallowing your own tail.

Every man must shout:  
there's a great destructive work to be done.  
We're doing it!

NURSE 3  
That's all now. We're finished.

WILLIAM  
Thank you.

(He sinks back on his pillow, exhausted, goes to sleep.)

The End.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT:

Orestes 2.0 was composed the way Max Ernst made his Fatagaga series of pictures after World War I, so that passages of the play were inspired by or taken from twentieth-century texts by Apollinaire, William Burroughs, Cindy, Bret Easton Ellis, John Wayne Gacy, Mai Lin, Elaine Scarry, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Vogue, and Soap Opera Digest.

The piece was developed in collaboration with Robert Woodruff, in a workshop he directed at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles

Charles Mee's work is made possible by the support of Richard B. Fisher and Jeanne Donovan Fisher.

▲

## Appendix B

### Production Calendar of Events

# ORESTES 2.0 TENTATIVE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

~ February 2013 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 SUPERBOWL	4 STUMBLE THRU	5 WORK	6 RUN	7 RUN	8 WORK	9 MARDI GRAS
10 MARDI GRAS	11 MARDI GRAS	12 MARDI GRAS POSSIBLE EVENING WORK	13 RUN	14 RUN	15 TECH	16 TECH
17 TECH	18 TECH	19 SHOW	20 SHOW	21 SHOW	22 SHOW	23 SHOW
24 SHOW	25	26	27	28	Notes: 1/27/13 MARK II!	

# ORESTES 2.0 TENTATIVE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

~ January 2013 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 7PM Read/Presentations ALL	8 7PM Table Work ALL	9 7PM Pgs. 1-5 <i>Electra, Medical Examiner</i>	10 7PM Pgs. 6-10, 2-5 <i>Electra, Soldiers, Helen, Nurse 3</i>	11	12
13 6:30 PM pgs. 27-32, 41-48, 11-15 <i>Electra, Orestes, Pylades</i>	14 6:30 PM pgs 18-27 <i>Orestes, Menelaus, Soldiers, Nurses, Tapemouth Man, Tyndareus (7PM)</i>	15 6:30PM Violence <i>Tapemouth Man, Soldiers, Nurse 1, Electra, Orestes</i> 8PM Crazy Court <i>ALL except Apollo and Apollo guards</i>	16 6:30PM pgs. 32-33, 41, 49-54, 58-60 <i>Nurses, Tapemouth Man, Soldiers</i>	17 7PM Pgs. 11-15 <i>Orestes and Electra</i> 8:30PM Pgs. 15-18, 27-28 <i>Orestes, Electra, Farley, Radio Voices</i>	18	19
20 6:30PM pgs. 57-60 ALL 8:00PM pgs. 18-21, 24-27 <i>Orestes, Menelaus w/ Guard, Nurses, Soldiers</i> 8:30PM pgs 54-57 <i>Orestes, Pylades, Menelaus, Soldiers, Nurses</i>	21 MLK DAY OFF	22 6:30PM pgs. 49 - 52 <i>Phrygian, Soldiers, Nurses</i> 7:30PM pgs. 52 - 54 <i>Soldiers, Nurses</i> 8:30PM pgs 6-9 <i>Electra, Helen, Nod, John</i>	23 6:30 pgs. 1-2 <i>Medical Examiner</i> 7PM <i>As stumbly Stumble-Thru as you can get</i>	24 ROYAL MONOLOGUES! 7PM Menelaus 8PM Tyndareus 9PM Electra	25	26
27 NONROYAL MONOLOGUES! 6:30PM Tapemouth Man 8PM Soldiers	28 6:30PM Helen Scene 7:30PM pgs. 52-54 M/O Final Confrontation (everyone involved) 8:30PM Orestes Monologues (Sponge bath first)	29 Pgs. 28 - 48 6:30PM O. P. Soldiers, TM Man, Nurses	30 Pgs. 1-28 6:30PM Med Ex. O, E, Helen, Soldiers 7:30 PM ADD Nurses 8PM ADD Farley and Radios 8:30PM ADD Menelaus (guard) and Tyndareus	31 Pgs. 49 - 60 7PM Soldiers and Nurses 8PM ADD Phryg 8:30PM ADD Men (guard), O, E, P 9:00PM ADD Apollo (guards), Tyn	Notes: SCHEDULE MARK III! Revised 1/27/13	

Created with WinCalendar [Calendar Maker](#)

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## Appendix C

### Production Program



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by Neil Simon Robert E. Nims Theatre

**Orestes 2.0**.....Feb. 19-24  
by Charles Mee Robert E. Nims Theatre

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# Orestes 2.0

by Charles Mee

Directed by  
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Lighting Design  
**Diane Baas**

Costume Design  
**Tony French**

Scenic & Properties Design  
**Anthonyka Ferdinand**

Sound Design  
**Justin Guidroz**

Stage Manager  
**Kit Sternberger**

**February 19-24, 2013**  
Robert E. Nims Theatre  
UNO Performing Arts Center

## Orestes 2.0

### CAST

Orestes.....	Mason Joiner
Electra.....	Kaitlyn Heckel
Pylades.....	Aaron Davis
Menelaus.....	John Neisler*
Tyndareus.....	Robert Facio
John.....	Kyle Woods
Nod.....	Jesse Stephens
William.....	William Watkins
Tapemouth Man.....	Peter Smith
Nurse 1.....	Kayln Hepting
Nurse 2.....	Sarah Chatelain
Nurse 3.....	Betsy Borrego
Forensics Expert.....	Blair Pourciau
Helen.....	Ashton Akridge
Farley/Menelaus/Guard.....	Hunter Christopher
Radio Voice/Apollo Guard.....	Justin Guidroz
Radio Voice 2/Apollo Guard.....	Marino DeLeon
Phrygian.....	Franny Harold
Apollo.....	Matthew Rigdon

\* Appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

This play will run without an intermission

## ORESTES 2.0 CAST BIOS

**John Neisler (Menelaus)** is a first year MFA student and has been seen at UNO in *Race* and *The Good Doctor*. Other local credits include: *The Cortez Method* at Mid City Theatre, *From a Long Way Off* at JPAS, *The Weir* for Rising Shiners, *Opus* and *Afterlife* ghost story at Southern Rep. He will appear this summer at Southern Rep in *Freedom*. He's a proud member of Actors' Equity.

**Peter Smith (Tapemouth Man)** is a second year theatre arts option student. This production marks Peter's theatrical debut. He is excited to work with such a fun and talented cast and crew.

**William Watkins (William)** is very excited to work with such a fantastic cast and crew. He would like to thank his parents for feeding him, he knows it was tough. He would also like to thank Celeste and Adrene for, "being significant people in my life."

**Justin Guidroz (Radio Voice/Apollo Guard)** is founder of the \*NU\* Theatre company in New Orleans. An Irene Ryan nominee for the role of Infomercial Guy in *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*, some of his other favorite roles include Kustinov in *The Good Doctor*, Self in *Verbatim Verboten*, Kent in *Talk Radio*, and will be seen this April in *The Four of Us* as Benjamin.

**Jesse Stephens (Nod)** is a film arts student in his second year at UNO. This is his first theatrical performance and he is very excited to be a part of all this!

**Blair Pourciau (Forensics Expert)** is happy to return to theatre UNO in her second semester pursuing an undergraduate degree in theatre arts. Last seen in UNO's production of *The Good Doctor*, Blair once again would like to send her love and thanks to her friends, family, and mentor Shane Stewart for their constant support and encouragement.

**Hunter Christopher (Menelaus/Guard)** is a sophomore in the department of Film and Theatre. This is his third production at UNO and his first time acting as dramaturg. He would like to thank the cast, Tim O'Neal, David Hoover, and his family for helping make returning to school an incredibly positive experience.

**Marino De Leon (Radio Voice 2/Apollo Guard)** is from the Dominican Republic. He has had several extra roles in commercials. His upcoming projects include two films "Now You See Me", and the untitled Diablo Cody project. This is his first theatrical experience, with hopes of many more in the future.

### Director's notes:

*Orestes 2.0* forms the end of Charles Mee's "Imperial Dreams" trilogy. So, using his text, here is the tale so far:

Tantalus, a mortal friend of the gods, decides to test their omniscience. He kills his own son, Pelops, chops him up and boils him, and plans to feed him to the gods as animal meat. The gods realize the truth and are horrified; they put the pieces of the boy back together- and send Tantalus to Hades...

Pelops has two sons, Atreus and Thyestes, and, the two sons fight over who will inherit the throne of Mycenae. Atreus wins the kingdom- but Thyestes revenges himself by sleeping with Atreus's wife. Atreus exiles Thyestes. But then, under the pretense of making up, Atreus invites his brother Thyestes home for dinner. For the menu that night, Atreus kills the sons of Thyestes, cooks them, and serves them to their father with a robust red wine. After dinner, he asks Thyestes if he knows what he has eaten- and the servants present Thyestes with the heads and hands of his own sons.

Thyestes runs out of the house. He asks the Delphic Oracle how he can be revenged. The oracle tells him the only way is he must have a child by his own daughter Pelopia. That night, Thyestes sees his daughter going into a nearby stream. He rapes her and abandons her.

Atreus, searching for Thyestes, finds Pelopia, and takes the pregnant Pelopia as his new wife. She bears a son, and Atreus thinks that the boy is his. Atreus names the boy Aegisthus.

Aegisthus kills Atreus and restores Thyestes to the throne of Mycenae. Meanwhile, Atreus's real sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus, have escaped. They come back later when they are grown up. With the help of Tyndareus, the king of Sparta, they throw Thyestes out of Mycenae at last. Agamemnon rules Mycenae. Menelaus rules Sparta. But then, the Trojan prince Paris carries Menelaus's wife Helen off to Troy, and so the Trojan War begins.

To get the favor of the gods to begin the war, Agamemnon sacrifices his own daughter Iphigenia. While he is gone, Clytemnestra takes up with Aegisthus. When Agamemnon returns, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus murder Agamemnon. And so the children of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra- Orestes and Electra- murder Clytemnestra.

So it is that we see revealed, the dreadful nature of what it is to be human that nature that we try always to rise above.

From *Thyestes 2.0*

## Orestes 2.0

### PRODUCTION TEAM

Director ..... Timothy O'Neal+  
Stage Manager ..... Kit Sternberger  
Technical Director ..... Diane Baas  
Scenic Design ..... Anthonyka Ferinand  
Costume Design ..... Tony French  
Lighting Design ..... Diane Baas  
Sound Design ..... Justin Guidroz  
Properties Design ..... Anthonyka Ferinand  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Tim Moseley  
Dramaturgy ..... Hunter Christopher  
Light Board Operator ..... Jeff McCormick  
Sound Board Operator ..... Mandy Houser  
Running Crew ..... John Erwin  
Box Office ..... Maria Hinterkoerner  
House Manager ..... Dustin Arroyo  
Publicity ..... Jenny L. Billot & John Neisler  
Programs ..... Jenny L. Billot  
Costume Construction ..... Lindy Bruns  
Set Crew ..... FTA Theatre Practicum  
..... Technical Production Students

+ This production serves as partial completion of MFA in Directing

### ORESTES 2.0

#### PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

Timothy O'Neal (Director) is a third-year Directing MFA candidate at UNO. Past shows he has directed at UNO include *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*, *Outside Sitka* and *An Autobiography About My Brother's* remount for the Tennessee Williams' Literary Festival, *About Time* for Fall 2011's New Play Festival and *The Dumb Walter* for Spring 2011's Directing Showcase. He'd like to thank the faculty for their support these past three years and his family for their support and patience throughout life in general.

Justin Guidroz (Sound Designer) designed sound for *About Time* last year at UNO, for which he received an Excellence in Sound Design at the 2011 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. He has also done music for *Talk Radio* and *Tiny Alice*.

## ORESTES 2.0 PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

**Anthonyka Ferdinand (Scenic/Properties Design)** is an undergrad pursuing a degree in theatre arts. She has previously designed the set for UNO's production of *Race* and served as props master for UNO's productions of *Holy Ghost* and *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*. Anthonyka believes gaining experience is the key to working your way to the top in the theatre world. She looks forward to working with the cast and crew.

**Diane K Baas (Lighting Design)** is the Technical Director and Lighting Design faculty for the Film and Theatre Department at UNO. Professionally she has designed lights for numerous productions around New Orleans and around the country. She also has participated in numerous capacities in the creation of new works in Pennsylvania and Washington state, so she's very excited to be a part of creating some of that work closer to home, the students at UNO.

**Kit Sternberger (Stage Manager)** is in her 3rd year as a theatre major. At UNO, she's stage managed such shows as *The Glass Menagerie*, *An Autobiography About My Brother*, and *Suicide in the Key of Infomercial*. Productions she has worked on outside of school include *Kiss Kiss Julie*, *The Lily's Revenge*, and *M. Butterfly*. She hopes you enjoy this show as much as she enjoyed working on it.

**Tony French (Costume Design)** is a professor and costume designer at the University of New Orleans. He has designed numerous productions at UNO, including many original plays. He has worked with Southern Rep, The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe Theatre, and The Cincinnati Playhouse.

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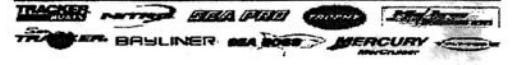


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## Appendix D

### Production Photographs













































## Appendix E

### Production Publicity Poster



## **Vita**

Timothy O'Neal was born at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois on August 28, 1982. He received his high school diploma in 2001. He then began his studies at University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He received his B.A. in Theatre in 2005. Upon completion of his B.A., he spent a couple of years working at Westport Country Playhouse in Westport, Connecticut. In 2010, he began working towards his MFA in Theatre Performance, Directing, at the University of New Orleans. Timothy will graduate from the University of New Orleans in May 2016.