

Missing Medea

by

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Abstract

The focus of this project is to (re)create a trilogy of plays that bring the unfamiliar and largely forgotten stories of the tragic heroine Medea of Greek mythology to the modern stage. In each case the selection of narrative detail and decisions regarding presentational style are part of the ongoing task of re-visualizing antiquity. The first play, *Cupid's Arrow*, focuses on the beginning of Medea's doomed and tragic love for Jason as it was engineered by the goddess of marriage Hera and it draws from fragments of Sophocles' play, the *Colchides (Women of Colchis)*. The second, *The Daughters of Pelias*, is recreated from fragments and the supposed narrative of a play (*Peliades* now lost) that was in Euripides' first ever production at the City Dionysia in 455 B.C. The story centers on Medea's deception of Pelias' daughters, who end up slaughtering their father when hoping to prolong his life. The third play of the trilogy, *After Medea*, which takes place after the horrific ending of Euripides' surviving *Medea*, rotates its triangle somewhat. Instead of a young Corinthian princess upsetting the balance of Jason and Medea's union by distracting Jason's affections, it is a young Theseus whose arrival creates turbulence for Medea and her rescuer and new husband Aegeus. This play follows the presumed plot of two non-surviving "Aegeus" tragedies, one by Sophocles and one by Euripides.

The dissertation attempts, in part, to redeem the character of Medea for modern audiences by placing before them, in dramatic form, some missing parts of her story. It thus follows a path similar to that of Margaret Atwood's recent novel and play, *The Penelopiad*, which similarly reinterprets otherwise unfamiliar mythological evidence for the wife of Homer's Odysseus. Such projects map out a methodology for such revisualization of classical mythology that does not limit itself to the surviving epics and tragedies. Appendices to the dissertation include a reworking of Euripides' *Trojan Women* (produced at SFU in Spring 2012), which represents another method for making ancient tragedy more accessible to modern audiences and performers, and an essay on Homer's Achilles that draws parallels between him and Medea.

Keywords: Medea; Pelias; Alcestis; Greek tragedy and adaptations

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Ant.</i>	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i>
<i>Apoll. Bibl.</i>	Apollodorus, <i>Bibliothēke</i>
AR	Apollonios of Rhodes, <i>Argonautica</i>
<i>Fab.</i>	Hyginus, <i>Fabulae</i>
FGrH	Fragments of the Greek historians, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker (Jacoby)
H	Hymn
Ibyc.	Ibycus
Il.	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
LIMC	Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae
<i>Med.</i>	Euripides, <i>Medea</i>
Met.	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
Od.	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
PMG	Fragments of the Greek lyric poets, <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> (Page)
<i>Th.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i>
Thes.	Plutarch, <i>Theseus</i>
W&D	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i>

Chapter 1.

Introduction

The focus of this project is to recreate a trilogy of plays that bring the untold and largely forgotten story of the tragic heroine Medea of Greek mythology to the modern stage. The first, *Cupid's Arrow*, focuses on the beginning of Medea's doomed and tragic love for Jason as it was engineered by the goddess of marriage Hera and shares subject matter indicated by fragments of Sophocles' play, the *Colchides (Women of Colchis)*. The second, *The Daughters of Pelias*, is recreated from fragments and the supposed narrative of a play (*Peliades* now lost) that was in Euripides' first ever presentation at the City Dionysia in 455 B.C. The story centers on Medea's deception of Pelias' daughters, who end up slaughtering their father when hoping to prolong his life. The third play of the trilogy, *After Medea*, which takes place after the horrific ending of Euripides' surviving *Medea*, rotates its triangle somewhat. Instead of a young Corinthian princess upsetting the balance of Jason and Medea's union by distracting Jason's affections, it is a young Theseus whose arrival creates turbulence for Medea and her rescuer and new husband Aegeus. This play follows the presumed plot of two non-surviving "Aegeus" tragedies, one by Sophocles and one by Euripides. In each case the selection of narrative detail and decisions regarding presentational style are part of the ongoing task of re-visualizing antiquity.

The inspiration for this project came, in part, from an impulse to redeem and inflect the character of Medea. By recreating the myth with a non-homogenous Medea at its centre, the narrative necessarily seeks to uncover emotional and practical motivations—while attempting to understand the strands of the myth from our modern perspective.

The mutability of Medea's character—from familiar to foreign, from sympathetic to monstrous, from helper-maiden to murderous witch—is part of her enduring

fascination.¹ However, in the popular imagination, Medea is famous for one incident, the murder of her children as depicted in Euripides' tragedy. That this portrayal has become canonical is not surprising: she is a character of monumental theatrical stature, embodying the internal conflict and passion that all great icons of the stage require. The reversal of archetypes embedded in her act—the mother as murderer of her own children—is such an arresting oxymoron that we may be dazzled by the conundrum and allow our imaginations to play and replay the incident trying desperately to make sense of it. While Euripides' play sketches the greater narrative that is Medea's mythical life, revisiting some of the earlier and later incidents will only deepen our fascination and our appreciation of the truly epic stature of Medea as hero(ine).

There are traditionally five major events in Medea's story, each tied to a specific location: her beginnings in Colchis where she meets and helps Jason with the golden fleece and then murders (or incites the murder of) her brother Apsyrtus; the murder of Jason's uncle Pelias in Iolcus; the Corinthian episode including her break from Jason and the death of their children; her time with Aegeus in Athens, which ends with the attempted murder of Theseus; and her arrival in Persia where she (or her and Aegeus' son Medus) becomes the progenitor of the Medes.² In addition to this list, I think it is important to note that there are two other significant incidents, each tied again to specific locations. Medea's *nostos*—her return to Colchis and the repatriation of her father to the Colchian throne (Apoll. *Bibl.* 1.9.28), an event that clearly depicts a coming 'full circle' of the character. And finally, the last event alluded to in the mythical chronology of Medea—reports of her marriage to Achilles when they both reach Elysium (Ibyc. 291 PMG)³ where, as Hesiod tells us, those favoured by the gods rest at ease after their mortal lives (Hes. *W&D* 168-70). Although the evidence for these incidents is sparse, there is enough ancient basis to speculate that there were more complete versions of these myths. The significance of these last two chapters in the mythology of Medea must not be underestimated; they indicate a trajectory that ends with completion,

¹ The compiled essays in *Medea* (Clauss and Johnston 1997) explore this theme, which Johnston highlights in her introduction.

² J.J. Clauss and S. I. Johnston eds., *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 13.

³ The scholiast on Apollonius 4 814-15a reports that both Ibycus (291) and Simonides (558) related this story.

atonement, repatriation, and celebration (not to say veneration). They also go a great distance toward putting Medea in the company of the great mythical heroes of classical antiquity: Heracles, Odysseus, and Achilles. Medea and Heracles both commit infanticide. Odysseus, like Medea, endures a long transformative journey that finally lands him at home where he reunites with his father. Marriage to the prototypical Greek hero, Achilles—a marriage for eternity—bespeaks an equality of stature and spirit. Seen in this light, if Euripides' play is read as one event in an ultimately redeemed, celebrated, and glorified life, there is an imperative to re-evaluate our reading of Medea the woman; to search antiquity and complete the story, and ultimately, to find the missing Medea.

Admittedly, not all of the ancient sources for the myth are consistent. Classical mythology was an ever evolving set of stories in which individual storytellers added, subtracted, and adapted elements depending on their own creative genius and the genres and circumstances of their writing.

Chapter 2.

Lost in Antiquity: Part 1

Many Euripidean heroes occupy a space between passion and reason; they attempt to negotiate the rocky channel that is, in essence, the journey we all undertake. But in the ancient plays, passion often takes the form of divinities. Euripides, certainly in the *Medea* but elsewhere as well, places Aphrodite and Eros squarely in the frame as culpable for choreographing human emotions in destructive ways.

The first play of the trilogy, *Cupid's Arrow*, formed the principal part of my M.A. thesis. It attempts to conform to Aristotle's indications about tragedy—it is written in verse and set in the mytho-historic, legendary time before the Trojan war—Hesiod's Age of Heroes. I provide a synopsis here.

The plot follows the narrative strand depicted by the third-century, Alexandrian poet, Apollonius of Rhodes in his *Argonautica*. Although this text itself comes from a period later than the surviving Greek tragedies, the story of Medea is from a still older tradition; aspects appear in the archaic poets Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, among others (*Il.* 7.541-2, 21.45-50, *Od.* 11.270-80⁴, 12.70-80, *Theog.* 992-1002, *Pythian* 4).⁵ In the *Argonautica*, Hera enlists Aphrodite and her mischievous, bow-wielding son to spin the young Medea into passionate irrationalism. Spurred by the arrow of Eros, Medea abets Jason in overcoming all the traps and trials set by her father Aeetes, and helps Jason to capture the Golden Fleece. Knowing that her father will be furious and want to punish them and drag her home, Medea convinces Jason to flee in the Argo—they sail through

⁴ All line references regarding to *Iliad* and *Odyssey* relate to the Penguin Classics translations of Robert Fagles

⁵ Cf. Mastronarde (2002) 45-46.

the night and imagine themselves safe when they put ashore on an island in the Cronian Sea. This island is protected by a Temple to Artemis (AR IV 330).

The play begins with a prologue delivered by Hera just outside the temple wherein Medea is praying. Hera's prologue alludes to the power of passion and offers a glimpse of the selfish hand that spins this particular wheel and raises questions as to the ultimate, and humanly unknowable, ends of the gods.

Hera points out that Medea has come of age; she is a *nymphē*, a marriageable young woman, filled with pent up sexual passion:

The girl within has no more thoughts of dolls
Or songs and games she played with other girls.
Her eyes shine now with maiden's eager love
And new desire flows strongly in her blood.
Medea is her name and she's in love,
This love of hers will work to bend a man
Who serves my turn, although he knows it not...
Now Cupid's love-smear'd dart has pierc'd her flesh
And bound her by its blood-charm to this man,
This Jason, who e'en now ascends the hill.⁶

As in Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Hippolytus*, where gods explain the actions to come before disappearing, after this preface Hera exits the stage into the Temple as Jason and one of the Argonauts arrive from the harbour. They recount to each other the adventures of the previous night—the capture of the Golden Fleece. Jason is amazed at how close to death he was and wonders whether it was Medea who saved him; his friend the Sailor confirms his suspicions. The Custodian, whom we later discover to be Hera in disguise, interrupts their recapitulation. She obliquely informs them that Apsyrtus (Medea's brother) has surrounded their ship with his fleet, posing an immediate threat to their safety, then retires into the Temple. Jason and the Sailor exit to the harbour to prepare for whatever danger may come their way.

⁶ Dow, W. B. *Cupid's Arrow* (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, 2008), 30-40. Throughout the play the characters speak in fairly strict iambic pentameter; the chorus has more latitude as we will see below.

As they exit, the Chorus enters. As Simon Goldhill tells us, an ancient Greek chorus is at once, “the most vexing” for modern productions and “the most distinctive” feature of Greek tragedy.⁷ *Cupid’s Arrow*, from behind the bulwark of Aristotelian orthodoxy, utilizes a somewhat traditional chorus. In an attempt to mediate their “vexing” nature, and to provide them with a justifiable, modern, *raison d’être*, they are cast as a chorus of dead (British) poets—dead, of course, to us—but unborn at the ostensible dramatic moment of the play. This blurring of chronology reinforces the theatrical fiction of the genre and underlines the inherent theatricality of the device of the chorus. As writers of English poetry, from the 17th to 19th centuries, they mediate the action of the ancient Greek plot to us. The chorus of poets, in some sense too, tries to mitigate the other major stumbling block for modern presentation, the absence of a pervasive, religious assumption in our increasingly secular culture. Combined with the lack of global homogeneity and adherence in existing religious practice, this absence sometimes renders the Olympian deities unnecessarily mystifying. The nature of the poets (they are ‘love poets’, romantics all, or at least their poems represent them in a romantic vein) reinforces the theme of passion as an irresistible and divine force. How many of these poets died too young, at the mercy of their passions? They are portrayed as zombies, or vampires, but instead of human viscera, they thirst amorally but unquenchably for love stories; stories of human passion... Medea is a new lamb to their feast.

These poets are summoned by the unfolding of a tragic love story. They muse on the nature of love, and then call on one of their number—Percy Shelley—to recite. They sense the arrival of Medea. As she enters, tormented by love and the twists and turns it is causing in her life, the chorus convince her to tell her story, partially out of their own voyeuristic need but also to make her understand that although love can be a torment, it is also a gift. After hearing her story they help her to sleep.

Jason enters in despair and prays for help. The chorus now appears to him also for the first time; they counsel him that fate is ultimately unknowable to mortals and that all humans can do is to act from love as best we can. They clearly have an agenda.

⁷ S. Goldhill, *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 45.

Apsyrtus arrives and angrily threatens Jason, who maintains the cooler head and ultimately convinces Apsyrtus to give him until nightfall to decide on his course of action: either to surrender Medea and go with the Fleece back to Greece, or to face Apsyrtus and his flotilla in an all out fight. They both exit leaving the chorus to try to lead the play back to love and away from war.

During the chorus' song Medea and the Custodian emerge from the Temple and the chorus persuades Medea to pick up her tale of love. It reflects her emotional intensity:

MEDEA: He told me how my praises he would sing
 And shout out in his far and distant land
 Till all would know 'his sweet Medea's name'
 And join him in this song of praise for me.
 (Pause)
 His words just melted me.

 I could not speak.
 But with the charm I did not hesitate
 And from my scented girdle drew it out.
 He took it in his strong but shaking hands.
 And then I reveled in his need of me –
 Like roses need the glorious morning sun—
 And when I saw the love-light in his eyes
 I would have poured out all my soul to him,
 But sometimes, meager words are not enough—
 So instead I told him how to use the charm
 To save him from my father's wicked trap.⁸

During her story (the initial meeting of Medea and Jason, and the sleepless night spent by Medea) the Custodian reveals that she may know more than is humanly possible—the chorus grows suspicious but is addicted to the tale of love and allows the question to drop. Medea is transported by feelings of love and, not suspecting that there is any jeopardy, confirms her trust in Jason's good intentions. The Custodian ushers Medea back into the Temple, then turns to face the chorus. In this scene there is some intricate rhythmic jousting that confirms the chorus' suspicion that the Custodian is immortal—the chorus until this point have commandeered a specific metre for their verse

⁸ Dow, 670 – 686.

(a modified dactylic trimeter with an extra, accented, monosyllabic foot at the end of the line); when the Custodian moves easily from the iambic pentameter of the other characters to the dactylic variation of the chorus, she subtly reveals her immortality.

When the Custodian leaves, the chorus muses on the nature of life and passion; a messenger from the Colchian fleet delivers an ultimatum from Apsyrtus: either Jason will fight the Colchians or he will take the Fleece back to Greece and return Medea to her family. Jason dismisses the messenger and it looks as though he will agree to these terms. Medea responds:

MEDEA: ...Where are these oaths you swore?
Sworn by Zeus! The god of suppliants!
And where the honeyed promises you made
That drew me to defy my own conscience,
Abandon country, home, and parents too—
Yea, everything that I did value most?
And now, I'm far away across the sea,
Carried here by you who will now leave me
With only circling seabirds as my friends.⁹

Jason appeases her and together they decide on a plot to escape. Blinded by love, Medea dismisses the bond of blood and decides to kill her brother.

JASON: You boil with rage, and troth, it frightens me.
Your vengeful heart burns with consuming fire
And nothing's safe that falls within its gaze...
Apsyrtus is your kin
His blood and yours do spring from the same source.
If I harm him, I'm harming you as well.

MEDEA: To do what must be done, there is no blame,
So hush—my brother, father, you are all –
More kin to me than them from this time forth,
So if you have the stomach for the deed,
My enemy Apsyrtus you must kill.¹⁰

⁹ *ibid.*, 940-948.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 990-1055.

The chorus warns of trouble ahead and sets the scene: Jason in the Temple, ready; Apsyrtus on his way to the rendezvous; the moon in the star-filled night sky; Medea sings an ode to the moon.

When Apsyrtus comes on stage, Medea tells him to go into the Temple, to strip off his armour and make offerings to the gods. This deception will render him defenseless for when Jason attacks. Jason appears at the door:

JASON: Medea, calm your voice.
It's me my love –It's me.
Your brother kneels within.
He prays ...
His weapons and defenses are set down
Am I to kill him in this reverend state?
Offend the gods with whom he now communes?
Medea, think.
This will compound our guilt.

MEDEA: What guilt?
We do but as we do.
Our love
Was built and sanctioned by the gods above.
The first time that I saw you I was done
I felt the love-god's shaft go through my heart
And still it's lodged there—
pain, oh sweet, sweet, pain.¹¹

Then, the Custodian emerges from the temple and describes the actions within:

But you shall hear all just as it fell out.
Apsyrtus stripped and laid his weapons down
And bathed and made ablutions to the gods
And kneeling there, he looked a god himself—
His young and glowing body shone with oil
As he knelt and offered blessings to the gods.
Then Jason stood behind him sword upraised
He didn't bring it down—that mortal blow—
Instead he called your brother's name aloud—
He said, "I will not kill you while you pray.
Stand up, and pick your sword up if you wish.
Together we will let the fates decide."

¹¹ *ibid.*, 1189-1200.

Apsyrtus stood, and simply shook his head—
“If you are here, I must have been betrayed.
There’s only one who knew where I would be,
My sister’s wish is that I should be dead—
So kill me now, and set my spirit free.”
Then quick and skilled, with Ares’ brutal force,
So did the blow from Jason’s sword come down,
As butchers fell the mighty, strong-horned bulls—
So Jason felled Apsyrtus where he stood
Upon the Temple floors of Artemis.
Apsyrtus tried to staunch the dark red flow,
His life was fled before his hand could cup
And catch the precious liquid of his life.
Then Jason made the kill a sacrifice:
He severed hands and feet from off the corpse,
Then licked the blood still flowing from the wounds.
As killers do who try to expiate
A murder that has treason at its source.
Three times he licked, and so three times he spat
Apsyrtus’ blood, polluted by his crime—

(Jason, soaked in blood, standing astride the bloody corpse of Apsyrtus is revealed)¹²

Medea embraces Jason and smears her white nightgown with the red blood of Apsyrtus. She recognizes that in killing her brother they have done some irreparable harm—as they look toward their rueful, foreboding future. Apsyrtus’ death has been a wedding sacrifice, a ritual killing.

And with this incident Medea embarks on her heroic journey. She has cut herself off from traditional sources of female protection—her father, her brother—neither is available to her from this moment until her ultimate return to Colchis when she will redeem herself by restoring her father to his rightful throne, and in so doing, reclaim a home for herself. That Medea in this episode both fulfills and subverts the traditional helper-maiden folktale motif will become typical of her depiction. She, like the other great epic heroes of ancient Greece, is hard to pigeonhole but she, like Heracles, Odysseus, and Achilles, is driven forward by an indomitable spirit.

¹² *ibid.*, 1249-1280.

That Jason's notorious ineptitude is the perfect foil for Medea's nascent heroism seems only fitting. She is still young at this point and needs circumstances to drive her to deeds from which there is no return. Had Jason been more adept or had he a clearer, more dominating drive, Medea would still be the novice of Hecate, quietly learning her herbal trade in some oriental outpost. Instead she is thrust into the world of dangers and duplicity, the world of men, the world of heroes.

Chapter 3.

Lost in Antiquity: Part 2

Creating a new tragedy of *The Daughters of Pelias* presents challenges that are in some ways familiar and in other ways completely new. The known fragments are more comprehensive than those of the *Aegeus* play and can be applied in a fairly logical narrative sequence. As well as the fragments, there are more ancient sources that are thought to relate directly to the tragedy than there are for the *Aegeus*. While both the *Aegeus* and *Pelias* incidents have sufficient alternative sources to know the bones of the stories (for example, both stories are treated by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*),¹³ to bring either of them into the tragic realm is a considerable challenge. The specific task with *The Daughters of Pelias* was to find a theatrical form that would be at once accessible and yet maintain a formal, and classical, sensibility. While *After Medea* sought a modern presentation and context, this play wanted something more timeless. The solution attempted is a non-specific world that allows for differences in culture and yet feels close enough to our own time—with pop culture references sprinkled throughout—that it is immediately recognizable and relatable to modern audiences.

The central question, once the story has been established, is one of style. Many of the stylistic conceits of *The Daughters of Pelias* are borrowed from my adaptation of Euripides' *Women of Troy* (see appendix). Early in 2012, an opportunity to adapt and stage a production of *Women of Troy* presented itself. Through the process of realizing Euripides' tragedy, a form developed that seemed to be accessible and engaging for audiences. Some of the noticeable hallmarks of this style are an absence of punctuation, the use of popular culture references, and compound words. The lack of

¹³ Ovid, *Met.* Book 7. Other sources include Homer, *Od.* 11.235-59, Pindar, *Pythian 4*, Pherecydes FGrH 3 F 105, Euripides, *Medea* 9-10, 486-7, 504-5, 734, Hyginus *Fab.* 24, Diodorus 4.50-53. Cf. also LIMC 'Peliades'.

punctuation (which of course harkens back to the ancient writing systems used in papyri, if not in the medieval manuscripts) creates a dynamic interchange between text and actor. The actor is forced into an even more interrogative relationship with the text and required to continually test any initial assumptions on meaning as knowledge of the script deepens. As well, and in conjunction with the notion of multiple compound words (neologisms in fact), the absence of punctuation requires a refined exploration of rhythm and a distinctive presentation in speaking the text results: spaces, line breaks and capitalization are all employed to provide clues as to the desired rhythmic delivery:

PELIAS: Daughters three you have grown to beauty in my land
 Ripe and full as I decline
 How this fearful symmetry presses ever forward
 the young reach perfection as we who are old fade and

 Enough of that
 In my land I am the arbiter I make the rules
 And even nature waits on me a son of Poseidon¹⁴
 Many who were younger have left this world already
 I have extended my stay in vitality beyond all hope
 I feel the press of time
 Yet

 What wonders we men have achieved
 We have surpassed the necessity of the seasons¹⁵

Audience comments following the production of *Women of Troy* indicated that the language was one of the most compelling aspects of the play; it seemed prudent to emulate that style.

Using the fragments as a framework, and the other, more complete versions of the story to fill in the details, the basic narrative seemed clear. There were, of course, discrepancies among the accounts. Possibly because Euripides' *Peliades* was included in his first trilogy to be presented at The City Dionysia in 455 B.C. (according to the ancient *Life of Euripides*),¹⁶ there are more remaining accounts that seem related to the tragedy. It became imperative to decide on one variant and follow it. The account of

¹⁴ See Gantz Early Greek Myth (172-3), although there is some controversy.

¹⁵ Dow, see below, 25.

¹⁶ Euripides Fragments VIII; Oedipus – Chrysippus (62).

Diodorus Siculus (4.50.1—4.53.7)¹⁷ is comprehensive, episodic, and either echoes or shares what we know of the ending of Euripides' play "from the preserved last line of a hypothesis"¹⁸. The episodic nature of Diodorus' presentation provides a fairly tidy dramatic structure and may be based on the ancient hypothesis (summary). Diodorus then becomes the primary source for story and structure.

In all sources, the story of Medea, Pelias, and his murderous daughters, relies heavily on magic and occult knowledge. Medea's access to these resources is a well known and constant attribute of her mythological character. It is interesting, however, that in his later and more famous play, Euripides focuses on the human motivation and psychological wrestling of Medea and allows the pharmacological intervention to occur offstage and with only a passing reference to its preparation and Medea's unique knowledge. In contrast, most, if not all, graphic representations of this story include some version of the ram becoming a lamb and the boiling pot where the magical process takes place. This attention in the later *Medea* to the exploration of human behaviour is typical of what we know of Euripides as a dramatist; the issue of magic in the *Peliades* may be attributed to it being one of his early efforts. At any rate, the device of plunging an exsanguinated old ram into a soup pot and having a young lamb spring from the boiling cauldron poses staging challenges for a modern production.

The first fragment (*fr.* 601), "Medea ... near the royal palace..."¹⁹ seems more useful as a stage direction for our modern version than as dialogue. The idea of her skipping underlines her youth and also alludes to an essentially female (and collective) activity—activity as we will see later, that has a special language and a rhythmic, incantatory nature. Creating the illusion that she is summoning, or at least seeing into, the palace of Pelias initiates the malleable theatrical time and space that will facilitate scene changes later in the drama.

¹⁷ <http://www.theoi.com/Text/DiodorusSiculus4C.html#13>

¹⁸ Test. *iia1 in Cropp and Collard (2008) *Eur VIII*. Gantz 1993, (367)

¹⁹ Collard and Cropp (2008) *Eur VIII*

Pelias' first speech²⁰ is reminiscent of the "ode to man" in *Antigone*²¹ and humanity's mastery over the elements and the natural world, but his thirst for dominion over death sounds a sinister note, which alarms Alcestis. The relationship of Alcestis with natural death is an active feature, just below the surface, throughout the piece. This relationship, of course, alludes to Euripides' later play, *Alcestis*, where the central action revolves around Alcestis trading her fated time of death with that of her husband, Admetus, thereby allowing his life to prolong beyond his 'time' and hers to be cut short (she is eventually saved when Heracles travels down to the underworld, wrestles Death, and carries her back). That Alcestis is one of Pelias' daughters offers a useful thematic symmetry that helps underscore and enhance the impact of this new *Daughters of Pelias*.

In the play, we hear that Pelias has reneged on his promise²² to restore the country to Jason upon his successful return with the Golden Fleece. There are a number of sources and variants to the story;²³ however, the most familiar version has Hera as the instigator, with Jason (and ultimately Medea) as the instruments in an extremely baroque revenge plot against Pelias.²⁴ Jason's reluctance to act plays upon his character as portrayed in *Medea* and *The Argonautica*, (among others)—he frequently seems an un-heroic and politically calculating hero.

The second fragment (*fr.* 602, 6), has Jason using the same line that is used by Aegeus in *Medea* (693): "By doing what? Explain this to me."²⁵ In both cases, Medea is reacting against perceived injustice and we can see the beginning of her machinations. In all representations, the character of Medea is highly intelligent, cunning, and able to manipulate those around her.

²⁰ Dow, see below, 25.

²¹ Sophocles, *Ant.* (332ff.). Cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 447-471.

²² Dow, see below, 30

²³ See Gantz (364).

²⁴ Pelias had slighted Hera by committing murder in one of her sanctuaries (Gantz, 173), a theme exploited in *Cupid's Arrow*.

²⁵ Collard and Cropp, *Euripides Fragments VIII* (67).

When Medea exits, “Jason My Lord I come”²⁶ and immediately enters into the next scene on a beach, the previously mentioned fluidity of staging must be active. If the theatre space is open and flexible, these changes can be achieved through shifts in lighting and the actors’ evocation of their different surroundings. There should be no attempt to create sand or other “beach-like” attributes. Similarly, Medea’s search for the shell, and examination of beach glass, is probably best evoked through mime and without the actual articles. The shell is intended to be something specific and rare, with chemical properties that are known to Medea, which will combine with other ingredients to create her potion of youth. The line between magic and science, belief and proof, mystical and empirical reality is one of the continuing themes explored by this story. The shell is an attempt to keep the ‘magic’ of the play in a plausible framework for modern audiences.

The first meeting of Alcestis and Medea hints at a similarity, perhaps even a spiritual kinship between them. We should, by the play’s end, feel that it is a shame that they had to come into conflict. Medea’s homelessness, which continues long after her relationship with Jason ends, will be Alcestis’ situation by the end of the play, and the confident and regal princess we see in Alcestis, was once the exact image of Medea in Colchis. In Euripides’ *Alcestis* similar themes are invoked, as she volunteers to die instead of her husband Admetus, likewise extending the life of a loved one.

One of the challenges of production will obviously be the transformative aging of Medea.²⁷ It is important as it reveals Jason’s fickle and youth oriented love—a failing that will definitely bring about his downfall in the future. It also reinforces Pelias’ preoccupation with age, and draws attention to our own youth-obsessed culture. When Medea traverses the age/youth boundary with no effort her otherness is highlighted. The return of the skipping motif²⁸ is an aspect of this liminality. As the daughters join into the skipping song,²⁹ they are initiated into an unspoken but recognizable secret society of women. Their solidarity is forged and their shared knowledge of the song

²⁶ Dow, see below, 31.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 38.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 40.

²⁹ Adapted from a traditional skipping rhyme.

becomes an unspoken pact, the first step in the daughters' complicity in the murder of their father.

Diodorus tells us that Medea ages herself then acts as if she is possessed and whips the entire populace into a frenzy of belief and almost mass hypnosis (4.51.4—4.51.7). She calls on the goddess Artemis to add credibility to her claims and Pelias, perhaps a victim of wishful thinking, succumbs to her manipulations.³⁰ Medea refers to the nymphs' dancing in celebration of Artemis, a dance that is so captivating that Helios always slows his chariot to watch and by so doing, lengthens the days:³¹ the information in her frenzied speech is designed to enthrall and captivate Pelias in much the same way.

The smoke that Medea releases will, by nature, swirl and coil, evoking a snake or serpent—a symbolic resonance to the sloughing of the old and the emergence of the new. The real, persuasive, 'magic' is Medea's removal of the old-age make up and posture, and her consequent appearance to Pelias in her true form. After seeing her thus transformed he is suggestible to the other proofs, willing to see almost anything in the smoke.

In the next scene, Medea insists that the girls eat her cookies; there is a strong suggestion that there is something hallucinatory in their ingredients—they are made of mushrooms and herbs. As the play draws closer to the 'proof'—the killing of the old ram and emergence of the new baby lamb—the groundwork is laid to assuage any doubts the audience may harbour. By softening the girls' perceptions through *pharmaka*, Medea ensures the success of her ruse and also loosens the disbelief of the audience. The actual proof occurs off stage³² and the girls are discovered post-rejuvenation in a deep sleep (except for Alcestis who has not eaten her whole cookie). There has been some speculation that the chattering lid on a boiling pot would have served as a theatrical representation of the young lamb coming back to life; to my mind it would only

³⁰ Dow, see below (51).

³¹ Callimachus (H.3. 181)

³² Dow, see below, 64.

create a laughable naïveté on the part of the daughters. To have a real lamb onstage, or to refer to a penned lamb off stage (after the fact), seems a far better solution.³³

As Medea and Alcestis debate whether Pelias should undergo Medea's procedure, Medea has a premonition of Alcestis' future.³⁴ That Alcestis is involved with attempts to stave off death affirms a mythological resonance with her future marriage to Admetus. Performing the actual exsanguination onstage³⁵ creates an obvious challenge for the special effects designers; in my experience, a challenge they are only too willing to embrace with slightly concealed blood-thirst. Once the deed is done, Alcestis undergoes her *anagnorisis*, recognizing Medea from the earlier scene on the beach.³⁶ Medea, on the other hand, will not undergo her reversal (*peripeteia*) until Jason's arrival and decision not to assume the throne through tyranny.

The history between Jason and Medea that is the precursor to the events of Pelias and his daughters is alluded to by Jason and Medea as they argue.³⁷ Medea, of course, has betrayed her father by abetting Jason in his capture of the Golden Fleece and escape. Perhaps the most alarming of these actions is hinted at when Medea's brother is mentioned.³⁸ In order to escape Colchis, Medea's brother, Apsyrtus has been murdered. In some versions Apsyrtus is younger than Medea; he is murdered and butchered and his body parts strewn on the sea to slow the pursuing Aeetes. In other versions (*Cupid's Arrow*) he is an older brother who is lured into a temple of Artemis and murdered by Jason (recalling the original crime of Pelias that started the whole chain of tragic events).³⁹

An alternative ending may see Jason and Medea driven from Iolcus by the angry citizenry. However, following the précis of Diodorus⁴⁰ and the surviving hypothesis.⁴¹

³³ *ibid.* (66)

³⁴ *ibid.* (64-5)

³⁵ *ibid.* (73)

³⁶ *ibid.* (74)

³⁷ *ibid.* (76)

³⁸ *ibid.* (77)

³⁹ T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myths* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 173.

⁴⁰ Diodorus, (4.52.5 – 4.53.2)

Jason, in our version, displays his usual diplomacy and mild-mannered temperament. He restores the kingdom to Acastus (a son of Pelias) and arranges for the daughters' safe passage and assignment to appropriate husbands.⁴²

This early episode from Medea's life solidifies her character as more than the typical 'helper-maiden' and redrafts the traditional marriage roles that we would imagine. Medea's access to magic and the supernatural are emphasized in this story but we also see her growing heroic *thumos* or spirit, that driving force that is the hallmark of the ancient heroes in whose company, we begin to see, Medea belongs.

⁴¹ Gantz, 367-368.

⁴² Dow, see below, 72-73.

Chapter 4.

The Daughters of Pelias

Medea near the royal palace (fr. 601), skipping. The rhythmic slap of the rope is an incantation that slowly reveals a vast, cavernous, room: colourful swaths of diaphanous fabric hang from the ceiling; a long table holds a feast; somewhere a fire blazes. It is timeless and speaks of wealth⁴³.

PELIAS: Daughters three you have grown to beauty in my land
Ripe and full as I decline
How this fearful symmetry presses ever forward
the young reach perfection as we who are old fade and

Enough of that
In my land I am the arbiter I make the rules
And even nature waits on me a son of Poseidon⁴⁴
Many who were younger have left this world already
I have extended my stay in vitality beyond all hope
I feel the press of time
Yet

What wonders we men have achieved
We have surpassed the necessity of the seasons
We eat fruit when we want We are not captive to dictator gods or
calendars
The cold of winter is a pesky fly We wave our hand and cold no more
The heat of summer becomes a moderate balm
We condition the very air
Still
Beyond our grasp is that final frontier
The dark void The curtain beyond which we know nothing⁴⁵
From our vantage all is dust
But certain knowledge cannot be had without that one way passage

⁴³ The setting is reminiscent of the 1989 Peter Greenaway film, *The Cook, the Thief, His wife, & Her Lover*

⁴⁴ See Gantz *Early Greek Myth* (172-3).

⁴⁵ An echo of Sophocles' famous Ode to Man, *Antigone* 332

These thoughts seem morbid but are future drawn
to you my three and what lies ahead for you once I am gone

PEGGY (Pelopia)⁴⁶: Papa Pelias Don't dwell on this You are strong

EVE (Evadne): Papaking though we know your age Your looks deny nature

ALLY (Alcestis⁴⁷): O sisters We are of this world not some other
PapaPel is bound as are we all by mortal bonds

PELIAS: Ally My Alcestis You doubt my strength My virile life

ALLY: No Sweet Papa No
I doubt not you but know the truth that all do know

PEG: Ally quiet You rile him up You always do

EVE: Peggy's right Keep quiet girl

PEG: Sweet PapaPel Eve and I we know you rule all forces natural and
beyond
Ally think Is it not night And yet we sit and eat in light as bright as
day
What we once thought nature is no longer natural
Eve tell her Tell Papa too

EVE: The might of PapaPel's kingdom is so great that nature herself has
turned tail
Even now mystics and scientists mine their lore for bridges over
nature's bounds
The stars are known and numbered and may one day be safe harbour
for Starsailors
Diseases that once spelled sure and sudden death are pricked away
when we are babes
So what of that last terrifying frontier
It too will one day seem a bauble
A shiny toy in Papa's purse

ALLY: Don't tempt the fates Is not some knowledge reserved for the gods
Things they may know but not we with numbered days
I fear we are too late already that we have drunk the juice of the
forbidden vine

PEG: Ally Shush You talk such rot
There's nothing we can know that can't be known

ALLY: All you need is love

⁴⁶ Pelias is imagined to have differing numbers of daughters (Gantz, 195) reduced here to three for resonance to *King Lear* and theatrical expedience.

⁴⁷ The same Alcestis who later appears in the tragedy by Euripides.

PEG: Shush

ALLY: It's a joke

PEGGY: Tell them Eve Tell them all

EVE: I heard about a woman
She's supposed to be coming this way
Fantastical story

PELIAS: What woman is this

EVE: She's a mystic

PEG: A scientist

ALLY: Snake oil science

EVE: Herbalist Naturalist Knows the old ways

PEG: That should make you happy Old-school-Ally
You hate progress Hate the new order

PELIAS: Girls girls Don't bicker Please It hurts my heart

ALLY: Papaking Sorry My quibbles are mine You needn't know them

PELIAS: Sweet my girl I know I know
Now Peggy Evie
What have you heard Tell me the news

ALLY: Don't Don't fill his head with the hope of charlatans

PELIAS: Ally ENOUGH

ALLY: Papaking please Don't let them swell your wintry head

PELIAS: ALCESTIS BE QUIET SHUT YOUR DAMN MOUTH
O my blood boils (*he staggers and falls*)

ALLY: Are you alright

PEG: No thanks to you PapaPel hold my hand

EVE: Look what you've done

PEG: Go get a cold cloth

EVE: Ally go get it God you're such a bitch

PEG: Are you trying to kill him (*Alcestis leaves*) Papa lie still Rest now

EVE: We'll tell you the story when you wake up

PEG: There there Papa be calm

PELIAS: You are good girls You love your papa
Turn out the lights I need to sleep

PEG: Sleep Papa sleep

EVE: Dream of good news I'm sure it will come

* * *

Medea and Jason, alone.

MEDEA: Nothing No recognition even Where is the golden artifact⁴⁸

JASON: Maddie Sweet Medea Be calm and let's think

MEDEA: THINK Think what
Think that my husband hero Jason has been duped by his uncle
Think that I was lured from my home and family by a less than man
By a won't stand up
Is that what you are Jason
What shall I think
That the very promise of kingship that we have held so dear
The promise that has fuelled our voyage and our dreams
Is dashed and come to nothing
Is that what I should think

JASON: It's true my uncle Pelias has reneged on his promise
He has stolen back the prize and not delivered my deserved crown
That crown he stole from my father
But Dear Maddie I think patience is our best course here
Uncle Pelias is old His people will soon need a leader
They will recognize my rightful claim
I will be king of lolcus

MEDEA: You will be king But patience is not our friend
No Leave the plan to me
This old king This ancient Pelias
He thinks he can master nature His boastful pride is legend
This pride I think will tell us where our true prize lies

JASON: The prize He took the prize He has the artifact

MEDEA: It little matters It was but a bauble A ruse to bring you to my land
I see the workings of the gods in this
They have brought us both to this place
Our actions now have divine sanction It must be so
And what follows we create as much as we are directed
So This old king Fading now but believing his power is greater than
nature
Such a man is ripe for picking

JASON: Picking
What makes him ripe Explain this to me (*fr. 602*)

⁴⁸ See Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (180) for mythology around the Golden Fleece.

Maddie I feel your cunning your *metis* at work
The ancient knowledge that is mystery to us churns within you
I see it I know it

MEDEA: And you fear it
Why What's mine is yours It works for you
And for us For our greater glory

JASON: It's true Fear stirs within me when I sense your power

MEDEA: Trust it Trust me
Now leave me I must think

JASON: Be careful

MEDEA: (*Grabs him, pulls him to her and kisses him hard*) Caution is not one of
my words
You my Jason I hunger for you I will be with you soon
Go wait within Let your mind race ahead
I'll be there soon

(Jason leaves. Medea alone)

* * *

MEDEA: O you dark power
Be ready when I call
Ambition swell within me
Stick the power of my sex to that ambitious strength
Not only sinew and bone are strong
But cunning and deep knowledge too And these I have
My advisors in the heavens My ancient family ties
Hecate Helios Dear aunt Circe⁴⁹
I know you are with me and will aid me when I call
Now
To Jason and his bed
Fuel my woman's fire

Pelias you old king
Where is your vanity That I will stroke and fluff
Where is your weakness
We'll find it soon enough

(She starts to exit in the same direction that Jason went)

Jason My Lord I come

⁴⁹ Diodorus Siculus has Hecate as Medea's mother and Circe as her sister (4.50.6). Far more common is the understanding that Helios is Medea's grandfather, and Circe Medea's aunt.

* * *

(As she exits, the lights shift... time has passed. She is on a beach now walking slowly, looking at the ground.)

MEDEA: *(Suddenly she looks up; feels the air on her face)*

Warm The wind is warm Funny Yesterday was so cold It's winter still But

Warm Glorious

(She walks a little more. Stops. Looks)

Oh Beachglass Beautiful

And more Look at it all

You can't see it until you stop but once your eyes learn to see

There it is

Green Green Clear Green Clear again BLUE Beautiful

Once hard and sharp and dangerous but time and nature

The endless sea and year upon year rub you soft and smooth

(She drops the pieces)

But you're not what I seek

Eyes learn to see the treasure

(She takes a couple of steps, then crouches down again. Looks)

No Nothing

(She looks to the sky)

Not today Not to be

(Decision reached, she starts to walk away. She stops abruptly. Looks up)

Really

(Looks down. Crouches in a new spot stares intently at the ground)

don't see it don't see it don't see

WAIT

Oh yes Precious my precious

(She carefully picks something up from the ground)

You are what I need

Thank you Thank you

(She picks up a stone and begins to crush the shell into fine powder. She takes a small flask from one pocket and another container from another pocket. She pours some of the crushed powder into the flask and saves and seals the rest in the other container)

It's always a risk

(She swirls the flask a few times, then drinks the potion)

Mmm Good Thrilling I feel you working

(Ally enters)

ALCESTIS: Hello

MEDEA: Hello

ALCESTIS: Isn't it glorious

MEDEA: What Oh yes Hard to believe after yesterday

ALCESTIS: I don't recognize you Are you a guest

MEDEA: Yes We just arrived a few days ago

ALCESTIS: Oh Are you oh

MEDEA: Yes From the boat The Argo⁵⁰

ALCESTIS: You must be

MEDEA: That's right I'm his wife Jason's wife

ALCESTIS: Jason did a great thing He must have had a god's help

MEDEA: I suppose so

ALCESTIS: I'm Ally Alcestis
You are beautiful Your skin

MEDEA: Go ahead It's alright You can touch it
(Alcestis gently strokes Medea's cheek)

ALCESTIS: So smooth Call me Ally

MEDEA: Probably won't have much occasion to call you anything

ALCESTIS: No I heard Daddy is sometimes he can be

MEDEA: He's a king
It's how they are

⁵⁰ Legendary ship that carried the Jason and the Argonauts on their voyage to repatriate the Golden Fleece.

ALCESTIS: Yes He's a king
 MEDEA: My dad too I know the territory
 ALCESTIS: Will you leave Where will you go
 MEDEA: It's under discussion
 I can't really talk about it
 ALCESTIS: No
Beat
 ALCESTIS: Well I should
 MEDEA: Yes me too
 ALCESTIS: Nice to meet you
 MEDEA: Yes You too
 ALCESTIS: If things were different
 MEDEA: Yes
Beat
 MEDEA: See you Ally
 ALCESTIS: Yes Good luck
 I didn't catch your name
 MEDEA: No Oh well
(laughs) I'll tell you if we meet again
 If we need it
 ALCESTIS: Funny OK See you *(She leaves)*
 MEDEA: Yes We'll see

* * *

Medea and Jason.

JASON: The Argonauts My men They've decided We'll attack the city
 Win it back Take it by force
 MEDEA: By force You are only fifty-two⁵¹ A deck of cards against a city
 Force will not work
 JASON: But Maddie Sweet Medea We must do something
 The men are prepared They're loyal and brave The best of Greece
 MEDEA: Listen Good Jason Trust me
 JASON: What can you do

⁵¹ The number of sailors aboard the Argo varies greatly, Diodorus refers to fifty-three; fifty-two plus Jason (4.50.4). The traditional warship, the trireme, has twenty-five rowers per side.

MEDEA: I'll go to the city Give me two days
I'll send up a signal
Smoke by day Fire by night⁵²
From the top of the citadel
You'll see it from the harbour

JASON: And what will it mean This signal of smoke

MEDEA: The king will be dead Long live the king
With Pelias gone Resistance will vanish
You and your sailors will win in a walk

JASON: But how What How will he fall

MEDEA: You are only beginning to know my charms
Women like We like to hide our wiles
But to show you my love I'll share this with you
Come sit by me here Watch as I work

(Medea sits in front of a mirror. Jason sits watching—a little boy watching his mother prepare for an evening out)

First beauty Men are attracted to shiny things

(She brushes her hair and powders her face)

JASON: You are a great beauty *(He starts to kiss her)*

MEDEA: Not now Sit and be still
There's a good boy

JASON: Should I be jealous

MEDEA: No Jason I'm yours *(A quick kiss)* Watch now

(Medea starts to paint her hair white and grey. Then she takes out the flask, pours some of the liquid onto her palm and smooths it on her face)

This is a secret too dark to share

(Wrinkles start to appear on her face. She draws and paints to enhance them. She is completely transformed... now an old hag)

JASON: Maddie Good gods Is this Will this
What have you done

MEDEA: Is beauty skin deep
Do you reel in revulsion

⁵² Diodorus (4.50.7)

Jason Do you still want me
Should you be jealous
There will come a day when thus I shall be
If in the fullness of time you revile me then Beware
I warn you now

JASON: But how is this wrought By what subtle arts
You sound like my wife but appear as a
I can't say what I see

MEDEA: *(Rises stiffly from her seat her movement and all is that of an old woman. She pulls her shawl over her hair so that only the grey bits are visible)*

Come my sweet

(Her voice is cracked and thin.)Where's your ardour now (She reaches out and takes his hand, tries to force it toward her breast. Jason pulls away, appalled)

JASON: Stop What are you doing Who are you
Let me alone

(Medea laughs—it is almost a cackle. Jason starts to leave)

MEDEA: *(In her own voice.)* O Jason Be calm I am still here
My body My self Are still what you love
And this can all change
But for now Stay away Watch for the flame
When you see the signal Come with your men
The city will be yours
And I too will be yours once more
The me that you want

JASON: You are strange to me
This This is what I fear
Your darkness Your power Your strange turns of mind
But as strange as it is I am bewitched Drawn to your flame
I'll wait as you say

MEDEA: Good If after two days you don't see the flame
Come quickly my love
I may be lost

JASON: What

MEDEA: No fears All will be well
Leave me now
I have still one last device that needs my full attention

(She turns away from him and as she does so he—and we—see her young and lithe body again)

JASON: O you are a great beauty

(He rushes to her, kisses her neck and then draws back and leaves.)

* * *

MEDEA: O men What can be said
Now to the vanity of Pelias the king
(She takes a beautifully shaped vial from her table.)
Sweet perfume You are not magic And yet You do entice
This will be fine
I think you were a gift from the gods
These people of lolcus
They're hungry for god
Well god they shall have
(Places the vial back on the table)

* * *

(She picks up a skipping rope and begins to skip. As she skips she is joined by three other girls... The daughters of Pelias)

MEDEA: *(Skipping)*
Medea had a donkey
The donkey had a bell
Medea went to heaven
The donkey went to
(1st skipper joins)

MEDEA and ONE: Hello Aphrodite please make me feel divine
And if instead you curse me
I'll kick you from behind
(2nd skipper joins)

MEDEA and ONE and TWO: The temple door there was a piece of glass
Medea sat upon it and cut her little
(3rd skipper joins)

MEDEA and ONE and TWO and THREE: Ask me no more questions
I'll tell you no more lies
Medea has a boyfriend and that is all
I know Hera
I know Zeus
How many boyfriends would you choose

(They all start skipping as fast as they can, counting aloud 'how many boyfriends' until they fail. They fall down in general laughter/exhaustion)

* * *

(It is night... Moonlit and clear... Medea rises from the girls, an old woman now. She raises the vial high over her head)

MEDEA: Artemis Goddess of youth and vitality⁵³
Virgin huntress
Racing with freedom along the hillcrest

PELIAS' DAUGHTERS: Hounds and deer run with you
Wind caresses hair and breasts
Bow drawn Arrow true

MEDEA: Artemis Goddess of youth and vitality

PELIAS' DAUGHTERS: Virgin huntress

ALL: Freedom races the moon along the hillcrest
Beside the tall trees
Moonlit freedom dancing

MEDEA: Girls The path I chose long ago is not for everyone
I chose freedom from lust
Quiet meadows Virgin silence seasoned with the laughter of
mountain streams
Freedom from envy
The heat of passion
I prayed to goddess Artemis
And she granted me this peace
With it and long years of practice came secret knowledge

PEG: What is in the vial

EVE: It glows and sparkles in the moon's reflected light.

ALLY: Is that the secret knowledge

PEG: What is it

EVE: What is it

MEDEA: The base of this liquid comes from the Ethiope
Where commonly men choose when to die
The traveler we all know⁵⁴ Wrote of this source
A spring that feeds a pond where nothing will float
Not wood Not feathers Nothing No matter how light
And plunge in your hand
The skin shines as if oiled

⁵³ Medea's incantation is loosely based on Callimachus, Hymn III To Artemis.

⁵⁴ Herodotus. Medea is referring to the account at Hdt. 3.23.3.

ALLY: The fount of everlasting youth

MEDEA: The water of life

PEG: Imagine a man who swam in that pond

EVE: O O O

ALLY: I guess we know someone who won't be devoting herself to Artemis

MEDEA: The path of that goddess is not for all
The Ethiopes drank this straight from the source
My potion is steeped with night-blooming flowers
They are luminous White their blooms face the moon

ALLY: I know them The scent Is heady and thick

MEDEA: Enough to make a young maiden swoon Hecate cultivates fields of
these flowers
The night is the time of maidens and magic

EVE: Does this potion

PEG: The stuff in the vial

EVE: Will it restore youth and vigour

ALLY: Stop you girls
I know what you're thinking

EVE: Well what of it

PEG: Do you want him to die

ALLY: It's against nature
We can't trust these dark arts

MEDEA: Good for you girl
Hold tight to your mind
You know the way the world works What's right and what's not

ALLY: Are you mocking me

MEDEA: Who me Don't think so that wouldn't be wise
You're a princess Your Daddy's the king
Besides You're educated You know philosophy
I'm sure you know best

PEG: Ally Can't you see

EVE: She's making fun of you

PEG: For god's sake there is more in heaven and earth

EVE: Than you've ever dreamt

PEG: Right Old one What more do you know

EVE: Please tell us Don't listen to her

MEDEA: No She's right to be cautious
A doubter A skeptic
Show me
Is that it
You want proof not words

ALLY: Well you make it sound so
Nasty I don't mean to doubt
But you don't know what they're looking for

MEDEA: O I have a pretty good idea
Your father is nearing his natural span

PEG: He weakens

MEDEA: It's normal

EVE: His skin is so loose

MEDEA: Nature's a hard master

PEG: His eyes are grown dim

ALLY: You know the saying
When you are a child enjoy your childish play
When child grows to maid be chaste and maidenly every day
But once betwixt the sheets of a well-born man you lay
Attend to matters there and let worldly cares fade away (*fr. 603*)⁵⁵

Life comes in stages
It happens To all of us He's not special

PEG: But if we can change that

ALLY: O what's the use

EVE: Ally don't be such a bitch Don't you want him to live

ALLY: To live his full span But more I don't know

PEG: Don't listen to her Tell us what can be done

MEDEA: There is a way I know it I've done it before

PEG: I knew it

EVE: See Ally I knew it too

PEG: Tell us

⁵⁵ The actual fragment is translated as: "I approve – but I want to give you some advice, my girl. When you are a child, don't have ideas beyond a child's; amongst the maidens, stick to the maiden's behaviour; and when you have slipped beneath a well-born husband's blanket... (line missing)... and leave all other projects to the men." (trans. Collard and Cropp, Euripides, Fragments VIII)

EVE: Yes tell us
MEDEA: It will shock you The process
I need you to think Meditate Decide if you have the strength
My methods are not for the weak
Go now Talk among yourselves
Meet me tomorrow when the sun dips again
The quiet of night makes this potion more potent
ALLY: Come sisters Let's talk
PEG: We'll talk You need to listen
EVE: Listen to sense
MEDEA: I'll be here at sunset
PEG: We'll meet you here then
EVE: See you soon
MEDEA: Farewell

* * *

(Pelias' room—the cloths, the fire...)

PEG: And then we left her
EVE: But she must have come into the city
ALLY: The people The streets They're full of madness She has whipped
up a frenzy
EVE: But have you heard what they're saying
PEG: The goddess has sent her
ALLY: Goddess That's such nonsense
EVE: Ally SHUT UP
You don't know
You're just afraid
Listen PapaPel
PEG: The thing is I think there's a chance
EVE: A chance she may save you
PELIAS: And yet my youngest daughter does not welcome the news
Why daughter Look at me I lie on this couch unable to move
My colour has fled But you don't want me to thrive again
ALLY: Papa listen I think your headlong rush against nature may be wrong
But if there is truly a way

Then of course But be careful Don't kick against the pricks of necessity A man defying the gods (*fr. 604*)⁵⁶

PEG: Listen to her She'll stall and balk until the chance is passed

EVE: Peg's right we have to make this woman know we want her

PELIAS: Who is she What's her name

PEG: We don't know

EVE: She's a daughter of Artemis

PEG: A nun

EVE: A virgin all her life

PEG: She has such peace about her

ALLY: That's true When you come near her she's tranquil

EVE: And you feel it It comes into you

PELIAS: But what of this frenzy in the streets
That's hardly peaceful

EVE: That's true

PEG: We don't know We've only heard of that

(Medea—as the old woman—comes flinging into the room. She seems possessed. Her speech is a river at the flood)

MEDEA: HowlHowlHowl⁵⁷
I've seen the best
MindsO DaddykingZeus Give me the mountains Give me the trees
Give me a bow to hunt No the Cyclopes will make me oneGive
freedom to run after the wildbeasts
to runwiththem fastandtrue
But givemefirstandlast MYMAIDENHOOD That'swhat Iwant
Cities NoCities Thewoodsandthehills Themoonlitnight
Thewindonmybreastsandthroughmyhair
Youthandage Endlessyouth girlsbeforemarriage
Boysonthebrink TiptowardmanhoodButgirlsOgirls
When the nymphs dancemydance
On the faroffIsle of Icaros
Andalways therightbreastshowsbare
And thepipesshrillloud So theycanfoot thedance
And evengloriousHelios slowshishshiningcar

⁵⁶ We see virtually the same warning in the Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (1624) and Eur. *The Bacchae* (794-5).

⁵⁷ A mash up of King Lear, Allen Ginsberg, Callimachus' Hymn to Artemis.

The sun stops to watch so enticing the dance
And as his gold gaze shines on my nymphs
the days grow longer and all men rejoice in the rays of the sun
And all men rejoice in the rays of the sun
Which City O Artemis would you have for yours
None Daddy Zeus I want the hills and the fields
Those you shall have But listen my girl If one day
You find a city you want it shall be yours and its king
Shall Not Die
O Daddy Zeus none of this do I want
And yet I bow my head And so it is done

(Medea now looks directly at Pelias—bores into him)

Yours is the city And You Are That King
This body I speak through this decrepit vessel virgin and old
Has come to give you the gifts promised by Zeus
I am Artemis and I am speaking to you KING PELIAS
DO YOU FEAR DEATH
I have traversed the skies in a dragon drawn car⁵⁸
Looking for you most worthy king of city the best
To find the rare king whose life shall not end
And you I have found If you are strong enough brave enough
To take on this gift
It's not for the meek No puny king can accept what I bring
Only a Great ONE
ARE YOU READY

(She begins to howl and writhe as the power of the trance becomes too much for her until finally she collapses in a faint)

(Pelias and his daughters are stunned for a beat)

PELIAS: Is she dead or transfixed
PEG: She is breathing her chest almost heaves
PELIAS: Quickly Go gather what's needed to revivify her Go Now
ALLY: But Fatherking what if she awakes while you are alone
PELIAS: I will be fine She promised great good for me What is to fear
Go Daughters Leave me with her

(The girls exit. Pelias watches Medea)

⁵⁸ Foreshadowing Medea's ultimate escape from Corinth in Helios' chariot. There are a number of serpents and dragons that appear in the greater story cycle of Medea. Here they are put to good symbolic use as creatures that slough their old skin and become 'young again'.

MEDEA: So King Pelias What do you think Do you want what I offer

PELIAS: O I want it But can I trust myself Is my desire leading me astray
Can I trust you Are the gods as they do playing tricks with me now

MEDEA: Artemis picked you She flew across all the lands

PELIAS: I know you said so already I guess you were in a trance In a chariot
drawn by dragons

MEDEA: But you doubt me It sounds fantastic I know You are a wise king
Wise to be skeptical

They study each other for a moment

MEDEA: Watch Only those who are truly chosen will see through the smoke
*(Medea throws a small flash bomb on the ground. There is a bright explosion
and smoke billows and curls from its source. Pelias draws back in fear)*

MEDEA: Don't worry Watch the smoke Tell me what you see

PELIAS: I see smoke

MEDEA: Perhaps you are not chosen
*(Medea takes some water from the vial she carries, wets her hands, and rubs
it on her face...)*

MEDEA: In the swirls Look
*(She rubs her face with her shawl and the wrinkles and age seem to magically
disappear from her face. Pelias looks at her amazed)*

PELIAS: O

MEDEA: Do you see scales A tail

PELIAS: What has happened to you

MEDEA: Don't look at me LOOK IN THE SMOKE

PELIAS: O gods Scales Yes and horrible eyes

MEDEA: Good

PELIAS: They swirl and entwine Are those the dragons

MEDEA: I was beginning to think you weren't the one Yes those are her
dragons
Listen You have been chosen Your youth will be restored But
more than that
Great riches and rewards will come your way

PELIAS: Look at you You are young What must I do

MEDEA: You will do nothing It will happen to you
Those who love you most they must perform what needs be done

PELIAS: My daughters

MEDEA: Yes Will they do it Are they strong
PELIAS: They are good girls
MEDEA: But will they do what is required It won't be easy
PELIAS: What must they do
MEDEA: I can't tell you that It is a dark and secret ritual
PELIAS: They will agree I will command them
MEDEA: Good She starts to leave.
PELIAS: Are you going
MEDEA: Yes
PELIAS: They'll be back soon They need to see you
MEDEA: They don't need proof They need to have faith
Tell them I'll see them tonight Make sure they're on side

(She is gone)

PELIAS: O what visions was this truth or some strange fiction that I saw
She became young Of that I am sure
Dragons
Scales
Horrible eyes

But she became young

Snakes lose their old skin
They become young

(His daughters return)

PEG: Father Where is she
PELIAS: Did you see her As she left
EVE: No Was she fine
ALCESTIS: She seemed on death's door
PELIAS: O daughters She was more than fine She was young
ALCESTIS: What do you mean
PELIAS: She was young what else can I say
PEG: Daddy Are you quite well Do you want to lie down
PELIAS: Listen to me She was young And I will be too
ALCESTIS: What did she tell you O daddyking I fear for you

EVE: Father relax Just keep yourself calm
 Ally shut up Don't stir him up
 Father tell me now Tell us all What happened What did she say

PELIAS: She said I was chosen That the gods favour me She said Artemis
 herself selected me as the best I am to be rewarded

ALCESTIS: Rewarded in heaven

PELIAS: NO NOT in Heaven Here Earthly rewards

ALCESTIS: OK ok shhh keep calm it's alright

PEG: What are these rewards

EVE: Riches and gold

PELIAS: No Well gold yes gold But better than gold Brilliant reward
 My youth returned

EVE: Your youth

PEG: How

PELIAS: Through you Something you'll do

ALCESTIS: This doesn't feel right

PEG: Ally

EVE: Maybe the doctors your

PELIAS: No it has to be you She was very specific I shall not receive the
 gifts of gods at the hands of servants
 My daughters My loving daughters their hands will minister to me

PEG: O Daddy What news
 Of course we will help

EVE: We're going to meet her Tonight She's bringing us proof

ALCESTIS: Now wait Let's give this a moment

EVE: Ally

ALCESTIS: No Now listen Our meeting is set We'll meet her tonight
 We'll see her proof
 But we can still be cautious Let's reserve judgment until then

PEG: Of course we'll see her proof But still This very good news

PELIAS: It's better than that

EVE: Of course it is

PEG: O Daddy I'm thrilled

PELIAS: Alcestis doesn't seem to want me to live

ALCESTIS: Of course I do I want you to live a full life

PELIAS: I already have
EVE: Yes fuller than most
PELIAS: But youth again A long future in front of me
PEG: O Daddyking Glorious
EVE: Do we dare dream
PEG: It's within our grasp
PELIAS: You girls You will meet with her You will learn the rites And you
will restore my youth.

(Peg and Eve embrace Pelias. Alcestis remains aloof)

* * *

(Night. Moonlight. Medea (who looks old again) sings quietly to herself)

MEDEA: Equal to the gods he seems
Gazing at you Listening to your voice
Gazing at you

You laugh Sweet My heart races

No speaking is in me
Voice breaks Supple tongue trips
Fire races under my skin

Light of you blinds my eyes
Ears roar with sound that no one hears
Trembling Quaking Cold sweat seizes me

I am newer than grass and
almost dead
Alpha omega I seem
But dare
because even the poorest can strive for⁵⁹

(The daughters enter)

PEG: What a beautiful song
MEDEA: I'll teach it to you sometime
I'm glad you've come Let's get started
EVE: Yes let's O I'm so excited my fingers are tingling

⁵⁹ This is a loose translation of Sappho (fr. 31).

MEDEA: Fire races under my skin
It's a true song
OK I want you to eat this

(She has a plate with what look like cookies. She begins to pass them around)

ALCESTIS: Stop Wait What are you doing

EVE: Ally don't

ALCESTIS: What do you mean don't

PEG: Ally

MEDEA: If you won't even eat a simple cookie You won't have strength to do
what's needed

ALCESTIS: We talked about this We were supposed to have some kind of proof

PEG: God Ally

EVE: You're such a bitch

(Silence. Ally is intractable. Medea watches)

MEDEA: Did your father speak to you

PEG: Yes he did Right Ally

ALCESTIS: ...

EVE: I can't stand this Yes He spoke to us He INSTRUCTED us to do
whatever you said

ALCESTIS: He is blind Blind with a thirst for everlasting youth

PEG: Which she is going to give him

For the sake of the gods

(Silence)

MEDEA: Well What's it to be

ALCESTIS: I'm not eating anything if I don't know what it is
And I'm not having any part of whatever you have planned until you
show me what will happen

(Medea looks at Peg and Eve)

MEDEA: I see
You wonder what this is
It's a special recipe designed to make you holy and pure
It has some roots and some fungus Leaves that loosen the iron of
your mind
It's a cookie that let's you see into the realm of the gods and makes
you exalted enough to serve them
When I was a girl Much younger than you I studied the roots and

the mushrooms
 I dedicated myself to a life of service to the gods And in so doing I
 was granted special knowledge
 It is a trust
 But you want proof
 We're in a bind Your father's direction is not enough for you

PEG: It is for me

EVE: Me too For us

MEDEA: Yet I cannot break trust with age-old tradition My teachers
 The women who taught me I can't tell you specifics Unless you are
 willing to join our cult
 Foreswear the call and fall of love

ALCESTIS: No I won't do that

MEDEA: What can I say

EVE: Ally please

PEG: For gods' sake

(Silence)

MEDEA: Alright Here's a thought Let's meet halfway
 Is there some ancient beast in your father's barn
 A creature near death whose use is past

PEG EVE and ALCESTIS: Theodore

MEDEA: Who is Theodore

PEG: Not who What

EVE: He's an old ram

ALCESTIS: Ancient

EVE: With a broken horn

PEG: He was old when we were little girls

MEDEA: OK That should do Bring him here

(The girls laugh)

PEG: We can't bring him here

ALCESTIS: He can't really move

EVE: It's true He barely stands up

MEDEA: You're not making this easy for me
 Alright We'll go to Theodore
 But you'll have to carry my things

ALCESTIS: Alright We'll carry them Where are they

MEDEA: Over there That cauldron and those knives

EVE: Cauldron Knives What are they for

MEDEA: O you disobedient weak weak girls
You'll never have the strength for this
Your father is cursed with weak daughters and because of your
weakness he will die

PEG: No wait
Tell us what must be done
WE TOOK AN OATH Eve are you with me

EVE: I guess

PEG: Ally

ALCESTIS: Tell us what is to happen

MEDEA: It is simple really You will eat these cookies to give you strength
and purify your deeds
Then you will drain the old blood from the old man's veins
And put him in a bath of the rejuvenating liquid I showed you
The serum of youth will infuse him and he will step from the bath like
a god covered in glory

(Silence)

EVE: That's horrible We can't

PEG: We took an oath We're bound by father But even I can't agree to
a plan like this

ALCESTIS: You should be thrown in jail

(Medea looks at them calmly)

MEDEA: As you wish
Go home Tell your father that you balked at the task.

Beat.

PEG: You said we could see it with Theodore

MEDEA: Yes

EVE: You'll do the Drain the blood

MEDEA: Yes But with your father it must be your hands The loving hands
of close kin Or there's a risk

PEG: Eve

EVE: OK

PEG: Ally

ALCESTIS: I don't like it

PEG: Let's just see what happens with Theodore His days must almost be done

ALCESTIS: You could say the same for father

EVE: Which is what makes the proof strong

(Beat. It seems like a silent capitulation from Alcestis)

PEG: Alright Let's see your proof

MEDEA: Alright But you have to meet me half way

ALCESTIS: What does that mean

MEDEA: The cookies

(Beat)

It's an act of trust An act of faith

PEG: I will

EVE: Me too

(Medea watches Alcestis)

MEDEA: If you want to see miracles you have to be close to the gods

(Medea holds out the tray of cookies. First Eve, then Peg takes a cookie... Medea offers them to Alcestis. Alcestis takes a cookie. Medea takes a cookie, eats it, and starts to sing)

MEDEA: Equal to the gods he seems
Gazing at you Listening to your voice
Gazing at you
You laugh Sweet My heart races

No speaking is in me
Voice breaks Supple tongue trips
Fire races under my skin

(As she sings the girls eat their cookies—it is clear that they taste bitter)

* * *

(Later. Still night.

Peg and Eve are asleep on the ground.

Medea and Alcestis stare at each other)

ALCESTIS: Quite a trick.

MEDEA: *(Shrugs.)* The will of the gods I am only a servant

(Alcestis continues to stare; Medea holds her gaze)

ALCESTIS: I won't do it

MEDEA: Gods Spare me the love of such children⁶⁰
It's easy for you Isn't it You can portray yourself as pious With no
fear
Because you know your sisters will do what's required
Fear
Not piety You hide behind your principles Daughter's love
I don't think so
Action is courage Action is love not-doing That's nothing
a null a void

ALCESTIS: Still I won't do it

MEDEA: (*Looks at her intently*) O O my
Good gods You and death you have some story going on
I see it It's coating you Dripping off you Death in its glory in its
power
Ha You should take this chance Learn your lesson now
It will keep coming up until you do

ALCESTIS: What are you talking about
Enough of your snake oil Go (*fr. 610*)⁶¹

MEDEA: I'm speaking the truth Listen to me
You should You won't
Ah Whatever Doesn't matter Do what you will

*(Peg starts to stir, then Eve. They are groggy; returning from a deep sleep.
Medea gets up and starts to leave)*

MEDEA: I'll be back.

(She is gone. Alcestis stares after her)

PEG: Ohhh What time is Where
Oh Hmmm

EVE: Ally What happened

ALCESTIS: It's alright You were sleeping

(She goes to her sisters and strokes their hair)

Shhh Don't worry It's alright Everything's alright

EVE: Gods above

⁶⁰ This is an analogue to *fr. 608*, which reads:
"When they are in trouble they are your greatest friends; but when they are doing well, they
repudiate their obligation, considering their good fortune to be of their own making." (trans.
Collard and Cropp, Euripedes, Fragments VIII)

⁶¹ Fr 610: "Get lost! You can do nothing – you can only talk" (trans. Collard and Cropp,
Euripedes Fragments VIII)

PEG: O (She starts to heave and retch.)

ALCESTIS: Everything's fine

PEG: *(Calming down)* Did that really happen

EVE: It must have I saw it too

ALCESTIS: Yes it happened I think there was something in those cookies

EVE: Were you out too

ALCESTIS: No I didn't eat the whole thing I just took a little and then
chucked the rest

PEG: But you were there You were watching

ALCESTIS: Yes I saw it too

EVE: It was horrible Cruel How could she do that

PEG: Don't talk about it I'll be sick

EVE: Poor Theodore

ALCESTIS: I remember her face She enjoyed it

PEG: But the little lamb Was that real

ALCESTIS: It is real It's over there In the pen
I touched it It's real

EVE: So she told the truth She can restore youth

PEG: But the knife The hacking
How could she do that

ALCESTIS: She loved it

PEG: Is it really Theodore

ALCESTIS: Who's to say It's a fresh fleecy little ram

EVE: It came out of the same pot that he went into

PEG: Yeah

ALCESTIS: yeah

EVE: yeah

(Pause)

PEG: Wait Let's think
We ate the cookies And she prepared the cauldron

EVE: Yes Special roots and herbs

PEG: The water from the Ethiope spring

EVE: And then Theodore She drained his blood

ALCESTIS: Cut his throat

PEG: She was mumbling and chanting Something about old blood for new
new

EVE: But then she hacked him to pieces

(Pause)

ALCESTIS: Daddyking

EVE: O

PEG: PappaPel

ALCESTIS: Yeah

(Pause)

PEG: But what can we do

EVE: You know what he's like Besides we promised him

PEG: Swore an oath

ALCESTIS: For the gods' sake you're not bound by that oath
An oath that will kill our father is not to be honoured

PEG: But will it kill him

EVE: You saw the little lamb Touched it Saw its youth

ALCESTIS: Are you serious You're going to sit there and watch her cut our
father's throat

(Medea enters silently and suddenly behind them)

MEDEA: No That won't happen

PEG: O You startled me

ALCESTIS: You mean you've changed your mind

EVE: Is the risk too great

MEDEA: No child I mean yes The risk is great But the reward is greater

ALCESTIS: So what then

MEDEA: O you won't watch me cut his throat It doesn't work like that
You His loving daughters must be the instrument to heal his old age

(Silence)

MEDEA: You knew that Surely
But don't worry I saw how you reacted to the dismemberment
We won't do that
I've got a better idea We'll do it in his bath
It will be very comfortable Relaxing Lots of candles
As long as we can submerge the whole body we should be fine

(Silence)

MEDEA: Huh Weak-willed girls
 Well I'll leave you to decide We don't have long
 it must be done before the moon sets

(Medea exits. Pause)

PEG: This is terrible

EVE: Can we do it

PEG: We have to Can you imagine living with him if we don't

ALCESTIS: You may not be LIVING with him either way
 Are you crazy There's no way

EVE: Peg's right We have to

ALCESTIS: NO we don't

EVE: Yes There's no other way

PEG: I know

ALCESTIS: Of course there is You can let his life end naturally We mess so
 much with nature these days
 Let it run its course

PEG: Ally You have to help us

EVE: YOU SWORE AN OATH

PEG: If you don't help it will be treason

EVE: And then when Papa is restored

PEG: You know what will happen

EVE: You know the penalty You won't be able to escape

PEG: He will be harsh

(Pause)

(Medea enters and looks at them)

PEG: Alright We're ready

EVE: Let's go

MEDEA: Good girls Let's go.

(Candles surround a big claw foot bath tub. It is the same room from the beginning; a fire burns somewhere.)

Pelias is wheeled on in a chair by his daughters who gather around him.

At some point we will be reminded of David's Death of Marat)

PELIAS: My daughters Time is short I feel my years creeping toward their
end
We must seize this opportunity
How this fearful symmetry presses ever forward
the young reach perfection as we who are old fade and die
but maybe not quite
not quite faded
not quite dead
Nature tamed by my will And I do will it
Help me up
Wrap this green rug around me
Green for youth
The colour of Spring

(Peg and Eve help Pelias to his feet)

PELIAS: Alcestis Help me The bond of three is magical
It presages strength and success

ALCESTIS: Alright Papa Here I am

PELIAS: *(His eyes are shining with greedy anticipation.)*
O I can almost feel my skin smoothing out My muscles growing
taught
I will be quick in my knees once more

EVE: Where is she

PEG: The potion must be prepared

PELIAS: She'll be back She went to light a signal fire on the roof
To draw the attention and power of Artemis
I am to wait in the tub
Then you will anoint me as she prays and says the incantations

ARTEMIS: Do you know what is to be done

PELIAS: Yes

ARTEMIS: And still you want to go through with it

PELIAS: Of course You said you saw the proof

PEG: It was miraculous Theodore Old Theodore is now a bleating baby

EVE: Quick in the knees indeed

ALCESTIS: But the passage to that quickness
Have you thought of that

PELIAS: I don't want details I want results
The end is all The passage phht Who needs it

ALCESTIS: I have a fear A great fear I cannot do you harm

PELIAS: Look at me I saw her own skin shrink tight around her face
The signs of age disappeared
She rubbed her special tonic on her skin And Youth appeared
But it was a topical treatment whose affects did not last
I want the change to be permanent
If Theodore can be young again then so can I

PEG: Yes Papa

EVE: Ally You know he's right

PELIAS: Sweet Alcestis

(Pause. Medea enters)

MEDEA: The signal's lit The gods are sure to be in attendance
It is time
Pelias Get into the tub and close your eyes
Girls Once the first part is complete
Take this and pour it in

ALCESTIS: The first part

MEDEA: QUIET The subject must be calm at rest

PELIAS: I am ready It feels good

MEDEA: Good Just relax

(She goes to each of the girls in turn and passes them a sharp knife)

MEDEA: Girls One on each arm one at the head

(Peg and Eve take one hand each, Alcestis stands behind the head of Pelias)

MEDEA: Now I will start to sing the song of youth and love
You know what to do
Equal to the gods he seems
Gazing at you Listening to your voice
Gazing at you
You laugh Sweet My heart races
DO IT

(Peg and Eve slice the arms of Pelias. He screams)

No speaking is in me

Ally DO IT

Voice breaks Supple tongue trips

Be Quick

Fire races under my skin

Peg Eve Quickly the throat The heart

(Pelias has been screaming throughout; Alcestis is frozen in horror; Medea tries to keep her song going through the commotion)

Light of you blinds my eyes

(Eve cuts Pelias' throat and Peg plunges her knife into his heart. Blood flows)

Ears roar with sound that no one hears

Trembling Quaking Cold sweat seizes me

(Peg and Eve start to pour the liquid over Pelias. Medea's song continues)

I am newer than grass and

almost dead

(Alcestis has collapsed to the floor but pulls herself to where she is looking at Medea)

Alpha omega I seem

(Medea is washing her face with some of the liquid. The age vanishes from her face)

(She looks at Alcestis)

But dare

because even the poorest can strive for

(Alcestis, as recognition dawns across her face...)

ALCESTIS: You It's you from the beach

MEDEA: Yes

ALCESTIS: O Where are the gods

MEDEA: It's not the gods that are unjust
Men's own corruption brings consequent evil to them *(fr. 606)*⁶²

ALCESTIS: You were never old

MEDEA: No

ALCESTIS: You've murdered our father

MEDEA: No It wasn't me It was his own greeddriven pride
And yours
A greedy gift sees only the wealth it expects in return *(fr. 607)*⁶³

(Peg and Eve have been listening. They come forward, still holding their knives, to confront Medea)

PEG: What are you saying

EVE: When does the serum begin to work

⁶² Fr. 606: "It is not the actions of the gods that are unjust, but men's which are corrupted by evil and thoroughly confounded. (trans. Collard and Cropp)

⁶³ Fr. 607: "But those who give (look) only to wealth" (trans. Collard and Cropp, Euripedes Fragments VIII)

MEDEA: It's working already The natural order is restored
(Jason enters, fully armed)

PEG: What does that mean

MEDEA: The gods are appeased All's right with the world

JASON: I saw the signal

MEDEA: Yes my love our quest is complete

JASON: My uncle

ALCESTIS: Our Father
 O father if I could switch places with you

MEDEA: Be careful what you wish for

JASON: Maddie Be kind

MEDEA: Yes my love
 The king is dead Long live the king It is your birthright

PEG: O what wicked practice All for ambition

EVE: You have soiled your soul

ALCESTIS: Be careful what YOU wish for

MEDEA: All I want is a quiet life

JASON: That is not our destiny I fear

PEG: Eve Ally Are you with me

EVE: Yes

ALCESTIS: Yes

(They take their knives and place them against their breasts)

JASON: Stop There is no need for this

PEG: We betrayed our father

EVE: We killed him and you will rule our land

ALCESTIS: What's left to live for

JASON: Stop No His death was just He broke his oath to me
 His pride ran away with him There is no need for you to suffer

MEDEA: Jason What are you thinking

JASON: A tyrant has no peace

ALCESTIS: Why bother We have nothing to live for
 You have killed our father We are without protection Better
 off dead

PEG: Better off dead

EVE: Better than slaves

MEDEA: O this is such nonsense You are not dead You are not slaves

JASON: Did I not hear the same argument from you when you

MEDEA: When I what

JASON: Fled your father
You were fatherless Alone in the world I had to protect you
Or so you said

MEDEA: Is your memory so short Why did I flee Because I SAVED YOUR
LIFE AND DISOBEYED MY FATHER And now Again I've assisted
you Fulfilled your quest I want a home It's what we deserve

ALCESTIS: Go ahead take ours It's no good to us

MEDEA: You're looking for pity You'll find none here

(Beat)

JASON: A usurping king A tyrant Has no friends He fears them
Puts them to death for fear they will harm him *(fr.605)*⁶⁴

(Beat)

You three have a brother You're his to support

MEDEA: Yes Turn them all out This land is ours Let their brother
support them

JASON: An option you didn't have

PEG: What She has a brother

EVE: We heard of his birth

(Jason and Medea share a look)

JASON: Had a brother He no longer lives

(Pause)

JASON: Your brother Acastus He will be king He can look out for your
welfare

MEDEA: What are you saying Why would you do this

JASON: It's the right thing Honourable Just

ALCESTIS: I can't stay here No matter what The pollution will haunt me

⁶⁴ Fr. 605: "As for the highest state that men so admire, tyranny – you could find no sadder one. The tyrant must ruin his friends and put them to death; he lives in very great fear that they will do him harm." (trans. Collard and Cropp Euripedes, Fragments VIII)

MEDEA: What about us What about me

JASON: We'll go to Corinth King Creon will help us

MEDEA: What Vagabonds Itinerants That's not my station
After what I've done for you The horrors

JASON: Quiet Just wait
Alcestis I have a countryman Admetus⁶⁵ He needs a wife
He is well positioned and will take you in with gratitude

ALCESTIS: So A Chattel
Do you sanction this Is this what you want for me
Princess
Are you Am I
Pause.
Alright that will suit me My needs are humble

JASON: You two come with me Let us go find Acastus and transfer the
throne

(Jason, Peg, and Eve exit leaving Medea and Alcestis. Alcestis goes and looks down at the corpse of Pelias covered by the green rug)

(Pause. She looks back at Medea)

ALCESTIS: The other morning On the beach You looked so full of life
You were enthralling

MEDEA: I was queen of this land for a second there

ALCESTIS: Yes and you knew it even then Didn't you When I first saw you

MEDEA: Yes

ALCESTIS: Can you see the future

MEDEA: A little Not really

ALCESTIS: Do you think Corinth will be good for you

MEDEA: I don't know Maybe for awhile I hope so

ALCESTIS: What about me

MEDEA: I told you Your story is with death
I saw a flash of that That's all I know

ALCESTIS: Aren't all of our stories with death In the end

MEDEA: Yeah There's truth in that

⁶⁵ See Euripides' *Alcestis*: Alcestis ends up married to Admetus who convinces her to exchange her allotted time of death with his, thereby allowing him a longer and her a shorter life. She is rescued by Heracles who goes to the underworld and wrestles death to win her back.

ALCESTIS: I guess I should get going
If things had been different

MEDEA: Maybe Who knows

ALCESTIS: I loved you When I saw you on the beach

MEDEA: I know

ALCESTIS: What is your name

MEDEA: Medea

(Alcestis leaves. Medea is alone with the corpse of Pelias. In a small halting voice she sings and falters)

MEDEA: Equal to the gods he seems
Gazing at you Listening to your voice
Gazing at you
You laugh Sweet My heart races

No speaking is in me
Voice breaks Supple tongue trips
Fire races under my skin

Light of you blinds my eyes
Ears roar with sound that no one hears
Trembling Quaking Cold sweat seizes me

I am newer than grass and
almost dead
Alpha omega I seem
But dare
because even the poorest can strive for

END of PLAY

Chapter 5.

Lost in Antiquity: Part 3

The bones of the story of Aegeus and Medea in Athens, known from Ovid (*Met.* 7.402-24) and Plutarch (*Thes.* 12) among other sources,⁶⁶ are as follows: the long lost, unknown son returns; the ‘evil stepmother’ suspects then detects the truth; she plots murder; the father recognizes the token that proves the son’s identity; the plot is thwarted and the murderess and her ‘false heir’ are exiled. It is no surprise that Euripides and Sophocles both composed tragedies based on the incident—it has all the makings of a ripping yarn. As a bonus, and probably instrumental in its ancient popularity, it depicts the recognition of Theseus as national hero of Athens.

We know little of what Euripides’ *Aegeus* portrayed. Euripides’ fragments 1—11a shed very little light on the story but there are other more complete narratives. Euripides, however, with his focus on Theseus and Athens, likely did not explore the character of Medea with any depth, or her position in this murky political/sexual/hereditary-monarchist, triangle. She is unlikely, for example, to have taken as prominent a role as Phaedra in the demise of Theseus’ son Hippolytus in Euripides’ play about him. The notions of succession and inherited monarchy sit well in medieval, early modern, and ancient traditions but are difficult to translate to a modern setting; yet this was the challenge of *After Medea*—to compose a modern version of this ancient tragedy. Further to this, to create a play that would stay true to the plot and intention of the original but still be practical in today’s theatrical production climate. Combine this difficulty with other modern practices and obstacles—birth records, paternity tests, the dramatic improbability of instantaneous discovery, or murder plotted with poison. The

⁶⁶ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 248, 255-56.

task is daunting. How to maintain a ‘classical pedigree’ but frame it all in a believable, modern context?

The play, at its most basic, is a backstage drama. A theatre company is performing a production of Euripides’ *Medea*. The play opens with the opening prologue of Euripides’ *Medea*; after that it immediately shifts to the backstage area and the dressing rooms. This establishes the parameters of the drama, the fluid nature of time and staging, and the classical antecedents that resonate throughout the piece. After the dressing room scene, we discover ‘A.G.’ (A.G. stands for Alexander Gerrard—the character who portrays the actor who plays Aegeus both in the onstage presentation and in our modern time analogue) alone onstage:

A.G.: Murder.
It’s been on the table from the very first scene of the play. The killing of children. When I come out and speak to the audience-slash-chorus, I am concerned for the welfare of the children. I play the Nurse... and Creon, and Aegeus, but first, the Nurse.

MADDIE: Enters. You’d better explain that.

A.G.: OK. Beat. We’re doing a production of Euripides’ *Medea*. It is a production that is at once conservative and radical—we use only three actors (as they did when it was first performed in 431 BC)—and, well...

MADDIE: I wouldn’t say radical. I wouldn’t say that—you create expectations. And I wouldn’t say conservative either—it just sounds pompous. We’re doing it with three actors and that’s that.

She exits

A.G.: Right. That’s Maddie; we’re married. There is another fellow in the show—he plays Jason.⁶⁷

The action of the play oscillates between various styles and locations—there is direct address, as above; traditional ‘fourth wall’ naturalism, and a kind of personal, reflective—almost confessional—space where the characters share with the audience their personal and confidential feelings and stories.

⁶⁷ See below, 100.

In the naturalistic scenes, there are four main settings: A.G. and Maddie's home; backstage during a performance of their production of *Medea*; in the dressing room; and in Maddie and A.G.'s car as they drive to and from the theatre. We also catch various snippets from *Medea* as it is performed—either from backstage or over the internal speaker system of the theatre. The characters' ages are significant—A.G., around fifty; Maddie, around forty; and Jay, around thirty, maybe a couple years younger.

A.G. concludes his prologue, and the scene is set:

A. G.: At my first entrance I know all that—and I (the nurse)—fear for the children. I hear Medea raging inside the house—breaking dishes. Screaming.

Beat

You hear it too.
And we do—screams and smashing crockery in the dark.
Jason is unfaithful. He breaks his oath—his oath of love and fidelity to Medea.
The consequences are dire.
Murder is on the table.
But that's Medea's story.
Our story is different. We're married, we have children.
Maddie and me, our story is different.

Lights fade...

The relationship between Medea and Jason in Euripides' tragedy is, to put it kindly, one of faded love. Jason seems to have moved on; his new alliance with the king's daughter is framed in terms of political expediency, but his lack of passion for Medea is evident.⁶⁸ Similarly, in the one existing scene we have of Medea and Aegeus it is clear who will have the upper hand in any ensuing relationship.⁶⁹ Both Jason and Aegeus—not to mention Creon—are like children compared to Medea. In fact her superiority in all aspects of craft and cunning, skill and sense, political, emotional, and intellectual intelligence, is abundantly clear in Euripides' play. How to portray this superiority in a modern context and still create a believable relationship is a major challenge. What holds them together? What does she get from him? What does he get from her? Thinking of the Medea/Aegeus relationship before the appearance of

⁶⁸ Euripides *Medea* (550 – 560)

⁶⁹ *ibid.* (663 – 759)

Theseus, one can imagine a fairly pleasant domestic scene, their relative attributes and personalities fitting well together—but put some impediment in the way of her ambition and the façade quickly crumbles. So, in the modern analogue, the marriage of A.G. and Maddie must have a similar dynamic.

The first scene begins with intersecting, ‘confessional’ monologues. The impression is of Maddie, still lying in bed, and A.G. rummaging around some distant part of the house—probably the kitchen. In these ‘confessional’ moments, however, there is no ‘real’ physical space. Instead, the intimate connection between the character and the audience creates an ‘alternate, theatrical reality’.

Maddie Alone. Sound of Rain...

MADDIE: Rain.
 Still raining. It’s warmer now, the rain of spring.
 It would be nice to feel the warmth of the sun, but I like the rain.
 Things are good—
 I always feel slightly uneasy when things are good... it’s silly, I know.
 Still, it’s there...

Beat

I can’t believe his father. I know I shouldn’t react, but he’s unbelievable! He must say those things on purpose, to provoke me. I try to stay calm but it’s like I see red— I lose all civilized sense of myself and BAM!

I mean why does it matter if our kids are girls? They can’t be penalized for being girls—

* * *

... sound of rain. A.G. Alone.

A.G.: Rain.
 Fucking rain.

 Trapped by the weather—trapped by my life.
 Eating cold meat from last night’s barbeque, eating cold meat alone.
 Where is my wife? Where is my comfort from the storm?⁷⁰

The conflict between them expresses itself in their contrasting views of the rain. As the scene progresses, A.G. nurses a festering resentment toward Maddie. He feels

⁷⁰ See below, 103.

emotionally abandoned by her and starts to wonder if she is unfaithful... Once again, the tentacles of Eros are eroding the foundation of rationalism. A.G. replays an argument between Maddie and his father from the night before—during his recapitulation, the first inkling of one cog in the engine of the plot is revealed:

A.G.: ...There's this thing in my family—It's the traditional family seat. It's in Scotland
It's supposed to be inherited by the "oldest son of the oldest son"—and it always has been. That way it stays in the family, keeps the family name on it, and doesn't get divided and lost. Dad has it now; it's supposed to go to me as the oldest son and then...⁷¹

As A.G. fumes, resentment becomes jealousy, and jealousy creates its own fertile ground for infidelity—the third leg of the triangle:

JAY: 'There is another fellow—he plays Jason'... that's me. I play Jason. Whatever.⁷²

Jay's opening confessional speech is intercut with snapshot-like scenes of Maddie and A.G. driving, in stony silence, to the theatre to do the show. Jay tells the audience about an image that he has found; although he doesn't recognize it, it is a painting depicting Medea offering her poisoned chalice to Theseus while Aegeus watches in consternation—and thus the plot of the ancient tragedy that *After Medea* echoes is obliquely introduced.

In a sequence of backstage scenes (sprinkled with glimpses of the *Medea* from the backstage perspective), a playful flirtation between Maddie and Jay develops and A.G.'s resentment quickly builds to rage. And always, a sustained chord alongside and underneath the action is Maddie's artistic striving: she is trying to understand the rationalization that explains Medea's murder of her children—of course, there isn't one:

A.G.: You still defend her for murdering her own children?

MADDIE: I know I keep going over this, but I have to work it out. I have to talk it through and you help me—you understand. OK? So listen, you can't look at it like that—think about her situation:She is already an exile, she can't go ba

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 104.

⁷² *ibid.*, 106.

A.G.: Yeah. Because she murdered her brother—

MADDIE: To save Jason! Her husband, who she is now completely reliant on for any status or stature she has in this community—if she wasn't married to him, she would just be a foreigner.

A.G.: And foreigners are slaves—yeah, so?

MADDIE: So?! She's the daughter of a king! Descended from the immortals—do you think she would submit to slavery? She's already tried to adapt, become one of the community—and what is the community? It's a village! A gathering of a dozen little huts—this is not the golden age—this is somewhere between the stone age and the iron age! Life is short and cheap—This is cavemen; this is the Flintstones!

A.G.: Still, she is a mother who murders her own children.

MADDIE: She doesn't want to murder them! She's forced into it. Imagine it—everybody, in all those little huts, knows your business. They know that you're some exotic foreigner. They think you are a *witch*, and dangerous, and mean...

A.G.: She is a witch.

MADDIE: Herbalist! ...
 ... God! I have to do this show. I have to find a way to justify the behaviour.
 Jay understands. But all I get from you is your neediness, your demands on me to be polite! To agree with you! You have no idea what it is to be a woman in a man's world. I hate how easy it is for men. You just have no idea.

*They drive. Silence.*⁷³

A.G., in the midst of his turmoil and self-loathing (resulting from his suspicious nature) recalls and confesses an earlier time, when he was ruled by:

A.G.: (*alone*) Passion. According to Socrates, none of us can knowingly do wrong. Medea is the case that disproves this—she clearly knows that it is wrong to murder her children but she CANNOT HELP HERSELF. That is the triumph of passion—it makes us flawed, but it makes us human...

It was 1981 and we took a show to the Edinburgh Fringe.
Beat. Extraordinary times. *Beat.* The days of my roaring. Passion triumphed...

He recalls an encounter between his acting company and...:

⁷³ *ibid.*, 117- 118.

Three French girls doing a production of Genet's *The Maids*. They were gorgeous and sophisticated and elegant in every way that we—three guys from Saskatchewan—just weren't. Maybe somehow our very difference was appealing—anyway, sparks were in the air.

One night we ended up in some club. It wasn't my kind of place and we were going to go in search of a more utilitarian place to drink—the pubs are great... But there they were: makeup and miniskirts. Three French girls dancing slow to fast throbbing music—euro-beat, electro-pop, disco.

Eventually he and one of the girls go back to his digs—the door is locked so he has to break in, and:

Passion triumphed.

The only casualty was my knife—I broke the end off the blade while I was prying open the window—still functional, just the tip was broken off. Marie-Claire asked for it, so I let her keep the knife.

Passion.⁷⁴

Perhaps this recollection eases A.G.'s rage—for whatever reason, there is a reconciliation between him and Maddie. However, the most significant narrative feature of this monologue is that it sets the groundwork for two of the critical and difficult plot points—the unknown child and the token by which he will be recognized. As the play progresses further clues to these elements will be offered to the audience. In the ancient myth, after Aegeus departs from his meeting with Medea in Corinth, he visits Pittheus in Troizen. Pittheus tricks Aegeus into sleeping with his daughter, Aethra. When Aegeus departs the next day he leaves a sword and sandals under a rock with instructions that if an heir should be born, he bring these tokens to Athens as proof of his identity.⁷⁵ Clearly this is a complicated plot device that becomes even more complicated in creating the corresponding modern device. In a number of public readings done over the development process there was an array of 'apprehension points' by various audiences; some individuals catching on sooner, others not until the final definitive revelation. All in all though, the device seems to be effective in creating a believable, modern analogue.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 132-133.

⁷⁵ See Gantz., 249.

In the meantime, a date has been arranged between Maddie and Jay. Maddie begs A.G. not to leave them alone but he insists that she see Jay on her own. A.G. struggles to understand his relationship to Maddie—maybe he is trying to understand all male/female relationships—an image is projected as he speaks:

The splayed and flagrant nakedness, the overtly non-fashionable, flabby, sagging fleshiness that the couple on the bed displays with so little regard—

– or should I say with an all too aggressive regard for the gaze they command...

The conjunction between voyeurism and exhibitionism.

It's a painting by Lucien Freud. Someone on the internet labeled it as "Medea and Aegeus"

... There is something attractive about this picture—It is erotic in an unlikely way; attractive—? No, maybe not attractive... alluring? To me, anyway—but, as I said, unlikely...

It is the mature representation of sexual attraction—or, more precisely, the representation of mature sexual attraction—post sex.

It's satisfying in a way that a younger love simply isn't...

This is what I want.⁷⁶

It is the day of the date between Maddie and Jay—Maddie's dressing room; A.G. and Jay are there... Maddie is in the bathroom:

A.G.: She still changing?

JAY: I guess. You guys are coming, right?

A.G.: I'll meet up with you later; going to hit the gym first.

JAY: You should come now.

A.G.: No, it's better this way. I didn't get my run this morning—I'm kind of punchy. I'll meet you there... *(Beat. Calls toward the bathroom)* Sweetie! I'll see you on the patio! *(Sound of water from the bathroom)* She must be having a shower. Well, I'll see you in a bit; I better get going.

JAY: Um... I'll walk out with you.

Beat.

A.G.: Relax. You might as well wait here. See you.

A.G. leaves. JASON sits in the dressing room. Sound of water. Pause.

⁷⁶ See below, 137.

Over the speaker we hear:

Ladies and gentlemen the stage door is now closed. Please exit the building via the crash doors to the street.

Water from bathroom stops.

JAY: (Calling) Ummm. They're closing the building. I think the stage door guy is gone now.

MADDIE: (from off) I'll be right out. I just have to dry my hair. Pour the drinks.

JAY starts to make drinks. Pause. Lights go out.

MADDIE: Shit!

JAY: What's that?

JAY lights a lighter

MADDIE: God damn it. OH! Shit. Aghh! They turn out the lights when they go home—it's a 'savings initiative'. Do you have a match?

JAY: I've got a lighter.

MADDIE: There's a candle on the table.

JAY: Got it.

JAY lights candle. He sits. MADDIE enters, wrapped in a towel. They look at each other. Pause.

If there is an intermission, this might be the End of Act One.⁷⁷

During extensive work undertaken at the 2012 Banff Playwrights' colony, several different attempts at this scene were launched—from more to less explicit in what happens after the lights go out. It became clear that this ambiguous ending to the scene provided the most theatrical interest and an added frisson to the triangle.

Although Medea's attraction to Theseus (and vice versa) is not in any of the sources that describe the ancient myth, it is not a difficult supposition to make.

On Maddie and Jay's date, Jay eats some nuts and goes into anaphylactic shock... paramedics attend, Jay is rushed to hospital, Maddie and A.G. go home together. Maddie is distressed by the closeness to death she felt. In the course of their conversation we discover that A.G., too, is allergic to nuts; Maddie implores him to be

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 139-140.

careful and declares her love for him—they seem very close. Maddie begins to obsess about death and murder—how it can happen.

The anaphylaxis provides a balm to another of the credulity-straining elements of the ancient story: Medea’s knowledge of, and access to, poison—and her willingness to employ it. Maddie, before she recognizes the need, has been provided with a secret that is deadly to Jay. Temptation is sitting in her backyard and will call her out when the time comes.

On another front, the pressure is building from A.G.’s father about the inheritance; he threatens to disown A.G. as he has no male heir—his and Maddie’s children are both girls. We hear of a major battle between Maddie and A.G.’s father wherein she fights for the rights of her children and (it seems) is persuasive in changing the intention of the inheritance—but only if no male children are born... confident that their child-bearing days are behind them, Maddie and A.G. celebrate this victory.

Meanwhile, the show continues to be performed—there is a definite change in the temperature between Maddie and Jay—he is puzzled by it and confronts her. She asserts that “nothing happened”—he is quite certain that something did happen. After their dispute, in his ‘confessional space’, Jay reveals that he is an orphan and never knew his parents. Maddie returns looking for a pencil sharpener for her eyebrow pencil; Jay doesn’t have one but offers his pocket knife, which has a broken tip. The audience now has more information than the characters—although, there is an unresolved question about whether or not Maddie knows the story that A.G. relates about his night in Edinburgh. Maddie’s actions over the next few scenes betray her knowledge and her increasing dilemma—how to secure her daughter’s inheritance in the face of this new information.

Maddie tries to get A.G. to find out more about Jay—the two men start to talk and a new rapport develops. All three look forward to the end of the run of the play with mixed emotions—the bonds formed are so intimate and deep but will be severed as quickly as they were formed when the show ends... “orphaned again”, as Jay puts it.

It is the closing night of the play. The show ends in a great triumph for Maddie and the three head to the dressing room for drinks and a quiet celebration:

MADDIE: I've been thinking about it, I really can't imagine an instance that would make me consider murder –

A.G.: I knew it.

MADDIE: – not of our children, anyway. If, however, there were some threat to my security—or more precisely, our children's future—that might be motivation for murder.

JAY: Me too!

MADDIE: Watch it buster.

A.G.: Yeah, watch it—she's a potential murderer.

MADDIE: You laugh, but you would do it. I would.

The blender whirrs; cracking ice; stops.

A.G.: It's hard to imagine what the circumstances might be... but in theory, I guess.

MADDIE: I know I would...⁷⁸

The sound of the blender throughout this last scene serves as a theatrical device to create tension and unease.

MADDIE: *(cont'd.)* If I felt like there was an imminent and calamitous threat—I would kill to protect my children and their world, their security. *(To A.G.)* If some long lost son of yours turned up, that would threaten their security... *(To A.G.)* Can you slice this sausage?

A.G.: Is there a knife?

MADDIE: Jay's got an interesting one.

JAY: I'll go get it. *He leaves.*

MADDIE: *(Whirrs the blender again)* I know you won't want any of this, but it's very good. *(Dips her finger into the blender, tastes it)* Yum.

A.G.: I don't know how you two can drink those things. *(Pours some wine; comes close to her)* You were fantastic, you know that don't you? That was an achievement. Powerful. Free. So focused every night. Brilliant. Just brilliant. *(He kisses her. She responds. A long one this time. Jay has entered unnoticed)*

MADDIE: Thank you, sir. You're not so shabby yourself—and darn sexy.

JAY: She was just telling me what happens after this play.

⁷⁸ Ibid. (159)

A.G.: You mean unemployment for all?

MADDIE: Hush.

A.G.: What's next for you? Are you sticking around here.

JAY: Nowhere else to go, really. (You love me. Look at me.)

Pause. Maddie looks at Jay.

MADDIE: So, Medea is in Athens with Aegeus and the long lost son turns up.

A.G.: Like in that painting of yours, Jay.

JAY: (What are they doing—playing happy families?)

MADDIE: She poisons the usurping son's drink.

JAY: Here's that knife.

He gives the Swiss Army knife with the broken tip to A.G..

A.G.: Thanks. Opens the knife and stares.

Beat.

A.G.: (To Maddie.) What's going on?

MADDIE: Nothing. *Beat.*

(To Jay.) Did he tell you? His Dad decided not to disown him but hasn't changed the family charter yet. He still doesn't want 'a girl' to have his castle.

JAY: What do you mean?

MADDIE: It's important that the girls get that land. It's theirs by right.

She pours two drinks from the blender

A.G.: What are you doing?.

MADDIE: Getting closer.

Jay: (Yes!)

A.G.: Wait.

MADDIE: Isn't part of our problem that we can rationalize things,—I mean, we live in such a narrow band of the possibility of our beings. There is a broader spectrum to existence. Classical tragedy—can we live that large?

A.G.: Maddie!

MADDIE: Maybe there are life and death situations—

JAY: Yeah. Like walking down the street—

MADDIE: But that's arbitrary, haphazard... I want passion. Volition. Things happening because I need them to—not because of some accident—

but because they are RIGHT. ESSENTIAL. BECAUSE THEY HAVE IMPORT.

Beat.

A.G.: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?

MADDIE: YES. *(To Jay)* The goblet is poised a breath away from the long lost son's lips. He is about to drink. He is thirsty. He will drink it deeply; open his mouth, his throat, and pour it in, gorge—in all its meanings.

She places the two glasses on the table.

JAY: What happens?

MADDIE: Aegeus acts—he recognizes the sword and knocks the cup out of his son's hand.

A.G.: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

MADDIE: *(Picks up one of the drinks. She drinks deeply)* Oh!—that's good... a little nutty almost—but delicious.

A.G.: *(Picks up the knife).* Where did you get this?

JAY: What?

MADDIE is staring at JASON intently.

A.G.: This knife... how did you break the tip?

JAY: It was always like that.

A.G.: What do you mean?

JAY: It's the only thing I ever had from my birth mother—I was given it when I left home...

A.G.: Where were you born?

JASON: France.

MADDIE: So. Here we are.
You told me a story—of that night long ago, in an Edinburgh walk-up...
How close is murder?

A.G.: MADDIE—

MADDIE: Where is your loyalty?

A.G.: To you. We're married...

MADDIE: Some threats jeopardize trust—action might need to be taken.
(Drinks deeply)

Ahhh.

A.G.: We have two children—Two girls...

She holds Jay's drink out to him—an echo of the painting.

MADDIE:

Now... Take the picture...

Aegeus dashes the cup from the hand of his long lost son before he can drink the poison... In the other story.

But this is our story. Now.

(End of play.)⁷⁹

In order to maintain all the vital plot points (as outlined at the beginning of this paper) our modern sensibilities are strained. Does the filter of antiquity make extreme events seem more palatable? Does the elevation of poetic language and heroic context somehow allow for greater extremes of believable passion? These are some of the questions posed by *After Medea*.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 158-162.

Chapter 6.

After Medea

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Never had been logged.
I wish that pride of heroes had never been convened,
And Jason and his crew had stayed at home in Greece.
Then never would Medea, my sweet mistress,
Have travelled cross those wine-dark seas to live
Here in this foreign, hostile land... Ohhh!
There's trouble—I've seen it in her eye.
I know that look—there's evil that will out.

We hear Medea screaming from the wings—Aieeee!! Dishes shatter against a wall.

Oh! Save us! Save us from her wrath—
The children!
I fear for their innocent small souls.

The lights take us to...

* * *

Dressing Room. It is after the show. Over the Tannoy we hear:

"Good show ladies and gentlemen. See you tomorrow. 7:30 half hour. Have a good night."

JAY: What are you guys up to? Are we going for a drink?
AG: Nope.
MADDIE: Oh, stop it. Be nice. *(to Jay)* We have to get home. For the kids and stuff... the sitter.
JAY: What?! Does this mean never?
AG: We're not really social.
MADDIE: Speak for yourself. I'm very social but...
JAY: Really? Never? That's appalling.
MADDIE: Well, the time it takes to go somewhere, and park, and find a seat, and order...
JAY: We can just go across the street.
AG: That's what she's talking about—if we go there the waiters are like molasses; they have a terrible wine list; the food is bad and expensive... there's nothing good about it.
MADDIE: That's true. But still, it is nice to have a little wind-down time...
JAY: Absolutely.
AG: ...

MADDIE: Okay... Listen, I have that small bottle of bubbly that they gave us for opening on my desk—let’s drink that.

JAY: Yippee. I have mine too, I’ll get it. *(Leaves)*

AG: Really? Warm, bad, fake champagne... that’s what we’re going to do?

MADDIE: Oh, come on, Mr. Grumpy. Be nice. It’s a good ‘company’ thing to do. Besides, he’s lonely and it won’t hurt us to hang out a bit.

AG: ...

MADDIE: Well, I’ve never really chatted with him... I don’t know much about him. It could be fun.

JAY returning: Here it is. He pops the top of the mini-champ. It fizzes over the top. Whoa. That was a little over-excited.

MADDIE: “Said the actress to the Bishop”

JAY: *laughs.* I’ll just wipe it off and everything will be fine.

MADDIE: “Said the actress to the Bishop” *(Jay laughs harder)*

AG: Oh, god.

MADDIE: What’s your problem? She pops her bottle... it too, fizzes over. Jay and Maddie look at each other and crack up.

AG: OK, I’ll get mine out too. *He starts to leave.*

MADDIE: “Said the Bishop to the actress.” *(Maddie and Jay find this hilarious)*

AG has left. Maddie clinks her bottle against Jay’s...

Cheers.

JAY: Cheers.

MADDIE: Thanks for this, it’s a nice idea.

JAY: We can’t just go home... that’s no fun. *Beat.* Oh, hey—I wanted to ask you about something –

AG returns.

I saw this painting... It has something to do with Medea but it doesn’t look like it’s anything from this play.

MADDIE: What is it?

JAY: Well, there are three people in it; two men and a woman. The woman—I guess it’s Medea—is holding out a cup.

AG: That sounds like Medea in Athens.

MADDIE: Yeah, right.

JAY: What happens in Athens?

AG: Well... there's a whole story about Medea and Aegeus—there's a long lost, son; a surprise reunion; and... there's a thing about safety—sanctuary.

You see, Medea is the perpetual exile—she needs a home—

MADDIE: Oh god, don't get him started. Lets go look at the picture, is it here?

As Maddie and Jay start to leave:

JAY: I think so. I think I've got it in my book... Or no, maybe I left it at home...

MADDIE: Let's go check your room.

And they're gone.

* * *

Scene 2 (Sunday)

A.G. alone.

A.G.: Murder.
The killing of children.
It's been on the table from the very first scene of the play. When I come out and speak to the audience, I am concerned for the welfare of the children. I play the Nurse... and Creon, and Aegeus, but first, the Nurse.

MADDIE: *(Enters)* You'd better explain that.

A.G.: OK. *Beat.* We're doing a production of Euripides' *Medea*. It is a production that is at once conservative and radical—we use only three actors (as they did when it was first performed in 431 BC)—and, well...

MADDIE: I wouldn't say radical. I wouldn't say that—you create expectations. And I wouldn't say conservative either—it just sounds pompous. We're doing it with three actors and that's that.

A.G.: Right.

MADDIE: Come here you...

She kisses him and exits.

A.G.: That's Maddie; we're married. She plays Medea.
There is another fellow in the show—he plays Jason.
As I was saying, I play the nurse. But I'm more than that—the nurse is Medea's oldest and only friend. The nurse travelled with Medea when she and Jason eloped from her home far across the sea. The

Nurse knows of the atrocities Medea committed for Jason... the depth of Medea's commitment, and the isolation that she now faces as a foreigner, and a woman—a woman who is about to be abandoned by her husband.

Jason breaks his oath.

Beat.

At my first entrance I know all that—and I (the nurse)—fear for the children. I hear Medea raging inside the house—breaking dishes. Screaming.

You hear it too.

And we do—screams and smashing glass in the dark.

The consequences are dire.

Murder is on the table.

Pause.

But that's Medea's story.

Our story is different. We're married, we have children.

Maddie and me, our story is different.

Lights fade...

* * *

Dressing Room. AG sits reading. It is pre-show, we hear Maddie in another room—vocal warm up.

Jay enters with a bunch of stuff.

JAY: Hi there.

AG: Ungh.

Jay starts setting up his blender and puts out bottles and glasses...

AG: Whoa. Hold on... what are you doing?

JAY: I'm setting up our bar. Company drinks.

AG: What?

JAY: Well, you guys don't have time to go out after the show, and we can't just go home... so—Company Drinks.

AG: Yeah. But a blender? What's wrong with wine—or beer if you have to...? Anyway—I don't want that crap in here.

Maddie enters.

MADDIE: Hi there.

JAY: Hi.

AG: Set it up in the green room or something.

MADDIE: What's up?
AG: I don't know. Blender-boy here has some plan...
JAY: No, I just thought it would be nice—You guys can't go out after, so I thought we should have drinks here after the show—just a quick one. Going right home is too abrupt.
MADDIE: That is nice.
AG: Yeah, but... a blender? All this stuff?
MADDIE: Phht. Don't pay any attention to him. *Beat.* Tell you what, set it up in my room.
JAY: Really?
AG: Seriously?
MADDIE: Yeah. Why not? We can get out of costume, then you can get the drinks going while I get my make-up off and make myself presentable.
AG: Maddie?
MADDIE: What?
AG: ?
MADDIE: WHAT? Oh, stop it. I'll change in the bathroom—my modesty won't be compromised.
AG: Under his breath, Unbelievable. He leaves.
JAY: Umm. I didn't mean to start anything.
MADDIE: Hush. It's nothing. *Beat.* Go set up your stuff. Jay leaves. Maddie thinks... starts burring her lips and running through her vocal range, still thinking...

* * *

Scene 3 (Tuesday)

Maddie Alone. Sound of Rain.

MADDIE: Rain.
Still raining. It's warmer now, the rain of spring.
It would be nice to feel the warmth of the sun, but I like the rain.
Things are good—
I always feel slightly uneasy when things are good... silly, I know. Still, it's there...

Beat.

I can't believe his father. He's so insensitive—he still puts nuts on the salad. I know I shouldn't react, but he's unbelievable! And then—God! I mean, yes he's old—and maybe he's losing it—but really, he must say those things to provoke me. I try to stay calm but it's like I see red— I lose all civilized sense of myself and BAM!
What does it matter if our kids are girls? They can't be penalized for being girls—
Fuck!

* * *

... sound of rain. A.G. Alone.

A.G.:
Fucking rain.
Trapped by the weather—trapped by my life.
Eating cold meat from last night's barbeque. Eating cold meat alone.
Where is my wife? Where is my comfort from the storm?

Beat.

We both do the same show, we get home at the same time—why is it that I'm the one that wakes up and gets the girls to school?
Two different breakfasts—they won't eat the same thing; two different lunches. Find the homework, finish the homework; find the field trip form, sign the field trip form... then, to talk to the other parents at drop off—that's the worst—
And yet it buys me... time.
Now...
Quiet time, with a coffee, and the morning.
I actually don't mind, it's just the sense of unfairness that gets me...
Why do I feel so alone?
I have friends.
I've had friends.

Pause.

Fucking dinner at my Dad's last night—it's always a minefield.
There's this contentious thing in my family—it's the traditional family seat, in Scotland—it's way out in the boonies, and there are no buildings or anything; well, there's a pile of stones that used to be something or other. They've designated it a heritage site—so there's value to it... but...
Most of the land got sold off at one point, but there is this one small plot left—about five acres—with this rubble of a castle on it. We went there once—it's beautiful, but definitely more sheep than people, if you get what I mean. It's supposed to be inherited by the "oldest son of the oldest son"—always has been. That way it stays in the family, keeps the family name on it, doesn't get divided and lost. Dad has it now. He's getting old and suddenly he's preoccupied with

his legacy.
It's supposed to go to me as the oldest son and then...
We have girls...

Beat.

Man, she cranks him up. Maddie.

Beat.

The inheritance, perpetuating the family—I don't care about that stuff. Not at all.
For me—it's her, always her.
I thirst for the sun that is her attention.

* * *

...rain; alone.

MADDIE: Today—a pie, I think. The last of the frozen blueberries and rhubarb. Time to get the garden in. I hope he gets to it soon. It needs to be dug but he's so touchy, I can't ask him to do anything. Maybe I'll just start with the pots—he'll see me with my hands dirty and want to join in.
One last minute here with my coffee and then...

* * *

... A.G. alone; rain is stopping; a hint of sun.

A.G.: Rain stops. Sun starts to hit my face. Birds and quiet in the trees. Alone, but the constellation of family feels good to me. I hope she doesn't wake up for a bit. I'm going to get at the garden.

* * *

Maddie, alone.

MADDIE: The only time I feel solid is when I'm doing the show—everything else is so confusing. Why do people confuse onstage with offstage? The show is real and predictable and I am somehow free inside it to be genuine, to be exactly me. Even though the story is not mine, when I'm in it, I feel like me. More me than when I'm at home, or with A.G., or talking to people on the street. Inside this story I am me. Unmediated. Not a mother, or a partner, or anything anyone else expects me to be...

Sound of a door.

MADDIE: Where's he going?
(Calls out) A.G.!

God, that's infuriating... he was here, lurking around, mooning, obviously wanting something—but I need my space... Why can't he just live his own life? Why does everything have to hinge on me? And now, where is he? He better get back in time to work out the sitter.
Asshole.

* * *

A.G. and Maddie; in a car—driving.

A.G.: *Silence.*

MADDIE: *Silence.*

While their silence stretches...

* * *

lights up on JAY. AG and Maddie's car ride continues throughout.

JAY: 'There is another fellow—he plays Jason'... that's me. I play Jason. Whatever.

I found this painting in an image catalogue. AG says it's a painting of Medea and Aegeus and someone else—a young looking guy. He said it's in Athens so it can't be Jason; it's after the murders, after she flees Corinth. I guess Medea makes it to Athens and safety...

(Each of the characters have several layers of introspection/reflection; one level is connected to art. This is Jay's)

A detail of the painting appears—Medea's back.

The extended arm of Medea is slender, elegant... a band, or bracelet wrapped around her extended wrist... The filmy, transparent shawl drapes from her shoulder to her elbow... cascades in enticing blue-grey scallops... obscures and allures; heightens the taught and supple nakedness of this arm that so boldly extends the cup.

* * *

A.G. and Maddie; the car—still driving; the light has started to glow more intently on Maddie during Jay's description .

A.G.: *Silence.*

MADDIE: *Silence.*

The silence stretches...

* * *

JAY: Medea's upper back is exposed to us; her shoulder has defined yet feminine muscles... the long curve that is the groove of her spine sweeps gently down from the mass of black hair... half disappears under yet another sheer, blue, wrap... and finally vanishes beneath the mystery of these two blue garments and the red that is her skirt... Her hips, too, curve in a feminine and inviting way—you can almost see the ripeness of her buttocks—Is it the fabric? Or is the fabric transparent and we see right through to her body?

* * *

The car. After a pause:

A.G.: I'll let you off here; gotta go park the car.

MADDIE: OK. See you in there.

A.G. is gone

* * *

JAY: Fabric draped and wound around this woman... held up by one of those timeless secrets that women seem to know. Not heavy—the opposite—gossamer, light and inviting... A hinted promise that if one possessed the secret knowledge, a single touch could release these folds and it would all fall to the floor...
A long and very fine, chain— doubled and golden—drapes low between her shoulder blades. So fine that it is almost not there—the perfect fascinator—it demands that you look closer.
And as you look closer, you find that beneath the chain, the skin is luminescent, alive.
Skin, far more captivating than any chain might be...
And, now, it is you in chains—a prisoner.

Lights out on JAY.

* * *

MADDIE: Did you see that? The whole trip in silence and then I'm booted to the curb in the pretense of kindness. What am I supposed to do with this? I have to do a show now. I have to shed this crap and shine and sparkle as if nothing were happening.
Damn. Damn. Damn.
Why do I have to make his life better? I can't believe this. Fuck him. He knows how hard this is—to carry a show, to play the lead. It's an enormous task.
He's done it before. He knows. He should.
And I gave him space when he was 'it'.
Fuck him.

Ok, focus.

I'll see if I can get Jay to run that 'happy life' section with me. There was something wrong there last time.

* * *

In a dressing room. Skipping through the dialogue; "running lines"

MADDIE: I don't want a happy life that makes me ill,
Or wealth and security that chafes against my heart
I pray for a life that is true even if it is poor and laced with hardship.

JAY: Change your prayer to something better and wiser—
Pray that good times never strike you as misery—
Do not mistake good luck for bad.

MADDIE: Go ahead, taunt me! You've feathered your nest.
I leave this country in exile. Alone.

JAY: You chose it yourself!

MADDIE: How did I choose?! Did I marry someone else?

JAY: Wait. Wait, that's it.

MADDIE: What do you mean?

JAY: Right there. That's where we skipped. I have something else there.

MADDIE: What do you say?

JAY: You say, "Blah, blah, in exile, alone."

MADDIE: Right, "I shall leave this country in exile. Alone." That's what I said.

JAY: Right, and then I say, "You chose it yourself! Don't blame anyone else!"

MADDIE: Oh, OK. Got it. *(Slower now, playing the scene 'for real.')*
I shall leave this country in exile, alone.

JAY: You chose it yourself! Don't blame anyone else!

MADDIE: How did I choose?! Did I marry someone else? Did I forsake you?

JAY: You cast curses against Creon. You spat in his face.

MADDIE: I may turn out to be a curse to you and your family!
OK. Good. Thanks for doing that.

JAY: No problem. Anytime. *(Beat)* What did you guys get up to on your day off?

MADDIE: We were at A.G.'s dad's place—family barbeque—Argggh!—enough said.

JAY: Right. *(Beat)*

MADDIE: Have you ever read the *Argonautica*? Jason and Medea is a great love story.

JASON: I know the gist, but I've never read it.

MADDIE: She is so in love with him.

Beat.

MADDIE: I should go get ready.

JAY: Me too.

MADDIE Sees A.G.: Oh, Hi. Did you find a place to park?

A.G.: Yeah. What's up?

MADDIE: We were just running a section that we'd screwed up on Sunday.

A.G.: Oh.

MADDIE: *Beat*) Well, I should get going. See you out there.

A.G.: See you out there.

JAY: Have a good one.

MADDIE leaves. Jay leaves.

* * *

AG Alone.

A.G.: There was a time when I was the most important thing to her and it was in her interest to curry and cultivate me, to sugar and flatter me with her attention—that high voltage attention. And now, there has been a massive shift—it feels like, if I do not put myself further and further out to maintain our connection, it will vaporize. It's all too clear to me what benefit she gets from 'us'. But she doesn't seem to see it. Or if she does, it seems like whatever value there is, can easily be obtained by her elsewhere—and with the increased fascination of novelty, of newness... Is she—what? I can't even put it in words—flirting? Having an affair? Betraying our...?

* * *

Maddie, backstage.

MADDIE: I love being backstage. The waiting in the dark. The silence. The concentration... there is a shared secret, a conspiratorial complicity—all in the aid of a mystery. An alchemy that combines audience and script. When you see someone waiting to make an entrance—the

strange ticks, the silent rehearsing of lines... emotional contortions—
people putting themselves in states that no one would choose—self-
inflicted torture... Only to walk onstage and submit to judgment
under the blast of that nowhere-to-hide light...

Go closer...

We yearn to be genuine—

(sings softly) “Strive for purity.”⁸⁰

* * *

In the dark, the sound of smashing dishes and MADDIE screaming... JAY is watching as the lights come up backstage on MADDIE screaming. In an instant she composes herself and exits to onstage.

JAY: That’s brilliant... The audience—they hear about this virago, this lioness, this rock—they hear the screams and the smashing crockery—And who enters?
Just her. Petite, beautiful, intelligent, composed—this cannot be the woman that was just imagined...

From onstage as Medea:

MADDIE: The one thing in which I placed my trust (Jason!),
The oaths sworn before the gods (Jason!),
Oaths that sanctified what was real and true,
The little vessel that was my life is smashed,
All souls are lost.

JAY: *(watching from the wings)* God she’s beautiful.

MADDIE: *(from onstage as Medea, suddenly very direct)*
Women, be wary, your life too, is at the mercy of men.
Women, it’s true, are gentle and yielding,

Backstage, A.G. stands ready for his entrance as Creon, King of Corinth.

A.G.: *(Thought as speech)* ... gentle and yielding? Gentle! She’s a witch! If they knew what she did to Jason’s uncle—his own daughters boil him alive because she tricks them.

MADDIE: *(from onstage as Medea)*
But cross us—just once—you’ll find murderous steel.

AG: Creon is smart. He knows Medea’s “murderous steel”—he exiles her to save himself and his daughter. He fears her passion, her potential for violence—at once destructive and creative.
Me too. And yet...
I embrace the storm. *(Small pause)*

⁸⁰ Tom Waits from the song “Grapefruit Moon” on the album *Closing Time*.

A.G.: Enters to 'onstage' as Creon:
You must leave this land at once.
I am afraid of you—Yes, you fill me with fear.

* * *

MADDIE and JAY after the show. They are drinking some kind of slushy alcoholic drink from Jay's blender.

MADDIE: I know the nurse is concerned for the kids. So maybe Medea's said something in the heat of the moment... You know, my sister told me that once our mother was having a hissy fit, and she screamed: "I wish you'd never been born! Then I could leave him!"— It seemed to traumatize my sister, and I don't even remember it.

JAY: I didn't know you had a sister.

MADDIE: What? Oh, yeah... she's great.
But listen: I understand. It's not what she really feels, Medea, it's just something you say...

JAY: What, 'I'm going to kill the kids if you leave me'?

MADDIE: Yes. Maybe Medea 'said' something—yes, alright, something like that—something that throws the household into a tizzy—

JAY: Well, if she said it—

MADDIE: But, that doesn't mean it is her actual intention.

JAY: ...?

MADDIE: And, it has to be said, Jason is treating her appallingly.

JAY: Well, he is trying to shore up their position—socially, politically—it's like he says, if he marries this princess —

MADDIE: YOUNG, PRETTY, princess—

JAY: No—

MADDIE: WITH A BEAUTIFUL BODY—

JAY: Let me finish. If he marries her, they will all be better off.

MADDIE: How?! How will she be better off? How will their kids be better off?

JAY: Because they'll be secure. They'll be with Creon. They'll be with the king.

MADDIE: No. There is no security being with the king, because the king dies.

JAY: Well! She kills him!

MADDIE: That's what happens to kings—people kill them—go read your Shakespeare.

JAY: *(laughing)* Nice one. That's good.

MADDIE: But, when A.G. enters as Creon, the whole game changes. He banishes Medea. What had been a personal dispute—a tug-of-war over the future of Medea and Jason's marriage—becomes a life and death situation for her.
She is exiled. Exile equals death.
The whole thing is dense, compact—and it happens so fast.

JAY: I get it, I see. Because, it feels unstoppable, like a freight train. Choo—Choo... *(he laughs and adopts an "unstoppable" train-like stance...)* Relentless, powerful.

MADDIE: *(laughs)*

JAY: I love watching you when that engine kicks in—it's beautiful.

MADDIE: That's sweet. *(Beat. She looks at him a moment, then to us)*
What is going on? I get these signals from Jay—not clear, not clear at all—but still, something. It's flattering—to be found attractive. To feel the heat in someone's gaze. It's confusing, too. Is it a trap? How much of my freedom must I give up to enjoy that heat?

Back to him:

You know what I love? The melding of character and actor. How fictional emotions conceived by a writer—a writer almost three thousand years ago—can engender real emotion in an actor. And then, for the audience to share that—a contemporary audience moved and captivated by these ancient stories... How we can somehow create genuine feeling... Be moved to shock, or horror, or tears...
... and all for nothing! For Hecuba! –

JAY: Yeah. Love that. Love the way you do it. But—they find you terrifying.

MADDIE: Ha.

JAY: There's this gasp that is dredged out of them—it's like they all forgot to breathe and then, all at once they have to: "Ahhh!"

MADDIE: Do you think they're appalled by Medea's behaviour, or in awe of her power.

JAY: I don't know.

MADDIE: Well, what do you think?

JAY: I guess it is awe inspiring, or something, to see someone so driven that they sacrifice what is now the most precious thing.

MADDIE: What do you mean 'now'?

JAY: Well, people don't kill their kids anymore.

MADDIE: What do you mean, 'anymore'? Was there some 'child-killing' epoch?

JAY: You know what I mean. In these old myths, it seems like murder—child-killing, and mother-killing, or brother, or father—it just seems to happen. It's the currency of the stories, but I doubt if it really happened.

MADDIE: Well, they are stories... But it happens now as much as it did then.

JAY: No way.

MADDIE: Sure. Jealousy—and I don't think gender matters in jealous rage, women are as susceptible as men. Jealousy triggers emotions as strong as 'maternal bonding'. People blinded by jealousy are capable of anything.

JAY: Maybe, but I think these myths are like ghost stories or fairy tales—to teach and protect—keep you out of the woods or whatever.

MADDIE: Because there is real danger.

JAY: But they are just stories.

MADDIE: That doctor in the news—He read emails between his wife and her lover, flew into a jealous rage and drank some anti-freeze—

JAY: Well, that's suicide, that's different—

MADDIE: Wait! He immediately realized that his wife would probably be glad that he was gone, suicide WASN'T PUNISHMENT ENOUGH. He gets a knife, goes into his five year-old son's room, and starts stabbing him. The son wakes up and says, "No, Daddy!" – and the guy REALIZES THAT HE'S HURTING HIS SON, but somehow thinks it would be worse to let him live with the knowledge that his Daddy had done that to him... so he finishes the kid off.

JAY: What are you talking about? Is this real?

MADDIE: Yes! Here in Canada!

JAY: Oh my g—

MADDIE: It gets worse... you'd think maybe he'd try a little harder to kill himself, or call for an ambulance, or even call his 'cheatin' wife' to shout at her—but no! He goes into his THREE YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER'S ROOM AND STARTS STABBING HER. He's in a "trance" or something (according to him)—and he becomes somewhat lucid, and wants to do himself more harm (or so he says at the trial), but all of a sudden, he CAN'T FIND THE KNIFE!

JAY: ...

MADDIE: AND... The jury lets him off for 'temporary insanity'.

JAY: They're the insane ones.

MADDIE: It happens. It happens here. It happens today. And people are ready to let it go. They let him go. Why?
Because they can easily imagine themselves in that situation.

Beat.

JAY: I can't.

Silence

MADDIE: Forty-three times.

JAY: What?

MADDIE: He stabbed them a total of forty-three times.
It's intolerable. But that's what we do—explore the intolerable on behalf of society.

Beat.

JAY: You're beautiful.

Jay exits.

MADDIE: *(Alone)* He's young—ten years younger than me... but then I'm ten years younger than A.G., and that doesn't seem to matter... I wonder if it's the man/woman thing, or what? Does it matter which way the ten years travels? If I was fifty and he was forty, how would I feel then?—I am forty. If I was thirty and he was twenty... he's a kid, a twerp.
I know how I feel being forty, and A.G. being fifty...
I don't get those women who want a 'boy toy'—
Not for me.

* * *

A.G. and MADDIE (the car).

MADDIE: Maybe you need a level of maturity before you can see it. He's an idiot. I mean, what else could she do? Yes they are her children, but her situation is extreme.

A.G.: So you still defend her for murdering her own children.

MADDIE: I know I keep going over this, but I have to work it out. Help me talk it through, OK? I'm trying to get closer. Think about her situation: She is already an exile, she can't go back to her homeland—

A.G.: Yeah. Because she murdered her brother—

MADDIE: To save Jason! Her husband. Who she is now completely reliant on for any status she has in this community—if she wasn't married to him, she would just be a foreigner.

A.G.: So?

MADDIE: Foreigners are slaves—

A.G.: Yeah, so?

MADDIE: She's the daughter of a king! Descended from the immortals—do you think she would submit to slavery? She's already tried to adapt, become one of the community—and what is the community? It's a village! A gathering of a dozen little huts—this is not the golden age—this is somewhere between the stone age and the iron age! This is cavemen; this is the Flintstones!
Life is short and cheap.

A.G.: Still, she is a mother who murders her own children.

MADDIE: She doesn't want to murder them! She's forced into it. Imagine—everybody, in all those little huts, knows your business. They know that you're some exotic foreigner. They think you are a witch, and dangerous, and mean...

A.G.: She is a witch.

MADDIE: Herbalist!—

A.G.: She tries to get the women on her side—she's manufacturing a conflict.

MADDIE: She's forced into it by the behaviour of her husband.

A.G.: Not sufficient.

MADDIE: She can't leave the kids with Jason—he's proved his treachery. And, it's clear he will have no interest in her children once his "new marriage" is up and running.

A.G.: Yeah, so?

MADDIE: You're being purposely obtuse.

A.G.: No I'm not.

MADDIE: God! I have to do this show. I have to find a way to justify my behaviour.
Jay understands. All I get from you is your need! You just want me to agree with you!
I hate how easy it is for men. You just have no idea.

They drive. Silence.

* * *

Scene 4 (Wednesday)

MADDIE: *(Onstage as Medea)* I am alone. No country, no home.
My husband insults me—wants to marry another.
For me, there is no family to turn to—no place of safe harbour.
They say, ‘You women have it easy. You don’t know fear,
You don’t know pain.’ Really?—I’d rather three tours of combat,
Than face childbirth once! Are you with me in this?
We all know—men need our protection. The world,
Harshly naked, is too much for them.

* * *

Scene 5 (Thursday)

A.G.: Her cell phone. It’s there, charging. I want to check the calls and
messages but I would hate myself if I did... Is it better to know or not
to know?

A memory strikes him.

“I’d rather be fooled than be suspicious.”

I was doing some TV show and I was supposed to be teaching
Howards End. I hadn’t done much prep so I thought, if I needed some
business, I would write “Only Connect” on the board.

As it turned out, they shot the scene in the other direction first, so I
had time to skim through the book— it jumped out at me: “I’d rather be fooled than be si
Would I rather be fooled? I’m certainly suspicious.
Which brings me back to the cell phone...

Silence

... I don’t know what to do.

Rage.

* * *

MADDIE: I heard him with the kids. I just couldn’t get up. The show takes a lot
out of me... he has no idea how tired, how deeply fatigued, I am. I’m
just going to lie here for a bit...

Slight pause.

What Medea does isn’t wrong. It is a terrible act—I understand why
everyone thinks that...

But, there must be something missing in how people look at it.
Sex. It has to be hot. They leave out the sex.

It's the arrow of Eros that got her at the very beginning—and he's hit too... He has to be in love with her—
(I think this Jason may be in love with this Medea...
And what about this Medea...?
Won't answer, don't have to)

* * *

A.G.: Ok. It wasn't just sitting there re-charging... I took it out of her purse this morning. So I've already crossed the line. Somehow it feels like a greater betrayal (betrayal of myself...?) to check her calls. I guess if I go there, I can't argue my innocence. I still don't know what to do.

Silence

he hears a noise

She's getting up.
I'm putting it back in her purse.

* * *

MADDIE: It's the gods, too. The gods are real, they exert real forces. We feel the same forces—sexual desire, anger, jealousy, envy—but we don't attribute those emotions to the gods. We need the illusion of control. What a joke. When we have an affair, or some sexual misdeed occurs we think it's a flaw, we think that we should have known and acted better; that it was a lapse in control... Control is an illusion. Break an oath sanctioned by the gods and consequences will be dire. Passion is our nature. The enigma of Medea is that she knows what is best to do, but she does not do it. At least that's what they say.

* * *

A.G.: Rage.
I am full to the brim with it.
I just about started a fight at a traffic light.
I'm blinded by rage—perspective vanishes—things that would never be in what I consider to be 'my character' suddenly seem inevitable. It's this casual disregard...
Does she not see what I do for her...?

* * *

Scene 6 (Friday)

A.G. and MADDIE (the car).

MADDIE: Every day I look forward to when we head to the theatre. The day is so full with kids and cooking and the house... Don't you love it when we're finally focused on the simple, controllable world that is the show?

A.G.: I guess.

MADDIE: What do you mean, you guess?

A.G.: I don't know, I guess there are other times of the day that seem OK to me...

MADDIE: Sure. But this is when I feel like my purpose is clear and I'm being who I'm meant to be. Beyond that, everything is messy and complicated and fraught—but acting is pure. Inside the story, actions are genuine. All you can do is give yourself over to it.

A.G.: Silence.

MADDIE: What's going on?

A.G.: Nothing.

MADDIE: Don't tell me that.

A.G.: It's just my Dad...

MADDIE: Oh—! I don't believe you. I can always tell, you know. Anyway this is bullshit! I have to do a show! I just told you how good I feel and now you're pulling some bullshit mood thing!

A.G.: 'I don't want a "happy life" that makes me ill,
Or "wealth and security" that chafes against my heart
I pray for a life that is true even if it is poor and laced with hardship.'

MADDIE: God! You are so infuriating! Stop the car.
I'm going to walk—I have to clear this out of my head so I can do the show.
God! That makes me so mad. That's the character—Not ME! NOT ME!

She gets out of the car and walks away.

A.G.: *(Alone, and in the 'inner voice')* Did I just do that?
I have to go to the theatre and see her, playing around, laughing with Jay...
How do we get back from that?

* * *

MADDIE and JAY (dressing room)

MADDIE: Life of an exile?
JAY: Well, I never knew my mother. Or my father for that matter.
MADDIE: Were you adopted?
JAY: Not exactly. It's an interesting story; I'll tell you about it sometime.
MADDIE: So you've experienced—?
JAY: *(Laughs)* The 'life of an exile...?'
MADDIE: Just like Medea—her solitude, her loneliness. I mean, she left her home and family; she's living in a foreign land.
JAY: She got to choose. I didn't. And Jason was protecting her.
MADDIE: Until he wasn't.
JAY: You're right, until he wasn't. *(Beat)* Where's A.G.?
MADDIE: He's just parking. *(Beat)*
JAY: OK, I know you can't go out—the kids—I know... and it's great to have drinks here, but... maybe once? We could go out somewhere?

A.G. enters unseen.

MADDIE: I don't know...
JAY: Or we could just go —He could take the car and I could give you a ride.
MADDIE: We'll see. I should get ready.
JAY: OK. Think about it. I'll tell you about my intriguing and mysterious past.
MADDIE: How could I refuse?
JAY: Sees A.G. Hi. Leaves.
MADDIE: Hi. Everything good?
A.G.: Yeah. Took awhile to find a spot—there must be something else on tonight.
MADDIE: It's almost the half; I should get ready.
A.G.: Yeah. Me too. Have a good one.
MADDIE: You too.

MADDIE leaves. A.G. is alone. Beat.

* * *

AG in the dressing room listening:

MADDIE: *(Onstage as Chorus)* Excess of Love brings no honour,
But Aphrodite in moderation rains down grace.
Let not the arrow of love pierce me with the poison of desire.
A wise heart is the gods' best gift.
Let not my heart be pinned and my desire drawn to a different man.
Make my marriage peaceful.

A.G.: *(Listening to the play—thought as speech)*
Where is your moderation?
I feel this rage.
If there are gods, let them rain down some grace on me.

Jay enters.

JAY: The audience just loves you—

A.G.: I know... I mean I can feel that—thanks.

JAY: No, really. They're so happy when you come on.

A.G.: I know. I can feel it... The comic relief.

JAY: No, I didn't mean—

A.G.: I know, I know. It's OK.

Picks up his book...

AG and Jay listen.

MADDIE: *(Onstage as Medea)* Don't ever speak of me as weak.
Let no one pity me or call me soft.
A friend to my friends, yes, without doubt—
But to my enemies? Beware: I am rock. I am steel.

One who lives this way is sung of—a hero's reward.

Hear my song from your grave—Jason's new wife.
And you husband, you... your reward will be fitting.

JAY: *(to AG)* Everything OK?

A.G.: Yeah, it's nothing.

JAY: Is it the show? Is it something we should look at?

A.G.: No. No. *Beat.* It's this thing with my Dad... *(AG rages internally. Recovers)*

Um... it's pretty complicated—family stuff.

JAY: Oh. I don't mean to pry.

A.G.: ...

Book.

JAY: No. I mean... Sorry, am I bugging you?

A.G.: Book down. Looks at Jay.

JAY: Right. Sorry. *Starts to leave. Beat. Blurts it out.* But can I just say this? I know some of the stuff you've done. I'm a huge fan. I've wanted to say this since we started rehearsal. I used to be an usher here—I've seen a lot of your shows. It's crazy how people in the theatre don't know about what's gone before, in their own town. The first show I saw when I came here, was you in the Scottish play—you were fantastic, unbelievable... Oops. Gotta run.

Exits.

AG listens:

MADDIE: *(as Medea)* Do you not respect your oaths!?
Where has it gone, respect and reverence?
Do you think the ancient gods have no power?
That we live by new laws?
This right hand that you grasped is defiled,
It is cheated of the life you promised.

* * *

MADDIE'S dressing room after the show. MADDIE & JAY. MADDIE wears a kimono; JAY wears street clothes. They are drinking slushy drinks.

MADDIE: No, the thing is, it would never have happened. The rules were changed on her. If the agreements had been kept, the children would be alive.

JAY: What do you mean?

MADDIE: Well, she didn't start out to be a murderer. She only wanted a quiet life.

JAY: She murdered her brother long before this, and Jason's uncle, too.

MADDIE: But none of it would have happened had she not been mad with passion—literally struck by Cupid's arrow. I mean you can argue that her brother was an innocent victim—

JAY: Wait a second—why are you doing this?

MADDIE: Doing what?

JAY: Why do you keep going over this stuff? The show is on. You're fantastic. Why do you keep poking at it?

MADDIE: I'm trying to get closer.

JAY: Closer to what?

MADDIE: *(Pause)* There's an old adage that photographers use when teaching photography: "Get closer... Get closer, again... Get even closer... Now take the picture."

JAY: Yeah, but you don't want to get closer to murder...
MADDIE: No. But I'm still working, OK? So:
It's a crime of passion—murder is not in her nature—
JAY: Really?
MADDIE: – until she meets Jason!
JAY: Huh.
MADDIE: Have you ever been in love?
JAY: What?

A.G. enters, dressed to leave.

MADDIE: Have you ever been in love?
JAY: *(finishes his drink)* I'd better go.
A.G.: *(to MADDIE)* I'll take you home.
MADDIE: *(to JAY)* No, no. *To A.G.* In a minute. Do you want a drink?
A.G.: Not one of those.
MADDIE: We're just in the middle of something. *Beat...*
A.G.: We should get home... the kids. Someone has to get up and get them to school in the morning.
MADDIE: I know, you're right. And thanks in advance for that. *(to JAY)* He always gets up, I'm terrible, aren't I?

She get's up and grabs her clothes and heads to the bathroom to change.

A.G.: No, no. I don't mind.
MADDIE: *(exiting)* I'll just be a sec.
JAY: I should get going. See you both tomorrow.
MADDIE: *From off.* I'm not done with this argument.
JAY: *Laughs.* OK. OK. To be continued. 'Night.
A.G.: Good night.

Jay leaves.

MADDIE: *(off)* Night. He agrees with me.
A.G.: *(under)* What a surprise.
MADDIE: *(off)* What?
A.G.: About what?
MADDIE: Medea—
A.G.: What?

MADDIE: (off) What? Is he gone?
A.G.: What? Yes. Agrees with you about what?
MADDIE: (enters with her clothes and, finishing dressing) About Medea. That her actions are justifiable, and in some way, innocent.
A.G.: ...
MADDIE: What? You don't think so?
A.G.: She murders her children.
MADDIE: I don't believe it.
A.G.: What?
MADDIE: Never mind. Kisses him—a quick one, on the cheek. Can we go?

* * *

Car.

MADDIE: I thought our scene went well. You found some new things there; it was fun.
A.G.: Yeah. It was good.
MADDIE: The audience always loves that scene—they need some relief. I guess most people know what's coming ... I always wonder what it would be like to have a naïve audience.
A.G.: No such thing. Not with this stuff. It was based on myths—the audience already knew the story even back then.
MADDIE: They didn't know the children were going to die—that was new.
A.G.: I think they always died in the stories. What's new is that she murders them... I think that's it.
MADDIE: I think you're right... I love you.
A.G.: (laughs) Really?
MADDIE: Of course. I always do. Don't you know that?
A.G.: Sometimes...
MADDIE: I just get wrapped up in what I'm doing—my work is important to me. It's who I am. Work. And the kids. That's who I am—but I couldn't do it without you. I guess I'd still be me but I can't imagine it.

pause

A.G.: Well, I love you. And I can't imagine the world without you.

Silence—but contented silence for the first time.

* * *

Scene 7 (Saturday)

Dressing Room A.G. and JAY looking at his picture.

A.G.: See—she’s holding out a cup.

JAY: Yeah, cool. And these two guys, sitting there. Are they angry? Suspicious? I don’t know...?

A.G.: It’s a painting of Aegeus and Theseus and Medea.

JAY: Theseus? Why are they together?

A.G.: Well, Medea gets Aegeus to promise her sanctuary in Athens, right?

JAY: Yeah—and then at the end of the play, that’s where she goes in the chariot of the sun.

A.G.: Exactly. But, when Aegeus is on his way home, he stops off at some island, and he tells a woman he meets on the island the oracle, the prophecy—

JAY: The bit about the wineskin—

A.G.: And the strings. Right.

JAY: But what does the oracle mean?

A.G.: *(slight beat)* Really? Well, the oracle basically tells him that the next time he has sex—“unlooses the wineskin’s strings”, so to speak—he will conceive a child. The oracle is saying that if he wants to have a child with his wife—he should wait until he gets home.

JAY: But he doesn’t wait.

A.G.: Right, because that other woman –

JAY: The one on the island?

A.G.: Right—She figures out what the oracle means, and she seduces Aegeus—men are so easy to trick—she wants to have his child.

JAY: And Theseus is that child?

A.G.: Well, that’s what this painting is all about—You see, no one knows that, no one knows who Theseus is—he’s just some hero who rode into town.

JAY: Like Clint Eastwood in *High Plains Drifter*.

A.G.: Or any of his other movies—yeah. But look closer—it’s all about alarm—the red sun, the expressions on their faces, the cup—dead centre in the painting. And the animals, the flying fish are scared, the frescoed animals on the bench...Look at the bottom of the bench they’re sitting on:

Painting detail.

- A.G.: It's all about fear and passion—a bull seems to gore a wolf. These deer-like goats—not looking in the direction they are fleeing, they don't see another bull—head and horns lowered—
The shield and club lie at the ready. Stone-age power from a time when men fought using brute strength and a club.
Can a club defeat a womanly foe, a foe of such subtlety—and such allure?
But we don't want to club her, do we?
No. We just want her.
With all our being.
Passion.
And we know it is dangerous.
- JAY: The young hero, Theseus—is he Aegeus' son?
- A.G.: Well, Medea thinks he is. The cup she offers... it's filled with poison.
- A.G.: *(alone)* Passion.
Instinctive action vs. philosophical rationalism...
According to Socrates, none of us can knowingly do wrong.
Medea clearly knows that it is wrong to murder her children, but she CANNOT HELP HERSELF. That is the triumph of passion over reason—passion makes us flawed, but it also makes us human.
Has my passion fled?
Am I less human than I was?
1981*. The days of my roaring. *(beat)*
(a date 30 years prior to production)*
We took a show to the Edinburgh Fringe.
Extraordinary times.
We were performing in a pretty posh space—a ballroom in the French consulate that had been transformed into a theatre. Every possible space in Edinburgh is transformed—some of them pretty awful. I don't know how we lucked into this one—it was beautiful; all the other performers were from France...
Three French girls doing a production of Genet's *The Maids*. They were gorgeous and sophisticated and elegant in every way that we—three guys from Saskatchewan—just weren't. Maybe somehow our very difference was appealing—anyway, sparks were in the air.
One night we ended up in some nightclub/bar thing. It wasn't my kind of place and we were about to go in search of a more utilitarian place to drink—But there they were: makeup and miniskirts. Three French girls dancing slow to fast throbbing music—euro-beat, electro-pop, disco.
They saw us, waved us over, and never stopped that hypnotic, slow dance...
It was a night—in that pre-aids, post-pill time of love and discovery...
One of them, Marie-Claire, came outside with me and asked me to

show her where we were staying. During the festival, all the locals leave town and rent their flats out to visiting theatre groups—they lock up valuables and charge a month's rent for a week's stay—so over the six weeks of the festival they cover half a year's rent... pretty good deal.

To avoid cutting and retrieving multiple keys, a key is suspended inside the door on a string that dangles past the mail slot; you put your fingers in the mail slot, grab the string and pull out the key to unlock the door. The first time I saw it I thought it was genius, by the third time I wondered why they didn't just leave all the doors wide open.

The flat I was returning to with Marie-Claire came with a resident cat. A cat that became bored... or maybe it was all engineered by the gods... Anyway, the cat seems to have decided that a key on a string is a good thing to play with... When we arrive, I reach my fingers through the mail slot, and pull out the now keyless string.

We are locked out.

The flat is on the top floor of a six story walk up—you don't make that trip lightly. There is a fire escape in the hallway that leads to the roof... I climb out onto the roof, and use my Swiss Army knife to pry open one of the windows to the flat. I get in, open the door for Marie-Claire and ... well—

I did not retie the key to the string. We spent the night alone—we giggled under the covers when my Saskatchewan confederates stood outside the door, pounded on it, and cursed until they gave up and went somewhere else for the night.

Passion definitely triumphed.

The only casualty was my knife—I broke the end off the blade while I was prying open the window—still functional, just the tip broke off. Marie-Claire asked for it, so I let her keep the knife.

That was passion.

And now...?

* * *

Dressing Room. A.G. sits reading. JAY enters.

JAY: I think you and Maddie should come out for a drink some night. I know, I know—the kids... But, I'd like to hear more about you, what you're thinking about that project of yours... and just hang out a bit.

A.G.: We'll see. Maddie usually doesn't feel like it, so...

JAY: I'll work on her; see if I can get her to come.

A.G.: Grunts. Reads.

JAY: Well I better get back to it. *(pause. JAY exits)*

A.G. Puts down book. Sits. Stares. Play is heard on the tannoy.

* * *

We are seeing JAY backstage he watches Maddie. From onstage we hear the Medea, before Jason's entrance:

MADDIE: *(as Chorus)* From whence will the courage come?
From whence the skill?
To commit this act—this dreadful, unthinkable act...

JAY: Fascinated, watches.

MADDIE: *(as Medea)* When these eyes find their prey—
Those innocent, lovely, small selves, my sons—
Eyes will you stay dry? Will you stay firm?
This hand, faced by my children praying for life,
CanNOT, un-shaking, dip itself in their blood;
CanNOT steep itself in murder.

* * *

JAY *is backstage:* My mother didn't share my blood, but she is MY MOTHER
nonetheless. Is infanticide really possible? Your own kids? My birth
mother abandoned me—that's sort of the same thing. Unthinkable,
and yet, she abandoned me.
Maddie—she makes that action genuine. It's frightening. But god, it's
sexy too.
I want her. I go onstage; I embrace her; I feel myself thrill for her—it
is so alive.

From onstage:

MADDIE: *(as Medea)* Jason!

JAY: *(exiting to the stage as Jason)*
A bobble of your desire—I've come at your bidding.

* * *

Car. Driving.

MADDIE: I can't wait to get home.

A.G.: It's been a long week.

MADDIE: Just one more show, and then... DAY OFF! I love you sweetie. Love,
love, love you.

A.G.: *(smiles)*

MADDIE: I can't wait to climb into our nice soft bed and curl up into you.

A.G.: That would be nice.

MADDIE : Do we have any wine at home?

A.G.: I'm sure we do... we have the matinee tomorrow—

MADDIE: I know, but we get to celebrate a little, don't we? There's no school tomorrow. You can sleep in.

A.G.: I'll get up early anyway, I always do.

MADDIE: I know.

A.G.: But you're right, the girls won't be up; I can ease into the day. *(beat)* You know there's a delicious Barolo that I've been saving since we were in Italy.

MADDIE: Should we drink it now?

A.G.: Well there's other stuff...

MADDIE: We should save it for something special...

A.G.: This is something special. Let's celebrate tonight. We'll celebrate your triumph as Medea. I mean, we didn't really get to, on opening. And you deserve a celebration—unless you'd rather have a slushy or something.

MADDIE: No way. I only drink those at the theatre with Jay—I don't really like them. Lets be adults and drink some expensive Italian wine. Oh, sweetie, I love you. I'll whip up a quick pasta; you open the wine...

A.G.: I thought you were tired.

MADDIE: No.

A.G.: You said you couldn't wait to get into bed.

MADDIE: I can't.

A.G.: You know something? You are crazy. I love you, but you're crazy.

MADDIE: *(smiles)* It makes perfect sense: food, drinks, bed—I want all those things right now. And you. I want you too. Besides, if we always slept when we were tired how boring would that be, how much of our life would we waste sleeping?

* * *

A.G.: This is my painting:

Lucian Freud painting.

The splayed and flagrant nakedness, the overtly non-fashionable, flabby or sagging fleshiness that the couple on the bed displays with so little regard—

– or should I say with an all too aggressive regard for the gaze they command.

The conjunction between voyeurism and exhibitionism.

It's a painting by Lucien Freud. Someone on the internet labeled it as

“Medea and Aegeus”

... There is something attractive about this picture—It is erotic in an unlikely way... No, maybe not attractive... alluring? To me, anyway—but, as I said, unlikely...

It is the mature representation of sexual attraction—or, more precisely, the representation of mature sexual attraction—post sex. It’s satisfying in a way that a younger love simply isn’t... That’s what I want.

* * *

Scene 8 (Sunday)

A.G. and MADDIE; driving

A.G.: What are you thinking?
MADDIE: Nothing really... I don’t like these matinees.
A.G.: Thinking about my Dad?
MADDIE: No.
A.G.: He’s OK, really—and he loves the girls.
MADDIE: Not enough to let them inherit his wreck of a Scottish castle.
A.G.: Well, he feels responsible for ‘the whole line of our illustrious ancestors’ ... it’s a pretty big deal for him to break a tradition that is centuries old.
MADDIE: You can’t agree with him.
A.G.: No, but I can see his point.
MADDIE: !?
A.G.: Forget it... Really. Really.
Anyway, he’ll come around. It’s all part of my secret plan—
MADDIE: Secret plan?
A.G.: Yeah. He takes care of them when we do our Sunday matinees, right? Well, after he spends a few more afternoons with them, he won’t be able to deny them anything.
MADDIE: They are kind of sweet.
A.G.: Irresistible.
MADDIE: Absolutely. But he’s very stubborn.
A.G.: Oh, yeah. Very.

Pause.

MADDIE: Jay's been asking us to go out with him—we could do it after the show this afternoon. *Beat.* Do you think your Dad would mind feeding them?

A.G.: No. He'd love it.

MADDIE: It would give them more time to work their feminine magic. And, if we do it today we can put a time frame on it—go for a glass of wine and then say we have to pick up the kids.

A.G.: You go. He doesn't really want to go out with me—he'll be happy to have you to himself.

MADDIE: But I won't. What about me? I don't want to go out with him by myself.

A.G.: Hmm. Well, I was planning to go to the gym after the show—sweat off a little of that red wine from last night.

MADDIE: That was a fun night, wasn't it?

A.G.: Very fun. *(beat)* I love you, sweetie.

MADDIE: Good. Then you'll come out after the show with me.

A.G.: Here's what I'll do: I'll go to the gym—only an hour—then I'll come and meet you guys and we can either stay, or I'll say we have to pick up the kids and we can take off right away. I wouldn't mind going for a drink with him, but I really need to work out. I slept in this morning because the company was so good—I didn't get my exercise.

MADDIE: I'd rather you came with us –

A.G.: I'll meet you there, it'll be fine. And I'll be far less grumpy after I've worked out.

MADDIE: OK. You better call your Dad and let him know.

A.G.: I'll call him after.

The car pulls over and stops.

MADDIE: Are you letting me off?

A.G.: Yeah. It's Sunday; I'm going to find some free parking.

MADDIE: Love you.

She leaves.

* * *

Maddie's dressing room. JAY, in street clothes, pours things into the blender. A.G. enters.

A.G.: She still changing?

JAY: I guess. You guys are coming, right?

A.G.: I'll meet up with you later; going to hit the gym first.

JAY: Come now.

A.G.: I didn't get my run this morning—I'm kind of punchy. Where are you going to go? I'll meet you.

JAY: I don't know. Any thoughts?

A.G.: Somewhere outdoors. This might be our only sunny day.

JAY: God, yeah. Will it ever be summer?

A.G.: Why don't you go to that patio. You know, under the bridge on the other side.

JAY: Oh yeah, that's a good place.

A.G.: Good. See you there. *(beat. Calls toward the bathroom)* Sweetie! I'll see you on the patio! *(sound of water from the bathroom)* She must be having a shower. I better get going.

JAY: I'll walk out with you.

Beat.

A.G.: Relax. You might as well wait here. See you.

A.G.: leaves. JASON sits in the dressing room. Sound of water. Pause.

Over the Tannoy we hear:

'Ladies and gentlemen the stage door is now closed. Please exit the building via the crash doors to the street.'

Water from bathroom stops.

JAY: *(calling)* Ummm. They're closing the building. I think the stage door guy is gone now.

MADDIE: *(from off)* I'll be right out. I just have to dry my hair. Fire up that blender.

JAY starts the blender. Pause. The lights go out and the blender stops.

MADDIE: Shit!

JASON: What's that?

JAY lights a lighter

MADDIE: God damn it! Shit! Aghh! Oh... they turn out the lights when they go home—fucking 'savings initiative'. Do you have a match?

JAY: I've got a lighter.

MADDIE: There's a candle on the table.

JAY: Got it.

JAY lights candle. He sits. MADDIE enters, wrapped in a towel. They look at each other. Pause.

The candle flickers, then goes out... blame it on the gods.

Darkness. Long Pause.

* * *

A.G. and MADDIE in the car.

A.G.: That's crazy. He'd never had nuts before?
MADDIE: I don't know. He must have. Anyway, the ambulance came, and the guy said he'd be fine—
A.G.: Did they jab him with an epi-pen?
MADDIE: I don't know—something. Do you have yours?
A.G.: Nah. I never carry it.
MADDIE: I'm going to make you. That was scary.
A.G.: I'm careful; it's fine.
MADDIE: Well if you're not going to carry one, I will and I'll chain myself to you. I don't want to lose you.
A.G.: I guess I should, for the kids...
MADDIE: No! For me! Me! I don't want to lose you!
A.G.: OK, OK, sweetie. I'll get a pen. *Beat.* Should we call the hospital, or his cell phone, or...
MADDIE: No. I don't care about him.

Pause.

Can we call your Dad and see if the girls can have a sleep over? I want to go home with you, and drink more wine, and have a nice supper, and pretend we're young and in love.

A.G.: *(gets out phone—speed dials)* Hi Dad? Yeah, hi. How's it going?
(smiles) That sounds great. What? Really? *Looks at MADDIE, winks.* Well, I think we could find something to do. Can I talk to them? Oh—no don't bother. Sure. OK, call you in the morning. *Snaps phone off.* He asked if they could stay over—they're at the pool at New Brighton, and they want to pick up burgers and rent a movie.
MADDIE: I love you.
A.G.: Me too, sweetie.
MADDIE: Take me home.
A.G.: Done.

* * *

MADDIE: Could have gone either way. That's what the ambulance guys said...
Get closer...
Death.
Get closer again...

When *Medea* was a new play—causing emotional upheaval, then as now. There was an actor in the city of Athens—Polus. He was renowned for his intelligent and dignified portrayals and much sought after as a performer by poets of the time. He could achieve feats of emotion that brought thousands of spectators to tears or exultation merely through his voice and soaring spirit.

It so happened that he had a child, a boy, on whom he doted. His pride in his son was equaled only by the joy he took in watching the child grow and accomplish the monumental tasks that each of us must master—walking, talking, singing, running... Any story that starts in this way is bound for tragedy... And, of course, tragedy came to pass. The boy died.

* * *

A.G. and MADDIE

MADDIE: He was sitting there, the drinks came—he ordered two—I was wishing you would get there...

A.G.: Where did the nuts come from—are you sure it was the nuts?

MADDIE: It had to be. The waiter brought this dish of nuts. Jay said he was hungry and scooped up a handful—I remember thinking 'what a boor'—he slammed the whole fistful into his mouth, basically inhaled them... I think he had another handful. And then he didn't look good, he started sweating. He downed his drink and turned all red... I thought he was getting drunk really fast, and I was a bit worried so I got up and said I was going to the bathroom—that's when I phoned you.

A.G.: And when you came back...?

MADDIE: He was on the floor. The waiter had Jay's shirt undone—he was passed out, gasping for air. They'd called the ambulance and they started asking me all these questions—I didn't know the answers—they were all looking at me and I could see them starting to wonder what our story was... They thought we were together—

A.G.: Don't worry about it.

MADDIE: I hated it.

A.G.: I know...

Beat.

MADDIE: I don't even want to see him.

A.G.: Well, we have to do the show... It'll be OK.

* * *

Scene 9 (Tuesday)

A.G. and JAY Dressing room.

JAY: Man, I was whacked out. I guess they mix the epinephrine with adrenaline or something,

A.G.: That's the same thing.

JAY: What?

A.G.: Epinephrine, adrenaline—same thing.

JAY: Really?

A.G.: Just different names.

JAY: Oh. Well, they use that and something else—

A.G.: Antihistamine.

JAY: Right... and it just shoots through you, and you get this kind of whoosh—and then everything gets real clear.

AG: Yeah.

JAY: I went home and crashed—from about seven Sunday night, until four yesterday afternoon. I got your messages—thanks for checking in.

AG: Yeah. Of course.

JAY: I was just too beat to get back to you—I mean, I got up, ate something, and went back to bed. And then, today, I just lay around and slept until I finally forced myself to come down here.

Beat.

A.G.: I had that once.

JAY: What?

A.G.: The same thing.

JAY: Really? You had—

A.G.: An anaphylactic reaction. Yeah. To nuts. Same as you. And I had no idea I was allergic either—it just happened.

JAY: You're kidding. Wow.

A.G.: I remember that—sleeping like that. Pretty wild.

JAY: Yeah. Maddie disappeared. She just left...

Pause. It stretches.

A.G.: We slept in 'cause the kids were at my dad's. Went over to pick them up and stayed for supper... He has this pull out couch that they sleep on... the kids jump up and down on it, turn it into a fort... my Dad loves having them around—
He takes them to this pool—it's in the middle of a dog park. Maddie calls it 'the Pitt Bull park'—I mean, they're safe, he protects them, but...

JAY: Sounds nice.

A.G.: *(beat)* Really? Well, anyway, it took a turn. Maddie and my Dad ended up screaming at each other.

JASON: Oh God, what about?

A.G.: They're always on the brink of something, ready to flare up. I try to keep her away from him. It was about his will, again... *Beat.* My dad owns this land in Scotland—'the Gerrard Family Seat'; it's supposed to be passed 'from the oldest son of the oldest son, to the oldest son of the oldest son'—so it's supposed to go from him to me, and then to my oldest son...

JAY: But don't you just have two girls?

A.G.: Exactly. Doesn't much look like we're going to have more kids, so...

JAY: So?

A.G.: Well, my sister has a son –

JAY: Wouldn't he have his father's name?

A.G.: You'd think. But my sister kept her name when she was married, and for some reason her kids have her name too...

JAY: Wouldn't want to be that father.

A.G.: Well, he didn't seem to want to be that father either—took off pretty quick. Being partnered up with my sister would be a tough gig.

JAY: So—your nephew's going to get the land.

A.G.: Hard to say at this point. Either way he's going to have to change the rules. Dad and Maddie fought about it all night. He threatened to change his will... She said he couldn't disinherit me just because I didn't have boys—couldn't break the trust. He said, if I didn't have an

oldest son the “family charter would have to change”... It’s a big deal to him.

I mean, she wants something for our daughters.

JAY: What about you?

A.G.: I don’t want to create conflict. I mean I want it for them too, but she’s ferocious about our girls’ inheritance, and anything to do with their future. She’s worried about security—ours, the girls... who can blame her?

“Hey diddly-dee, the actor’s life for me.”

Tannoy: ‘Places for the top of Act One ladies and gentlemen. Places please for the top of the show. Have a good one.’

MADDIE comes past the dressing room. They see her go by.

* * *

MADDIE backstage.

MADDIE: After the death of his son, Polus was overcome by grief. He couldn’t act. His heart was broken and he knew (even if no one else did) that it was his heart that made him a great actor... After sufficient time with his grief, Polus decided to return to the stage. It so happened that Sophocles had been chosen to present a tragedy that year—yes, that Sophocles—the tragedy that Sophocles was working on? *Electra*.

JAY comes up behind her, puts his arms around her, gives her a quick kiss on the neck. MADDIE smiles, squeezes his arm, then pushes him away. Lights onstage change. MADDIE exits to ‘the stage’.

JAY: I was strapped to the gurney, the paramedics were poking and prodding me—I tried to sit up, they pushed me back down... and when I looked, she was gone.

From onstage we hear MADDIE; the anguished cries of Medea: Aiiiee! Aiee!!

JAY: (*cont’d.*) They asked some questions, I tried to answer: ‘Yes, I could breathe—barely. No, I didn’t have allergies that I knew of.’ They had a huge hypodermic; jabbed it in my ass; slammed me into the back of the ambulance—I kept looking for her but she was nowhere.

MADDIE: (*from onstage*) Aieeeeeee!!

JAY: I was so alone. Maddie vanished. She didn’t even know which hospital I’d been taken to. Alone. Then I got myself together—as I always do—went home when they released me, got myself here. I guess alone is how we are.

* * *

Scene 10 (Wednesday)

MADDIE: *(entering)* Have you got a pencil sharpener?

JAY: No. What for?

MADDIE: My eyebrow pencil—I'm lost without it. *Starts to leave.*

JAY: Wait. I've got a knife... will that do?

MADDIE: Ok. Give it here.

JAY: Umm... *(gives her the knife)* I didn't know where you went, Maddie, you abandoned me—

MADDIE: Hush. Shhh. Quiet. I can't talk about that right now.

She opens the knife. Beat. She looks at him.

Pause.

JAY: *(watches her; then, quietly, to her)* I grew up in an SOS Children's Village in France. They're all over Europe and starting to become big in the rest of the world...

She's still staring at him. Jay looks at her.

The tip's broken off—it still works though.

Maddie starts to sharpen her eyebrow pencil.

They're kind of like mini-orphanages but without the Oliver Twist gloss—"please sir can I have some more?"—you know what I mean. They're pretty cool places. Each 'home' has a 'Mom', and a bunch of brothers and sisters, and there are a number of homes in a group. It's this great idea that was developed in Europe in the late 50s to deal with orphaned or abandoned kids.

... Anyway, the mom from our home is the only mom I ever knew...

MADDIE is still sharpening her eyebrow pencil.

JAY: Funny, when I go back now I have brothers and sisters that I've never met.

MADDIE: In France?

JAY: Yeah... My mom is almost going to retire—I was her first; I'm thirty now and I was just a baby when I got there...

MADDIE: Thanks... And thanks for the knife...

Jay exits... Then:

* * *

MADDIE:

In Sophocles' play, Electra makes an entrance carrying an urn that contains what she believes to be her brother's ashes—it turns out that the ashes are not those of her brother—she, however, believes that they are, and so her grief, in that moment, is genuine. Polus, we are told (thousands of years before Stanislavsky and 'the method'), put on the costume of Electra in mourning, and took from the tomb the ashes of his beloved son.

He filled the theatre—and we're not talking about seven hundred seats, or even the opera hall with twenty-five hundred... No, they had between fifteen and eighteen *thousand* people in the audience. Polus makes his entrance, and fills the theatre "not with the appearance and imitation of sorrow but with unfeigned grief and genuine lamentation"—

So, while it *seemed* that the play was being acted, and while in the play it *seemed* that Electra was carrying her brother's ashes—neither of these things was in fact true. What moved those people and lived in legend for thousands of years, was the soul of an actor sharing his genuine grief in service to the story and for the edification of the audience.

Get even closer...

That's what we do.

Polus the actor we salute you.

She toasts.

* * *

A.G. & MADDIE Car.

MADDIE:

Do you ever wonder if you have other kids?

A.G.:

What?

MADDIE:

I'm just asking—do you ever think about that?

A.G.:

No. God. What a question.

MADDIE:

Why? I mean from before you met me.

A.G.:

So, you're basically accusing me of sleeping around and being irresponsible and...

MADDIE:

Well, it's not impossible is it?

A.G.:

Highly unlikely.

MADDIE:

I mean we've all had moments—little flings before we got together... I have. I know you have—you've told me about them. The difference is, that I would know if I got pregnant—you wouldn't necessarily.

A.G.: Well I hope I would know—I mean surely whoever it was, would have told me.

MADDIE: Not if they didn't know your name. Or how to get hold of you a month or two later.

A.G.: When has that ever happened?

MADDIE: You've told me! —there was that designer in Montreal; some lawyer who picked you up in that bar after your show in Calgary;... and god knows how many others—

A.G.: That was years ago! Anyway—You too! And probably more than me.

MADDIE: I know, I said so.

A.G.: Why are you talking about this? What brought this on?

MADDIE: I don't know... Medea's life in exile. Your chauvinist, senile, Dad. That ridiculous inheritance thing...

A.G.: Oh sweetie—don't let it get to you.

Pause.

MADDIE: Do you guys ever talk? You and Jay, in the dressing room I mean.

A.G.: Not really. I'm chipping away at that *Pincher Martin* project of mine, and he's usually on stage... and then after the show he seems to hang out in your dressing room.

MADDIE: Stop it.

A.G.: Well, it's true.

MADDIE: Whatever. You should talk to him.

A.G.: Why?

MADDIE: I'm curious.

A.G.: What about?

MADDIE: I don't know—where did he train—did he train?

A.G.: Huh.

MADDIE: Well? Are you going to talk to him?

A.G.: ...

MADDIE: What?

A.G.: If you're curious, why don't you ask him?

MADDIE: God!

A.G.: What?

Pause.

MADDIE: Do you know what he said?
A.G.: No. About what?
MADDIE: *(beat)* He said that the kinds of events that take place in classical tragedy are unbelievable—that we have no way to really understand actions of such magnitude; that the size of human feeling in classical tragedy is beyond us these days...
A.G.: Well—do you think we live that large?
MADDIE: ?
A.G.: I mean it—we don't worry about 'the wrath of the gods' when we break our oaths—do we?
MADDIE: What are you talking about?
A.G.: Ok then, can you imagine a passion so grand that you would kill our girls?
MADDIE: I'm not going to answer that.

Silence.

* * *

Scene 11 (Thursday)

MADDIE: *(as chorus)* From whence will the courage come?
From whence the skill?
To commit this act—this dreadful, unthinkable act...
MADDIE: *(as Medea)* When these eyes find their prey—
Those innocent, lovely, small selves, my sons—
Eyes will you stay dry? Will you stay firm?
This hand, faced by my children praying for life,
CanNOT, un-shaking, dip itself in their blood;
CanNOT steep itself in murder.

We become aware of Jay and A.G.—both watching. They are isolated. Both, from different vantage points, watch Maddie.

* * *

A.G. and JAY; dressing room after the show. A.G. has wine, JAY has his usual slushy drink.

JAY: This show is kind of a dream gig for me.
A.G.: Really? *(beat)* How can you guys drink that stuff?
JAY: It's good. When did you know you were going to be an actor?

A.G.: Early Mesozoic Period. *(beat)* Seriously? I was sitting in the audience—it was one of the first plays I’d ever seen—and I felt it. All of us, breathing as one, understanding the same thing—in the instant. I was thrilled.
And that’s always my intent—to bring the ‘room’ together.

JAY: Yeah. Absolutely.

A.G.: I used to sit backstage and I’d LISTEN for the audience to come on board.

JASON: I do that.

A.G.: *(beat)* Anyway, as I listened, I often heard the audience’s attention lost—squandered—it’s such a fragile strand... I think we yearn for story, we long to connect.

Beat.

JAY: I thought I could do it better than the people I was watching onstage.

A.G.: Well that’s honest.

JAY: I mean, not you—like I said, I thought you were brilliant—

A.G.: Right...

JAY: But there were a lot who weren’t. I know, it sounds terrible, but it’s true.

A.G.: Hm.

JAY: Once I finally got the chance... Well, I found out it was harder than I thought. Eventually, I discovered a better reason to do it.

A.G.: Which is?

JAY: My life outside the theatre seems a fraction of my life in it.

A.G.: Really? OK... I get it, yes.

JAY: You know—in this play alone, I marry a princess; negotiate a separation with my wife; see my children murdered...
But more than that, we’re in it together—we’re family.

MADDIE enters.

JAY: Why do you do this?

A.G.: Hi.

MADDIE: Hi. Do what?

JAY: Act?

MADDIE: Good god! Is this what goes on in the men’s dressing room?

JAY: Seriously.

MADDIE: I think I’ll stay in my own room.

JAY: No. Come on.

MADDIE: I'll think about it and tell you later. Have you forgotten we have a 'conference' with your Dad.

A.G.: Oh, shit. What time is it? Shit, we have to go! *Grabs his stuff.* Sorry, we have a meeting.

JAY: No problem. Is everything OK?

A.G.: God only knows. With my Dad, it could go either way... See you.

MADDIE: See you.

JAY: Yeah. See you tomorrow.

A.G.: Yeah—good chat... to be continued.

JAY: Absolutely.

A.G.: *(to MADDIE)* Grab that wine.

He and MADDIE leave.

Beat. To us:

JAY: When you're in a show, you are essential to everyone else. And to the enterprise as a whole—the show must go on, but of course it can't—not without you. That pressure—commitment and responsibility—is very comforting to those who had a chaotic beginning in life. It's kind of like being swaddled—your freedom is restricted, but you are secure. The trick of course is not to settle for confinement. To keep your individual voice AND be a strong part of the ensemble. To strive for freedom within a voluntarily adopted structure—That's what an artist does...
Adopted.
The phantasmagorical part of this voluntary structure, this family of mutual necessity, is that it evaporates at the end of the show. Intense intimacy and trust that vanishes after the final curtain... Then you're alone again.
Orphaned.

* * *

Scene 12 (Friday)

MADDIE and JAY.

MADDIE: We met up with his father and there was this huge argument—he decided to disown A.G., or disinherit him, or something. I went: 'What, because we have girls?' I mean it's unbelievable. Are we living

in the twelfth century or something? And it's not as if there's this huge pile of money or anything—

JAY: *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (Did you fall in love with me?)

MADDIE: But there is something—and if he takes it away they get nothing. I mean, this is all about a pile of rocks in a corner of Scotland. But if worse comes to worst, it's a place to retreat to—I want my girls to have that. To know that they're secure.

JAY: *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (I know something happened.)

MADDIE: And it's not as if—
To Jay: What?—
It's not as if we'll be able to leave them anything. I mean, good god, the life of an actor! I'm not going to stand by and let my children lose out. It drives me crazy...
Did you say something?

JAY: Umm, ... No. Nothing.

She looks at him.

MADDIE: “When these eyes find their prey—Eyes will you stay dry?”

Beat.

MADDIE: Ok. Well, I better get my stuff on.

JAY: What does he think about it?

MADDIE: Who?

JAY: A.G..

MADDIE: I think he was a little appalled by the way I spoke to his father, but—whatever.

JAY: Is it hard? To love so intensely, then just go home at the end of the day?

MADDIE: *(pause)* Very.

JAY: Are you going to pretend that nothing happened?

MADDIE: What are you talking about?

JAY: You know.

MADDIE: No. I don't.

JAY: Between us.

MADDIE: Nothing did happen. Nothing.

JAY: Right.

MADDIE: And nothing is going to jeopardize my life... or my kids.

She goes.

JAY: (thought) She fell in love with me. I know she did. I felt the heat.

* * *

Scene 13 (Saturday: Closing Night)

Backstage. A.G. is standing in the semi-dark. From onstage we hear:

JASON: You gods above!
I call you as witness. See this now.
She that rides away in her heaven-built chariot,
She has killed my sons.
I cannot even touch or bury their sweet bodies.
I wish the gift of life had never been given to those sweet lads.
Neither my eye nor heaven's should have to see this foul murder.
But, you gods, I call you to witness
The horror ... The horror.

The 'onstage' lights fade to black leaving A.G. in a wash of blue. MADDIE joins him. We hear applause from the audience. A.G. and MADDIE share a look. She takes his hand, caresses his cheek. The lights 'onstage' come up for Curtain call. A.G. exits to 'onstage'. Jay enters; stands briefly beside Maddie... she squeezes his hand. He exits to onstage—applause continues.

MADDIE waits, gathers herself.

Exits to onstage.

Applause crescendos.

* * *

It is after the closing night performance—MADDIE presides over the blender where she is concocting drinks.

Jay enters.

MADDIE: I WIN!
I kill my children—but this act, in the world of the play, IS NOT CONDEMNED—it is vehemently approved.
Oaths were broken—the destruction that is wrought is sanctioned.
In the end, the chariot of the Sun, the “heaven-built chariot”, comes to pick me up and takes me to freedom, to Athens. The gods are on my side.

JAY: Wow!

MADDIE: Their presence sanctions my actions. I am in the right.

A.G. enters.

In the next chapter of her life, Medea is a queen in Athens. Aegeus is the father of her child who will one day ascend to his throne...

A.G.: Did he show you that painting?

MADDIE: I didn't particularly like it, but it was interesting to see how the three were portrayed. *Beat.*

I have an announcement to make... An admission.

Pause.

I've been thinking about it, I really can't imagine an instance that would make me consider murder –

A.G.: I knew it.

JAY: Me too!

MADDIE: – not of our children, anyway. If, however, there were some threat to my security—or more precisely, our children's future—that might be motivation for murder.

JAY: Kill to preserve the family but not to destroy it... Maybe.

MADDIE: Watch it, buster.

A.G.: Yeah, watch it—she's a potential murderer.

MADDIE: You laugh, but you would do it. I would.

The blender whirrs; cracking ice; stops.

A.G.: It's hard to imagine what the circumstances might be ... but, in theory, I guess.

MADDIE: I know I would.

(she looks at JAY)

If I felt like there was an imminent and calamitous threat—I would kill to protect my children.

(he turns to A.G.) If some long lost son of yours turned up... That would threaten their security...

(to A.G.) Can you slice this sausage?

A.G.: Is there a knife?

MADDIE: Jay's got an interesting one.

JAY: I'll go get it. *He leaves.*

MADDIE: *(whirrs the blender again. Stops)* I know you won't want any of this, but it's going to be very good.

A.G.: I don't know how you two can drink those things. *(pours some wine; comes close to her)* You were fantastic, you know that don't you? That was an achievement. Powerful. Free. So focused every night. You're brilliant. Just brilliant.

He kisses her. She responds. A long one this time. Jay has entered unnoticed.

MADDIE: Thank you, sir. You're not so shabby yourself—and darn sexy.

JAY: She was just telling me what happens after *Medea*.

A.G.: You mean unemployment for all?

MADDIE: Hush.

JAY: *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (What is going on with them? She wants to find some time for us to be alone.)

A.G.: What's next for you? Are you sticking around here.

JAY: Nowhere else to go, really. *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (You love me. Look at me!)

Pause. Maddie looks at Jay.

MADDIE: So, Medea is in Athens with Aegeus and the long lost son turns up.

A.G.: Like in that painting of yours, Jay.

JAY: *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (What are they doing—playing happy families?)

MADDIE: She poisons the usurping son's drink.

JAY: Here's that knife.

He gives the Swiss Army knife with the broken tip to A.G..

A.G.: Thanks. Opens the knife and stares.

Beat.

A.G.: *(to Maddie)* What's going on?

MADDIE: What? *(beat)*
(to Jay) His Dad decided not to disown him. But he won't change the family charter. He still doesn't want 'a girl' to have his castle.

JAY: What do you mean?

MADDIE: It's important that the girls get that land. It's theirs by right.

She pours two drinks from the blender

A.G.: What are you doing?.

MADDIE: Getting closer.

JAY: *(very softly, almost inaudible)* (Yes!)

A.G.: Wait.

MADDIE: Isn't part of our problem that we can rationalize things—I mean, we live in such a narrow band of the possibility of our beings. There is a

broader spectrum to existence. Classical tragedy—can we live that large?

A.G.: Maddie!

MADDIE: Maybe there are life and death situations—

JAY: Yeah. Like walking down the street—

MADDIE: That's arbitrary, haphazard... I want passion. Volition. Things happening because they need to—not because of some accident—but because they are RIGHT. ESSENTIAL. BECAUSE THEY HAVE IMPORT.

Beat.

A.G.: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?

MADDIE: YES. *(beat; to Jay)* The goblet is poised a breath away from the long lost son's lips. He is about to drink. He is thirsty. He will drink it deeply; open his mouth, his throat, and pour it in, gorge—in all its meanings.
(she places the two glasses on the table)

JAY: What happens?

MADDIE: Aegeus acts—he recognizes the sword and knocks the cup out of his son's hand.

A.G.: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

MADDIE: *(picks up one of the drinks; she drinks deeply)* Mmmm!—that's good... a little nutty almost—but delicious.

A.G.: *(picks up the knife)* Where did you get this?

JAY: What?

MADDIE is staring at JAY intently.

A.G.: This knife... how did you break the tip?

JAY: It was always like that.

A.G.: What do you mean?

JAY: It's the only thing I ever had from my birth mother—

A.G.: Where were you born?

JASON: France.

MADDIE: So. Here we are... You told me a story—of a night long ago, in an Edinburgh walk-up...

A.G.: MADDIE—

MADDIE: Where is your loyalty?

A.G.: To you. We're married...

MADDIE: Some threats jeopardize trust—action might need to be taken.
(drinks deeply) Ahhh.

A.G.: We have two children—Two girls...

She holds Jay's drink out to him—an echo of the painting.

MADDIE: Now... Take the picture...
Aegeus dashes the cup from the hand of his long lost son before he
can drink the poison... In the other story.
But this is our story.
Now.

(End of play)

Chapter 7.

Lost in Antiquity: Part 4

Medea: Bride of Achilles

As part of the ongoing process of reclaiming and visualizing antiquity, another prospective project presents itself: a play featuring Medea and Achilles as they explore their promised marriage in the afterlife.

In the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, Hera (Zeus' wife, the queen of the Olympian gods), tries to enlist Thetis (a sea nymph and Nereid) to assist Jason and Medea. To do so, she reveals that Thetis' son is destined to marry Medea when they both reach the Elysian plains (*Argonautica* 4.815). As we know, Thetis' son is Achilles—the prototypical Greek hero of the preeminent Greek epic, *The Iliad*. Achilles and Medea? One wonders just how this would seem a good marriage prospect to the mother of the groom.

When Hera approaches Thetis in the *Argonautica*, she points out the prophecy that Thetis had been destined to bear a son greater than his father, so Thetis was one goddess with whom Zeus must not philander, which placed her (and her son) high in the esteem of Hera, Zeus' wife. Hera, of course, was also a champion of Jason. At this point in the *Argonautica*, Medea has only murdered her brother, not yet her husband's uncle or her children, or attempted to murder her stepson; and Achilles (through the elastic nature of mythological chronology), is learning his hero-trade with Chiron the centaur.

How do these two become a match?

In the *Iliad*, Achilles struggles to achieve mastery over his characteristic anger, even as his heart and mind wrestle to decide his double-destined fate.⁸¹ Is this anger-darkened hero the husband a young girl descended from the immortals and versed in magic and the herbal arts dreams to marry? Medea has no *Iliad*, no equivalent canonical epic to mint her story. The closest we can come from our modern valance is the Euripidean tragedy that has all but usurped any other versions of her myth.

If, however, we take as a starting point this allusion to a heroic marriage in the after-life (it is also referred to by a scholiast of Pindar),⁸² the question arises, how is Medea a suitable bride for Achilles and vice versa? What character defining tests does she endure? What social norms does she exemplify or recreate? After all, Medea will try—and reject—two heroic husbands, Jason and Aegeus; neither of them has the ‘right stuff’ to match up to her. Is Achilles ‘the man’ or will they destroy each other? If we imagine Medea married to Achilles, what new paradigm for marriage and male/female relations might emerge?

The Elysian plains (where this marriage is to occur) are a somewhat murky concept—they are ‘the blessed isles’ and beyond the western reaches of Ocean. Hesiod describes a place where “a god-like race of hero-men ... live untouched by sorrow in the Islands of the Blessed along the shore of deep-swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far from the deathless gods.” (Hes., *WD* 170). Pindar tells us specifically that Thetis, Achilles’ mother, “persuades Zeus with her prayers” to allow her to take the fallen Achilles to Elysium where, “the good receive a life free from toil... in the presence of the honored gods, those who gladly kept their oaths enjoy a life without tears... Those... who keep their souls free from all wrongdoing... follow Zeus’ road to the end... to the islands of the blessed ”(Pind., *Oi.* 2.65-72). Achilles’ mother lobbies Zeus to gain entry to the blessed isles for her son. We hear in the *Odyssey* that Menelaus will not die but that “the deathless ones will sweep [him] off to the world’s end, the Elysian fields... because [he] is Helen’s husband now—the gods count you [him] the son-in-law of

⁸¹ See Appendix *Achilles’ Choice*

⁸² A scholiast to Apollonius 4.814-15a says that the Lyric poet Ibycus (6th-cent. BC) was the first to relate this story and that Simonides (fr. 558) followed him.

Zeus.”(Homer, *Od.* 5.630—40). So Menelaus gets in because of a fortunate marriage (a marriage that didn’t look all that felicitous for some time) and Achilles gets in because of his mother’s persuasive charms. How does Medea gain access to Elysium?

The criteria laid out in Pindar offer some intriguing points of inquiry. Criteria such as ‘the good’; ‘those who gladly keep their oaths’; ‘those who keep their souls free from wrongdoing’—do not immediately reflect our modern, Euripidean-tinted, concept of Medea. Even in Euripides though, Medea is adamant about the primacy of oaths. It is for breaking his oath to her that she feels justified in the vengeance she wreaks on Jason (Euripides, *Med.* 495); a position that is affirmed by the Nurse who in her first speech bemoans the broken vows and the dishonour that Jason heaps upon Medea (*ibid.* 20). As another example, she insists that Aegeus sanctify his promise of refuge by swearing an oath by Earth, Helios and “all the gods” (*ibid.* 747). Euripides’ chorus, although horrified by the doom of the children, nonetheless recognizes the righteousness of the action: “Heaven, it seems, on this day has fastened many evils on Jason, and Jason has deserved them” (*ibid.* 1232). Although this *akratic* impulse, this triumph of passion over reason, results in many recognized evils, it somehow cannot be condemned. The heroic character, whether Achilles or Medea, is so full of spirit, passion, or as the Greeks call it, *thumos*, that despite any consequent destruction, it cannot be denied. Medea describes herself thus: “Let no one think of me that I am humble or weak or passive; let them understand that I am of a different kind: dangerous to my enemies, loyal to my friends. To such a life glory belongs”, (*ibid.* 807—10) a portrait that resounds with echoes of Homeric heroes. Can keeping one’s soul free from doing wrong mean acting in accordance with one’s passion, or character, or spirit?

In Book 18 of the *Iliad*, Achilles asserts his character and the sense of waste that comes from not fulfilling it.

No, no here I sit by the ships...
a useless, dead weight on the good green earth—
I, no man my equal among the bronze-armed Achaeans,
not in battle, only in wars of words that others win.
If only strife could die from the lives of gods and men
and anger that drives the sanest man to flare in outrage—
bitter gall, sweeter than dripping streams of honey,
that swarms in people’s chests and blinds like smoke—
just like the anger Agamemnon king of men

has roused within me now...
Enough.
Let bygones be bygones. Done is done.
Despite my anguish I will beat it down,
The fury mounting inside me, down by force.
(Homer, *Il.* 18. 121-135)

He decides to master his anger toward Agamemnon to avenge the death of Patroclus. As we know, this rage is only redirected, not mastered; it will be replaced by a murderous fury that rains destruction on the Trojans and leads to the death of Hector. Aristotle decides that an emotion such as *praotes* (calmness) is not the same as anger mastered, and courage is not mastered fear, “for a courageous person is called emotionless [*apathes*], whereas one who has mastery does experience [*paskhein*] the emotion but is not led by it.”⁸³. This mastery of emotion is arguably what Achilles ultimately achieves.

Throughout the epic, Achilles is at the mercy of his temper and (it must be said, heroic) rage. It is only in Book 24 that he gains mastery over this trait and, in a demonstration of self-knowledge and self-mastery, he prevents Priam from seeing the body of Hector and thus triggering a rage that would find its twin in Achilles himself—he prevents the well known cycle of rage from continuing (Aristotle, *Topics* 4.5 125b20-7).

In Euripides’ *Medea*, she too is enraged. Similar to Achilles, who is slighted by Agamemnon, Medea is slighted by Jason and exacts a costly revenge. In his examination of Aristotle’s rhetorical emotions, David Konstan defends Medea’s revenge as consequent to the injury perpetrated by Jason and because it “is grounded not in petty jealousy but in a proud sense of honour”.⁸⁴ Anger as response to an unjust slight is elevated to a heroic dimension: when one’s honour is threatened or injured, anger-fuelled action is the appropriate response. Certainly, Achilles and Medea are a good match in this aspect. Achilles’ story, however, completes with the scene between him and Priam; Medea has no recorded end to her story, yet for her to be truly a match for Achilles in Elysium, one suspects that she too must achieve mastery.

⁸³ Aristotle, *Topics* 4.5 125b20-7.

⁸⁴ David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 89.

In Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus meets Agamemnon in the underworld, Agamemnon—whose own wife (Clytemnestra) has not turned out to be a paragon of wifely obedience, loyalty or fidelity—praises Penelope’s steadiness, depth of feeling, and wisdom.⁸⁵ Later, in Book 24, when again we meet the shade of Agamemnon, his esteem for Penelope has seemingly blossomed and incites hyperbolic flights of rhetoric. He compliments Odysseus: “what a fine, faithful wife you won! ... How well Icarus’ daughter remembered you, Odysseus, the man she married once! The fame of her great virtue will never die. The immortal gods will lift a song for all mankind, a glorious song in praise of constant Penelope” (Homer *Od.* 11. 500-10). Notwithstanding that there is no surviving song praising Penelope (or should we inaugurate Margaret Atwood into the canon of classic poets?⁸⁶), Agamemnon’s passion for her virtue, faithfulness and constancy do suggest a template for the ‘ideal’ wife. Similarly, it could be argued that Odysseus exemplifies the ideal and devoted husband—passing up invitations to immortality from not one but two goddesses on his way home. That one of these goddesses—Circe—is Medea’s aunt, invites conjecture of how Odysseus might handle marriage to one of the women in the line of Helios... but no, his story is to be the ideal husband to the ideal wife. Perhaps his cunning is not a match for the occult powers of Medea or Circe—in any case, it is left to Achilles to marry into and match this line of women.

Virtue, faithfulness, constancy... Does this describe Medea? No more, it must be said, than striving tirelessly to get home describes Achilles. They both, however, are true to their individual and heroic *thumos*. Achilles, as we know, beats down his anger so that he can avenge the death of Patroclus and ultimately achieves mastery over it in his negotiation with Priam. Priam offers ransom in exchange for Hector’s body and Achilles responds,

“No more, old man, don’t tempt my wrath, not now!
My own mind’s made up to give you back your son.
A messenger brought me word from Zeus—my mother,
Thetis who bore me, The Old Man of the Sea’s daughter.

⁸⁵ Homer *Od.* 11.500-10.

⁸⁶ Atwood’s reimagining of Penelope’s story *The Penelopiad* is a novel and a play. See also Ovid, *Heroides* 1.

And what's more, I can see through you Priam—
No hiding facts from me: one of the gods
Has led you down to Achaea's fast ships.
No man alive, not even a rugged young fighter,
Would dare venture into our camp. Never—
How could he slip past the sentries unchallenged?
Or shoot back the bolt of my gates with so much ease?

So don't anger me now. Don't stir my raging heart still more.
Or under my own roof I may not spare your life, old man—
Suppliant that you are—may break the laws of Zeus!"
(Homer *Il.* 24—655-70)

Medea has no direct correlation to this action but we may perhaps infer the same from various aspects of her full story. After her escape from Corinth, she does go to Aegeus in Athens and bears him a son, Medos. It is the return and recognition of Theseus that precipitates the next chapter. Medea immediately sees Theseus as a threat to the future that she has planned for Medos—to become king of Athens. She attempts to eliminate this threat by sending Theseus off to do battle with the Marathonian Bull. However, when he returns victorious, she devises a more personal fate, one that makes use of her own particular talents—she decides to poison him⁸⁷. The plot is thwarted when Aegeus recognizes Theseus as his son and dashes the poisoned cup from his hand. Medea is on the run once again. She stops long enough to give name (through her son) to the Medes and the land of Media, but her heroic journey must be completed.

Ultimately, her saga is a homecoming, a *nostos*, and it is by taking her myth as a whole that we might see how she is deemed an acceptable match for Achilles. When she leaves her native Colchis, she betrays her father, Aeetes, to abet Jason's escape. She murders (or at least plans and facilitates—depending on the version—the murder of) her brother. Throughout her adventures she demonstrates a heroic, single-minded drive to retain and repair her honour; she invokes her ancestors and their heroic and semi-divine lineage to witness, sanctify, and lend strength to her actions,

⁸⁷ As we saw in *After Medea*.

Well, Medea, spare none of the things you know, none of your schemings and devices. Advance to the terrible! Now it's a test of courage. You see what they're doing to you? You mustn't be laughed at by these Sisyphian marriages of Jason. Since your father was noble, and his father, the Sun—You know how. (Eur *Med.* 400-5)

This is a heroic manifesto, a call to arms executed in front of her sisters in disenfranchisement, the chorus of Corinthian women. Despite being a woman, foreigner, and newly rejected wife, she will prevail. The cost of her passion is high—but is it greater than any of her male counterparts? Achilles' withdrawal and re-entry into the Trojan conflict leaves a wake of destruction; none of Odysseus' shipmates returns to Ithaca; and Heracles, too, wreaks havoc on his children. These heroes elevate through acts of greatness—Heracles, his labours; Odysseus returns and vanquishes his wife's parasitic suitors; and Achilles defeats Hector and then repatriates his body. Is there though, some expiation to achieve, some action that will bring restitutive grace to Medea?

According to Apollodorus, in one tradition, “Medea came unknown to Colchis, and finding that Aeetes had been deposed by his brother Perses, she killed Perses and restored the kingdom to her father.” (Apollodorus 1.9.28). She returns home “unknown”—certainly in this she is more Odysseus than Penelope, more the hero than the wife. We have no details about the restoration of her father to the throne but we can perhaps infer that there is some humility learned; it is an act in direct contrast to her earlier impulsive betrayal. Perhaps she achieves mastery over her *thumos*, her passionate character, to do this for her father but she has not lost her *thumos*—after all, “she kills Perses”—in order to restore her father. She is as forceful, violent, and inflexible as she has been since we first met her—her heroic character is intact.

What then, are we to make of this wedding in the afterlife? This is not the “ideal marriage” of Odysseus and Penelope. There is no Penelope in the union. Medea wed to Achilles is a marriage of two heroic spirits. Medea batters at ideal conceptions of ‘heroic’ and ‘feminine’. This marriage, should it take place, will of necessity, shatter old concepts of marriage and the roles within marriage. There is no account of this marriage; in fact, the allusions to it are somewhat sketchy. To entertain the possibility of

this marriage, however, opens a door to the idea of equality in marriage that is far more modern than its origins.

Medea: bride of Achilles. Does this marriage invoke images of everlasting love? The ultimate war between the sexes? Or some negotiated Switzerland of equals? It would at least, one imagines, not be a boring union but ripe material for drama.

Chapter 8.

Conclusion

Resuscitating the various threads of Medea's mythical biography while holding all the while the notion that she may occupy a role alongside other traditional epic heroes, the analogues compound and grow. As this part of the inquiry draws to a close, there is (as so often in dealing with ancient sources) a deep yearning that we had more, obviously the original tragedies by the great tragedians—but this is so often the case. Beyond that though, even allusions to the elements of the story would go a great distance toward satisfying some of our hanging questions. Having seen Medea's character evolve from the young maiden that we first encounter, to the threatening presence who is forced into exile wherever she lands, one can't help but wonder what her final chapters might look like. In particular, the mysterious *nostoi*.

When Odysseus returns to Ithaca, he comes in disguise to find his household all but usurped; the orderly refuge that is what home represents teeters on the brink of complete collapse. That he has been mellowed by the years is evident in his prudent, clandestine, arrival; that he is still the hero, capable of commanding his home and household is graphically painted by the carnage visited on the suitors and unfaithful servants. Medea, too, must have been hewn and shaped by experience. We know from the incident with Pelias that she is capable of disguise; we know too, that after Jason's betrayal she is a sadder but wiser woman, unlikely to expose herself to danger without first scouting the field. It is certainly possible, if not likely, that Medea, like her proposed Homeric analogue, would return to the land of Colchis in the assumed guise of a person of lower station—a serving woman or travelling crone. Upon discovering that her home, as with Odysseus' Ithaca, is upended, that the throne has been usurped and that, as in Hamlet's Denmark, an evil uncle wears the crown—what would this woman 'of many turns' do then? According to the sparse sources we have, she does what heroes do—she slays the usurper and restores the crown.

Achilles never gets there, he never sees his father through eyes steeped in experience. His repatriation must be imagined, by him and by us, through his encounter with Priam. Odysseus does regain his father, Laertes; it is a strained and strange encounter that, once identities have been established, ends well enough. Even the reconciliation between Odysseus and Penelope—as fraught and complicated with levels of expectation and suspicions of betrayal as it is—the negotiation between these two worthies is but a glimmer of what must necessarily transpire in a meeting between Medea and Aeetes. If we grant Medea an equal measure of *metis* as Odysseus (and who but she could rival his notorious cunning?), and imagine for her a slow insinuation into the world of Colchis—complete with her version of swineherd, dog, and bow—where does it all lead but to some monumental scene between father and daughter? Medea’s reconciliation with her father has a recognizable counterpart in the Priam/Achilles episode—a father meeting with the killer of his son. With Medea and Aeetes, though, the heat is turned up to a boil because the murderer, Medea, is also Aeetes’ daughter. The double nature of this reconciliation makes it doubly difficult, and as a result doubly complex and dramatic.

Looking to Penelope and Odysseus as an example of effective reunion, the action comes first. Although Odysseus and Penelope meet and have a significant conversation before the final *anagnorisis*, it is not until the political house has been restored that the personal reunion is attempted. In searching for an analogue with Medea and Aeetes, following the lead of the *Odyssey* seems a fruitful plan. The steps might include the following: Aeetes in distress—either in prison or in hiding—somehow powerless and threatened by his brother’s rule; there should be an element of urgency, in the same way that Penelope’s tapestry ruse has been exposed and she is being forced to make a decision soon, so too with Aeetes—perhaps he has been given a set time to decide on exile or execution and that time is now up; in a preliminary conversation between the two (Aeetes and Medea) there should be a glimmer of hope, a hint that there might be a saviour out there—“I had a daughter once who was skilled in these arts... She could save me now. But she abandoned me years ago...”; and there should be an identifying artifact—in the same way that Odysseus’ bow is brought out, some item from the pre-Jason past should become instrumental in the rescue of Aeetes—perhaps something to do with the fire-breathing bulls; and finally, Medea must

defeat and slay her uncle, restore the crown and scepter to Aeetes and then, as supplicant, ask for reinstatement and sanctuary from her father. This is a quick sketch to show a possible form for the drama; there are other ways for it to progress but following Homer seems a prudent choice. In Homer, too, the way back for Penelope and Odysseus is not smooth, nor should it be for Aeetes and Medea, as much as she may acknowledge her father's rightful office, she must not lose her spirit—she will always remain the heroic, self-determining Medea that we have come to know.

We know that Achilles will overcome his anger. We know that Odysseus will reach his home. We know too, that Heracles, at the end of his labours, achieves his apotheosis. Knowing the ends of these epic heroes at the outset of their stories colours our understanding of their actions. Can it be any different with Medea? If Euripides' *Medea* were merely one episode in her life, if some epic told us in its opening lines that 'the wheeling seasons would bring around the year that Medea would reach her home in Colchis...', we would know that what has become identifying and canonical—the murder of her children—is only a step on the journey. It is important to reiterate that this proposal is not based on fantasy. This story exists, these incidents have been told—they have been lost over time but they were part of an ancient tradition, the story of the missing Medea.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Achilles' Choice

In Bernard Knox's article, "Achilles", he proposes Achilles as "the model for the tragic hero of the Sophoclean stage; his stubborn, passionate devotion to an ideal image of self is the same force that drives Antigone, Oedipus, Ajax, and Philoctetes to the fulfillment of their destinies." (149). I will examine the possibility that the heroic journey of Achilles is rather one from instinctual action and rage toward self-consciousness. This idea is in contrast to Knox's "devotion to an ideal image of self", and also to the heroic journey undertaken by Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. Odysseus represents a single-minded hero, overcoming obstacles, sometimes detained or diverted, but never wavering from his fundamental nature and goal. Achilles on the other hand, by nature a warrior, finds himself (by fate or design) withdrawn from the war. In conflict with his nature, he enters a period of enforced reflection. By the time the Achaean embassy arrives in *Iliad* 9, the rage of Achilles is contained, yet he still remains withdrawn from the war; he rejects the worldly prizes offered, and instead proposes a new hierarchy, one where the prime value cannot be measured materially but is of a completely different kind—life itself. When Achilles finally meets Hector on the battlefield, Hector is outfitted in Achilles' armor and as such, Achilles is essentially facing (seeing) himself, or perhaps a former self. The hero must battle himself. Knowing the weaknesses of the armor so well, he metaphorically kills himself, while literally killing Hector. His self-knowledge finally becomes conscious when he confronts Priam and exercises restraint; compassion gains supremacy over rage. Socrates tells us "the unexamined life is not worth living" (*Apol.* 38a). Achilles, with his twin fates and enforced inaction, has both the opportunity and the impetus to examine his life. The fruits of this examination provide us with perhaps the first self-consciously transformed literary hero.

Whether Antigone, Oedipus, Ajax, and Philoctetes are devoted to an "ideal image of self" is the subject for another paper. The spirit of this assessment, however, must be examined. The words 'ideal' and 'image' both carry implications that other options exist. 'Ideal' suggests a platonically unachievable 'other' to which the entity strives or aspires; 'image', on the other hand, has connotations of either self-deception or at least subjectivity. It seems, in the case of the Sophoclean characters, more likely that they

are in fact following their own nature: Oedipus vows to rid Thebes of pollution; Antigone insists on the primacy of religious values. These seem not to be options that the characters choose, but manifestations of who they are which in turn lead to their respective tragedies—self-knowledge and choice come later.

Unlike the Sophoclean protagonists or Odysseus, Achilles, if only briefly, falls outside this tradition. Odysseus, despite his Homeric designation as “*polutropos*”, does not intentionally swerve or deviate from his course. Whenever obstacles or challenges block his path he may strategize to get around them, but his intention never wavers. We are told in *Odyssey* 1, how he is “driven time and again off course... his heart set on his wife and his return” (1.2-15). Odysseus’ heroism derives from this single-minded devotion to achieving his goal and the ingenuity and prowess he employs to fulfill this end on which his heart is set. The obstacles are not insignificant: journeys to the underworld, outsmarting mythical monsters, overcoming the temptation of sirens and goddesses; but the will of Odysseus is strong enough to carry him through all these. It is only on the island of Circe that Odysseus seems to lose himself. He spends a year in the company of the goddess until his men remind him that his goal is ‘home’ (10.515). Even this delay, however, does not seem laced with the consciousness that Achilles must carry. Unlike Odysseus (or Oedipus or Antigone for that matter), Achilles has no guiding objective—no home and wife to head inexorably toward. Instead, Achilles has two fates, one short and one long; a nature that fulfills itself in battle, and a war that is not his and is quickly losing its luster—more than enough to make a hero angry.

“Sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles,” Homer implores in the first line of *The Iliad*. What is this rage, and why does it merit a whole epic? Perhaps it is not the rage but the release from it that is being sung. The beginnings of self-consciousness glimmer early in the poem. Achilles is overcome by his rage in Book 1 when Agamemnon steals his prize, Briseis. The instant and natural manifestation of this rage is to fight—Achilles, the great warrior, will not lose if he fights. Responding to Agamemnon’s affront, Achilles wrestles with his own “racing spirit (*thumos*) [which] veered back and forth” (1.255); he is struggling with himself. He is, after all, a man of action—his nature is to act. His instinctual nature wins out, and as he draws his sword to kill Agamemnon Athena sweeps in and stops him. Although Achilles submits to the will of the gods, his rage does not abate and we are left with a clear sense that had this intervention not occurred,

Agamemnon would lie dead. Achilles goes on to vent his rage, belittling Agamemnon with no compunction and finally vowing to abstain from the war (1.280). This voluntary withdrawal comes at no small cost to Achilles. He is denying his essential character—that of a warrior: “day after day he ground his heart out, waiting there, yearning, always yearning for battle cries and combat” (1.585). This is clearly reminiscent of Odysseus restrained from his true nature and goal on Calypso’s island where he is discovered sitting on a headland, “wrenching his heart with sobs and groans and anguish, gazing out over the barren sea with blinding tears.”(Od. 5.95) Without his purpose and his heart, what is a man? Later, in *Iliad* 6, we hear Achilles’ Trojan counterpart Hector articulate clearly this sense of living one’s true life: “But I would die of shame... if I would shrink from battle now, a coward. Nor does the spirit urge me on that way” (*Il.* 6.523). These are heroes of the heroic age; they have strong natures and are driven to fulfill them. Achilles’ warrior heart is torn and wracked with anguish as he sits in his tent avoiding the war.

The rage that begins Achilles’ stasis is born of humiliation—his prize is taken from him. When the Achaeans are desperate for help, even Agamemnon admits his error and constitutes an embassy, armed with a glittering list of inducements (including Briseis, the inciting fulcrum of the dispute), all proffered to win Achilles back. It is here that the first crack appears in the value structure of Achilles. If, as he asserts at length in Book 1, the affront was to his material status, or even the devotional love he declares for Briseis (9.419)—surely these objections are answered by the embassy and a traditional, single-minded hero would leap at this chance to re-claim his nature.

In fact, when the embassy first arrives, Achilles seems outside himself and far from rage. Strumming on his lyre, singing about heroes, he is the image of Apollonian clarity and far from the tempestuous Dionysian that we saw in Book 1. Achilles is “Singing the famous deeds of fighting heroes...” (9.228). The content of these songs must celebrate acts of courage, heroism, and ultimately death—prime topics for a man weighing his fates. By withdrawing from his natural realm, that of the warrior, Achilles develops a set of values more in line with his alternate, home-body fate. Here Achilles the philosopher-poet provides the first glimpse of a new kind of hero: “I say no wealth is worth my life... a man’s life breath cannot come back again—no raiders in force, no trading brings it back, once it slips through a man’s clenched teeth” (9.488—498).

This surely is a new stance from the man who complains so bitterly of Agamemnon's selfish division of the spoils of combat. No longer the man of action, Achilles arrives at a new measure for what is of value—a warrior-nature would put courage, fighting prowess and war booty ahead of a quiet life. Perhaps the reflective nature of artistic endeavour has led to this insight, singing and repeating the inevitable trajectory of all mortals: we live and then we die. We know that when Odysseus repeats Agamemnon's offered catalogue of riches, Achilles responds in this completely new and unexpected way. The new philosophy Achilles unveils is not capricious; in fact he will repeat it in *The Odyssey* when he says to Odysseus, "No winning words about death to *me*, shining Odysseus! By god, I'd rather slave on earth for another man—some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—than rule down here over all the breathless dead" (11.555).

Placing life at the top of the hierarchy of values also throws new light on the famous twin fates of Achilles. Immediately following his declaration of values, Achilles recalls his two fates. To claim undying fame Achilles must fight and die at Troy; however, if he leaves the war, his fame will die but he will sail home to a long and happy life. Achilles has rejected the calculus of booty (*geras*), but has he rejected fame (*kleos*) too? Phoenix offers glory in the next instant, recalling the hero Meleager and his strikingly similar story. But Achilles is ahead of this temptation. He has sung through the heroic songs and has already rejected the attraction of glory in favour of life. He answers, "what do I need with honour such as that?" (9.740). Ajax tries a final appeal, invoking law and the bonds of brothers in arms. Achilles rejects this approach as well, although he seems to be swayed somewhat, to the extent that he abandons the idea of immediate departure. Instead of sailing home immediately, Achilles reframes his vow and declares that he will not enter the war until Hector has fought his way to Achilles' own camp where Hector will be "stopped dead in his tracks" (9.800).

By staying out of the war yet again, Achilles ensures that he will have more time to ponder his choice—the choice of his fate. This choice is uniquely his and puts him in company of more modern and self-reflective heroes like Hamlet. When Hector, who exemplifies classical heroism, considers fate he claims, "No man will hurl me down to Death, against my fate. And fate? No one alive has ever escaped it, neither brave man or coward, I tell you—it's born with us the day that we are born." (6.581). There is a vast

difference between Hector's assessment of fate and Hamlet's debate with himself about his noblest course of action. Achilles, however, is born with two fates and he, like Hamlet, must choose—but before he chooses he will weigh his options.

Achilles is not yet ready to re-enter the war, which could seal his fate. Perhaps he is also unwilling to relinquish the novel luxury of the philosopher, dangling in the decadence of choice as long as he can. He knows that his fate (if he opts for everlasting fame) is tied to Hector and the fall of Troy. The question re-presents itself when the leaders of the Achaeans are all wounded, the troops in disarray, and Patroclus petitions Achilles to fight in his stead. Contained in this petition is an unthinkable proposition. Patroclus wonders if it is the prophecy coupled with cowardice that keeps Achilles from fighting (16.41). To a hero of Achilles' stature the question of cowardice is anathema. In fact it is the very vice that Achilles accuses Agamemnon of with great frequency and derision. But the questioning of his character seems not to trouble Achilles—he brushes the notion aside and stands (or hides?) behind his vow. Patroclus offers potential release from this dilemma, offering himself as surrogate to fight in Achilles' place. This solution has the double benefit of delaying Achilles' choice and possibly ending the battle. Patroclus will dress in Achilles' armour and enter the battle. In fact, to all outward appearances, Patroclus will be Achilles. Patroclus is allowed to fight but Achilles insists on one condition—that Patroclus must stay away from Troy. The plot device is clear. Patroclus is warned; it will be his mistake that leads to his death. Achilles prays to Zeus for his safe return, not wanting to jeopardize his own choice of fate.

All prayers are heard but only some are answered. The gods ensure Hector's victory. Now all forces conspire to bring Achilles to his choice. Patroclus lies expiring on the ground but his vision is clear: Achilles will come to kill Hector (16.1000). The crucial point of this encounter, from the standpoint of Achilles' self-consciousness, is that Hector takes Achilles' armour from Patroclus. Armour that is sufficient to withstand the rigours of battle necessarily obscures the personality and physiognomy of the person wearing it. Achilles' armour is among the best, comprehensive and impregnable, and when Hector puts it on he will look like the familiar figure of Achilles. In modern warfare the uniform is exactly that—one form; it obscures identity and individuality and creates the faceless soldier. Achilles' armour is exactly the opposite; it does not lump him in with the mass; rather it is notorious, easily recognizable and unique. Hector in Achilles' armour

assumes the outward persona, or at least the mask of Achilles. Although Homer does not emphasize any confusion in identity due to the change in armour, there are several indications that appropriating and wearing Achilles' armour gives Hector a new and triumphant sense of himself: "Hector himself, strapped in Achilles' armor, swaggers on in glory" (17.542). It is likely (and fated) that Achilles will defeat Hector no matter what armour either wears, but in the description of the confrontation, the armour becomes crucial. Before that can occur however, it remains for Achilles to re-enter the battle.

If the death of Patroclus is the fulcrum, emotion is the lever that pries Achilles from self-absorption. Achilles is somewhat disingenuous when he sends Patroclus into battle—he knows it will not be the final act of the war. He knows Troy will not fall to Patroclus: "No, time and time again his mother Thetis told him this was not to be" (17.475). Achilles sends Patroclus to fight in full confidence that he will return unharmed. As the battle wears on and time passes, however, Achilles' confidence erodes. He finds himself in that morass common to philosophers, an agony of doubt: "he probed his own great heart: 'Why, why... but why?'"(17.5-8). With "such fears... churning through his mind" (17.15), Achilles is fighting in territory unfamiliar to his nature. He is, after all, a warrior and therefore a man of action, not a man given to reflection. We know who we are by what we do: character is revealed by action; action is precipitated by conflict. Achilles has been in conflict with himself from the beginning but has been unable to recognize this. The first conflict comes in the guise of Agamemnon and the slight of the appropriated prize, and the next in the guise of a vow that keeps him from battle. Primarily though, he has been wrestling with the question of his fate: to die or not to die. It is the death of Patroclus that now propels him into battle. He is overcome by grief, yes, but surely it is self-loathing that drives him to fight. Achilles speaks to his mother of his grief, groaning, "I wish you'd lingered deep with the deathless sea-nymphs, lived at ease, and Peleus carried home a mortal bride."(18.100). In other words, 'I wish I'd never been born'. As a result of his gamble he must now account for the life of his friend. As we have seen, Achilles will have the opportunity to face himself in battle; the new Achilles, seasoned by contemplation and self-awareness will confront the old, familiar, fighting machine.

Achilles is now ready to re-enter the battle, ready to re-assume his nature in full consciousness of the ramification of his decision. He says as much to his mother in

Book 18, exclaiming, “But now, as it is, sorrows, unending sorrows must surge within your heart as well—for your own son’s death.”(18.102). Achilles is once again afforded time to reconsider (he must wait for new armour). This time though he does not indulge in doubt or alternatives. He smolders, primed and ready. When he finally faces Hector in Book 22, Achilles is facing himself, and he charges without hesitation, fully embodying his warrior nature. In the midst of the charge, assessing his foe in the instant, Achilles searches for where best to strike and discovers “The rest of his [Hector’s] flesh seemed all encased in armor, burnished, brazen.” Achilles realizes that he is seeing his own armour, “armor that Hector stripped from strong Patroclus when he killed him...”. He knows this armour as he knows himself—knows the weakest point, knows where to attack: “one spot lay exposed, where collarbones lift the neck off the shoulders, the open throat, where the end of life comes quickest—*there* as Hector charged in fury, brilliant Achilles drove his spear” (22.378-385). His former weakness becomes his strength as he drives home his spear. Hector manages to gasp out a plea for compassion before he dies; he begs for the repatriation of his remains and the rites that will ease him to the underworld. Achilles, however, is not yet ready for compassion and this victory is not the end of the story. Achilles is victorious in a realm where he would always be expected to win; his challenge has never been in the realm of battle. As we are told from the very first line, Achilles must struggle with himself and vanquish his weakness... his rage.

Achilles’ rage is rage against his fate; against the ‘choice’ he must make and, in kinship with all who are mortal, against the too short life that is granted. This rage against fate is the overwhelming passion and drive that ennoble Achilles and affords him the status of tragic hero. Achilles brings vengeance to the man who kills Patroclus: a life for a life. He seals his fate and regains his heroic nature. Why then is the story not finished? His fury rages on. Achilles’ quarrel is not with Hector (although he must avenge his folly of sending Patroclus to his death). Certainly it is not with Troy, it never has been. His struggle is to come to grips with his fate and this leads to what can only be regarded as the *hamartia* of the tragic hero: that he sends Patroclus into battle alone. We know he imagines (hopes?) that Patroclus will drive the Trojans from the ships and come back unharmed, but he is mistaken and Patroclus dies. Perhaps when Achilles dispatches Patroclus he is just buying time; perhaps he is imagining that quiet, long, anonymous life in Phthia. Whatever his imaginings, we know he is wracked with doubt.

We know too that when he hears of Patroclus' death he is overcome with grief and transported by rage—a rage that does not dissipate with either vengeance or memorial rites. If this is Achilles' *hamartia*—to adopt Aristotle's tragic scheme—what then are his *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*?

Achilles' *peripeteia* occurs with the death of Patroclus. Achilles is transformed from the lyre-strumming philosopher, contemplating a triumphant return and a long life with his friends and family, to the rage-filled, vengeance-seeking warrior who fulfills his nature and seals his fate. In order to be a true tragic hero, to excite emotions and their catharsis in the audience, Achilles must achieve some recognition, an *anagnorisis*, a slice of self-knowledge that the reader can share. Still seething and unresolved, Achilles is told by his mother that Zeus requires him to return Hector's body. He agrees to the condition but has no real sense what it will take to fulfill his agreement and no idea who will come to claim the body. It is Priam. Priam appears within Achilles' tent, clutches Achilles' knees and kisses his hand, the same hand that killed Priam's son. This act of humility from Priam is extraordinary and Achilles takes it in. Priam does not rage or attempt vengeance. Instead he calls for compassion and conjures not the difference of enemies, but the kinship of men—of fathers and sons and the commonality of woe that a father feels for a son who dies too young. Achilles recognizes fellowship and pain, mortality and family and he sees these things in himself and his own father as clearly as he sees them in Priam and Hector. Is this the *anagnorisis* of Achilles? Although this recognition takes Achilles some distance toward accepting his fate (and the fate of all mortals—death), he has yet to arrive at the self-knowledge that is particular to him. He has yet to recognize and transform his rage.

At the beginning of the epic, Achilles' rage is triggered by Agamemnon. Only the gods prevent him from inflicting the fruits of his rage. When Achilles returns to the battle his rage is his strength and it makes him ruthless, effective, and invincible as a warrior. Rage is also Achilles' weakness; it cripples him, blinds him, and takes him away from his true nature. Achilles spends long days contemplating his rage and its consequences. Now, softened by emotion and the memory of his father, Achilles feels compassion for Priam. Achilles tries to extend the kinship, inviting Priam to rise from his knees and telling him to buck up and bear the common sorrow of humanity. Priam, perhaps sensing this softening, reminds Achilles of the ransom that awaits and asks to see

Hector's body. In this instant, Achilles feels his rage rising and has a flash of self-knowledge: "A dark glance—and the headstrong runner answered, 'No more, old man, don't tempt my wrath, not now!'" (24.655). Here is Achilles' *anagnorisis*. This is recognition, recognition not of some deed done or undone, but of himself and his nature; recognition of the frailty and fallibility that is the essence of being human. This time no god intervenes to stop his rage. This time Achilles' self-awareness acts the part of the gods. This recognition allows Achilles to transform from impetuosity to wisdom, from instinct to consciousness, or perhaps more simply, from immaturity to maturity. Achilles goes on to detail his reasoning, solidifying the impression that he has attained true self-knowledge. He warns that if Priam should see Hector's body it might enflame Priam's anger—and if Priam becomes angry, then Achilles will not be able to contain his own rage. Achilles acts on his newly achieved wisdom by having servants wrap Hector's body, allowing Achilles and Priam to remain in a place of common humanity instead of having their differences come to the fore.

Achilles, throughout the epic, seems to be steered inexorably toward this end—the short but fame-filled life that will live forever in the minds of men. Does Achilles really have two fates? Is there really any choice? We will never know, but what we can say with some certainty is that Achilles believes he has a choice. He weighs these options carefully and when he acts, he acts decisively, and through his deliberations, he acts with a deeper knowledge of himself. Achilles, at the end, comes to a more profound humanity than is common for a man of the heroic age as modeled by Odysseus; he is self-aware and compassionate—qualities more readily thought to belong to modern heroes. At the end of his essay, Knox reminds us that Socrates invokes the name of Achilles in his *apologia*. Perhaps Achilles' enduring fame is built on more than his skill with a spear and superior prowess as a great warrior, more even than his reputation as the man who vanquished the great Hector. Perhaps Achilles is in fact a prototype for the examined life that Socrates holds to be the only life worth living.

Appendix B.

The Women of Troy

During my research, I was afforded the opportunity to adapt and direct a production of Euripides' *Women of Troy*. It seemed a fantastic chance to put some of what I had been exploring academically to a practical test and a great privilege to bring together this study and my lifework in the theatre through a production of *Women of Troy*. Of course, Euripides' tragedy is available in many fine translations and adaptations, but for two main reasons I wanted to create my own.

First, it seemed a way to become intimate with the structural and narrative workings of one of the plays by an acknowledged master. Euripides wrote both *Women of Troy* and *Medea*. By actually getting inside the play, trying to express the characters' reality through dialogue while sitting safely within the classical framework of an ancient master—well, it's kind of like learning to ride a bike with the security of training wheels, you may wobble and occasionally lose your balance but rarely will you fall so hard that serious injury will result. Second, by consulting the original Greek, I had the chance to see at first hand how the language worked. It was this in-depth examination that led to one of the most distinctive elements of my version, the extraordinary and extravagant compound words. As I saw how the Greek language made new words with compound meaning out of two nonrelated root words, it occurred to me that this could bring fresh eyes and ears to this well-known material. It also became a way to indicate rhythm of speech, and along with the absence of punctuation (as we know in the original manuscripts and papyri there are next to no punctuation indications), it ensured a closer reading and examination of the text.

For methodology I loosely followed a format recommended by Eric Overmyer⁸⁸. He proposes taking ten translations, reading twenty lines at a time from all of them, writing the twenty lines oneself, and then checking to see if anything essential is missing. I started out using this process but soon developed a language and presentation that

⁸⁸ Divine Fire (21)

rendered the various English language versions less useful; I began to rely almost exclusively on David Kovacs' translation (with its Greek counterpart) in the Loeb edition, who summarizes his method as follows: "I have translated into prose, as literally as respect for English idiom allowed."⁸⁹

Working first on the adaptation, and then on the production, the strength of the original play revealed itself time and again. With the adaptation, my attempt was to make the language fresh and modern while retaining a sense of the poetry and the formal structure of the original. The centrality of *agon* or 'contest' that is one of the hallmarks of ancient Greek theatre—the laying out of positions and the methodical rebuttal that follows—has been fascinating to discover and work with. The way that these arguments manufacture emotion through the actors, the way language delivers emotion through story to the audience—it has been a revelation to feel this ancient machinery come to life once again.

One of the discoveries about staging that came as a result of the formal structure of the piece is that too much movement on the part of the actors becomes distracting. As noted above, it is the contest between an argument and its rebuttal that carries emotional weight. We, the audience, want to follow these verbal volleys carefully, and excessive movement becomes distracting.

The Chorus, as always in a modern conception, is a challenge. I decided to have three individuals with common concerns but distinctive personalities. This allowed a collective, as well as an individual, point of view on the proceedings. As the action of the play drives toward the truly tragic fate of these young women, giving them individuality also enhances the empathic response from the audience. One of the threads of the original that I decided to pull out and make stronger is a disintegration of belief in the gods and their benevolent involvement in the lives of mortals. This theme seemed pertinent from a retrospective view of ancient Athens and the cultural trajectory of the times, and also as a relevant, if not essential, caution for our own times of various fundamentalisms.

⁸⁹ Kovacs, D. (trans.) Euripides. *Trojan Women, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Ion*. Cambridge, MA: 1999.

Finally, a word about the numerous pop culture references and quotes sprinkled throughout this version. Working with students, there is a consequent energy that is natural, exuberant and irrepressible. It was the desire to encourage that energy, to find a contemporary access point for student actors and modern audiences, that inspired the inclusion of these references. I wanted to find a way to achieve the classical impact of the ancient Trojan war and to run it through a contemporary filter so that we could hear and feel it afresh.

Here is that version of *The Women of Troy*. Many of the discoveries I made through this process informed my work on *The Daughters of Pelias*.

The Women of Troy:
A version after Euripides

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Cast

POSEIDON

ATHENA

HECUBA

LACEY (daughter of Hecuba and chorus)

LYZA (daughter of Hecuba and chorus)

LIZZY (daughter of Hecuba and chorus)

TALTHYBIUS (*Greek herald*)

CASSANDRA (daughter of Hecuba)

ANDROMACHE (wife of the deceased Hector, mother of Astyanax)

MENELAUS (husband of Helen; Greek captain)

HELEN

The Play

(In the dark of night a fire flickers high above. It is a city in flames but far away. It is Troy burning. Smoke drifts, obscuring what light the moon provides.

A spray of water. Poseidon silhouetted by the moon and lit by the flickering flames appears from the sea.

Silence.

He stands dripping—tears...? or the sea dripping off him?)

POSEIDON: This was my city I built it They burnt it
Destroyed the walls that I erected Me and Apollo
The Greeks brought their war to Troy Destroyed beauty Destroyed
culture
I come from the waves to see this smoking ruin
I am Poseidon

HECUBA: (moans)

POSEIDON: Women mourn the loss of men No more husbands no more sons
Gods mourn the loss of culture No more temples no more sacrifices

HECUBA: O! Oooo!

POSEIDON: You know the story Still famous The wooden horse belly burbling
with treachery Spews its foul bile of Greek sneakspears into the
party that was Troy
All men slaughtered
Priam dead on the steps of the temple
Zeus' temple
Hector dead long before
Dead men all All men dead
All women adrift Then captured Now divvied up
Greeks like children after a dimestore robbery All the pretty candies
I want that one I want that one

HECUBA: O

POSEIDON: I want that one I want that one
That one is a virgin I want her even more
She's mine She's mine Agamemnon
I want that one I want that one
I'll take the old Queen Odysseus
I want that one I want that one
I'll take the one that shared the bed of the 'hero' my father destroyed
She looks tasty Neoptolemus son of Achilles

I want that one I want that one
 He gets Helen Menelaus
 Of course He gets Helen That's the deal
 Greeks like children smash my city Nestkicking eggstomping brats
 I built it They burnt it
 Beautiful Troy
 Gone Troy gone

HECUBA: o

POSEIDON: Sleep while you can Griefsleep Restless but sleep still in grief
(enter Athena)

ATHENA: Brother of my father

POSEIDON:

ATHENA: Uncle

POSEIDON: ... Athena

ATHENA: May I speak

POSEIDON:

ATHENA: I feel your anger I know you're mad but listen just
 Listen I want your help The Greeks must pay

POSEIDON: Flip flop girl You won the war for them
 This smoke rises from your flame

ATHENA: They are too proud They show no respect
 Priam slain on Zeusdad's steps
 And Cassandra

POSEIDON: I saw Cassandra farseeinggirl Pulled from sanctuary in your temple

ATHENA: And not a peep Not a Greekpeep whisper at the outrage
 Ten years war Ten years gone
 Fightingandkilling and winning through me
 Paris takes Helen Aphrodite's WhoreHelen
 I get her back Back for the Greeks
 Death of Achilles
 Death of so many
 But Victory through me I gave them Victory
 Menelaus victorious Agamemnon too Through me
 And what No offerings No prayers Desecration instead
 Not only my temple Zeusdad's too
 They must pay They must learn

POSEIDON: What from me

ATHENA: Great storm Boatsmashing waves
 Wreckage and carnage and bodiesonrocks

POSEIDON: Done Good as

ATHENA: I get some lightning Zeusdad said Some bolts I can hurl
 Zeusdad's mad too
 Greeks gonna pay

(she exits)

HECUBA: o

POSEIDON: Oh people
 Gone Troy gone
 Gods are not happy
 Piperpaid Good as

Saddest of women Deepest of grief
 Rise up now
 It is day

(Sunburst)

HECUBA: Up *i can't*
 Up *no*
 Get up *please no hurts hurts too much*
 Get Up QUEEN *stones are my bed*
 I'm up
 Queen of Troy Mother of fifty Mother of a
 Hundred all dead all
 Boys dead
 Sons Brothers Fathers husbands
 Husband
 mine
 dead
 mine
 grief
 mine

HELEN WHORE HELEN you brought this This is yours
 Ten years ago
 I was still sweet The world was bright
 Paris won Helen That's what he said Aphrodite's reward
 Reward from the Lovegod
 Who could refuse
 Helen WhoreHelen
 Manmagnet Helen The whirlwind you stir
 Destruction your beautyproof Must constantly prove
 I am most beautiful
 Helen Whorehelen

Brought Greeks trailing after

lustmad followtheircocks
OarsweptGreekboats Our beach Harbour breeched
WAR
Ten years
War
Whirlwind destruction Proof for manmagnet Helen
Blood spurting fleshrending eyegouging war
Hector my heroson killed by Achilles
All my sons
all my sons
Too many mendeadead
Warwithoutend

Then suddenly finally
No warning at all
Gone
Greeksgone

Gone Aretheygone
No Greeks to be seen
No Greekboats in harbour
No Greekytents on shore
Can it be canitbe canitbe

We Won
TEN YEARS
We Won
O gods we won!
WE WON
Last night
Party
Hornsblow Dancenow Partydressflirt and spark
Bandplays pantiesdamp feel the flush Oh pretty now
Pretty
then

GREEKS

Damn wooden horse
killed me killed my sons

Hector Paris Deiphobus Helenus Polydorus Troilus Polites Hippotheus
Kebriones Agathon Mentor Chromius Doryclus Democoon Antiphus
Lycaon Pammon Dius Isus Antiphones Echemmon
Those are just mine

husband gone gone
Ache
To the stonebones bonesache

gone Troy gone

(She starts to hum a simple tune. Three young women—the CHORUS—in party dresses emerge and join her in the song. It is a waltz or simple dance rhythm—they sway in time to the music.)

HECUBA: Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

CHORUS: Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

HECUBA and CHORUS: Gone Troy gone

(The song becomes a round, weaving the names of the dead sons of Hecuba through the refrain of Gone Troy gone.)

HECUBA: Oh my daughters Songdance partydress makeup runs
Laodice Lysimache Lysianassa you three You three
Lacey and Lyza and Lizzy
We must prepare Spoils of war

LYZA: We

LACEY: WE

HECUBA: We

LIZZY: Yes Lacey and Lyza and Lizzy

HECUBA: Yes We
All women All girls

LACEY: Even Cassandra

LIZZY: Cassandra

LYZA: gods Not Cassandra

HECUBA: ...

LACEY: MommyQueen

LYZA: Cassy

LIZZY: Cassy's a virgin

HECUBA: Apollosanctioned No surely not

LIZZY: Apollo vowed

LYZA: Virgin

LACEY: God decreed virgin

LYZA: Not Cassandra
 LACEY: No
 LIZZY: Surely not
 HECUBA: Sweet Cassandra addled by prophecy Maddened girl Maenad girl
 Precious and pure
 LIZZY: What do they want with us
 HECUBA: Spoils of war
 LIZZY: Motherqueen
 HECUBA: O sweet girl
 LYZA: Spoils of war
 LIZZY: How does it turn A good thing turn bad
 LACEY: A god thing turn bad
 LYZA: A goodthing godthing lovething turn bad
 HECUBA: Love becomes rape war equals hate Two sides always
 LoveHate BeautifulHorror GloryDestruction
 HECUBA: The gathering storm Greekboats preparing to sail
 LYZA: Will we sail
 LACEY: Where will we go
 HECUBA: Greece
 LIZZY: Faraway Greece
 HECUBA: Slavegirls you Slaveoldlady me
 Motherqueen of glittering Troy
 Waterslave Loomslave Doorslave
 Surely not bedslave
 Kitchenslave Babyslave
 Surely not bedslave
 LIZZY: So many slaves farawayGreece
 LACEY: Goatfarm
 LYZA: Dirtfarm
 LIZZY: Nofarm hovel
 LYZA: Agamemnon
 LIZZY: Spitjar
 LACEY: gobjar (She spits at an imaginary Agamemnon.)
 HECUBA: Spitjar Latrinetrench cages us Keeps us Divvies us up

LACEY: Hate him

HECUBA: More than ever

LYZA: Menelaus

LIZZY: Aggie's brother

LACEY: Hate him

HECUBA: Helen's fingersnap

LACEY: There he is

HECUBA: Menelaus citysacker Couldn't be wifekeeper

LYZA: Menelaus

LIZZY: Cuckolded husband

HECUBA: Menelausnow chases skirt Wifeskirt Wifeflirt HelenWhoreHelen
Wifeskirt vanishes
boohoo Menelaus Boohoo

LACEY: Motherqueen shh Greekcoming

THE GIRLS: Shh

(Talthybius enters.)

TALTHYBIUS: Hecuba

HECUBA: Talthybius

TALTHYBIUS: Hello

HECUBA: Again
Different now Stations reversed

TALTHYBIUS: Yes List here
Who goes where One by one

HECUBA: Girls together

TALTHYBIUS: Each to each None together

HECUBA: Not any

TALTHYBIUS: None

HECUBA: Each to each

LYZA: Each to each

LACEY:

LIZZY:

TALTHYBIUS: Ask

HECUBA: Cassandra

TALTHYBIUS: Agamemnon

HECUBA: Houseslave Kitchenslave

TALTHYBIUS: Bedslave

HECUBA: NOOOOooooo
 Apollodecreed virgin Consecrated Pure Crazy sweet madgirl

TALTHYBIUS: Alluringlypure
 Ask

HECUBA: Polyxena

LACEY: Yes Polly

LYZA: Sweetpolly

LIZZY: They took her last night

HECUBA: Polly my youngest Where's my daughtersweet daughter

TALTHYBIUS: Special honour Tomb of Achilles

HECUBA: Girl for a tombslave

TALTHYBIUS: Tombslave Yes As you say

HECUBA: Tombslave Gravetending girls slave

TALTHYBIUS: Communing with heaven

HECUBA: Greekways Odd customs you have

TALTHYBIUS: Peaceful
 Ask

HECUBA: Andromache Wife of my Hector
 Hectorheroic tamer of horses

TALTHYBIUS: Son of Achilles

LACEY: Mommyqueen Us

LYZA: O

LIZZY: Us

HECUBA: Yes girls

TALTHYBIUS: Ask

HECUBA: Lizzy and Lacey and Lyza

TALTHYBIUS: Undetermined Unknown soldiers Each to each
 Picking continues

LACEY: Each to each

LIZZY: Unknown soldiers

LYZA: Picking continues

LIZZY: Mommyqueen

TALTHYBIUS: Ask

HECUBA: Hecuba

LACEY: Queen of Troy

LYZA: Mother of many

LIZZY: Motherqueen where

TALTHYBIUS: Odysseus

HECUBA: Flay my wrinkled cheeks Blood flow down my face
Liespinning twoface dealer in smiles Winking and grinning and
tongueturningtales
Couldn't tell truth if his mouth was stuffed full of it
If it choked him
Couldn't spit it out
Only lies and deceit
Everything double Dealing Meaning Toungued Faced
Liespinning odeous twoface odysse-
Can't even say it

TALTHYBIUS: Enough Fetch Cassandra Agamemnon's command
Calling Cassandra

(Cassandra enters. She looks a little mad.)

CASSANDRA: *(singing the song of the dead sons of Hecuba)*
Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

THE GIRLS: Join in with the song.

(As Cassandra sings, she waves a lighter in the air. She has several—they are her 'wedding torches'. She passes them out to her sisters who also hold them aloft.)

TALTHYBIUS: What's going on What are you doing

CASSANDRA: *(Singing from the girls continues under.)* Weddingsong
Weddingtorch
Marriage to be Bridetobe me

TALTHYBIUS: Alright enough Give me that fire *(He grabs the lighters... Cassandra has more and she has newspaper stuffed under her party dress—she pulls some out, crumples it and lights it on fire. The girls start the song again.)*

CASSANDRA: CELEBRATE

TALTHYBIUS: Oh for the sake of the gods *(He rushes off in search of something to put out the fire.)*

HECUBA: Calm now Cassandra Come and be calm

CASSANDRA: Mommyqueen hold me Come sit by my fire

HECUBA: Sweet madone Comesweetgirl Squeezetight

CASSANDRA: Sisters sit by us A vision A story
 I'll tell what I see
 Raise high the roofbeams carpenter
 Ha ha
 Wedding song by Sappho
 Stolen by Salinger
 Ha ha Ha ha
 Weddingsong mine
 No roofbeams for me Not raising Destroying Pulling down house
 House of Atreus falling down
 Take me for bedslave
 Take me for bridebed Down will come Agamemnon Bedslave and
 all

HECUBA: Daughter sweet madone
 I imagined your wedding when you were a wee one
 Not marriage like this with a spear at your back
 Dancing and singing Glowing brideblushing
 Proud mother roosting and fluffing and mistyeyed loving

*(They gather round Cassandra's fire, which she feeds with more newspaper
 as the need arises.)*

CASSANDRA: Fret not mommyqueen fret not for me
 By this fire of Hephaestus By the light of Apollo
 My wedding's a good one

Listen
 In me Agamemnon wins a bride worse than Helen Destruction will
 rain down on the Atreus house O
 The axe through my neck stop
 There's a part of this vision I don't want to tell
 Skip forward and back

Listen
 Glory of Troy We're lucky We're winners
 Skip forward and back
 Endless destruction Wars of men
 It's what we do
 Inquisitions and holocausts and twintowers burning
 Dresden Rwanda the streets of NewYork
 Berlin and London and Hiroshima
 Bombs fires warofgerms warofsticks and rocks
 Endless destruction

Wars of men
It's what we do
Stop
Skip forward and back

Listen
Glory of Troy We're lucky We're winners
HECUBA: Poor sweet madone You've gone off again
CASSANDRA: Mommyqueen Listen
Sistergirls too
LACEY: O Cassy
LYZA: Sweet Cassy
LIZZY: Cassy be calm
CASSANDRA: Sshh I know Look into the flames
We'll rewrite this story

Who lost who won
Won what Lost what
Won back WhoreHelen
Lucky Greeks
Won what Lost what
Great Generaltheirs Future husband
Lost wife and daughter Lost home and family Lost all that he valued
Won years in a tent instead of a palace
Lost his own wife Won back his brother's who left on her own
Won soldier's skimp rations instead of king's feasting
Won hardship and rockbed Festeringwounds and poundingpain
Won me as bedprize Ha
Deathprize for the Atreus house

The Greekwinners
Won what Lost what
Our Greekgreedymasters
Died in their hundreds and thousands and more
Died far from home Unburied Unwept
Ten years of dying on our native their foreign their unnativeland
Ten years of childgrowth never been seen No pencil marks on
doorjamb Watching the space between grow as they grow
Walking and running and learning to swim Concerts Recitals
No parentproud swelling and saying
That's my boy Mybeautifulgirl
None of that Not for those Greeks

Ten years of wifebed never recovered Sharing and secrets

Fighting and making up
None of that
Warwhores Campfollowers at night Raping unwilling
None of that wifebed No depth No being human
Won what Lost what
Some never married
No children no garden no picketfence dreaming
Parents died unknown Dreams died undreamt

But Trojans our Trojans
Won what Lost what
Died defending their homeland
Were carried home and with full honour
Those who lived saw every day the face and beauty of their families
Lived in the glory of Troy
Hector bravest of men Tamer of horses
Lived his life fully No man could hurl him down to death before his
time
Didn't seek the destruction of others
Won renown and honour
Greeks brought that to his doorstep

(Talthybius returns with a fire extinguisher and sprays out Cassandra's fire)

Won what Lost what
Do not pity our country's defeat
We triumph through and above it

TALTHYBIUS: Watch your tongue you firemad mischief

CASSANDRA: My marriage carries destruction to those we hate most

TALTHYBIUS: If you weren't crazy I'd have to report you Give me the fire makers
Try to behave

CASSANDRA: House of Atreus falling down

TALTHYBIUS: Let's go
When Odysseus comes Hecuba go with him Ithaca will be your
new home

CASSANDRA: You think mommyqueen's going to Ithaca

TALTHYBIUS: Know not think

CASSANDRA: Apollo knows better He told me she'll die here

TALTHYBIUS: Spare me o gods Apollo Right You have a direct pipeline
Well ask him what horse I should bet on when the races begin
Come on Get going

CASSANDRA: Horses I know not but Odysseus I'll tell
Ten years to get home Shipwrecked and wavetossed

Sirens and goddesses
Cycloptoo

TALTHYBIUS: Ten years Ha If the weathers blow fair a three hour cruise

CASSANDRA: Timewasting Greekspeak Let's go My general awaits

TALTHYBIUS: Hecuba I'll be back your daughter's a loon

CASSANDRA: I heard that Come Harold or herald whatever you are
I'll just call you Harry

TALTHYBIUS: MOVE Agamemnon's waiting

CASSANDRA: Goodylet'sgo
The destruction of the House of Atreus is coming

(They exit)

(Hecuba slumps to the ground)

LIZZY: Motherqueen up

LYZA: Stand

LACEY: We can help

HECUBA: No Let me lie here Let me feel the earth Mother to mother
EarthMothertoall I know you mean well but The weight is too
great Lie down Rolling in dirt is the proper response to what is
endured

Yet more is to come and more and more
gods!

Ha ha

I call on gods who have left me bereft

It's what we do

Ha ha

When suffering stretches beyond our endurance

When bad luck overwhelms our small little life

We call on the gods

Ha

Luck

I was born lucky Daughter of kings Luck travelled with me

Married a man

King among men

King to all Troy Priam *(breathes)*

Husbandlove Priam *(breathes)*

Fatherbest KingofTroy

No one told me of his death I watched it

Kingblood flowing Bloodflow down the steps of their altar
god's altarZeus

Call on the gods

Crumpleking
Gone

THE GIRLS: Hector Paris Deiphobus Helenus Polydorus Troilus Polites Hippotheus
Kebriones Agathon Mentor Chromius Doryclus Democoon Antiphus
Lycaon Pammon Dius Isus Antiphones Echemmon

HECUBA: Those sons
No mother ever
Hector

LIZZY: Killed by Achilles
Wearing the armour of Achilles
Killed by Achilles

HECUBA: Hector my son myHector

LIZZY: No man will hurl me down to death before my time And fate
No man has ever escaped it

LYZA: Sword of Achilles finds one vulnerable spot Here
Between shoulder and neck Pierces skin

HECUBA: Hector

LYZA: Drives through sinew shattering bone Arteries severed

HECUBA: Hector

LYZA: Sword plunges down Through gristle and flesh and into the heart

LIZZY: Hector tamer of horses

LACEY: Hector skilled in war

HECUBA: All my sons gone
Daughters going now
All of us slaves Me a slave
Why

LACEY: Desire

HECUBA: Desire of one woman

THE GIRLS: Helen's desire

HECUBA: Paris' too He isn't unscathed
Woman Man Conjugal Fireofdesire
One man one woman Death all around
Deathsex fuckingdeath
Bore sons of extraordinary gifts Daughters too Yes girls you
Daughters
Cassandra

THE GIRLS: Dear Cassie

HECUBA: Shared sight of the gods Specialone madone goneone now
Polyxena my youngest of all

LACEY: Said she was tombslave

LYZA: Tomb of Achilles

LIZZY: Communing with heaven Praying I guess

HECUBA: Count no one happy until they're in the ground
Life's full of spinsandturns
Can't tell 'til it's over
Know only this
No one knows what is next

LYZA: Gone Troy gone

LIZZY: It was the horse

LACEY: Of course

LYZA: The horse

LACEY: Beautiful

LIZZY: Huge

LYZA: Astonishing grandeur

LIZZY: A gift

LYZA: Wood and bronze and glittering gold

LACEY: It was huge It was beautiful Astonishing grandeur

LIZZY: Outside the gate

LACEY: No more Greeks

LYZA: No more Greekboats

LACEY and LYZA: Gone Greeks gone

LIZZY: We Win Ten years war wewin wewin

LACEY: And as a token we thought

LYZA: Left to us we thought

LACEY: Spoils of war we thought

LIZZY: This gift

LYZA: The horse

LACEY: Of course

LIZZY: It was the horse

LYZA: It was holy

LIZZY: This horse gift Gifhorse

LACEY: Pull it inside

LACEY: Singing and drinking and sweatgleaming bodies
Drumming and music and pantiesdamp dancing

LYZA and LIZZY: Singing and drinking and sweatgleaming bodies
Drumming and music and pantiesdamp dancing

LACEY: The horse

LYZA and LIZZY: Thehorse Thehorse

LACEY: Singing and drinking and sweatgleaming bodies
Drumming and music and pantiesdamp dancing

LACEY: The horse

LYZA and LIZZY: Thehorse Thehorse

LACEY: O Pull it inside

LYZA and LIZZY: Pullitinside Pullitinside

LACEY: O What's that make you think of

LIZZY: We win we win celebrate kissing

LACEY: Eyes shining

LYZA: Hair flinging

THE GIRLS: Pull it inside *(they collapse in giggles. A rhythmic drumming begins, increasing in intensity until the girls are driven to dance—resonant of the triumphant ecstatic dance of the night before. It is abandoned and sexual and a release for pent up emotion. As though called by the drums, Andromache enters and stands to the side, watching. She carries the little bundle that is Astyanax and watches the dance.)*

HECUBA: It was fun

LYZA: Lacey I heard you O O Oooo

LACEY: Wasn't me

LYZA: Was

LACEY: Wasn't

LIZZY: Was

LACEY: Wasn't

LIZZY: Was

LYZA: Then O's turned to screams Ares the wargod comes stalking
Joy turns to fear Smell of fear Metallic and burnt
Running darkness Out from ambush slaughtergreekspears

LIZZY: In beds at altars At home sweet everywhere
Bloodsmell deathstink Corpserreeking Troy

Slaughter not warfare Headhunting scalptaking
 Sheep to the

LACEY: Troywomennow Greekchildbearing slaves

LIZZY: Waiting here in Agamemnon's cage

LYZA: Sad Troy sad

HECUBA: Gone Troy gone

ANDROMACHE: Gone Hector gone (*She coos to the bundled baby.*)

HECUBA: Andromache

LIZZY: Wife of Hector

ANDROMACHE: Hector nomore And you my Astyanax My little Lord Of The City
 You are fatherless here

HECUBA: How is the boy

ANDROMACHE: Fatherless

HECUBA: Yes

ANDROMACHE: Lord Of No City

HECUBA: Gone Troy gone

ANDROMACHE: Lord Of The City Who gave him that nickname

HECUBA: Paris

LACEY: Paris

LYZA: Yeah Paris

LIZZY: It was

AMDROMACHE: Paris Your hateson He brought this all on us He brought the
 Greek Whore Should have died as a baby Ptthui Paris
 Name made for spitting

LACEY: Brotherstill

LYZA: Brotherdead

LIZZY: Pierced by an arrow from Heracles bow

LYZA: GreekPhiloktetes shot the arrow

LACEY: Arrow flies

LIZZY: Niplerending

LYZA: Skintorn

LACEY: Heartpierced

LIZZY: Dead

LYZA: Brotherdead
 LACEY: Parisdead
 HECUBA: All my sons dead
 ANDROMACHE: Hectorhusband
 HECUBA: Hectorson
 THE GIRLS: Brotherdead
 HECUBA: Cassie taken Cassie gone
 ANDROMACHE: Polly
 HECUBA: Polyxena
 LYZA: Guarding the deadGreek
 LACEY: Tomb of Achilles
 ANDROMACHE: Polly is dead
 HECUBA: What
 LYZA: No
 LIZZY: Talthybius
 LACEY: He said
 HECUBA: Communing with heaven
 ANDROMACHE: Polly is dead
 HECUBA: Ooo
 LIZZY: Tombslave
 ANDROMACHE: Tomb sacrifice Pierced through the breast
 LACEY: At peace
 LYZA: Peaceful
 LIZZY: Enigma answered
 HECUBA: My youngest
 ANDROMACHE: I saw her IsawherButchered Her body cut open thrown on the tomb
 HECUBA: My youngest My sweetone
 ANDROMACHE: I climbed up Andkissed her Covered her Wept
 HECUBA: Won't call on those gods

(Scoops up dirt and pours it over her head, smears it on her face.)

Won't
 Just the goodearth
 Mother of all Earth our mother Come to me Succour me

Mothertomother

O

o

o

I am almost drowning in earthwaves of grief Polly Gone Polly

Goodmotherearth wash over this mother

This crashing griefwave is too great This crushingcrashing grief

Wave

We are so small

We puny people Grief is godsize

But where are they

No help No words

Let go or be dragged

ANDROMACHE: Death is her freedom Polly is happier than melivingpain

HECUBA: Death is not happier

Death is just nothing

Done is done

Life is alive Life is hope

ANDROMACHE: Death is the same as not being born No birth no pain

Life's full of pain We're born into pain Pain is our homeland once

we're alive Those neverborn have no sense of pain

But me I lived the best life I strove and succeeded The goodwife

The best

No husband ever had better than me

Demure and obedient or strong and in charge

The right response to every occasion

Oh laugh We'd laugh

It's true Voice quiet and sweet Gaze calm and loving

I was only as good as my husband He bestowed gifts that any could

want

Wellborn Wellthought Wellbrave and Wealthy

My firstandonly

More than sufficient

Now dead

My excellence becomes a curse Makes my pain worse

They heard of me the greedyGreeks and that sonofa sonofa

sonofAchilles has claimed me for his

slavewife

Slavepain versus Polyxena's painending death

HECUBA: Andromache Daughter Stepdaughter Wife of my son

Let go or be dragged Hector is gone Let go

Look to the new life that is calling Use skills from yourmarriagebed

Make your new life a shining example

A beacon that my small grandson who silently suckles can follow
He may still live up to the once playful nickname

LIZZY: Astyanax

LACEY: Lord Of The City

LYZA: Little Asty

HECUBA: And down through the ages The sons of this grandson
May found once again Our glittering Troy

(Talthybius enters)

TALTHYBIUS: Don't hate me

HECUBA: You're Greek

THE GIRLS: 'Nuff said

ANDROMACHE:

TALTHYBIUS: The boy

ANDROMACHE: Baby

TALTHYBIUS: Whatever It's been decided
Decided by council
Well mainly
Odysseus

HECUBA: ENOUGH

ANDROMACHE: Different masters for him and for me

TALTHYBIUS: No Not exactly
No Greek will be his master Ever

ANDROMACHE: You can't leave him here He's only a baby

HECUBA: Hush child I don't think it's that

TALTHYBIUS: I CAN'T STAND THIS Your son must be killed
Odysseus persuaded the council No sonofahero sonofawarrior
No son that might want revenge Killhimnow

ANDROMACHE: O o o

TALTHYBIUS: Odysseus Very persuasive Hard to refute

HECUBA: Liespinning twoface dealer in smiles Winking and grinning and
tongueturningtales
Couldn't tell truth if his mouth was stuffed full of it
If it choked him
Couldn't spit it out
Only lies and deceit
Double everything Dealing Meaning Toungeed Faced

Liespinning odeous twoface odysse-
Can't even say it

(Andromache starts smearing dirt on her face and body. She clutches the bundled infant to her.)

TALTHYBIUS: Please Oncewife of Hector Call your nobility
Acknowledge your state You have no power You cannot resist
Allow things to happen
I'll tell you this Though really I shouldn't If you don't put up a fight And really resistance is
useless If you don't put up a fight I will bring the wee body back to you to bury
If you fight now the corpse will be desecrated
No hope for the afterlife

HECUBA: How will he die

TALTHYBIUS: Details

ANDROMACHE: Details

TALTHYBIUS: I must take him to the highest walls of Troy
The highest crested tower
He will be thrown from the wall

THE GIRLS: O o o

TALTHYBIUS: Not me I couldn't can't couldn't

ANDROMACHE: O little Asty O little bundleybabyofkootchygoobabymine Look at
your little face Your tinybuttinierringnailed fingers What a grip
You grab my finger Strong littleman O the sweetsmellbabysmell
Your father The braveststrongtheprince Has become your
murderer
Not your saviour He was too good a man Now you have to die
O you are so light a bundle Perhaps you will fly
No
Nobird you Only babymine Falling drifting down down
stone falling down down
rocks below

THE GIRLS: Abrupt

LACEY: Crack

LIZZY: Babybonesbreak

LYZA: Babygone

ANDROMACHE: Breath

LYZA: oophwhoosh ahhh

LIZZY: Babysweetbreath

LACEY: Stopped

ANDROMACHE: I hold you babymine lasttime Lasttime
Helen WhoreHelen No daughter of Zeus Nothing divine
Your mantricking beautiful eyes
Are not more beautiful than These bright little sparks
POKE them out GOUGE your heart
O baby Did mommy's shouting startle you I just boodely boodle
Yes Littleman I just Litllelitllelittleman want to kill your aunt Or
whatever she is
So Greek babytaker Take my littleman
Gods destroyTroy
We are done by the gods
Cannot save even onelittle baby
Take him and hurl him and mark him as dead

TALTHYBIUS: Not me I couldn't can't couldn't But take him I must

ANDROMACHE: Me to my slaveship Ship me out Shop me out childless

TALTHYBIUS: Come here little fellow

TALTHYBIUS: Here we go I wish my heart were harder Tower of your fathers'
Extraordinary view O O o This is a world of horrors (*Talthybius exits with the
baby Astyanax.*)

LIZZY: How many must die for Helen

LACEY: WhoreHelen

LYZA: Her destructive desire

ANDROMACHE: What did you say about abandoning hope I am abandoned I am alive
but I have no hope I go where the wind blows (*She stumbles and
staggeres off.*)

HECUBA: What can we do when babies are slain
Cry out Pour dirt on our heads

LIZZY: Troy was the best

LACEY and LYZA: We were told

HECUBA: I was told too

LACEY: Favoured by gods

LYZA: Gold capped towers

HECUBA: Streets of gold Land of honey

LACEY: Troy is the place where the gods find their lovers

HECUBA: Ganymede Tithonos

LIZZY: Why are we forsaken

HECUBA: Troy loved yet destroyed
gods

Second time sacked Heracles first
gods
Now Agamemnon for Helen WhoreHelen Breathes fire again
Won't say it aloud
is gods love a curse

LIZZY: Hush now

LACEY: No words against Zeus

HECUBA: zeus

LYZA: Listen who screams

LACEY: Motherswivesdaughters

LIZZY: Seabirds surely

LACEY: Eos dawngoddess She loved our land

LYZA: Each morning's Dawn She kissed our shores

LACEY: Loved Troy Loved Trojans

LIZZY: Dawngoddess found a brave Trojan to share her forever

HECUBA: is gods love a curse

(Menelaus enters)

MENELAUS: O what a beautiful Did someone say something about the dawn
Beautiful morning I now get my hands on mywife MyHelen
You party girls Do you know me I'm Menelaus You know mywife
no doubt
I'm the hero I sacked Troy Not so much to get mywife as to get
that hostcheating rat who stole her away Paris DeadParisnow
So Where's that sparkySpartanwife of mine Don't need to say her
name pttui Not in her thrall
Greekarmy awarded her to me My prize Onlyright Worked and
died to win her Mine to kill here and now
Or take her back to Argos
Kill her there
Yes drag her by the hair
Her hair
It's decided She will not die at Troy She will be dragged back to
Greece

(A hint of Helen appears skirting around the edges of the entrance. We see glimpses of her filmy robe, perhaps a flash of leg, and the hair... the hair. A light picks out her eyes—just for an instant.)

HECUBA: Zeus above Please Please hear me
Are you natural justice A force of nature
Or do you hide antic in the minds of men Dispense justice there

Wherever your mystery sits Come now Do not abandon justice now Do not abandon us now Bring your justice to this camp now

MENELAUS: What strange things you say

HECUBA: Menelaus Great king Man of justice and sense Yes kill yourwife
Yes kill your wifewhore
But shield your eyes from her Don't look She captures men's eyes
Sneaks into their hearts Listen to a woman who knows
Womenall have tricks to fool men But her capturing looks eat all in
her path Destroys cities of men Homes Lives
Killher Don'tlook

HELEN: *(Still only partly visible.)* You haven't changed a bit.

(Caught off guard by her voice, Menelaus whirls around to face her. Too late, his hand comes up to shield his eyes. He's already looked; he's done. Helen looks at him and steps forward. Where the others are disheveled and undone from the night before—barefoot or broken-heeled, mascara smeared and running, dresses a little torn—Helen is perfect. She wears a negligee or kimono, heels, hair brushed, makeup perfect, ...)

HELEN: You want to drag me by the hair
I know you hate me
Do you
Of course you do What decision have you and the Greeks come to
What will become of memylife

MENELAUS: Choice is mine Wrongedman decides Power to kill

HELEN: Do I get to argue Prove death is unjust

MENELAUS: Argueshmargue Death is just Whatyoudeserve

HECUBA: O let her speak But let me speak too
List her crimes her horrors
Once all is said her death will come clear as day follows night

MENELAUS: This will take time This back and forth talk
Alright But be clear For your sake not hers
Begin

HELEN: My fault you say This whole Trojan war

HECUBA: Whose fault else Helen WhoreHelen

THE GIRLS: Whore Helenwhore

HELEN: Ha
One
O motherqueenTroy you wear the fault You and old daddyking
Yes
We all know Prophecy spoke of a single bad seed
A son like a torch who'd return to set the city ablaze

Gone Troy gone
Paris yourParis He needed to die He was the one
Protect the city Sacrifice the son But courage failed somewhere
Live Parislive

Two

Judgment of Paris

As night follows day As two follows one
Paris still living judges beauty of goddesses Goddesslikegirls giggle
and jiggle Pickme Pickme I'm pretty Paris Prettier me
ManboyParis judging beauty of gods

Athena tries bribing Pick me and Troy will win a war against Greeks Conquer Greek
homeland You will be king

Hera Bribes next Pick me and you will rule the whole world Europe and Asia and
anything else

Aphrodite Pick me and O did my dress fall open O How clumsy It's ok you can look
Pick me and you can have **Helen**

My fault Not hardly

Instead of being overrun by Trojanhordes

Instead of losing all Greece as promised by Athena As promised by
Hera

Instead of becoming Greekslaves to Trojan masters

Greeks come to Troy Wage war and win

Troywomen now bedslaves forGreeks

Greekswin

Isuffer

Isuffer so Greekscanwin So mightyMenelaus my husband can win

Should be crowned notdrowned or dead by whatever

HeroicHelen HelenofGreece Not what you say

I know Iknow I left your house Iknow

Husbandmine

But

Three

Blame lands on younow

What were you thinking Paris is in our house

I think I'll sail to Crete

The stunning Trojanman Paris is in our house

StayMenelaus

Nope Beautiful day Winds are right Sailing I go

Gone husband gone

Why was I weak Why did I leave

Paris had goddess accomplice

Aphrodite myhelper hishelpertoos Who could resist Never had a
chance

Aphrodite

Zeuslordofall ZeusKingofgods ZeusgodPowerofpower
Even Zeus even he
Is slave to Aphrodite
SmallHelenthisgirl she's no match for power like that

Four
Whataboutthis I bet you will say Why not escape
Time to come homenow Greekships Come to them
Idid Itried I climbed down the walls Ropesandsuch dangling
Guards pull me back time and again
New husband claims me Anotherbrother Deiphobus
Twice married by force
Enslaved for my beauty
Pity not hatred Death sure as sure should not be my reward

MENELAUS: Whatshisname Deiphobus In yourwarmbed
Secondnothird Can'tcountthenumber Chopped off his bits

THE GIRLS: Deiphobus Gone brother gone (*singing the song of the dead sons of Hecuba*)
Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

THE GIRLS: Mommyqueen please Prove she is wrong Prove she must die

HECUBA: O sweetgirls speak I will
Utterrotnonsense Blaming goddesses
Goddesses want beauty contest win
Why Whatforwhy ridiculousnonsense
Hera wife of Zeus wants beautyqueentitle To get a better husband
Utterrotnonsense
She'd sell out her city Hercity of Argos For sash and tiara
Don'tthinkso can'tseeit
What of the other The GoddessAthena
She's a Virgin for Zeussake She begged for the gift
Zeusgranted her virginperpetual Beauty'sreward's to seek out a
husband Don'tthinkso can'tseeit
AbandonAthens Her city To Trojans For beautyqueentitle
Utterrotnonsense
Hey beauty Yesyou Don't mess with the gods
Don't make them look foolish to cover your weakness
Yourwetwithdesire
You say Aphrodite took Paris by hand to the house of this Greeklord
Utterrotnonsense
She could have done the whole trick without leaving her couch
Moved you Moved the whole city if she had wanted Twitch of an
eyelid
Realstorytold
My son was so handsome

Your whoreHelenheart WhoreHelenpantieswerewetwithdesire
 Love is folly love isblind Youwereblindwithdesire
 A man from the east
 Paris myParis And Troy his home
 Your Argostown littletownblues
 You want to wake up in the city awash with gold
 Troy
 Did Paris force you
 Don'tthinkso can'tseeit Could have called out Could have
 eeksqueaked
 Castor and Pollux Your brothers the stars They would have saved
 you
 Not a Greekpeep
 Battle at Troy Examine the facts
 With Menelaus winning you'd crow Brag how he was your husband
 Onlyyesonly to rile Parismine
 But with Trojans ascendant GreekLord was nothing
 Fairweatherwifey
 And what of your danglingscapingdownwalls
 I tried to assist andwhispered and planned
 Helen escape
 Sneak out I'll help you
 But nonotyou Stay to be the beauty who all men must fight for
 Whynot tieknot knotroundyourneck Or
 sharpenandstabwiththebladeofaknife
 Andnow Zeusbemywitness Look at you now
 You ought to smear dirt out of grief like the rest
 Butlookatyou look Have you no shame
 Do you and yourhusbandhere share the same sky
 Menelaus Good GreekLord This is the end
 Glory to Greece means killing this whore This liar
 This profaner of gods and of men
 Die She must die
 Yours is to choose Protect future husbands Respect for the gods
 Die she must die

LACEY: Menelaus show yourself a man
 LYZA: Not what the whisperers say
 LACEY: Greekspeak whispers say you're not a man
 LIZZY: Not a man
 LYZA: Not a man
 LYZA: Under your wife not the proper way up
 LIZZY: We know you're the man
 LYZA: We know it

LACEY: We do

LIZZY: Punish your punishdeserving wife

THE GIRLS: Die She must die

MENELAUS: Listened and concluded I decide the same as you
Wifeminewhorenow freely left mybed for strangerbed Troybed
Parisbedhere
Go
Greeks with rocksinhand wait to stone you
Many have comradesbrothersfathers dead
They limber their arms at the stoning pit

HECUBA: Menelaus Wiseandstrong GreekLord
Give Blindfolds to those throwing stones
When men look at her their resolve is unstrung Their own eyes
turntraitor
Stones fall from their hands

MENELAUS: Taken under advisement

HELEN: Husbandmine
Look at me
Always have been Always will be At your mercy
It is sickness godsent at the root Don't kill me
Aphrodite and beauty curseme Beautymycurse
Find mercy instead
Remember what's past between us

HECUBA: Remember your comrades deadbywhoreHelen
Mysons too
Mercybedamned

MENELAUS: I've got this Queenusedtobe Enough with your racket
I'll sailherhome Stoneherthere we'll take her by sea

HECUBA: O trouble I see trouble at sea
Not on the sameboatasyou GreekLord beware

MENELAUS: Not the same boat Has she gained weight Too heavy or what
Get it Joke Sinking etc.
Never mind
Different boatfine And when we get to Argos I'll grab her by
By the hair
her hair
I'll make her die a littledeath Petitmort A little at a time
And you You Can'tsayyourname You don't try your wiles and
charms on me

HELEN: Are wiles and charms weapons
Look at you Stronghand Speararm Greatchest
Could crush in an instant this helensmallgirl

I'll do as you say
Never fear obedient me

HECUBA:

MENELAUS: SILENCE you old queen You queen used to be
I've got this
You small wife girl former wife mine Walk in front of me That way
To the boats

HELEN: Yes sir Greek Lord My Husband My

MENELAUS: SILENCE YOU TOO

HELEN:

MENELAUS: Walk

(They exit, Helen walking in front of Menelaus.)

LACEY: What happened

LYZA: Will he kill her

LIZZY: Will he do what is right

HECUBA: No

LIZZY: Mommy queen

LACEY: What

LYZA: What do you mean

HECUBA: I saw his eyes Looking at her He is weak
He'll be in her bed before the Dawn kisses our shore

LIZZY: Zeus Lord of All

LACEY: We don't understand

LYZA: You have Troy betrayed Troy abandoned

HECUBA: Helen Whore Helen How why how do you do this

LIZZY: Sons of Troy

HECUBA: Sons of mine

THE GIRLS: *(singing the song of the dead sons of Hecuba)*
Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

(As the song continues, one by one, they speak over the singing)

LIZZY: Troy glory gone Gone dancing gone

LACEY: Troy glory gone Nighttime festivals
Dancing and singing and torches through dark
Gone Troy gone

LYZA: Troy glorygone Shapelygoldstatues goldtowersgold
Gone glorygone

LIZZY: Troilus gone

HECUBA: If he was alive Troy would still stand
Wretched Sonkiller Killed by
Achilles
Knew the prophecy Knew the secret

LACEY: If Troilus lived

LYZA: Til he was twenty

LIZZY: Troy could not fall

HECUBA: Troy could not fall

THE GIRLS: Troy could not fall

(singing the song of the dead sons of Hecuba)

Hector and Paris
Troilus Deiphobus

HECUBA: Wretched Sonkiller Achilles
Hateyou

LACEY: hateyou

LYZA: HATEYOU

LIZZY: We hateyou

(The song fades and ends)

LIZZY: Zeus LordofAll

LYZA: Can you see us

LACEY: Do you care

LYZA: Babies and children penned bytheshore

LACEY: Calling for Mommys

LIZZY: Calling unheard

LACEY: One wish I send Zeus LordofAll
Menelaus hisboat with HelenvainWhore

LIZZY: Blast them

LYZA: Yes blastthem

LIZZY: smithereensBoom

LACEY: O wishit

LIZZY: Wishitmetoo

HECUBA: Wishit but
 LYZA: BUT
 LACEY: but
 LIZZY: I know
 HECUBA: Menelaus is weak
 And Zeus does not hear
 THE GIRLS: Zeus doesnohear
 LYZA: Will she be fine
 HECUBA: Helen WhoreHelen
 Yes she'll be fine
 LYZA: O no
 LACEY: O no
 LIZZY: And Babies can't fly
 HECUBA: Zeus doesnohear
 Gods havegone deaf
 Gone Troy gone
 THE GIRLS: Gone babygone
 HECUBA: O o o

(Talthybius enters carrying a box)

TALTHYBIUS: Hecuba Boats are leaving Andromache Wifeformer of Hector
 Gone aboard sonofAchilles boatforhome
 HECUBA: Yes gone now
 TALTHYBIUS: Lastwish Lastdesire
 Could he be buried Buried by you Covered by shield of his Daddy
 In this box Son of Hector Sonof yourson
 Boy
 HECUBA: Baby
 TALTHYBIUS: Right Baby Died quickly Thrown from the wall
 Couldn't look but
 no pain
 HECUBA:
 TALTHYBIUS: Did what couldbedone Stopped and washed Cleanedthewounds
 Looks quiet Peaceful
 HECUBA:

TALTHYBIUS: Find something clothorwhat Wrap him littleyke
I'll dig You know Grave Small Won't take long
We worktogether helphimalong

HECUBA:

TALTHYBIUS:

(Talthybius exits)

HECUBA: Sonofmyson
Greeks Sharpwords dullwits
Fear of a boybabyboy Fear ofgrowing and reclaiming the glory of
Troy Sharpwords dullwits Fearclinging Fearcreeping Greekfear
Noglory nocourage Fear of a boybabyboy
And you myweeone Never togrow Nevertoman Nevertomarry
Father died defending the city
Glory in that
gloryinthat
Not where I sit

Sweetbaby Your sweetface Your curlyhaired blondehead
Hair shorn by the walls Kissed those curls Blood besmirched
Skullsmash haircut O
Grip my finger Squeeze Pleasepleaseplease no Nothing there
No breath no warmth No littlebabywords
Nana
You called me allyou couldsay
Nana
You littleone should bury me
World is all wronghere Oldladymenow
Nocity Nosons
Burying hope buryingfuture
Rest Daddyshield covering over you Watching you shielding you
Great Bronze Shield
Stained with hissweat
Burnished by
dadsweat sonsweat Hectorsweat
Hectorsweet myson
Gone Hector gone

THE GIRLS: Gone Hectorgone

LACEY: Hector luckyHector

LYZA: Hector skilled in war

LIZZY: Hector tamer of horses

HECUBA: Count noman lucky
Luck is a minnowslipfish dart and flash thiswaythatway flash
andit'sgone

(One of the girls tears a bit of her dress... or perhaps it's a scarf she had on, a beautiful remnant to wrap the corpse of Astyanax.)

LYZA: Mommyqueen here Wrap Asty in this

HECUBA: O Baby LittleAsty A prize for you now
You never had the chance to race or shootthebow or kicktheball
Horeseriding none
I'll wrap you now with the purple of winning The redoffirstprize
Helen whoreHelen Zeusloved godsbelovedHelen
She stoleyourchance at the purple Stoleyourlife
Stoleourwholeworld

THE GIRLS: O Asty littleAsty Princeofnocity Nevernow

HECUBA: I wrapyou and packyou and markyou with tears
Your daddyshield Hectorshield will protect you
Shield that so many times protected myson Go now with this little
bundle of nolife A task of noble work still to do

THE GIRLS: *(Start to hum and sing the song of the dead sons of Hecuba—but no words this time just the melody... They start to clap their hands giving the song an insistent, deliberate, rhythm—it becomes a lament, a song of grief transformed to triumph and celebration. The song continues to grow as each girl speaks)*

LIZZY: Earth motherofall Receive this bundle
Mommyqueen motherof nosons now join oursong

HECUBA: O

LACEY: Sing with us griefsong for Asty

HECUBA: O

LYZA: Sing for sorrow Singfor memory

HECUBA: We wrap you in thisworld and send you to nextworld
HectorDaddy waits for you Nextworld nextworld O

(As Hecuba joins in the song crescendos and soars.)

Troysinging onlysongs left
Things from thisworld all gone to nextworld
Above is below
Gods
Troy once unknown and glittering Gonenow and Smouldering
Troy Famous for Falling
Wasabove Nowbelow
Thisworld to nextworld

Gods
Troyfame whatacost
Peopletocome Hear Our Story
Hear our song Griefthymeall forever to come
Thisworld nextworld Gods whatacost

(The box with the body of Astyanax is carried off. As THE GIRLS start to process off, they look up to the walls of Troy. Talthybius enters Listening to something in his ear. When he speaks, he speaks into his sleeve.)

LACEY: What is happening Look

TALTHYBIUS: Yes Burn it
Orders
Fire it up Bring it down
Right
Time for home
Womengirls Woman Finish the burying Head for the ships
Trumpet will sound
Head for the ships
onemoment

(Listening.)

Old one

Right
Griefwoman Queenthatwas timenow for you
Odysseus
Ithaca will be your newhome
Timenow

(In the background the flames grow brighter and more intense. The day is almost over. Darkness falls.)

HECUBA: The long day wanes
Nowork to still be done
No city to glitter and shine
Shining now in flames
Count noman lucky
Burn Troy burn

(She turns and starts toward the fire)

Hecuba burntoo

(Talthybius grabs her; holds her back)

TALTHYBIUS: STOP queenthatwas
I seeyour grief
Ihaveajob don'tmakeme don'tforceme
Excusethis but

I
Hate
Your
Troy
I Long for Home
Hate This Windy plain Those towers Glittering finery
Hate it All
Time for home
Home Greekhome

Girls
ONE
Prizes to be Here are numbers *(He hands out cards from a deck of playing cards)* Soldiers dealt you Dealt cards
Card to card each to each Go find your card your soldier
TWO
Watch her Queenthatwas Keeper safe She goes to Ithaca
THREE
Burying quickly Trumpet sounds offyougo
understood
good
O gods
Time for home
Home Greekhome

(He exits. The girls look at the cards in their hands. They go to Hecuba and help her.)

LIZZY: Do the gods not see
LYZA: Weren't we the lucky one
LACEY: The special one
HECUBA: They see but don't care Gods Carenomore
Gone Troy gone
THE GIRLS: Gone Troy gone
HECUBA: Gone husband gone
THE GIRLS: Daddyking gone
HECUBA: Allmysons
THE GIRLS: Gone and gone
HECUBA: Come little deadone I'll lay you to rest
LACEY: Mommyqueen
HECUBA: You girls stay here Burying babies is my chore

(She exits with the box containing Astyanax. The girls watch her go for a moment.)

LYZA: Three of clubs
LACEY: Seven of hearts
LIZZY: Who will we match to
LACEY: What did you get
LIZZY: Six of hearts
LACEY: Maybe we're neighbours
LYZA: I'm a club I don't want to be alone
LIZZY: Doesn't work like that Deck shuffled Cards dealt
LACEY: Where will we go
LYZA: Each to each
LIZZY: No one with someone
LACEY: Each to each
LIZZY: O Take me to Athens
LACEY: Between Brindisi and Corfu is where the blue begins
Please Corfu or some wavewashed Isle in the Ionian sea
LYZA: Somewhere safe
LACEY: Somewhere pretty
LIZZY: Somewhere with culture Only Athens Only place
LACEY: Not like Troywas
LYZA: No
LIZZY: No
LACEY: What happened to the gods
LYZA: Are there gods
LACEY: Used to think
LIZZY: The gods do not hear
LACEY and LYZA: Troy Loved by gods
LIZZY: Clearly not
LYZA: No
LACEY: No
LIZZY: Maybe there are none
LYZA: No gods

LACEY: no gods
LIZZY: No gods
LYZA: Three of clubs
LACEY: Seven of hearts
LIZZY: Six of hearts

(A solo trumpet rings out—a lament, an aching, yearning, crying song... it continues to the end. As the trumpet song starts, Hecuba enters.)

LACEY: That's the trumpet
LIZZY: Off to the ships
LYZA: I'm scared
LACEY: Me too
LIZZY: Me too
LACEY: Mommyqueen
HECUBA: Gone Troy gone
Girls remember You are princesses of Troy
The greatest Most beautiful
Glittering Troy

THE GIRLS: Gone Troy gone

HECUBA: All that was solid
Melts into air

LIZZY: All that was solid

HECUBA: Melts into air

LACEY: All that was solid

LIZZY and LYZA: Melts into air

HECUBA: All that was solid

THE GIRLS and HECUBA: Melts into air

HECUBA: Smoke and dust (And indeed smoke is starting to drift across the stage.)
Earth motherofall
Join with my dust (She takes some dirt and pours it over her head.)

THE GIRLS: Earth motherofall
Join with my dust (*They echo Hecuba's action.*)

HECUBA: Of earth we were made To earth we return

(BOOM—a single resounding note from a tympanum rings out.)

THE GIRLS: Of earth weweremade To eartwereturn

LACEY: Did you hear
LYZA: What was it
LIZZY: Walls coming down
HECUBA: Smoke and dust
THE GIRLS: Smokeanddust

(BOOM-BOOM)

HECUBA: Walls coming down
Gone Troy gone

(The trumpet hits a long sustained note until lights out)

All that is solid

THE GIRLS: Meltsintoair

HECUBA: GONE TROY GONE

(On each of the drum beats a section of the lights go out. The last stage should be only the backlighting from the flames. On the final drum beat, all sound and light disappear.)

(BOOM BOOM BOOM)

(End of play)