

Chapter 2: Script Analysis for *Electra* in *Oresteia* by Robert Icke

INTRODUCTION

In the preface to Icke's *Oresteia*, he says: "In Homer, the solution to the problem was simple enough: if the household is properly organized with the right man firmly in control everything in society will function smoothly. In Aeschylus's world, this is no longer adequate. The family needs the state. There can be no answer for Orestes until he goes to Athens itself and inaugurates the legal system. Now the democratic city is the framework which makes sense of what it is to be a man.

"So the *Oresteia* is the perfect instance of how tragedy rewrites the story of the past as a story for and as a challenge to the democratic city and its values. What should a city do with a man who has killed his mother or a man who has killed his daughter? What is the place of violence and revenge in society? Can law provide the answer? What does justify violence in a community? How does one family's strife relate to social order? It is no surprise that this masterpiece of theater has been produced again and again across the world at times of intense social disquiet as a way of publicly exposing the most pressing questions of *justice in society*¹."

As I was reading Icke's play, I immediately realized that there are many occasions when the same words and phrases are said over and over again, but always in different contexts with different meanings.

Here are some of those phrases and what I think they signify:

- "She's been dead since the beginning." (usually, this is said referring to the death of Klytemnestra's daughter, Iphigenia, but sometimes it seems to be said in reference to Electra)

¹ Goldsmit, Samuel, Preface to *Oresteia* by Robert Icke, 2015

- “This has all happened before.” (This is an interesting phrase. At the very, very beginning of the play, Icke does not put in a location for the setting or a year in which this play occurs, he only puts, “The appointment occurs in the past. Outlook calendar error message.” I’ve mulled over and over this a lot in the past couple months, trying to figure out what it means. I think it means that the play is SUPPOSED TO take place in the past, but because there’s an error message that must mean that it’s actually NOT taking place in the past and it really occurring right now, right before our eyes. Of course, this isn’t seen by the audience and in the end we realized that the whole play was actually just a reenactment of Orestes’s childhood that was performed in front of the jury in his trial for murdering his mother. That leaves a lot more unanswered questions but we can get into that more later.)
- “Is it reliable?” (which refers to the reliability of prophecies and signs. At the very beginning of the play, Agamemnon is going to see Calchas, a prophet, to get the prophecy “the child is the price of the war”, but over and over again we see all the characters questioning this and other prophecies and questioning the reliability of them. As said in my research on ancient Greece, knowing a prophecy did not take away the person’s responsibility and humans are capable of mistakes which can lead to a fulfillment of a prophecy, but just in a different way they said person thought. Take the story of Oedipus, who tried to flee the prophecy that he would marry his mother and kill his father. He did everything in his power to make that not come true, but it came true anyway. This then begs the question “Are we truly in charge of our own fates?”

One of the major themes/phrases that applies to my character in particular is the theme concerning women’s place in society. This idea is a big departure from the original text and I’ve spoken of the earlier. One of the major differences between Aeschylus’s play and Icke’s adaptation is the fact that my character, Electra, isn’t real (or is she?). Tisha Turk wrote an article “*Oresteia as transformative work*” speaking about this, “In Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, Electra disappears” in the final act. “Icke’s production both rewrites and explains that disappearance by suggesting that perhaps she was

never there at all.” Example: “DOCTOR: Your hair was the same? And your footprints and hers were the same? A girl? That doesn't make sense. Listen to me, Orestes...I think we have to consider the possibility that those were your footprints, that that was your hair...You've survived a trauma. Your sister died, Orestes: your sister, Iphigenia. She died. You survived. We have no record of another sister. You had one sister (Icke, 100).”

She writes further, “The idea that Electra is a figment of Orestes' imagination is startling, yet it's an idea for which Icke prepares us throughout the adaptation. Electra appears unambiguously present in the first dinner scene, but something is off: in this and other scenes, Klytemnestra or Cilissa address Electra as Orestes (25, 31, 90). In retrospect it seems clear that the first family dinner scene was not an unmediated glimpse of the past but Orestes' own unreliable memory of events. In later scenes, Electra's presence is even more ambiguous: when Orestes mentions Electra, other characters don't react or don't recognize the name.[5.4] Making Electra imaginary renders eerie rather than amusing the famous scene, later parodied by Euripedes, in which Electra recognizes the presence of Orestes by a lock of hair and a footprint. In Icke's adaptation, the scene shows that something is wrong with Orestes' perception of reality. Transforming this element of the story also allows Icke to comment on the story as a whole. Why is Orestes the only one on trial? Why does the trilogy bear his name? Why is the woman less important?”

Margherita Laera writes that Icke's "bizarre but very popular adaptation strategy that attempts to humanize what is ultimately a set of mythological (not psychological) characters; the intention to make infanticide less symbolic, less removed from everyday life, and more naturalistic, understandable, consumable; the portrayal of parents killing their children as plausible, when none of that familiar atmosphere of domestic life or psychological depth is to be found in Greek tragedy. Identification with characters, as Denis Guénoun has argued in his book *Le théâtre est-il nécessaire?*, was not a mechanism known the Greeks. It is our own attunement to the mechanisms of naturalism and the principles of psychology that make us read Greek tragedy through those lenses, but the circle cannot be squared that easily. It is like reading feminism

into Euripides' *Medea* when the notion of feminism was totally alien to Euripides. The fact that Euripides' *Medea* speaks about women's oppression and kills her children to hurt her husband does not make her a feminist²."

There are a lot of extremely complex themes that pose hard and sometimes unanswerable questions throughout Icke's play. My question is why does Icke say things multiple times?

THEMES

Below I've managed to amalgamate all the instances in which Icke brings up these certain phrases and ideas.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN V. WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Icke seems to be speaking to the same idea that Aeschylus himself was grappling with: a person's place in society. Simon Goldhill speaks about this in the introduction to Icke's play: "The first word in Homer's *Odyssey* is "andra" or MAN... his epic poem explores an explanation of what it is to be a male adult in society." This is important because plays in ancient Greece, including *Oresteia*, were performed for an audience of men, all of whom at one point or another had served in the military as it was compulsory back then. "Orestes is an exemplary hero for the young man trying to find what it means to be a man." But, Goldhill says, Aeschylus's play "retells the story." In *The Illiad*, the solution to a family in disarray was to "have the right man firmly in control". Icke himself writes this into his play. Klytemnestra says, "I've been the head of the house" and when Agamemnon arrives home in Act II she says, "This family has too missed the head of its table (Icke, 70)" very, very shortly before brutally murdering him in cold blood while he's in his bath. Then, after murdering him she says, "and from this point, from now, this house is set in order ONCE AND FOR ALL (Icke, 81)", meaning, the WOMAN is finally in charge now, as Klytemnestra thinks it

² Laera, Margherita, "On Killing Children: Greek Tragedies on British Stages in 2015". *Critical Stages*. December 2015, <http://www.critical-stages.org/12/on-killing-children-greek-tragedies-on-british-stages-in-2015/>

should be. This goes against EVERYTHING from the original story. And it is no surprise because of the times we live in.

The way Icke wrote Electra also speaks to this theme of the importance of women vs. men. I've written before that in the original story, Electra disappears completely in the last act of the play. Icke asks why the woman is less important and Klytemnestra asks this question herself.

pg. 68, QUESTION: "...BUT AS A WOMAN, you must have an opinion?"...
KLYTEMNESTRA: "AS A WOMAN...I find that a disquieting phrase. I mean, I don't have sets of opinions depending on the mask I'm wearing It's not as if I'm one thing while I'm breastfeeding and then change entirely wen I'm doing something..."

pg. 121, This is spoken by the woman who plays the role of Klytemnestra, but it seems as those in the 4th act she is instead Orestes's mother's defendant.

KLYTEMNESTRA: "But allow me to ask the house: why does the murder of the mother count for less than that of the father? Because the WOMAN is less important. Why is the mother's motive for revenge lesser than the son's? She avenged a daughter. He a father. Because the WOMAN is less important. This WOMAN has paid the price. But this house cannot a place where the WOMAN is less important."

pg. 126, ATHENE: "If there are no objections? In the practice of our lives, we favor men in all things - in our society, in our religion, in our law- and as the just representative of our society, our religion and our law, it is appropriate that on behalf of this house of justice it is emphasized that men are favored."

pg. 18, DOCTOR: "No. You are yourself. But you are also a part of a family and a country. And a world. And a religion... I think we're all several things, even just within our family."

pg. 68, KLYTEMNESTRA: "I contain multitudes."

pg. 124, AGAMEMNON: "It can't be just a single person. The decision is too complex for one. It has to be more... then they're all implicated in the consequence."

2. THE RELIABILITY OF PROPHECY

This is a HUGE theme in Icke's adaptation. One of the very first things said in the play by the prophet Calchas is that prophecies are pretty unreliable and one comes to their own conclusions. Something else important to note is the philosophy that Aeschylus himself came up with, "You suffer: you learn."

pg. 15, (This phrase has a double meaning: Calchas is also apologizing about how long the play is since there are so many STORIES within Icke's play.) CALCHAS: "I meant to apologize about the stairs. It's storey after storey."

pg. 15, CALCHAS: "This has all happened before. And more than once."

pg. 16, (Speaking about the prophecy that if Agamemnon kills his daughter, the fair winds will blow): CALCHAS: "You know there's a MESSAGE. A STORY. Maybe that proves it was created, maybe it's just a STORY."

AGAMEMNON: "It's not [a STORY], it's a PROPHECY."

CALCHAS: "It's a FACT. At least, it's going to be a FACT."

pg. 35, KLYTEMNESTRA: "Your father was told... that he would die in water. And when he told me that STORY, do you know what I said to him? It's nonsense. And it is."

pg. 94, ELECTRA: "It's a SIGN. The thing we have to do... but it was a SIGN, she died so we could win the war. And we did... and he died in water just like he said... We kill her like she killed you. In secret. No SIGN. She has to die- or none of it makes sense."

pg. 39, (speaking of the prophecy that Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter in order to win the war):

AGAMEMNON: "Is it- reliable?"

MENELAUS: "The MESSAGE?"

AGAMEMNON: "PROPHECY..." ...

TALTHYBIUS: "Yes, we think it is."

AGAMEMNON: "So where's your document (proof)?"

pg. 41, TALTHYBIUS: "...if the PROPHECY is real.

AGAMEMNON: “*If* the PROPHECY is real.”

MENELAUS: “You have had the second opinions, checked and re-checked and it’s always exactly the same. I’m saying: I believe the thing and so do you.”

pg. 50, AGAMEMNON: “Everything is telling me something more is happening here, there have been SIGNS...”

KLYTEMNESTRA: “And SIGNS are scientific proof.”

AGAMEMNON: “I know you’re not behind me in my faith we both know that, but... but everything is point the same way.”...

KLYTEMNESTRA: “I’m going to tell the TRUTH. The SIGNS aren’t real...”

pg. 56, [*This phrase is said multiple times throughout the play and it is left up to the audience’s interpretation as to who the characters are speaking about.*]: KLYTEMNESTRA: “She’s been dead since the beginning.”

pg. 64, ORESTES: “But is there evidence? Was there any SIGN? Did you dream it?”

pg. 66, ORESTES: “There’s a way of

pg. 78, (Propheying that Agamemnon is about to be murdered): CASSANDRA: “the house breathes slaughter. he dies. murder. he dies now. no good gods here. not in this story. these are his final moments. these ones. he dies now.”

pg. 101 (Klytemnestra has a dream about a snake biting her breast, she realizes that Orestes was the snake and the dream was a prophecy foretelling her death):

ORESTES : “This is your dream.”

KLYTEMNESTRA: “That dream. The snake was you.”

pg. 112, (testifying that killing his mother was prophecies by the gods):

ORESTES: “There were SIGNS.”

ATHENE: “So, not directly. Were there not similar SIGNS endorsing the first act, read by your father as sanctioning his murder of your sister...?”...

ORESTES: “There were SIGNS then, I think. And he read them correctly.”

ATHENE: “How do you *know*?”

ORESTES: “The winds came. They won the war.”

ATHENE: “Can we *prove* that Ipigenia’s death caused those events? Do we *know* it would not have happened anyway?”

ORESTES: “No.”

pg. 113, ORESTES: “It was a SIGN from him, beyond the grave or from god. I was his child, I was to be his avenger...”...

KLYTEMNESTRA: “Could it not have been a note sent to your father by one of the many people who disagreed, passionately disagreed, with military action which resulted in the deaths of countless innocent children? Was he too in several senses not a child killer? Might the note have been penned by his wife?”

ORESTES: “It is some coincidence for this not to be meaningful: the will of the gods is clear

CALCHAS: “My lady, could we clarify how the gods might...”

ATHENE: “Gods speak in SIGN. *SIGNS are interpretable. Open.*”

pg. 114, KLYTEMNESTRA: “We read the SIGNS like mirrors, my lady. *They show us what we want and nothing more.*”

3. CAN THERE EVER BE A REAL TRUTH?

This one is big. Orestes is always saying he doesn’t know what the truth is and the Doctor interviewing him is always saying how she wants the truth and Orestes is always denying her. We find as the play goes on that Orestes is a TRULY unreliable narrator and in the end, the only fact is Klytemnestra’s body but everything else is really up to interpretation.

And, in the end, Orestes says to the Doctor, “I need you to help me. You’re here to help me,” and she says, “No. We’re here to try and understand the truth (Icke, 104).”

pg 62, DOCTOR: “We have to understand the TRUTH.”

ORESTES: “What if it’s a dream. What if it’s a LIE?”...

DOCTOR: “One version of TRUTH...”

pg. 64, ORESTES: “But how do you KNOW that we’ve won? I don’t want to believe it until I know it’s true... but is there evidence? Was there any sign? Did you dream it?”

pg. 65, KLYTEMNESTRA: “And I know for a FACT that we’ve won.”

pg. 66, ORESTES: “There’s a way of reading the SIGNS – gathering little tings up into big slabs of MEANING – but it just slips. There’s things missing.”

pg. 69, ORESTES: “... we all look at the FACTS through our own lens, our own families, our own dreams and sadnesses.”

pg. 80, KLYTEMNESTRA: “Everything I have said until this point- all of it- was lies. To myself, to my family, to the public, to *him*, it was all, all untrue but as I speak this, in this moment, this is TRUE – from now.”

pg. 82, DOCTOR: “The whole TRUTH of what happened.”

pg. 87, DOCTOR: “We have to try and understand TRUTH.”

ORESTES: “... I do not want to talk about the TRUTH, there isn’t one, *there are just versions of versions*, twisting variations, seething over each other like bees and one of them actually happened, there’s one that is actually right... and the TRUTH is swimming dark underneath and if you rise it out, pry it out into the light, it evaporates as it comes to the surface.”

pg. 104, ORESTES: “I need you to help me. You’re here to help me.”

DOCTOR: “No. We’re here to try and understand the TRUTH.”

pg. 110, ORESTES: “How can I swear to tell the TRUTH?”...

ATHENE: “Orestes, as best as you can, you swear to give the TRUE version of what you did.”

ORESTES: “There isn’t one TRUE version. There isn’t. There isn’t one story- a line of TRUTH that stretches start to end. That doesn’t happen any more, maybe it never happened, but even as I say this now, as I say *THIS* now, in each of your minds you create your own versions, different lenses pointing at the same thing at the same time and seeing that thing differently- it depends on too much- the day you’ve had, what you feel about your mother, the thought you thought before this one- it all floods in,

this thing this whole thing is helpless because your brain creates stories in which it is *RIGHT*.”

pg. 111, CALCHAS: “You undertake to tell the TRUTH, to tell here today a true and binding version of events?”

pg. 119, CALCHAS: “THIS IS THE STORY. THESE ARE THE FACTS.”
CALCHAS: “Her carcass is the *only* FACT.”

4. WHAT IS TRUE JUSTICE?

Does a son have a duty to avenge his father’s death? Is it right to do so?

Is it justice that a man who murders a mother he loved to go free?

Is it justice for a father to sacrifice his child for his country and not be punished for it?

Is it justice for a wife to brutally murder her husband in vengeance for killing their child? How can the cycle of revenge be ended? By taking another life or setting one free? But still, if one kills another and is judged innocent and set free, are they indeed innocent? When is it *RIGHT* to kill someone else? Is there ever a case where there is?

p. 44, AGAMEMNON: “I am in no way fit to make this JUDGEMENT. I cannot- I cannot in good conscience make this decision.”

pg. 46, AGAMEMNON: “Let me understand the JUSTICE that will follow.”

pg. 97, CILISSA: “There’s no JUSTICE...”

pg. 99, ORESTES: “Mum. I’m here to make things *RIGHT*.”

pg. 108, ATHENE: “I announce myself the higher power of *RIGHT*, and I inaugurate this house once again for our purpose as a house of JUSTICE with mandate to establish, enforce and engender what is *RIGHT*.”

pg. 110, KLYTEMNESTRA: “Orestes, do you believe you were *WRONG* to kill your mother? The story your brain told you, was it... was it the *RIGHT* thing?”

pg. 43, AGAMEMNON: “In no code or system or law — no social law, even the law of nature, is this considered to (be right) and I know that there is a higher power and a bigger picture — but she is not a soldier, for her to die like that...”

pg. 116, KLYTEMNESTRA: “Of course you couldn’t be sure. Of course... your hesitation is a recorded FACT. And what that hesitation represents is a screaming acknowledgement that murder is wrong... *acceptable in no code or system of law- no social law, even the law of nature. Against the fact of your birth. Your blood. She was your mother. You knew it was WRONG.*”

ORESTES: “Yes. Yes. You’re RIGHT. That’s RIGHT. I did love her.”

pg. 125, ATHENE: “Let me remind you to think not of this one instance but of the other instances to come, people thousands of years from today. Your JUDGEMENT will judge them; the JUSTICE we serve will be their JUSTICE too.”

5. WHAT IS THE ACTUAL MEANING OF WORDS?

pg. 15, CALCHAS: “A thousand words looking at the same thing. And more words I’m afraid than meaning.”

p. 64-65 Klytemnestra’s speech

pg. 88, ELECTRA: “... and it isn’t just words. Words are defined by other words. Chasing each other round in circles until they quietly just stop existing.”

6. IS THERE EVER A TIME FOR JUSTIFIED VIOLENCE?

What is the place of VIOLENCE in society? How should it be dealt with? How should it be punished? How does one family’s demise impact the society as a whole? Is there ANY circumstance in which violence is okay?

pg. AGAMEMNON, “My life is a VIOLENT life.”

Chapter 1 Background Historical Research KLYTEMNESTRA: “VIOLENCE is how you’ve put food on our table.”

pg. 123, ORESTES: “How can you punish *natural impulse*? Who is that *for*? Who benefits? How are things BETTER? It won’t stop REVENGE, it won’t stop murder. It is still going to happen it was always going to happen.”

pg. 127, CALCHAS: “We need her here. A murderer should fear retribution of this house. A murder cannot just be wiped away. She is essential: the terror she holds keeps us from collapse. It keeps the house of justice standing. She is a part of us, and we of her.”

Chapter 1 Background Historical Research ORESTES: “But I still killed her. Where does it end? Perhaps I’ll always feel guilty. What do I do? What do I do? What do I do? What do I do?”

7. IS THERE EVER A JUSTIFIED TIME FOR SACRIFICE?

pg. IPHIGENIA: “It’s a little dead body. It’s a little dead body.”

pg. 118, AGAMEMNON: “His act served the *greatest possible GOOD*. He sacrificed his family for the state.”

... MENELAUS: “He only killed his daughter for *our GOOD*. And his murder was an act that tore apart the fabric of this country’s security, it hurt us all.”

TIME PERIOD OF ROBER ICKE’S PLAY

It was extremely challenging to figure out when this play takes place as Icke offers no setting or time period other than “This appoint occurs in the past. Outlook calendar error message.” When I first started working on my script analysis, I assumed that the play did in fact take place in the past, in ancient Mycenae, but after getting back to school I consulted with my director, Sam, and he said we’d be setting it today.

So then, what does this phrase mean? Does it mean that this play does actually occur in the past or not? My interpretation of this is that the scenes of Orestes’s family life and all the tragedy that happened to him and his family DID occur in the past, BUT, it’s all IN HIS HEAD and what is happening RIGHT NOW is Orestes’s TRAIL and everything the audience sees over the course of the evening is being re-enacted by

actors in front of the jury, but Orestes's has lost his grip on reality to a point that he thinks it's happening in real time.

Below is my analysis of what time every scene I'm in is set. Crossed out are my initial ideas. In bold are my current ideas.

In the 1st act, (as in ever act) p. 25, it's the 21st c. AD OR 11th c. BCE, spring, 2020 AD or 1184 BCE (as it is for the next scene), or no time at all.

It is what ever day it is that I perform the show and what ever time it is when I perform this show (this is true for all scenes).

We eat at the exact same time every single night, on the DOT, and if you're late, mom gets incredibly angry. She does this all the time. And I'm late A LOT. Dinner is a long affair. Takes probably 2.5-3 hours. We talk about our days. It's my least favorite part of day. Afterwards, my little sister and brother take baths. I usually go to my room. I will sometimes try to leave dinner early. My parents always give me such a hard time.

This time is also significant because dad has been away at war. Right now they're kind of in a lull, meaning dad is kind of home on leave, but he can be called away at any time. We are losing and thousands upon thousands of men have died and my dad has been the military general in charge. He has blood on his hands and I know it. I know that any day, word could come that he'd dead. I worry CONSTANTLY and am afraid he's going to die.

On p. 33-36, it's still the same year, same day, an hour later. My father almost just murdered my little sister, but I of course don't know that. I DO however know about the prophecy so I know it's going to happen soon.

On p. 63, 10 years have past. This is an incredibly significant day. The night before, we finally won the Trojan War after 10 years of fighting. This is the morning after. My father survived the war, but my little sister is dead. Millions have died to serve our country and protect our family and thousands others. If we had lost, we would all have been taken as slaves, raped or murdered.

Troy, "the city that god didn't favor", isn't really a city anymore. Dad and the others killed all the men, burned the city to the ground and took all the women and children as slaves. Many, many people have died during the course of this war. Every day it seemed there was a continuous black parade of coffins packed tightly with grey ashes.

Everyday my family hears a hundred times different ways that dad died. We are always prepared for the worst, for the very worst. Mum did her best but

everything was too much for her at one point and she tried to hang herself. I was the one who found her.

Dad is FINALLY safe. His job always made it MUCH more likely that he would die sooner rather than later. But now, he has escaped death and he won't die for another 50 years, unless there's another war.

Many, MANY people have been protesting this war. Dad was seen as an evil man for sending all those boys to fight for his brother. Thousands upon thousands of innocent women and children died too. People saw him as a CHILD KILLER. And the Trojans were ready to fight for another 50 years. That meant that millions of others would have died, if dad hadn't sacrificed my sister. He did the greatest possible thing he could do. He put all those other family's before his own and that is the most honorable, noble thing any man in our society could do. And because of that, after we win the war, dad is lauded as a hero.

On p. 75-77, same day, that evening. This is the first meal our family has had together in ten years. Plus, dad brought a war prize with him from Troy. Her name's Cassandra. She's the daughter of Queen Hecuba of Troy and this is the first time I've really gotten to meet with her. It's incredibly uncomfortable having her here with us. I know dad's been fucking her. She had twins with him. He found her in a state of extreme shock, hiding in a church under an altar. Cilissa, my childhood nurse, says that she looks angry, because she was taken from her home, from her family. I'm very happy to have dad back home again. But mum has changed a lot since he left. She's become unstable. Orestes doesn't even remember Iphigenia. I seem to be the only one who does, me and mum anyway. Cassandra reminds all of us of Iphigenia, which is incredibly unnerving, haunting and freaky.

Every night since dad left I've had HORRIBLE nightmares. I don't really sleep. None of us do really. One of us always wakes up screaming every night.

On p. 82-84, it's 7 years later. It's been 7 years since dad died. Orestes has been gone for that long. My new step father, Aeghithus has been living in the palace with mum all that time. I hate BOTH of them and I'm just waiting for my brother Orestes to return. I talk to my father a lot and visit his grave as often as I can. I feel nothing. I don't know how to miss him. I don't really know what to do. All I know is that I HATE Klytemnestra and her lover and they HAVE to pay for what they've done. I miss my brother dearly. But mostly, I miss my dad. I miss him so much and I don't know how to miss him. I feel all different things; apathetic, hurt, betrayed, scared, oppressed, vengeful, spiteful, hateful... I HAVE to do SOMETHING.

On p. 87-96 it's the same day, later in the day. I've come to dad's tomb. It's a beautiful tomb right outside the palace. My mother never, ever comes here. I talk to my dad a lot here. I talk to him all the time really. He seems real but I know he's not really there. He's the only person I can really talk to now. Orestes is gone, my mum has gone bat shit crazy, my little sister is dead and I'd rather eat shit than talk to that fucking mum's fucking in the house that dad bled and died to make into a home. Dad sacrificed so much for our family and she profited and lived off of the things he did. And he's been fucking someone else the entire time. She never loved him. She RELISHED killing him. he ENJOYED it. She's completely psychotic. She keeps saying that she wants to die. I WISH SHE WOULD ALREADY! And now that she has what she wants, this fucker Aeghithus, she doesn't even really like him anymore. I don't think they even fuck. I'm going to RELISH killing her, as much as she relished murdering my father. I want to MASSACRE her. I don't want to just kill her... I want to DESTROY HER.

On p. 100, it's the same day, that evening. I've been waiting for this fucking day for fucking 7 years. That's how long I've been waiting to revenge my father's death. I HATE THIS PERSON WHO GAVE BIRTH TO ME. SHE'S A SLUT AND A WHORE. SHE DESTROYED MY FAMILY. SHE KILLED MY FATHER WHEN HE WAS FINALLY SAFE. SHE DESTROYED OUR HOME AND NOW SHE HAS TO PAY. I know what I'm about to do is wrong. I know it is. And I know somewhere deep, deep down inside me that I do love her. But I HAVE TO. I have to do it. There have been signs. The gods spoke to me. They told me she has to die. She killed my father. So she has to die.

SETTING OF ROBERT ICKE'S PLAY

When I first started analyzing Icke's play, I seriously thought we'd be setting our play in Mycenae, but, as I spoke of earlier, that seems not to be the case. Below is a break down of where I am in each scene I'm in.

Icke's play is not set in any particular time or place. There *is* no setting. We do know that the play is taking place right here, right now, as whenever someone dies, the exact time is stated on a clock above the stage.

On p. Act I p. 25, as in all scenes, I'm in my parent's house. This particular scene, and the next I'm in the dining room. In the next scene I'm in Orestes's room. The next scene I'm back in the dining room then in the middle of the 3rd

act I'm at my father's grave. The last scene I'm in, p. 100, I'm back in the dining room.

What Surrounds Me?: I had to use my imagination to answer this question this summer, but my ideas were actually pretty close to what Lindsey, our Scenic Designer, is actually creating.

In my first scene I am with my mother, father, sister, brother, nurse. There is a table, wine, wine glasses, forks, plates, knives, chairs, tablecloth, columns, windows, curtains, mosaic floor, moon and stars. There is a long table with a place for 4 people in the center of the room. The majority of the room is white, with multi-colored tiles on the floor. There are two white pillars behind us. If you go up right, that's my parent's bedroom. It's upstairs. The palace is enormous, with very high ceilings. The palace has many floors and is an intricate complex of storerooms, kitchens, etc. Downstairs are our bedrooms. Iphigenia and Orestes sleep in one room and I have my own room. Our maid sleeps downstairs in the basement. UL is a long, grand hallway that leads to the front door and the kitchen.

From p. 33-36, I am with my brother, my mother and my little sister. We're in the kitchen. Cold box, marble island (black), countertops, chocolate cake and stools. There is a black marble island in the middle of the kitchen. Black marble floors. There's a cake in a plastic container on the island. The cake is chocolate, my favorite

On p. 63, I am with Orestes, my brother (In reality, I'm completely alone). There is a bed, curtains, windows, marble floors, marble columns, sheets, pillows (goose feather), clothes and shoes (in closet). It is a huge, white bed with incredibly comfortable sheets in the center of the room. Night tables. A dressing gown draped over the chair by the mirror that you can see from Orestes's bed. A closet full of clothes. A HUGE window over looking the entire city. Orestes's room is on the 6th floor of the palace, so he has a great view. The room is always bright. Everything is made of very expensive white marble.

On p. 75-77 I am with Cilissa, Dad, Cassandra, Klytemnestra. We're in the dining room again so same as before, except for everything; walls, floor, ceiling, tablecloth, chairs, plates, cutlery, etc., has aged significantly since the last time.

On p. 82-84 I am with Klytemnestra and Aeghithus (mum's new lover who helped kill my dad. He's also my dad's cousin, making him my cousin too.) There is a table, chairs, plates, decanter, wine, tablecloth, cutlery, food. Everything is same as before, only the table cloth is so much dirtier, with lots of holes and

bloodstains on it. My mother put this over my father's head to cover his eyes RIGHT before she killed him. The house is much older and more decayed now too as many, many years have passed during the course of the evening. The house is slowly crumbling, falling part. Things have changed A LOT since father died. Now his cousin takes his place. Now that dad's dead, I HATE this house.

On p. 85-96 I am with Cillissa/Agamemnon (ghost) and Orestes (the only person is REAL in this scene Cillissa.) I am in a graveyard filled with many graves. My father's grave is made of white marble with flowers of all kinds, with dirt, grass and trees all around me. Dad's grave is HUGE. We call it the Treasure of Atreus, my granddad. All the great kings are buried here, most recently, my father. Granddad is right beside him. It's a HUGE, stone building, filled with gold and jewels that we hope our loved ones can take to the afterlife with them. Dad was buried with a gold-plated mask in full golden armor, fine robes and his sword.

On his grave stone it says, "In loving memory". That's from me, not my mum of course. I put flowers on his grave every time I come. My mother will have flowers sent to the grave as well, because of her nightmares and overwhelming guilt as to what she did to my dad. The floor is made of sand/dirt. It's cold in here and the ceiling is 50 feet above me.

On p. 100, I am with Klytemnestra. Cillissa, my childhood nurse, is back in the kitchen. We are in the dining room, so like before but the house is falling apart and the tablecloth is torn and bloody. The house is much colder and devoid of life now. Oppressive. The house is literally crumbling to pieces and there's bloodstains on the carpet and the tablecloth that will never wash away. The house is a mess. My mother hasn't held it together very well since she killed dad. The house is falling apart, figuratively and literally.

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF ROBERT ICKE'S PLAY

In the first act, the Trojan War (or a war that America is fighting against another country) is about to start. We've been at war for years and my father has been away for a LONG time. He's the leader of our army and the King of Mycaene. I'm his daughter and a princess. We all know that if we lose the war, very, very bad things will happen, especially to us, the royal family. We'll be raped, sold as slaves, beaten or worse. This war is life or death. We HAVE to win. Hundreds of thousands of men have given their lives for this country; for us.

Presently, dad is on leave for a bit and we're having our usual family dinner, something we do every single evening. We always pray before dinner and dad has us talk about what we did that day. It's SUPER boring for me. I HATE

tradition. It's like a habit we've gotten into. And mum gets very upset when we're late. We start dinner every night at 7pm exactly and even if you're two minutes late, mum and dad both throw a fit. It's SO annoying. Also, it's INSANELY hot because there's not been a BREATH of wind in WEEKS. This is because dad hasn't made a sacrifice. As soon as he does, the wind will begin to blow again.

We never know when dad is going to be called away to fight. Might be during the course of dinner. We could never see him again if he goes. I also have heard of the prophecy that he will die in water and that he has to kill one of his children, Iphigenia, in order to win the war.

In Act II, Dad has been at war for the last 10 years. Hundreds of thousands of men have died under his command. [pg. 68, QUESTION: "Your husband as been fighting for several years now, and under his command our forces, as you know, suffered substantial losses."]

The night before the start of the second act, we heard that we won the war and our men are FINALLY coming home. We know that the war was dearly bought. Dad left shortly after Iphigenia's death so it's been hard for us all. I have nightmares. Horrible nightmares. But he's back. He's finally back and safe and no one will hurt him. He's home. I'm so happy he's finally home. I missed him SO MUCH.

He brings this young girl home with him. She's a war-bride. Her name is Cassandra I think, the daughter of the Queen of Troy. Dad found her in a church and took her home with him. She's very quiet. She seems angry and I can't understand anything she says. She's crazy. It's weird having her here. She reminds me of my sister, and I hated my sister (but loved her too).

Now that dad is finally home, things will go back to normal. He won't die for a long, long time. He's finally safe. Our house has its leader back and we'll be ok now. We're so lucky.

I do know though that it's been prophesied that my father will die in water. I don't really know what that means. When Cassandra starts talking about someone dying, I get really scared. I really hope it's not my father.

In act III, Dad was murdered by my mum, I don't really call her that anymore, 10 years ago. My brother Orestes has been gone for about that long too. I've been going to my father's grave in Argos as often as I can and thinking about ways to avenge my father. My mother shackled up with my dad's cousin shortly after murdering my father.

The house is oppressive. I feel betrayed and angry, hurt and spiteful. There's nothing I can do really. I feel nothing. I don't know what to do. I need Orestes. I need my brother. I need him to come back. He would know what to do.

When my brother comes back, I'll convince him to help me murder my mother. He'll do it. He knows it's what has to be done. And when I do kill her, I'm not just going to kill her. I'm going to massacre her, like she massacred my father. And it will feel GOOD. It will feel like justice.

DAS, INITIAL STASIS, MAJOR INCITING INCIDENT, ETC

I. What is the statement or story of the play?:

a. What is the place of violence and revenge in society? Can law provide the answer? What does justify violence in a community? How does one family's strife relate to social order?

b. Dramatic Action Statement and why:

A mentally ill young man who suffered a childhood trauma faces complete destruction as he is finally confronted with the truth about his past and comes to grips with reality, but still has no answers as to if what he did was right or wrong.

II. Discussion of Major Analysis Elements that are important for your work

a. Given Circumstances/Initial Stasis:

- The family is together.
- They have the family tradition of having dinner together every night.
- Agamemnon is the King of Mycenaean and the leader of the Greek army
- He has been asked by his brother, Menelaus, to go to war against the Trojans because Paris stole Menelaus's wife, Helen, and took her to Troy. (*The President is asked to go to war against an enemy that CANNOT go un-fought*)
- Thousands upon thousands of men have died fighting under Agamemnon's command. Carts full of dead soldiers come home every day, and the Trojan army is ready to fight for decades if they have to.
- The family knows that if they lose the war, they will all be raped, murdered or sold as slaves. Everything they have will go away. a
- The war has been going on for a couple years now.
- Agamemnon also goes to see Calchas to make sure the prophecy is true.

- Agamemnon has been encouraged by his brother, Menelaus, and his close friend, Talthybius, to sacrifice his daughter in order to end the war.
- Agamemnon doesn't think he can do it. He doesn't want to.

b. Major Inciting Incident:

The death of Iphigenia.

c. Building Action:

- Klytemnestra says; "It was prophesied your dad would die in water."
- The big argument between Klytemnestra and Agamemnon before he sacrifices Iphigenia
- The "coming home speeches" made by Klytemnestra and Agamemnon when the Trojan War is finally won.
- Agamemnon is murdered by Klytemnestra.
- Klytemnestra and Aegisthus together in the house with Electra years after the murder of her father.
- Electra talking to Agamemnon, Cillissa and finally Orestes, persuading him to kill their mother to avenge their father's death.

Important Sub-Plots:

- Cassandra is stolen as a war prize and has children with Agamemnon. She is murdered along with Agamemnon
- Cillissa grows old watching the family fall apart and grows to hate Aegisthus and Klytemnestra as much as Elektra does.
- Orestes leaves Greece after the death of his father.

d. Major Crisis:

Orestes murders his mother

e. Further Building Action:

- Orestes being confronted that his sister, Elektra, isn't actually real.
- Orestes realizing he's been in a courtroom on trial for his actions during the course of the entire play and has been reliving his traumatic childhood.

f. Major Climax:

- Orestes is judged innocent by Athene

e. Denouement/Final Stasis:

- After the verdict, Orestes continues to feel guilty and has no one to turn and no idea what to do next.
- He is the last surviving member of his family and still has severe mental issues with no answers

II. Discussion of Journey/Story Arc

a. Journey of Action in story:

The family is home together, with the threat of war all around them. They are under extremely psychological and societal pressure to hold everything together. They are pressured to murder their daughter in order to win the war. When the war is won, everything seems to finally be at peace, but then Clytemnestra murders her husband, who is the King of Mycenae and marries his cousin, who takes over the throne, leaving his children to defend for themselves. When Orestes kills his mother, he is finally able to face the reality of his situation and admit what he did and be judged for it.

b. Character Journey:

I, Elektra, serve as Orestes's emotional seat. I say what he can't and do what he can't. I express the violent emotions that he himself cannot. I take care of him, watch out for him and always know what to do. I am vengeance personified. I care for him and tell him how to cope with his situation. I listen to him and express and do what he cannot.

But in the third act, I don't know what to do. I feel "absolutely nothing" and when Orestes comes back and asks, "What do we do?", I say, "Nothing. There's nothing to do. Sorry. I know I'm supposed to know, and tell you how to [cope] (Icke, p. 93)." I think this is my function in the play.

In the first part of the play, I always seems to know what to do, but I lose that after dad dies. All the fire and passion leaves me after my father's brutal, untimely death. Agamemnon and Orestes were the only person I truly love and care for, and now that both gone, I feel completely empty with absolutely no idea what to do next.

But when I see a sign that we need to kill Klytemnestra in order to “make things right,” I find my passion, my drive and my purpose again. My goal for this entire play is to honor and protect her father, no matter the cost.

And by the VERY END of the play, it’s almost like I’m still there, and yet I’m not. When Orestes asks in the last lines of the play “What do I do?” over and over again, he’s essentially asking me. But I’m no longer there. So what WILL he do now that I’m gone and his ENTIRE family is slaughtered?

III. Discussion of Electra’s relationships

a. Character dramatic action statement:

I must fight to keep myself alive. If I am faced with the reality that Electra is in fact not real, I will have to admit that it wasn’t HER that killed my mother.

b. Backstory:

I am not real. I’m dead. I was a miscarriage. I was born 6 years before my brother, Orestes. He’s heard whispers about the pregnancy so he just came up with the idea that I never died in the first place and grew up alongside him. I always know what to do and exactly what to say. I do what he cannot do, say what he cannot say and am who he cannot be in order to help him cope with his traumatic situation.

I HATE my mother because I believe she is responsible for my death. Plus, I know she’s a FUCKING liar. I love my father because I know he’s a good man, despite what he had to do to my little sister. I HATE my little sister, because dad loves her mother then me, because she’s a girl.

As the play goes on, my personality becomes stronger and stronger because my little brother wishes more and more that he was me.

c. Motivations in specific scenes:

1st scene (w/entire family, at dinner): To entertain my brother in order to distract him from how terrible his life is. To say and do the things he can’t, because he’s shy, timid and fucked up. To upset my mother as much as I possibly can in order to prove my love and devotion to my father

2nd scene (w/mum, brother and sister, in kitchen late at night): To get mum to tell me the truth if my dad’s leaving again or not.

3rd scene (w/brother, when war finally ends): To convince Orestes the war is really over and dad is coming home. To comfort him. To reassure him

4th scene (w/family, -sister, +dad’s war bride, Cassandra): To confront Cassandra. To get back at her because she reminds me of my sister and I fucking

HATED her. And if dad loves her, he's gonna leave and then I'll be alone. I have GOT to get the truth out of Cassandra... is my father going to die?

5th scene (w/mum and step father at dinner): To hurt my mother in however way I can, to get back at her AND my uncle

6th scene (w/dead father): To convince my father that I still love him and figure out what to do next. To get him to tell me he loves me, which he never has in my entire life.

7th scene (alone at father's grave): To get Godly intervention, to get a sign from God as to what to do to make my mother pay for what she did

8th scene (w/nurse, Cillissa): To make Cillissa feel terrible. To deny the truth.

9th scene (w/brother): To persuade my brother to murder our mother. To get him to say, "I love you."

10th scene (w/mother): To have one final stand before I am destroyed completely and disappear. To destroy my mother. To purge my hatred for her. To enact vengeance for my father's murder, proving once and for all I am the one truly worthy of his love.

d. Major conflicts between characters:

I HATE my mother. I've never liked her. She and I have always had an extremely tense relationship. I always do everything I can to get on her nerves and drive her crazy. I want my father to love me MORE than my mother.

Agamemnon and Klytemnestra's relationship becomes more and more strained as the play goes on, and it is eventually revealed that everything that Klytemnestra has said and done has all been a complete and utter lie. This includes when she says she loves my father.

e. Families of characters and dynamics between characters:

The House of Atreus, which includes Princess Iphigenia, Elektra's little sister, Prince Orestes (heir apparent), my little brother (who is younger than Iphigenia), Elektra's father, King Agamemnon (King of Argos), Elektra's mother Queen Klytemnestra (Queen of Argos), Prince Aegisthus, Elektra's cousin cousin, and Elektra's uncle, King Menelaus. Cillissa is Elektra's nurse. Cassandra is Agamemnon's lover and a war-prize from Troy. She is the daughter of the Queen of Troy, Hecuba. Talthibius is Agamemnon's closest friends and one of his army generals. Calchas is a seer and close with Agamemnon's family.

f. Character relationships/societal influences:

- Klytemnestra and Agamemnon: Despite their broken marriage and strained relationship, must put up a front for their people. Both carry on extramarital affairs. Agamemnon and Klytemnestra's marriage is on the rocks at the beginning of the play. From my research, I learned that Agamemnon took several consorts while away. Agamemnon even brings one home with him, saying he was doing it for her own good, but in reality, he impregnated Cassandra and she gave birth to twins, further fraying his relationship with his wife. Klytemnestra knows that he's been playing her for a fool for years. But, secretly, she had been sleeping with Agamemnon's cousin, Aegisthus, the entire time he was away.

- Orestes and Elektra are extremely close and continuously being mistaken for the other.

- Aegisthus and Klytemnestra carry on a strained affair that takes place over years, Klytemnestra eventually growing tired of him.

- Cillissa doesn't trust Klytemnestra or Aegisthus. She also HATES Aegisthus. She feels great compassion for Cassandra and loves my brother more than anything in the world. She cared for him as a baby and the news of his death completely devastates her.

- Electra admires and loves her father and desperately desires his love back.

- Iphigenia and Agamemnon are very close. She is his favorite. She sings songs to him when he comes home that she learned at school for him. She will not inherit his throne though.

The family as a whole have a series of rituals they go through every night together. They are expected to be the perfect family as they are the ruling family and must set a good example for the rest of their society.

- Menelaus, Agamemnon and Talthymbius are incredibly close, as would be common among soldiers of the time. But Menelaus would force his brother to kill his daughter, if it came to that. Menelaus and Talthymbius highly respect their king, which is

expected as well, but it is unanimously decided to kill Iphigenia in order to end the

war and “they’ll take other measures to insist that [she does die] (Icke, p. 43)” even if Agamemnon refuses to do it himself. They have a council of men looking out for him and his family and they will do whatever it takes to win the war.

g. Stories of major character relationships:

1. Agamemnon and Electra: I **ADORE** my father, though he is distant to me because he’s distracted by other things. After he dies, I mourn him for **YEARS**, unable to do anything about it. I talk to him often in my dreams, etc, saying he was like a God to me and didn’t really talk to me when he was alive.

2. Klytemnestra and Electra: We have a **VERY** strained relationship from the beginning and it only gets worse by the end. Mum goes pretty much out of her mind and gets crazier throughout the course of the play. After dad’s murder, she treats me like a slave and I’m stuck at the house with her and her lover. I grow to **DESPISE** her and develop a toxic bloodlust for her.

3. Agamemnon and Klytemnestra: My parents have an extremely complicated relationship. Mum and dad always say how much they love each other, but it is revealed shortly into the course of the play that dad has been seeing other women while away at war. He even brings one of them, Cassandra, home with him. Klytemnestra knows this, and so do I. After she murders him and Cassandra, she reveals that everything she said prior to his death was a lie.

4. Orestes and Electra: My brother and I are **EXTREMELY** close. He looks to me to help him cope throughout the play. We are, in fact, the same person. I was made up by him in order to deal.

IV. Words of interest, important images, sounds/music, challenging design elements

CHALLENGING DESIGN ELEMENTS:

- Throughout the course of the play, the set is supposed to be falling apart.
- After Iphigenia’s death, a howling wind should blow, I’m not quite sure how the design team is going to make that happen.
- There’s **A LOT** of blood involved in this play.
- There are a lot of seamless transitions of Orestes talking to the Doctor and the scenes from his childhood. Not sure how the design team is going to accomplish that.

IMPORTANT IMAGES:

- There are many moments of complete and utter stillness on stage, like at the end of Act I in which Klytemnestra sits on the stage for a LONG time.
- The image of Agamemnon and Cassandra dead in the bathroom
- The death of Klytemnestra
- The death of Iphigenia

IMPORTANT PROPS:

- THE TABLECLOTH (a net, a shroud, a veil, a cloth; symbolizes violence/death/murder and the family's ultimate destruction)
- wine decanter (symbolizes Electra's immense sadness)
- red carpet (symbolizes DEATH)
- labrys knife (symbolizes TRUTH)
- "Child Killer" letter (symbolizes the unheard masses who HATE Agamemnon)
- microphone
- TV
- the paintings of the hare being murdered by two eagles (All the different interpretations of one prophecy. The flimsiness of prophetic vision)
- deer (symbolizes Iphigenia)

IMPORTANT SET PIECES:

- the bathtub (symbolizes the prophecy of Agamemnon's death)
- the dinner table (family)
- the ticker tape saying time/date of death

IMPORTANT COSTUME PIECES:

- Iphigenia's yellow muslin dress (symbolizes Iphigenia)
- Agamemnon's red dressing robe

IMPORTANT SOUNDS AND MUSIC:

- Wind blowing
- Crowds cheering