Translation and/in Performance: My Experiments 1985-1992

In 1984 I had been happily teaching Greek and Latin language and literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz for eleven years when Chris Grabowski, an undergraduate theater major, asked me what translation of *Medea* he should use in a production he planned to direct. I waffled; far fewer translations were available then than now, and none seemed very stageable. He asked me if I would translate; I knew the play well and loved it, so I agreed.

Just thinking of the play as a script to be spoken by living actors rather than as a literary monument gave me a new perspective. Chris' approach was also exciting: inspired by the 1981 film *Mommie Dearest*, he planned to set the show in 1953 Hollywood, with Medea and Jason as movie actors, Creon a producer, the Chorus Leader a reporter and the sixteen Chorus members movie fans. The stage was a former quarry with high rock walls on which the sign CORINTH would echo the famous HOLLYWOOD sign. Novice as I was, I followed the text: the location was "Greece," Creon was called "king," his daughter "princess," and there was no explanation how a film producer had the power to banish an actress from his "kingdom." The dialogue was mostly in iambic pentameter; there was no music, but the choral odes were in dactyls, giving a different rhythm. There were frequent colloquialisms, motivated less by the production's setting than by Aristotle's comment that Euripides "chose his words from ordinary language—it was the way he put them together which created art" (*Rhetoric* III.ii.15).

After finishing the script I participated in the whole rehearsal and performance process of *Medea* in spring 1985. This experience made me realize that translating for performance is a whole new world, not just changing language but transforming a text into a new medium. Every single decision made in a production—*mise en scène*, casting, blocking, movement, costumes, sound, etc. etc. etc. is part of the translation, as recent theoretical works have made clear (see Pavis 1992, 136-159; Upton 2000; Baines, Marinetti, and Perteghella 2011; De Martino, Puppa, and Toninato 2013, 170-190, 207-223).

I then dedicated myself to theater practice, and in the thirty-one years since have been involved in many productions as translator, adaptor, director, dramaturg and/or producer. It wasn't until 2007 that I thought about trying to theorize my practice; at a conference sponsored by the Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama at Oxford I gave a presentation on different forms of "authenticity" drawing on ideas from Barthes, Jonathan Miller, Taruskin, Kivy, Thom, Wiles,

Auslander, and especially philosopher David Dutton, illustrated by particular examples of performance (Gamel 2010). In a later essay (Gamel 2013) I refined and expanded the categories to a total of six:

"nominal/historical," in which later practitioners try to imagine and replicate the conditions and effects of the original performance, asking "What did the art work mean to its creator? How was it related to the cultural context of its creation? To what established genre did it belong? What could its original audience have been expected to make of it? What would they have found engaging or important about it?"

"expressive," in which the practitioners express values important to them, and/or awareness of the "emergent value" or larger artistic potential of the performance text;

"processual," in which the practitioners are invited to contribute ideas to the production;

"structural," in which the process of a performance's creation and function reflects the community in which it is created;

"inductive," in which modern productions engage their audiences in ways comparable to those that ancient productions did;

"critical," in which observers/scholars attempt to understand the social goals of performers and evaluate the whole process of development.

In this essay I look back at various stagings involving my own and others' translations/adaptations and draw on my past work on authenticity and my experience as both practitioner and theoretician.

In retrospect I understand that my *Medea* script is primarily an example of "nominal" or "historical" authenticity, responding to such questions as "What could the play's original audience have been expected to make of it? And how can we replicate that experience for modern audiences?" I focused on putting the Greek script into speakable English, but was not thinking about how it would affect its modern audience in performance (I couldn't, since I had not yet been involved in performance), nor about potential conflicts between the script and how it was going to be performed. The Nurse and Tutor are called "slaves." "Zeus" became "God," but Greek figures such as Artemis, Hermes, Hera, Helios, Hekate, Orpheus, and the

Furies are mentioned. Medea says women must "buy a husband" with "a rich dowry" and weddings involve a "wedding torch."

Such references definitely conflicted with Chris' staging. Every actor was in modern dress. Jason entered in a vintage Thunderbird and pulled out a checkbook as he offered Medea "a little financial support." Aegeus (in a black shirt and white tie, suggesting he was a Mafioso) arrived in a vintage Cadillac with two henchmen, and at the end Medea, the Nurse, and the children's bodies left the stage in that same vehicle. The messenger speech describing how Creon and his daughter died was staged with the Chorus putting on 3-D glasses as if watching a film of their deaths, wincing as they reported what they were seeing. To be sure, I took a few liberties: Jason complained about Medea's "bitching" and sarcastically said that if he had told her of his plans to marry the princess she would have "jumped right on the bandwagon." The first choral ode included "the doddering bards will stop writing their ditties/about how *mobile la donna* is." And when Medea calls Jason *pankakiste*, "totally worthless" and says "this is the worst thing I can say about your cowardice" (465-6) I translated "the worst thing one could say to a <u>real</u> man:/you have no balls!" Yet this mixture of ancient/modern, foreign/familiar might well be considered not only as thought-provoking to modern audiences, but in fact similar to the combination in ancient Athenian plays (including *Medea*) of Bronze Age figures with contemporary issues important to Athenian audiences such as the portrayal of women, slaves, and "barbarians"—hence an example of historical authenticity.

In 1986 I convinced Chris, then living in Los Angeles, to return to Santa Cruz to direct Sophocles' *Ajax*. This was the first play I had ever read in Greek, and it remains my favorite Sophocles. *Ajax* was especially timely then because the previous year, only ten years after the end of the Vietnam War, the Reagan administration was exposed as engaging in illegal arms sales to Iran in order to support anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua. The Santa Cruz chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars objected to this and vowed "No Vietnam Wars in Central America!" and as a result they were expelled from the national organization. We decided to locate the play in Vietnam and dedicate the production to the chapter.

We set it near the quarry theater, in a wild spot where the audience sat on the ground and the action took place in various areas within view. Ajax was a commando figure, much rougher than the generals Agamemnon and Menelaos; his wife/concubine Tekmessa was played by an Asian actress and their son Eurysakes by a mixed-race boy; Athena was a male CIA operative; the Chorus of three were

"grunts," and Teucer was an average Joe. In place of the animals slaughtered in the original our Ajax had killed unarmed prisoners of war. Many local vets came to the show and applauded the play's negative depiction of the "Army brass" Agamemnon and Menelaos. And the final scene demonstrated that the American warriors were not the only victims: as the Chorus lifted Ajax's corpse and started to carry it back home for honorable burial, Tekmessa and Eurysakes started to follow, but were rejected.

In retrospect, this production anticipated current ambitious projects which use *Ajax*, *Philoctetes*, and other ancient Greek dramas to help contemporary soldiers suffering from P.T.S.D. and other aftereffects of battle (see Adamitis and Gamel 2013). If psychiatrist Jonathan Shay is right that ancient Athenian theater sought to "purify, purge and reclarify civic understanding to its returning soldiers" (Shay 1995), our *Ajax* 's attempt to reach contemporary veterans might be called an example of historical authenticity.

The following year undergraduate Tim Earle approached me with the idea of doing another Greek show. I immediately thought of a visit the actor Patrick Stewart had recently made to my class on Greek drama in translation. When I asked him whether he liked acting in these dramas he said no, because most translations were not effective in performance; he then proved his point all too clearly by demonstrating how inadequate was the translation of *Antigone* we were currently studying. But then he offered an exception: David Rudkin's version of *Hippolytus*, in which he had played Theseus at the Royal Shakespeare Company, in 1978. He delivered—from memory, brilliantly—a speech in which Theseus curses his son (Rudkin 1980, 45):

> Hear me. Old neglected powers, hear me.
> All you, whose potency has been denied so long:
> from that dark deep to which we've banished you,
> hear us! Waken! Rise! We call you home.
> I have a son, unhusbands me. A son no son,
> unfathers me. Yourselves be father for me.
> Ascend before him into the day, to cover him
> from all his light, and your annihilation fall
> on him! Under that Sun do it: to leave him
> ruin on this earth. Else I'll know wrong in
> Nature's nothing; violation's nothing;
> and all our sense of boundary is vain.

Hippolytus, one of the few plays which earned Euripides a first prize in the Athenian dramatic competition, has had a significant influence on later drama, opera, literature and art (Reid 1993, 883-888). Rudkin offers a very free translation; the lines above are only part of a great expansion of Euripides' lines 887-890 and 893-98, typical of Rudkin's approach throughout. In his Foreword to the published version Rudkin says he has not provided "an abstract linguistic equivalent of the Greek, but what I understand its *living significances* to be. . . . In the theatre, we must know, in the drama's vital presence, what is actually being said. . . . To achieve this, an interpretative commitment must be risked. . . . The Greek dramatists are important. In the theatre, I want to encounter what they are saying to me, not what they once said to someone else. Paradoxically, we might only ever approach the "original experience of Athenian Tragedy, by first expunging from it every element we think of as 'Greek.' Euripides' audience weren't watching a 'Greek' play. They were watching a play of their own. So must we be." (Rudkin 1980, p. III; see his indispensable notes pp. 75-97). Rudkin clearly felt that Euripides' version of Theseus' curse was too short and insufficiently powerful; it needed expansion and amplification. So his Theseus calls not just on Poseidon but "all old neglected powers" and threatens dire consequences if his request is not granted. Rudkin's use of capitals ("Sun" "Nature" "Earth" "Man" "King"), and his omission of articles ("King must do this") and conjunctions ("Else I'll know . . .") urges actors to compress and intensify utterances. The obvious model is Shakespeare.

This powerful version called for an unusual production, and Tim and his actors rose to the challenge. The setting was the same outdoor theater where *Medea* was staged, but the model was performance art, so the only setpieces were a large curtain behind the playing space, a sort of altar midstage, and a semicircle of chairs in which all the actors, when not performing, sat observing the action. The Chorus of eight (not in Rudkin, who gives all the Chorus lines to a single Young Woman) wore onepiece worksuits, the others modern daywear. The actors spoke to the audience, not to each other (using microphones, to counteract the site's poor acoustics, but also to emphasize the performativity). As the downstage Messenger described how the Bull from the Sea terrified Hippolytus' horses and caused his death the Chorus and Hippolytus performed the scene upstage, using only chairs; at the end Aphrodite approached Hippolytus writhing on the ground and slowly, carefully poured a bucket of stage blood on him. This was certainly far from a traditional Greek production, but like Rudkin's script it was strikingly different from the naturalism of most American theater productions, and succeeded in exploring the emotional depths of Euripides' script. I would call this combination of language and

staging "expressive authenticity" in which the deep meanings of the script were explored both by the adaptor and the staging.

A year later, thanks to Tim, for the first time I had the chance to translate a Greek drama while thinking from the start about how its staging would affect its meaning and the audience's reactions. Together we decided to do Euripides' *Alcestis*, a notoriously problematic play in terms of genre (tragedy? comedy? satyr play?), meaning, and effect (for an astute discussion see Slater 2013). This time our stage was inside—the raised stage of a college dining hall with stairs to the floor and the audience on three sides of that floor. Tim brilliantly suggested following ancient Greek dramatic practice by having three actors play all the central roles: one, Apollo, Admetus, and the Butler; two, Death, the Maid, and Alcestis; three, the Son, Herakles, and Pheres. These were distinguished by their costumes and masks: Apollo, Death and Herakles had masks and "plumbers' stilts" which raised them three feet into the air, the aristocrats just masks, and the common people neither. As may well have happened in ancient Athenian performances, the connections established between actors playing the same characters were obvious and thought-provoking. But the costumes were contemporary; Herakles' recalled the film star of Crocodile Dundee and carried a large suitcase with decals from his Labors.

Despite the contemporary look the language was fairly formal; as in *Medea* the dialogue was in iambic pentameter, but when other non-dialogue metres are used I changed to short two-beat lines, and for songs (not sung) combinations of different metres and some rhymes; the first choral ode used ABA/CDC/DED etc. 208-213:

> Zeus! Lord Zeus, is there any way out?
> Any key to unchain our leaders from fate?
> Disaster is coming on fast. Hear our shout!
>
> Why don't they come out? Is it already time
> for cutting our hair, and changing to black,
> and starting our lamentations in rhyme?

As rehearsals proceeded, however, we noticed more and more the strangeness of the events and the dialogue. The dying Alcestis makes very legalistic demands on Admetus—he must not marry again and give the children a stepmother—and he makes extravagant claims about how he will respect her memory, such as commissioning a sculptor to make a statue of her which he'll put in their bed and caress it (338-342). In place of a choral ode our Music Director Kerry Rose

suggested using the well-known Kenny Rogers song "Lucille" but changing the lyrics: "You picked a fine time to leave us, Alcestis,/with two little children and all of the restis . . . " which let the audience know that it was ok to laugh. After the Chorus reproves Admetus for welcoming Herakles into his house despite his wife's death, they sang to the tune of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's "Our House:" "Admetus' house/ is a very, very, very weird house/ with mourning going on/and a rager all night long/Now everything is festive, right, yahoo!" Such liberties seem justified by Euripides' strong swings between humor and seriousness not only in this play but others such as *Helen, Ion*, and *Iphigenia and the Taurians.* We made sure that when Herakles entered drunk and found out that Alcestis has died, he sobered up fast, and when Admetus returned from entombing his wife he first expresses his grief in lyrics and then has what I consider a genuine *anagnorisis* ("understanding") 918-925:

> My friends, my wife is luckier than I.
> This might seem odd, but I believe it's true.
> No pain will ever touch her life again.
> She's left behind her burdens, and she's gained
> a glorious reputation. As for me,
> the one who should have perished, I live on
> beyond the time allotted, but I live
> in misery. At last I understand.

One very important decision we had to make involved the deeply controversial fact that Alcestis never speaks after being brought back from death. Herakles explains that "she's still under the spell of the gods below./After three days she'll be purified./ Until then she's not permitted to speak." Of course, a theatrical production includes other kinds of communication than words. Like a good feminist I thought that Alcestis might be furious at being returned to her unworthy husband, and suggested that Herakles bring her in bound and gagged, perhaps draped over his shoulder. But then something very interesting happened: our Alcestis, Deborah Taylor, said that as she stood there still covered with her veil while Admetus resisted Herakles' pleas to take her in, she heard him repeatedly speak of his love and devotion to her: ""Life will never give me pleasure again" (1046); "No woman will ever share my bed again" (1052); "Wherever she is, my love belongs to her" (1054); "I'd rather die than betray her, even in death" (1057). So when Admetus agreed to accept her, she was delighted, showed her joy by smiling and embracing him, and we had a genuinely happy ending. I would call this an example of "processual authenticity," in which the involvement and personal commitment of

the artists helped shape the performance. Much later I had the chance to direct two productions of *Alcestis* which were both similar in their methodology (inviting and using suggestions from the performers) and different in their content from both the Santa Cruz production and each other (see Gamel 2013, pp. 190-195).

During this early period I was so captivated by performing ancient drama that I got involved in a production every year, and this continued through 1992. In 1989 I worked with my dear colleague Audrey Stanley, a Greek drama expert, on a production of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, a wonderful play which contains enormous insights about ancient performance practice and Athenian audience reactions. But like most Aristophanes plays *Frogs* expects topical knowledge which contemporary American audiences are unlikely to have. This is why *Lysistrata*, which deals with the eternal theme of the war between the sexes, is the only Aristophanes script performed regularly. The central debate of *Frogs* is a debate between Aeschylus and Euripides about who is a better playwright, complete of course with quotations from their plays. Audrey came up with a brilliant suggestion, especially appropriate for a production on a college campus: change the playwrights from ancient Greeks to 20th-c. Americans: Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams! Unfortunately most audience members were no more familiar with these two playwrights than with the Greeks, but they certainly learned more about them in the course of the show. Using topical American material made the show structurally authentic to its own community, and in the case of a comedy audience laughter is definitely a sign of inductive authenticity!

In 1990 I was becoming irritated at hearing "Greek drama" described as if the ancient Greek playwrights were all the same, like lumping Tony Kushner, Edward Albee, and David Mamet together as "American playwrights." I decided to make use of the fact that Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides each wrote a play on the story of Elektra and Orestes' revenge on their mother Klytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus to show that these plays are very different from each other in content and style. I decided to stage a double production of Aeschylus' *Choephori* (*Libation Bearers*, the middle play in the *Oresteia* trilogy) and Euripides' *Elektra*, calling it The Elektra Project. My idea was to stage scripts by different translators using quite different styles in distinctively different productions. Chris Grabowski, then at the Yale School of Drama, agreed to direct, and the UCSC Theater Arts Department kindly offered to sponsor. The idea was to have the same cast members play in both shows, and I originally hoped they could be done back to back, but that proved impossible, so *Choephori* was staged in March at the Barn Theater, a wonderful 19th-c. refitted barn, while *Elektra* took place in May. In Euripides' play the princess Elektra has

been married off to a humble Farmer who lives far from the city, so we thought it should be staged outdoors, and the 3000-acre Santa Cruz campus has lots of wonderful spaces for performance.

For *Choephori* I chose Tony Harrison's version, first performed at the National Theatre in London in 1981 with music by Harrison Birtwhistle (available on videotape at many libraries). It is written for an all-male masked cast in powerful four-beat AngloSaxonese ("he-god" "bloodclan" "life-lot" "bloodgrudge") with lots of alliteration ("this one for your mound as a mark of my mourning") and rhyme ("tears drop on your dark head/ drop by drop the way you bled").

There are some similarities between Aeschylus' and Euripides' versions of the story (both involve Orestes' return from exile to Argos, his reunion with his sister, and their successful plot to murder Klytemnestra and Aegisthus) but also huge differences. Here's how Elektra describes her and Orestes' situation as she prays at her father's grave (Harrison p. 54):

> We're both dispossessed, deprived of our bloodright.
> She bartered her bairns and bought as her bed-mate
> Aegisthus who shares in the guilt of your killing.
> Elektra's a bondslave, and Orestes an exile.
> Klytemnestra and Aegisthus, basking and idle,
> loll in the luxury made by your labours.

Such powerful language offers both challenges and rewards to young actors, and our cast rose to the occasion.

One element which made this project quite different from any I had yet done was the creation of original music. In 1989 I met Philip Collins, a Santa Cruz composer, and soon learned that he could write in any musical style. Because Greek drama involved music and dance, the addition of music was a huge step towards historical authenticity, and also a huge increase in the emotional effect (inductive authenticity) of the drama on the audience. For *Choephori* Phil wrote in an abstract style for three singers (whom he called the Fates) and George Crumb-inspired instruments, while for *Elektra* he primarily wrote country-western songs.

One of the reasons for doing this Project was to make clear in performance the ideological differences between the two plays. The whole *Oresteia* trilogy supports an agenda represented as progressive but thoroughly masculinist. Every element

sustains this agenda—Elektra and Orestes' devotion to their father (whom they cannot have known well) and anger at their mother for his murder, as well as the conduct of the Chorus of Trojan female slaves, who call Agamemnon (who destroyed their city, killed their relatives, and enslaved them) the "clanchief," and hate his murderers (as does Kassandra in *Agamemnon*). We cut the Chorus' Trojan references and made them homeless people living just outside Klytemnestra's palace, angry about their lot and eager to foment trouble for others. We tried to temper the ideology when possible: for example, when Klytemnestra hears the false news that Orestes is dead (delivered by Orestes himself in disguise) she laments (Harrison p. 73), and the lament was sincere (despite the Nurse's later comments that her mistress was only pretending to mourn, Harrison p. 74).

An onstage character who does not speak is a special challenge for those staging translations. One such in this script is Pylades, who grew up with Orestes in exile and accompanies him whenever Orestes is onstage. He seemed to be a mute character until just before Orestes is about to strike his mother. She says "Have pity! These breasts you nestled on/and nuzzled the nipples for their nourishing milk." (Harrison p. 79) Orestes asks Pylades "What shall I do?" and Pylades answers "Remember Apollo and all that you swore/Give grudge to mankind but not to the godclan." Orestes and Klytemnestra have a two-line rhyming interchange as she continues to plead for her life, while the Chorus gathered behind her and finally pushed her into his arms and he took her offstage to her death. We prepared for Pylades' big moment by having him present whenever Apollo was mentioned, observing, striding across the stage, wrapping his arms around Orestes. He was Apollo's servant—or possibly Apollo himself.

The Chorus as homeless people gave us an idea for bringing the bodies of Aegisthus and Klytemnestra back onstage for the final scene: the Chorus ran in with them in rolling metal shopping carts which thrummed powerfully on the floor as the band percussion clanged. Orestes, shirtless and covered with blood, then addressed the bodies. Meanwhile, the Chorus ascended into the rafters (one of the great benefits of working in a converted barn), re-gelled the lights to dark red and purple tones, metamorphosed into the Furies and descended to surround and torment Orestes. As Orestes slipped into madness and the Furies laughed, Pylades/Apollo tried to calm him (Harrison pp. 84-5):

> P. It's nothing, Orestes. It's all in your mind.
> Fear nothing. Your father's pleased with his loyal son.

O. Apollo! Look at them. More! More! More!
Through black blood-ooze their eyes stare straight at me.

P. Apollo's the one god to cleanse you of gore.
The touch of Apollo will set you free.

O. You can't see them. I can though.
They're baying for my blood. I've got to go.

And I gave him two more lines: "You don't understand! I'll never be free!/ They're after my blood! I'll never be free!" Orestes then ran not just off the stage but out the door of the theater and into the darkness, pursued by the Furies cackling maliciously. Elektra then approached her mother's corpse and took a taste of her blood, and the Nurse then spoke the final lines (Harrison p. 85):

This, the third stormblast to buffet this bloodclan.
One: the banquet of babes, the bane of Thyestes.
Two: the Achaean warlord hacked down in his bath-trough.
Three: the deliverer . . . or new doom in disguise.
When will the blood-grudge be weaned
off blood, when will it sleep, the fiend?

In productions of the whole *Oresteia*, of course, the third play presumably answered that question, but in ours it remained open.

Euripides' *Elektra* is more varied in tone and character portrayal and asks deeper questions than *Choephori.* The differences are many: the location, a farmer's house far from Argos (in our production a trailer in the woods complete with chickens); the psychologically more complex characters of Elektra, Orestes, Klytemnestra, Aegisthus, and the Farmer, Elektra's husband; the Chorus of Elektra's neighbors, much more ready to question her views; the siblings' reaction after murdering their mother; and the conclusion brought about by the *dei ex machina*. The Farmer provides what we would now call the "exposition," the background needed to understand the play's events. I divided the lines into a song in rhyming couplets and spoken lines in which he reveals that though married to Elektra he hasn't slept with her. Elektra enters speaking in exaggerated tragic style, saying she is going to fetch water so she can "make a spectacle" by lamenting for her dead father, and she and the Farmer exit in different directions. Orestes and Pylades enter and Orestes tells his friend that he is avoiding the city but hopes to find his sister and join forces with

her to take revenge on his father's murderers. Elektra returns and sings a lament for her father; the Chorus of neighbors enter and invite her to a festival in Argos; she rejects their invitation (Gamel 1990: 160-164):

> Weeping is how I spend my nights
> weeping I spend each day
> This is all I care about
> I've got no time to play

Orestes and Pylades enter; Elektra is terrified and runs towards the house, but Orestes grabs her. At this point we expect a recognition scene; Orestes knows she is his sister, but strangely his dialogue with her goes on for eighty lines without his ever acknowledging that he is her brother. Finally he asks her to tell him everything, and she launches into a long complaint about how badly she is treated and how arrogant her mother and Aegisthus are; in the process she says "I have no friends. No one invites me out/to go to dances, or to festivals" (Gamel 1990: 284-5) even though the Chorus has just done exactly that. The Farmer returns and reproves his wife for entertaining two young men; when she says Orestes "sent them as eyewitnesses of my pain" he replies sarcastically "Some things they can see; you'll fill them on the rest" (327-8) but invites them into the house. Impressed, Orestes delivers a lengthy soliloquy about the Farmer's excellence; in our production this was turned into a Woody Guthrie-style "talking blues" accompanied by guitar (Gamel 1990 pp. 12-13). Elektra, however, is furious at their lack of preparation for guests, and sends him to get provisions from the old family nurse (a man in Euripides' text).

The nurse is the vehicle for the long-delayed recognition of Orestes and the siblings' reunion, but not before Elektra makes a point of mocking the signs by which Orestes is recognized in *Choephori* (a lock of his hair, a piece of fabric she wove), demonstrating her reluctance to give up her fantasy brother. The Chorus bursts into song but Orestes quickly cuts them off: "All right, that's enough nice warm reception./ Later there'll be time for more" (538-9) and with the nurse starts plotting the murders. Aegisthus is nearby holding a sacrifice, but Elektra declares she will entice Klytemnestra to come to her house by sending the news that she has had a baby: "She'll come here when she hears I've gone through labor." The nurse wonders "You think she cares about you, child?" and Elektra says "Yes" (589-600), suggesting that Klytemnestra does care about her. Orestes and Pylades depart, and soon a Messenger arrives to describe the killing of Aegisthus (695-797).

In our production the Chorus left with Orestes and Pylades, and it now returned, wearing tragic masks, to speak the Messenger's words while Orestes, Pylades, and an actor paying Aegisthus spoke their characters' words and acted out the murder. Staging Orestes stabbing Aegisthus in the back made clear how unheroic this was. Elektra danced ecstatically, and Orestes returned with the body, in our show draped over a wheelbarrow. Elektra now indulges in a long rant (842-96) mocking Aegisthus as a coward, unfaithful to and cuckolded by his wife; our actress did this while leaning over the body and practically embracing it, suggesting her own pent-up sexuality.

Orestes now sees Klytemnestra approaching; horrified, he questions the whole idea of killing her, but Elektra attacks him furiously, and before going into the house he says (928-930)

> I know that what I'm going to do is awful.
> If the gods wish, so be it. But to me
> this is a bitter contest I can't win.

Elektra remains outside to welcome her mother. When her daughter criticizes her, Klytemnestra flares up but then stops herself and calmly lays out the family history, including much more detail about the sacrifice of Elektra's sister Iphigenia than occurs in the *Oresteia* (959-79), and ends by inviting Elektra to respond. She does, insisting "I'm the only one who really knows you," and arguing that her mother "didn't want Agamemnon back from Troy" (1027) and "used our inheritance as your wedding present" (1038). Klytemnestra's response to this attack is surprisingly self-reflective:

> Honey, you always loved your father best.
> It happens that way: some children love their fathers,
> others prefer their mothers. I understand.
> Besides, dear, I'm not completely pleased
> with every step I've taken in my life.
> The way my plans turned out makes me so sad.
> I drove my rage too hard against my husband.

Our Klytemnestra entered the house and soon began to scream. Orestes and Elektra rushed out with bloody hands, and looked back in horror as Klytemnestra, covered with blood, emerged and fell dead. Now the music changed to opera as the siblings mourned (1100-1111):

Orestes: Earth and Zeus
who see all things
see these bloody two
see my hand
that struck them down
for all that I went through

Elektra: Don't weep, brother
not your fault
I'm the one to blame
my own mother
I hated her
rage set me aflame

The play seems to be over. Orestes, Elektra and the Chorus start to leave the stage. Suddenly two figures appear above; Castor and Pollux (the siblings' uncles) who act as the *dei ex machina*, raising, as usual with Euripides, more questions than they solve. They say Apollo was wrong to command Orestes to murder his mother, say Elektra must marry Pylades, and promise (condensing the whole of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* into eleven lines) that if Orestes goes to Athens and goes on trial, all will be well. They also say that Helen never went to Troy, so "the whole Trojan War was a spectacle for the gods!" (1216). Elektra and Orestes fall into each others' arms and say farewell; the gods have the last word, in my version in rhyming couplets (1271-3, 1277-8):

Criminals aren't helped by us,
but we reward the good and just,
releasing them from grief and pain.
So, mortals, this is my last word.
Remember you heard it from a god.

These gods clear the stage but do not clarify the issues, suggesting that human beings live in a confusing, difficult world controlled by unfriendly, contradictory forces. Overall, The Elektra Project suggested that Euripides' version raises many more questions than does that of Aeschylus. I would argue that in doing so it achieved expressive and inductive authenticity.

In 1992 I took a bolder step in adaptation, one which might be seen as a continuation of The Elektra Project. Two undergraduate feminist directors and I did *The Furies*, an adaptation of *Eumenides* which emphatically challenged and even mocked Aeschylus' text. Our conclusion showed Athena bribing the Furies with consumer goods and pretty dresses, and they changed into them along with white gloves and high heels, their behavior now appropriate feminine. All the characters including Orestes, Apollo, and Klytemnestra appeared and joined in singing, to the tune of "God Bless America"

> Bless us, Athena
> Goddess we love
> She trusts us
> for justice
> and turns night into light from above.
>
> Bless us, good Goddesses
> daughters of Night
> they have turned from
> nasty vermin
> into girls shining good, shining bright

This was perhaps a rather Aristophanic version of the play, but it was not intended as parody. As I said in a full discussion of this production (Gamel 2010, pp. 166-168), it aimed to use theatrical means to raise questions about the meaning of justice, social progress, and the construction of female roles by masculinist institutions (including theater). This production had expressive, inductive, and—because it involved the directors' and my own interests and ideas—processual authenticity.

One more note about all the productions discussed above: because they occurred in the same locale, the UCSC campus, and were performed by and to members of the campus community, they each manifest "structural authenticity." As I argue in a forthcoming essay (Gamel 2016), Athens was a community theater, and knowing what that means greatly enlarges our understanding of Athenian drama.

I continued writing adaptations and staging them at UCSC and elsewhere until spring 2015: *Effie and the Barbarians* (Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*), *Eye on Apollo* (Euripides' *Ion*) *Prometheus 1.1*, *The Julie Thesmo Show* (Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*, a double production of *The Eunuch* of Terence and Hrotsvit of

Gandersheim's *The Conversion of Thais*, *Iran Man* (Plautus' *Persa*), *The Buzzzz!!!!* (Aristophanes' *Wasps*), *Helen of Egypt* (Euripides' *Helen*), *The Ajax Project* (Sophocles' *Ajax*), *Orestes Terrorist* (Euripides' *Orestes*), and *The Congressladies* (Aristophanes' *Ekklesiazousai*). I will gladly supply scripts and DVD copies if desired.