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Dominance and submission, rhetoric and sincerity; insights from a replica production of Sophokles, *Elektra*

This paper is based on one part of the author's research production of *Elektra*. Scene 4 (the second Chrysothemis scene) will be broken down into its six component beats, and analysed. The paper will present a detailed reconstruction from the text of the action in the *orchestra*, in accordance with the rules and conventions of Greek tragedy; and the author will demonstrate some of the insights which can be obtained, if we unite such a reconstruction with an understanding of the values and concerns of the original Athenian audience.

It will be demonstrated, in contrast with the traditional and still prevailing literary interpretation of this drama, that Chrysothemis can and should be played as a strong character, who is right in her arguments; firstly because several features of Sophokles' text make no sense in the theatre shape for which it was written, unless she is given a dominant position for each of her main utterances (by contrast, it comes to life with a feisty young actress cast in this role against a powerful Elektra, and directed so as to bring out the strength of her position). Secondly because the text refers to key terms in the Greek values of the late fifth century, in such a way as to make clear that the Athenian audience would have responded more sympathetically to Chrysothemis' prudent *sophrosyne* than to Elektra's self-sacrificial plan to adopt male *arete* and attempt to kill Aigisthos. And thirdly because this theatrical interpretation makes sense in the context of the throughline of the drama as a whole.

The paper will be illustrated with extracts from the videorecording of the author's March 1998 production of *Elektra*.