

# **Dēmokratia and Women in Greek Context: The Tragedy of Electra in Greek and Latino Theatre**

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In the research at hand, the role of women in ancient Greek and modern day America is examined through three dramatic presentations of Electra. Sophocles' and Euripides' tragedies *Electra* and Mexican American writer Luis Alfaro's contemporary version *Electricidad* (2006) are seen against the backdrop of democracy. An intertextual analysis will be used to explore how writers use the myth of Electra to present strong willed women with a passion for vengeance in different ages.

According to Julia Kristeva, the term intertextuality is used to signify “the multiple ways in which one literary text echoes, or is inescapably linked to other texts, whether by open or covert citations and allusions, or by the assimilation of the features of an earlier text by a later text” (Kristeva 1980, 200).

Alfaro relies more on the Sophoclean *Electra* for his *Electricidad* in the sense that his female protagonist figures more prominently than others. In fact the subtitle of the first draft of his play was “A Chicano Take on Sophocles’ *Electra*,” which was later changed to “A Chicano Take on the Tragedy of Electra” to make it broader and more encompassing of more “Electras” than the limiting Sophoclean one. Alfaro’s intertext makes use of the legacy of violence, revenge and the mother-figure in his modern-day dark comic adaptation of the myth.

Sophocles and Euripides portray women as dramatic heroines breaking the norms and boundaries of 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC Greek society. Helen Foley observes that:

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Although many female characters in tragedy do not violate popular norms for female behavior, those who take action, and especially those who speak and act publicly and in their own interest, represent the greatest and most puzzling deviation from the cultural norm.

(Foley 2001, 4)

Despite having set the grounds for democracy, Greek polis remained discriminatory towards women who were akin to slaves in terms of legal and political rights due to social conventions. Foley notes:

... Attic women were formally excluded from the political and military life of their city; this exclusion was important given the particular significance that Athens' radical democracy placed on participation in public life. They could not attend assemblies, serve on juries, or even speak in court. (7)

The Greek word “polis”, H.D.F Kitto explains, is a “Greek word which we translate as ‘city-state’. It is a bad translation, because the normal polis was not much like a city, and was very much more than a state” (Kitto 1965, 64-79, esp. 79). He prefers the use of the word *polis* itself rather than the unflattering translation. Bowra on the other hand, has no problem with using the phrase city-state which he explains that the Greeks believed “was the natural and right unit for human society.” He goes on to say:

They knew that it did not exist among other peoples, but that was just another sign of the inferiority of barbarians... Plato and Aristotle still regarded the city-state as the logical end of social development and framed their conception of ideal societies on it. (Bowra 1957, 77-96, esp.77)

By today's standards, Greek society would not be seen as an ideal one due to its marginalization of women. This is probably where the fascination of critics with Greek tragedians' portrayal of women comes from. In spite of conventions, Greek women are featured in all new light, not quite familiar at the time.

It is noteworthy that women's limited participation in public and political life was mostly due to conventions, rather than laws. It was an inherited Ionian custom. Marilyn Katz explains that

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The Ionians...inaugurated the exclusion of women from the public sphere and their confinement to the home and to the company of female friends. The Athenians adopted the practice from their fellow Ionians, but among non-Ionian Greeks women retained the freedom they had enjoyed in Homeric times ... The Ionian practice of seclusion became more widespread in Athens during the fifth century, at just the time when democratic ideals of liberty were institutionalized. (Katz 1992, 73)

Women remained on the sidelines despite Jon Hesk's contention that

The tragedians' frequent focus on the mythical and ruling families of cities outside Attica shows that tragedians sometimes promoted Athens as opposed to any other state ... also often worked to problematize the very oppositions between Athenian or Greek, civic, lawful 'self' and non-Athenian or non-Greek, autocratic, bestial, unjust 'other'. (Hesk, 72-91, esp. 77)

Luis Alfaro becomes fascinated with the strong women of *Electra*, transferring them to his play which he sets in modern day East side Los Angeles. However, Powers finds that

Alfaro's most remarkable revision of Sophocles lies in weakening the male characters ... to create a story that revolves much more around ... generations of women, despite the prominence of Agamemnon's shrine center-stage. However, the feminine story that follows is not exactly feminist. Instead, Alfaro explores what happens when women start acting for men. (Powers 2005, 742-744, esp. 742)

At the house of Atredes, cholo (gangster) king has been murdered by his wife Clemencia, Electricidad's mother. The Cholo/Chola culture of Mexican Americans comes more into focus against the larger backdrop of America. As the land of democracy and the American dream, it remains ironically, indifferent to gang life and gang subcultures available in its midst. "Unfortunately, Latina female gang members have been overlooked not only by researchers, but also by the designers and directors of programs developed to deal with problems of gangs" (Moore 1994, 1115-1126, esp.1124).

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As one of the early democracies, Athens was the city-state that developed the rule of the people's power around 508 BC. The term democracy comes from *demos*: people and *kratos*: power. Democracy was in tension between the rule of oligarchy (from *oligos* meaning “a few” and *archō*: to rule, to command) and *demos*. R. Brock explains that the “Oligarchs, for their part, lay stress on the virtues resulting from their style of government and the vices to which democracy would lead... Such an approach is quite understandable: the claim of aristocrats or oligarchs to rule was based on superior character (nature and nurture)” (Brock 1991, 160-169, esp.166). He goes on to say that “Democracy, on the other hand, insisted on its own theoretical basis, whose fundamental tenets were equality, legality, freedom and community” (167). Yet it was an equality that did not extend to women.

By modern standards, the exclusion of Greek women from political life may seem awkward. Yet, it is noteworthy that women in the U.S did not get the right to vote until 1920, and for those of color later on in the 1960s and 70s. This is a reflection in and of itself on the status of women in the ancient Greek times and the not so distant past of America. In fact, the American process of democracy has undergone several stages of transformation culminating in its final form today where everyone has equal rights, under the law constituted to them despite race, creed or gender.

Sophocles and Euripides presented Electra and the other women in a culture that had inherited, among other things, a Pythagorean view that women were associated with darkness, whereas men were good. In his *Metaphysics* “Aristotle recorded a table of opposites attributed to the Pythagoreans (Allen 1996, 19). Since Pythagoras left no writings, his views were carried on by philosophers known as “Pythagoreans.” Pythagoras had held several views on women in relation to man.

The Pythagorean table of opposites is extremely important for the concept of woman in relation to man... male and female are included as a primary category of opposites in the centre of the

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table...the first member of the pair of opposites is given a superior valuation over the second valuation. (20)

It is thus that man became associated with straight, light and good, while woman became associated with curved, dark and bad.

In his famous *Politics*, Aristotle has this to say of the husband/wife relationship reflective of the male/female order:

A husband and father... rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature. But in most constitutional states the citizens rule and are ruled by turns, for the idea of a constitutional state implies that the natures of the citizens are equal, and do not differ at all. Nevertheless, when one rules and the other is ruled we endeavor to create a difference of outward forms and names and titles of respect...The relation of the male to the female is of this kind, but there the inequality is permanent. (Aristotle 350 BC, 1259b)

The question that presents itself here is do the two playwrights deliberately break all cultural norms of their time by putting a female protagonist on stage, empowering her with strong will and masculine rhetoric? It is the contention of this study that while both Sophocles and Euripides do stray somewhat from tradition, they remain true to the expectation of their society at the time and present an Electra who is an instigator of events and action yet confining her to her limited role as an Athenian woman. She may be the catalyst of unfolding action against Aegisthos and her mother, but she needs her brother Orestes to take action. Similarly, Alfaro presents an empowered Electricidad mourning the death of her father, cholo king of the East Side Locos, at the hands of his wife Clemencia. She places her father's decaying corpse in the yard and plots vengeance on her mother. Yet she too, awaits the return of her brother Orestes to kill their mother and resume his metaphorical throne of Cholo kingship as rightful (male) heir.

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The defiant women are the focus of all three plays. Sophocles' *Electra* is more about the emotions and tragedy of Electra herself and resentment of her mother for killing her father. He presents a tormented Electra in a way that stands out and differs from Euripides' heroine. Euripidean Electra has an extra axe to grind because we see her miserable life after being married off to a peasant. His heroine begrudges her mother for her banishment. Both Electras, nonetheless, come across as more masculine than their brothers. While Orestes in Sophocles' tragedy is not as reluctant as Orestes in Euripides', both pale in comparison to their sister(s). The roles are reversed; Electra(s) are strong willed and adamant in their pursuit and execution of vengeance upon their fathers' murderers, while both Orestes are reluctant to carry out punishment on their mother(s). However, Euripidean Orestes is more hesitant than the Sophoclean one:

ORESTES: what shall we do? Kill our own mother?

ELECTRA: Now that you see her, do you feel pity?

ORESTES: Pity-she brought me up, she bore me. How can I kill her?

ELECTRA: The way she slaughtered your father and mine.

... Let no coward's thoughts topple your manhood (Euripides 1994, 57-58)

On the other hand, Sophoclean Orestes requires little coaxing to commit the deed:

ORESTES: Spare me these words. You don't need to teach  
me my mother's evil or how Aegisthus drains the family  
wealth, pours it out like water, sows it to the wind. We've no time for  
all that- talk is expensive. What I need now are  
the practical details... (Sophocles 2001, 101)

This unusual reversal of male and female roles resonates in Alfaro's play as well. Electricidad is more aggressive than her Greek namesakes and counterparts. Perhaps it is due to her gangster background that her words are coupled with physical acts of violence towards Orestes:

ELECTRICIDAD: Stop playing around! It is your duty. All the East Side Locos will respect and accept you... This neighborhood has

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been waiting. They expect it. You will gain your honor. This is your kingdom, Orestes. Take it!

ORESTES: I can't ...

She slaps him hard on the face.

ELECTRICIDAD: Don't disgrace your father! Show them that you can be the leader. Kings don't get crowns. They take them!

Orestes starts to cry. (Alfaro 2006)

Similarly, Euripidean Electra encourages her brother with the following words:

Electra: ... Be the man you need to be. [It cannot be put too strongly: Aigisthos must die. If you fall losing the contest and your life, I, too would die. No, don't tell me I'd be saved. My hand would drive a sword right through my heart. No matter what happens, I shall be ready.] (Euripides 47)

The Greek heroines are not concerned with the prescribed notion of womanhood; the wellbeing of family and child rearing, and are rather consumed by hate and vengeful desires. However, Euripidean Electra talking to her husband of her role as a woman in the house may be somewhat confusing:

ELECTRA: You are a friend I respect as I do the gods,  
... So, at no one's bidding, I must use my strength  
to make your labors lighter, easier, and share  
the work. You have more than enough to do  
out there in the fields. Keeping house is my domain.  
And when a working man comes in at dusk,  
He likes to find order and his supper ready. (23)

On closer examination of Electra's words, we come to understand that her willingness to keep house stems from a sense of gratitude rather than spousal obligation. But she understands perfectly well that her duty as a wife is to make sure that her husband comes home to order and a ready supper. She is grateful that this honorable man understands that her marriage to him was an act of elimination by her step-father and mother. The children resulting from such a union will have no legal claim to the

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throne. The farmer, by his own admission, “never shamed Electra’s bed. She is still virgin” (22).

Alfaro’s Electricidad, also consumed by the same hate, understands her limitations well. When her brother asks her why she will not kill their mother herself, her brisk reply reveals a tradition not that different from fifth century B.C. of Greece:

ELECTRICIDAD: What are you talking about! You are the next king. We can't be doing everything for you.

ORESTES: But, but ... you, you're the one that's all eager to get rid of her...

ELECTRICIDAD: I can't, Orestes. Don't you understand? I want nothing more than to take these hands to her neck. But it isn't our way ... I give her to you. With a smile ... (Alfaro)

The vecinas, or neighbours, who are Alfaro’s chorus, explain the ways of the barrio [neighbourhood] and women’s expected roles there:

LA CUCA: El barrio.

LA CARMEN: Cleaning.

LA CONNIE: Cooking.

LA CUCA: Sweeping.

LA CARMEN: La familia.

The cooking, cleaning, sweeping and family duties are all too familiar. Therefore, Clemencia’s ambitions break chola traditions and are quite unorthodox. In the eyes of her daughter, Clemencia is not only guilty of murder, but also of too much ambition:

ELECTRICIDAD: I know how she works. Once she got rid of Papa, she knew the Council of Old Cholos would follow the old ways and make Orestes el new Rey del Barrio [king of the barrio]. It's his birth-derecho [right]. But she sees the men and how they hold on to their power. Oh, she can taste it. It's like she walked into a Target for the first time--she wants it all. (Alfaro)

This brings us to the subversive role of the mother. The reasons for Clemencia’s murder of Agamemnon Atridas are different from

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Clytemnestra's. It comes after years of emotional and physical abuse and of crushing her dreams:

CLEMENCIA: ... Everyone forgets what a bully he was. He made us think that we couldn't grow and change and make something better than what we are. He beat me and made me scared of the world. Scared of crossing over these bridges. It was the only way he could control us. Like the petty thief that he was, he took our dreams.

(Alfaro)

In my opinion, Clemencia's statement reflects typical cholo behaviour towards women, also part of the Latino culture which remains somewhat discriminatory towards women. Francine Garcia Hallcom observes that:

In many Mexican culture homes, it is normal for boys to be treated more leniently than girls, enjoying more privileges, being allowed to stay out later, and even dominating their sisters who must often iron their shirts to perfection and wait on them at the dinner table. In the traditional Mexican family, the joys of motherhood and family security are highly prized. (Hallcom 1993, 157)

Clemencia, as a Mexican American woman, is struggling to break free from the constrictions that bind her to the male dominated cholo sub-culture:

CLEMENCIA: ... *I* made sure the mortgage never died. *I* made sure you kids always had your cholo-wear. I even scared the vecinas into buying all that Avon, so we wouldn't starve when your papa got lost in some City Terrace thighs. Oh, don't look at me that way. You think it's easy being a woman in this hombre [man's] world? Those hombres are ruthless conmigo [with me]. And they will be with you, too. They want one thing from us. And they always take it. But when we want a cut. A place in their world. Our fair share. Well... (Alfaro)

Despite being part of the American culture that ensures her equal rights and dreams, the dominance of her sub-cultural world is more powerful. She is chola first, Mexican woman second, and at last American. But, against all odds, she knows she has rights, and she is trying to claim them.

She goes on to explain the circumstances of her union with Agamemnon and how she left one male dominated home only to be caged in another:

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CELEMNCIA: You know how I met your sweet papa? On the boulevard. I was thirteen... But he took my girlhood from me. In the back of a car. And he brought me here. My father looked at me and called me a tramp. My mother hid in a back room to save herself a black eye. And he sold me to him. Because he thought I was dirty. This is what they do. ... No my stubborn daughter, *I didn't get to choose. And neither will you. History just keeps repeating itself. Cholos don't move forward. They just keep going farther into the past.* Oldies, oldies, oldies ... And I want to change it. I want to take back every bruise your father gave me and turn it into a dollar. I want the memory of every one of his punches to be a kiss that could make me believe in myself. I am going to make a business. In his name, if you want. I could give you a cut. Then you could have a piece of him that's worth something. The piece that makes dinero [money].

(Alfaro)

What her mother wants is a slice of the American dream and a sense of being. She needs to break away from the “oldies” and join the ranks of entrepreneurs and independent women. But, and in keeping with the myth, she dies at the hands of her own son at the behest of her daughter.

Sophocles’ Clytemnestra shows equal strength and resolution when confronting her own daughter:

CLYTEMNESTRA: ... this father of yours, this one you bewail, this unique Greek, had the heart to sacrifice your own sister to the gods... Tell me: why did he cut her throat? ... was that not brutal? Was that not perverse? (Sophocles 70-71)

Electra remains unwavering in her determination. She is unmoved in both versions of Greek tragedies by her mother’s justifications and pleas. Nothing will satisfy the spilling of blood except more bloodshed. In Euripides’ version, Electra explains:

ELECTRA: You killed him—you, his wife.  
Tyndareos’ daughter, driven by malice.  
For that the gods in heaven  
will send you to your death.

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And may I see your throat beneath the knife. And may I see your blood pumping out. (Euripides 38)

She goes on to say "... if blood calls for blood in the name of justice I will kill you--I and your son Orestes--to avenge our father" (61-62). This theme of blood letting is echoed by the chorus after Clytemnestra's death "But, blood for blood you paid the just price" (65).

The mothers in all three plays are seen by critics as lacking maternal instinct. They see them as unnaturally sacrificing their offspring for the sake of their own selfishness. When Sophoclean Clytemnestra receives news of her son's alleged death she is relieved, an unnatural reaction from a mother. Kathleen Komar offers this insight into her reaction:

Klytemnestra's reaction to the supposed death recalls her maternal claims. She regrets that her own good fortune as queen in being freed of the threat of destruction can only come at her expense and pain as a mother who loses her son...we are reminded of the ambiguous motivations for Klytemnestra's actions. Does she kill justly in a mother's act of vengeance, or does she murder to usurp a throne with a paramour? Although Sophocles presents both possibilities, his Electra only believes the latter. (Komar 2003, 42)

Komar finds nothing noble in Electra's vengeful actions and sees that "she demands the two most barbaric acts in the play: the murder of the mother and the casting of Aegisthus' body to the dogs... Sophocles leaves us with mixed emotions; his Klytemnestra does not seem entirely evil nor his Electra altogether positive" (43). I find that the mother's unnatural relief at the death of her son is only paralleled by the unnatural vengeful feelings of Electra's. The cycle of hate is passed on from mother to daughter.

While Clytemnestras have chosen lovers over husbands, Clemencia has chosen material ambition as a sign of both the American dream and female empowerment. Helen Moritz notes that "Alfaro concentrates on the theme of ambition and dispenses with the paramour... Clemencia does not have a lover, and expresses no interest in one" (Moritz 2007, 130). The chorus of vecinas explains that what she desperately wants is power,

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something that no woman in the barrio or cholo world can get. Yet all three mothers give something of an explanation as to why their hearts have hardened driving them to commit their murderous crimes. Both Sophoclean and Euripidean Clytemenstra offer explanations of grief coupled by jealousy at the sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia and the return of Agamemnon with another woman. Clemencia gives an explanation of years of abuse and suppression leading to the final explosion and murder.

Another woman Sophocles saw fit to portray is Chrysothemis, Electra's sister, as the acceptable model for Greek women. She is meek and submissive as a good Greek woman ought to be. She stands in contrast to Electra:

CHRYSOTHEMIS: - If I had the strength I would show what I think of them. But now is not the right time. In rough waters, lower the sail, is my theory. Why pretend to be doing, unless I can do some real harm? ... if I want to live a free woman, there are masters who must be obeyed...I tell you we have masters, we must bend. (Sophocles 63, 65)

However, Chrysothemis does not make an appearance in Euripides' version of *Electra* due to the fact that the Sophoclean Electra is the most unconventional of all her counterparts, a point that he wishes to accentuate. So by presenting a sister afraid to show rebellion she amplifies the level of rebelliousness of her sister. Euripides' Electra is more isolated than the Sophoclean one. She lives in poor dwellings, married to a poor farmer and cut off from her family. This makes her more embittered and hence she is the one who concocts the murderous plans.

In *Electricidad*, her sister La Ifi (Ifigenia) is alive and well. She comes back from a convent to save her sister from the hate and vengeful cycle in which she is trapped. She speaks of forgiveness and moving forward, but her words fall on deaf ears. Electricidad is only more determined to move forward with her plan against her mother. Significantly, Melinda Powers observes:

Alfaro's introduction of an Iphigenia character in place of Electra's Sophoclean sister Chrysothemis seriously undermines the Greek

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Clytemnestra's claim that Agamemnon's murder is merely retaliation for his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia. In this case, the born-again La Ifi becomes an embodied manifestation of the futility of retribution and the hope in Christian forgiveness. (Powers 744)

I believe that Ifiginia's appearance in the intertext also sheds light on another aspect of chola women in the U.S. i.e. the mixed medley of religion and gangster background. Although a born-again Christian who has just recently joined a convent, her language is still heavily coloured with obscenities and her body still reveals tattoos, both telltales of her previous life. When she reaches over trying to touch the body of her father guarded by Electricidad, a fight ensues:

IFIGENIA: You crazy bitch!

ELECTRICIDAD: No one touches him!

IFIGENIA: You're lucky I know about that "turn-the-other-cheek" shit. (Alfaro)

She neither takes part in her mother's plans to get rid of Electricidad, nor in her sister's plans to off her mother. She escapes her previous world of violence and seeks shelter in religion, all the while carrying her culture's "scars" with her.

Ifiginia not only adds to Electricidad's resolution and stands in contrast to her, but she comes in as a representative of Chola woman who has been scarred by the heavily dominating cholo world of her father. Like her mother, she is looking for an escape and, for the moment, this escape is in her new found faith:

Ifigenia: ... he gave us these tattoos, but these tattoos are also scars...

Look at what he left us. Our own jails... Oh yeah, you. Mama. Me. All trapped... I am out of my jail. But I see you have just entered yours.

Moritz views that "for Alfaro's Ifigenia, if their father did not physically shed her blood on an alter of ambition, he did sacrifice his family to the cholo life, and he himself imprisoned all of them" (Moritz 2007, 126).

What triumph in all three plays, are culture and tradition. All versions end with the death of the mother. Electricidad nearly gives up on her plan and is ready to move on, but the emergence of her brother alive and well sucks her back into the old ways. Euripidean Electra and Orestes are exonerated from matricide by the gods. Sophocles' ends the play on a

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somewhat ambiguous note with no mention of retribution or punishment for the murderers. Basing events of their plays on the past, both Euripides and Sophocles circumvent any claims that their heroines may be unusual Greek women. They may be writing and presenting in a democratic Athens, however their characters and settings are not from the present. Their women may be strong and outspoken, defying cultural expectations of them, but in the end they adhere to societal codes. Even Alfaro's setting is of a sub-culture available in the midst of modern day America. His characters live by different codes and ethics. It may be present-day America, but the codes are those of an invisible and foreign culture; the cholo world of Mexican-Americans.

Nonetheless, I believe that the women in all three plays, Electra, Electricidad, Clytemnestra Clemencia and even La Ifi are strong and outspoken women. Mothers have killed their husbands, defying cultural codes of their society, and daughters have exacted revenge. Euripidean Electra's ominous words "and if blood calls for blood in the name of justice, I will kill you" hold true for the other two plays. While Euripides' protagonist steadies her brother's reluctant hand as his knife finds its way to his mother's throat "... my hand on yours, I took the knife and guided it home. Of the most dreadful suffering I am the cause" (Euripides 67), Alfaro's Electricidad slaps her brother across the face promising him "you will become a man" (Alfaro). Without women, justice is not achieved. The message is that a democratic society which alienates women is, in a sense, emasculated. A society without the active role of women is incomplete.

In an interview with Luis Alfaro, he explains his fascination with the women:

When I first read Electra---I was excited by Clytemnestra, by this idea of the matriarchy taking over the patriarchy, which is something that exists a lot in gang culture. Women have a very specific role; they can be very powerful. These girls who allow people to hit them with open fists, without any covering or anything, move up in rank as tougher girls. Does the matriarchy become a patriarchy in order to survive? Or is Clemencia saying to the daughters that we can become a new society? ... and I think her act is very sacrificial. It makes her an interesting evil person. She's got this global view, but locally she's evil. She's very materialistic... I was dealing with the notion of what's indigenous about us and what's American. (Alfaro)

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Despite limitations imposed on ancient Greek women, tragedians break away from tradition under the safety of basing events on a distant past. Foley observes that although

Attic women were meant to make important decisions under the supervision of a guardian... *Tragic women, however, frequently make important autonomous decisions, often in the absence of male guardians, and can deliberately flout the authority of their men.* Thus tragedy apparently deliberately violates cultural norms. (Foley 8)

Working within the established system of Athenian and Greek Polis of democracy, Clytemnestra makes a decision to get rid of Agamemnon, the cheating husband who came home with another woman and killed his own flesh and blood. In so doing, she chooses to work around the system. She chooses the man to be with and in fact makes him king. Though she commits an unspeakable act, it is a coup against the establishment. Similarly, Clemencia's killing of Cholo king and husband, in a sense, is a killing of patriarchy which allows subjugation and marginality of women within a democratic society. Interestingly enough, though the daughters of both women are vociferous and come across as more masculine than their brothers, it is the mothers who actually take action while daughters wait for the male heir to come forth and make the world right again. Electra and Electricidad conform and re-establish what they perceive as balance and order to their worlds eliminating the threat represented by their mothers. The young women may be vengeful and full of hate; unnatural and unfeminine by both ancient Greek and Mexican-American cholo standards. Nevertheless, they step up and allow for order be restored. It is the mothers who may have had a chance to break away from patriarchy but their deadly ambitions are nipped in the bud by non-other than their own daughters. Luis Alfaro fuses the myth of Electra with contemporary reality of cholo Mexican-American world and weaves a modern day myth of his own not quite different than that of ancient times.

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