



Sophokles Elektra (New Directions Paperbook)

Ezra Pound

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This critical edition of Ezra Pound's *Elektra* marks the most significant appearance in twenty years of a "new" work by the controversial poet. Composed in the early months of 1949, while Pound was under indictment for treason and hospitalized by court order in Washington, D.C., this hitherto unpublished version of Sophocles' play documents a critical stage in the poet's writing career: with his subsequent rendition of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and his ongoing translations from the Chinese classics, it signaled his return to sustained composition and his eventual decision to resume his life work, the *Cantos*. The success of Carey Perloff's Classic Stage Company debut of Pound's play in 1987 has already demonstrated the interest of the theatrical community in the work, and this presentation of the text, with critical apparatus, is a major event in Pound studies. The edition serves as a kind of practical workshop in translation, particularly in its exposition of Pound's discussions with his collaborator, Rudd Fleming. Richard Reid demonstrates in his introduction that Pound's choice of the *Elektra* was of crucial significance. In the play Sophocles confronts many of our most deeply held cultural assumptions: those concerning the family, the community, the claims of religion and justice, and language itself. As anyone familiar with the works of Pound will readily recognize, these issues are central in his own writings. The *Elektra* clarifies the formal, thematic, and psychological dilemmas seen in his work following the achievements recorded in the *Pisan Cantos*. This play and Pound's version of the *Trachiniae* can lead to a reassessment of his entire oeuvre in the context of this century's history. It will be essential reading for admirers of Pound's poetry, for students of the art of translation, and for directors and actors interested in performing the drama of ancient Athens on the modern stage.

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Gary Games:

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