

## Part 1.

*(Sarah walks onstage and stands, looking out at the audience. She shares the space with a plinth on which is a script and 8 post cards.)*

Good evening.

My name is Sarah Mainwaring  
and tonight  
for you  
I am Oedipus the King.

If we are going to get along  
it's important that you know this  
that you understand  
what I have said  
and what I am about to say.

Language is the main instrument of our refusal to accept the world as  
it is.

Language is the main instrument of our refusal to accept the world as  
it is.

There have been many other instruments  
deployed  
in our refusal to accept  
the world as it is:  
mud  
sticks  
stones  
fire  
knives  
guns  
guitars  
pianos  
paint  
film  
video  
to name just a few  
but

right now  
we will concentrate on language.

My name is Sarah Mainwaring  
and tonight  
for you  
I am Oedipus the King.

Your King.

I am Sarah Mainwaring.  
And tonight  
I am also Oedipus the King.

I'm standing here  
assuming a role – several roles,  
the more well known  
one being  
one of  
the most  
famous  
most researched  
most freighted roles in the history of Western Civilisation.

The play  
*Oedipus the King* was first staged in Athens in 429 BC.  
It is a play about knowledge  
and identity.  
It is the story of a City becoming a city  
the story of a people questioning *themselves*  
*defining* themselves.

5<sup>th</sup> Century Athens:  
A place  
a time  
an idea  
a photograph

a post card  
an object.

This object is like us  
our subject.

Are these things  
in our hands  
our equals?

We are things too.

Like us  
things  
are constantly exchanged.  
Like us  
things are  
alive  
we make them so.

Images are things too.

To participate in the image as a thing  
means to participate in its potential agency.

Something vigorous  
something viral  
never full or glorious  
mostly rubbish...  
How are we different?

*(Sarah holds up a post card of the Coliseum.)*

What about

The Roman Empire?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of Notre Dame Cathedral.)*

The Middle Ages?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of Michelangelo's David.)*

The Renaissance?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of a painting of Martin Luther.)*

The Reformation?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of Delacroix's Liberty.)*

The Enlightenment?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of a B&W picture of a coal mine.)*

The Industrial Revolution?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

*(Sarah holds up a post card of a painting of a map and a sailing ship.)*

Imperialism?

*(She tosses the post card onto the floor.)*

These things  
are the fruits of our  
Western Civilisation.  
This is our history.  
This is the story of how we all got *here*.

When Sophocles began writing The Theban Plays  
5<sup>th</sup> century Athens was coming to terms  
with many things:  
the plague  
militarisation  
the end of the reign of tyrants  
the concept of democracy  
a shift in the economy from grower/producer  
to trader/merchant  
all the while debating  
the primacy  
of the laws of the family  
versus those  
of the Polis.

This is what tragedy was:  
an expression of these conflicting  
fundamental notions of what a group of people are  
what a group of people can be.

Today  
these conflicts  
rest  
within us  
silenced, assumed.

Still we ask:  
Who are we?

Together  
we  
have made a world  
in which  
capitalism  
is triumphant  
labour  
has been marginalised  
and monied interests  
have purchased  
enough political infrastructure  
to prevent reform.

We have made  
a world  
in which  
the values of the free market  
are mistaken  
for a social framework –  
a world  
in which capital  
is free to move about  
but people are not.

*Ours*  
is a world  
wherein  
institutions themselves  
are paramount

and every day  
individual  
human beings  
matter less and less.

We made this  
For me  
for Oedipus  
for us  
everything  
has already happened:

Our tragedy has already occurred.

Oedipus believes he can fix it.  
Oedipus refuses to accept the world as it is.

My name is Sarah Mainwaring  
and tonight  
I am Oedipus the King.

## **Part 2.**

*(HaiHa and Mariaa come out carrying a TV and VCR. They place these things on the plinth, Sarah plugs them in. Mariaa and Sarah leave the stage. Haiha stands next to the TV; on the screen is a B&W image of a smiling blonde woman.)*

Imagine this:  
that  
at your feet, on the floor  
while you were shooting this video  
two kittens were playing  
with a ball of red wool.

One of them is licking your ankle  
its tongue is small

strong and rough.

It doesn't feel bad...it tickles.

You wonder  
what it would feel like  
to be licked  
all over for a long time, by a much larger animal...

Up until the invention of photography  
the past had to be taken on faith:  
that is  
you had to take somebody's word or effort  
regarding what had already happened.

Photography changed all that.  
There it was  
in black&white:  
a view from a window in 1827 –  
a dead man lying in bed –  
a horse  
galloping  
all 4 hooves in the air.

Ocular proof.

Unlike any other visual image  
a photograph is not a rendering or  
an interpretation of its subject but a trace  
like a footprint or a death mask.

No painting or drawing  
no matter how realistic  
belongs to its subject like a photograph does.

Cameras affix time and offer appearances  
but they do not create or maintain meaning.  
Only you can do that.

(and) Cameras affix only one concept of time.

What of all the other concepts of time?

What if time is also like a word or a sound?  
Culturally based, ambiguous,  
an edifice or threshold to meaning –  
How would you affix *that*?

In this video  
you're naked  
sitting on a block of ice  
in front of a live  
studio audience.

Or this:  
you are looking at your lover and she is looking at you.  
you stare longingly, lovingly into each other's eyes....  
you are so close  
you can feel her breath, smell her skin.  
Her eyes are brown – light brown  
almost hazel with flecks of green in them.

you are so close you can see yourself  
reflected in her eyes.

I am an actress.  
(Starting from the present and working back, HaiHa lists her C.V.: the  
name of the **PRODUCTION/FILM**, her **ROLE**, the name of the  
**DIRECTOR**, and finally **VENUE/PRODUCING BODY**)

I remember  
when I was a little girl  
lying on the carpet  
watching TV...  
I really wanted to be on television – physically *in it* –  
in the world *in that box*.  
Same with movies  
I wanted to be *up there*  
*on* the screen.

I was 18 when I auditioned for 'The Story of Soil'.  
For the first time

I was standing  
in front of a director and he was telling me what to do.

He asked me to imagine a door.  
I had to go and open this door  
and show him what was out there:  
I had to respond to the world I'd imagined.

I was raised a Jehovah's Witness.  
I saw a lot of doors.

Every Saturday  
Me  
my brother  
my mother and father  
would go out witnessing.

Sometimes  
we would be let in  
for tea and polite conversation  
but mostly the doors would open  
and then quickly shut  
or not be opened at all.

Now it's your turn:  
Close your eyes....  
Go on, relax,  
keep them closed;  
I'll tell you when you can open them.

*(Walk)*

Imagine a door  
from a place you lived  
when you first  
moved away from home....

Do you see that door?

Now  
in your imagination  
go and open that door....

You know that it would be untrue  
You know that I would be a liar  
If I was to say to you  
Girl, we couldn't get much higher

Come on baby, light my fire  
Come on baby, light my fire  
Try to set the night on fire!

The time to hesitate is through  
No time to wallow in the mire  
Try now we can only lose  
And our love become a funeral pyre

Come on baby, light my fire  
Come on baby, light my fire  
Try to set the night on fire! Yeah....

*(Walk)*

In April 1969  
Jim Morrison -  
the lead singer of the The Doors -  
was arrested in Miami Florida  
for exposing himself  
on-stage, during a concert.

The Doors took their name from  
The book 'The Doors of Perception'  
written by Aldous Huxley in 1954  
who took the term from William Blake  
who in 1793 wrote:  
'If the doors of perception were cleansed  
every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.'

Open your eyes

For a few years  
Jim Morrison was the sexiest man in rock and roll.  
He was almost 6 foot tall  
with thick lips and wavy light brown hair.  
He sang in a chocolate baritone  
and had one of the greatest rock and roll screams ever.

On-stage,  
he *was* sex.

Then  
in the middle of an extended  
organ solo  
he unzips his leather pants and pulls out his penis.

Here was this  
6 foot tall cock with wavy brown hair  
performing for the world  
and a second later  
he's just a guy  
a regular fella  
standing in front of 2000 or so people  
with his fly open and his penis lolling about...

From ecstatic symbol to merely physical.

Sex.  
Intercourse.

Remember when you first learned that word?  
Like me, you probably were about twelve years old  
and one day at school  
one of the older kids asked you if you wanted to have  
intercourse.  
You screwed-up your face and said '*no*'  
and then he said, innocently  
'what, you don't want to talk to me?  
Intercourse means to have a conversation!'

Our parents had sex.

We are having intercourse right now.  
All mammals have sex.  
As a species this is what we do,  
otherwise, we die.

Imagine this:

You are wise and powerful and there is nothing you can't do.  
Nothing at all.  
You are gracious and benevolent, patient and compassionate  
but secretly  
you know  
you are better than everybody else:  
a can-do sorta person;  
not one to mope about asking do I dare and do I dare.  
You act!

You have four children aged between  
say, 10 and 16.  
2 boys and two girls.  
you have a loving wife  
a good job  
and live in a nice house.

But friends and neighbours are not well –  
something is not right –  
you must make it right –  
you must fix things:  
Only you can fix things.

While you are fixing things  
you discover  
that some years previous  
in a fit of rage  
you killed your father.

You didn't know  
that the person you killed was your father –  
you thought  
your father  
was somebody else.  
And your wife –  
the woman you love, the mother of your children –

turns out to be *your* mother, too.

You killed your father  
married your mother,  
and your children are your brothers and sisters.

Imagine her body  
your mother's body  
the taste and smell of her skin  
and how it responds to your touch.  
Her breasts  
how often as a child you cried  
demanding them...

Your cock  
her cock – you both like to say -  
because she knows it so well:  
She knows  
how to touch it, kiss it;  
make it ache with pleasure -  
and how easy and often  
your cock  
stiff and demanding  
finds its way into that filial furrow.

What do you think?  
How do you react  
to this change of circumstance -  
the new you?

Do you want to end it all? Do you beg your friends to kill you?  
Or, do you blind yourself and go wandering  
using your youngest daughter/sister  
as a sort of guide dog?  
Do you say to yourself  
as Oedipus did: 'I have been saved for something great and terrible,  
something strange.'

Here we are  
all of us  
at the end of your journey.

Oedipus,

you are sitting by the side of the road  
near a sacred grove  
outside of Athens.

I am Theseus, King of Athens  
and I have come to see you.  
I'm standing in front of you  
and I say:

In the old days I often heard your legend,  
the bloody mutilation of your eyes...  
I know all about you, son of Laius.  
And now, seeing you at this crossroads,  
beyond all doubt I know you in the flesh.  
Your rags, your ravaged face –  
it's all too clear, they show me who you are,  
and in all compassion I would ask, Oedipus,  
doomstruck Oedipus, why are you here?  
What appeal do you bring to Athens and to me?  
You and the young girl, helpless at your side.

Tell me all. Your story, your fortunes  
would have to be grim indeed to make me turn  
my back on you. I too, remember well,  
was reared in exile just like you,  
and in strange lands, like no man else on earth,  
I grappled with dangers pressing for my life.  
Never, I tell you, I will never shrink  
from a stranger, lost as you are now,  
or fail to lend a hand and save a life.  
I am only a man, Oedipus,  
and I have no more power over tomorrow,  
than you.

It is October 21, 2009  
and this woman – Bec Reid –  
(*Pointing to the image on the TV.*)  
is sitting in her bedroom  
listening to the radio  
listening to news  
of mudslides in Sumatra  
and tsunamis in Samoa;

people are buried alive  
and lost to the sea.  
Still  
she looks into the lens of the camera  
and wills a smile onto her face.

We thought  
that making this with you  
might tell us something about  
who we are and how we came to be.

This is our only power over tomorrow.

### **Part 3.**

*(Mariaa and Sarah help HaiHa remove the TV and VCR. HaiHa and Sarah take their seats as Mariaa places a digital camcorder on the plinth, facing the audience. Mariaa walks offstage and sits on the steps the run between to sections of seats. As she does so, she turns on a video a projector. The lights on stage are dimmed, and the lights over the audience are brought up. After 15 seconds, the image from the camera is projected on the back wall of the theatre. There is a 15 second delay in the image from the camera to its projection.)*

They say you are my sister.

They say there is no grief that Zeus has not perfected for us:  
They say that our father, Oedipus, died hated  
his reputation in ruins.  
They say his wife and mother – our mother –  
was a suicide  
tied bedding about her neck and hung herself.

They say both our brothers  
are this day  
dead.  
They say Eteocles and Polynices  
killed each other.

They say Creon is the king of Thebes.  
They say he has decreed it a capital offence to bury Polynices.  
They say Eteocles is to be given full military honours,  
while Polynices is to lie unburied, undead, dishonoured.

They say he is your brother too.

They say Creon will sentence to death anyone who buries Polynices.

They say 'what can we do? It is the law.'

They say Antigone is a crazed, grieving teenage girl.  
They say Creon is an insecure, petty tyrant.

They say Antigone buried Polynices.

They say Antigone has a deathwish.

They say Haemon, Creon's son is betrothed to Antigone.  
They say Haemon tried to reason with Creon.  
They say the citizens of Thebes were beginning to fear Creon.

They say Creon mocked Haemon and his reasoning.

They say the citizens of Thebes respect strong rulers.

They say Creon feels emasculated because Antigone  
disobeyed his decree.

They say Creon ordered Antigone  
to be walled-up in a cave with plenty of food and water;  
that how she lives or dies  
is none of his –  
nor the people of Thebes –  
concern.

They say Creon will rue the day he buried Antigone alive.

They say Antigone will hang herself.  
They say Haemon will stab himself upon seeing his beloved, dead.

They say Euridyce, Creon's wife, Haemon's mother will kill herself at the news of her son's suicide.

They say all of this will come to pass.

They say the dialectic of collision  
between the universal and the particular  
between  
the sphere of the feminine hearth  
and the masculine forum  
between  
the polarities of ethical substance  
as they crystallise around  
immanent and transcendent values  
is now compacted  
into the struggle  
between Man (Creon)  
and Woman (Antigone)  
over the body of the dead (Polynices).

They say Antigone represents the transition  
from a natural ethical community of the family  
to the *community*  
the superior law whose validity is openly apparent.

They say that law and desire are not at loggerheads,  
but that the sublimity of the moral law *is* Antigone's desire.

They say  
Antigone is not a representative of a particular sphere at all –  
household or state – but a figure for relational identities in crisis.  
They say the war in Afghanistan is 'a clash of civilisations'.

They say 'History is a foreign country, they do things differently  
there'.

Numberless wonders terrible wonders walk the world  
but none the match for man –  
that great wonder crossing the heaving grey sea  
driven on by the blasts of winter

through breakers crashing left and right  
holds his course steady  
and the oldest of the gods he wears away –  
the Earth, the immortal, the inexhaustible –  
as his plows go back and forth  
year in  
year out  
with his well-bred stallions turning-up the dirt.

And the blithe lightheaded race of birds he snares  
the tribes of savage beasts  
the life that swarms the depths –  
with one fling of his nets  
woven and coiled tight  
he takes them all  
man the skilled, the brilliant!

He conquers all taming with his techniques  
the prey that roams the cliffs and wild lairs  
clamping the yoke across the shaggy neck of tireless bulls and horses.  
And speech and thought quick as the wind  
and the mood and mind for law that rules the city –  
all these  
he has taught himself  
and shelter from the arrows of frost when there's rough lodging  
under the cold clear sky and the shafts of lashing rain –  
ready, resourceful man!  
Never without resources  
never an impasse as he marches on the future –  
only Death  
from Death alone he will find no rescue  
but from desperate plagues  
he has plotted his escapes.

Man the master ingenious past all measure  
past all dreams  
the skills within his grasp –  
he forges on, now to destruction  
now on to greatness.

When he weaves in the laws of the land  
and the justice of the gods that binds his oaths together  
he and his city rise high –

but the city casts out  
that man  
who weds himself to inhumanity  
thanks to reckless daring.

Never share my hearth  
never think my thoughts  
whoever does such things.

Sophocles wrote that –  
or something to that affect –  
two an a half centuries ago.

In his time, language written  
had already been in the world  
for 3 millennia.

There are about 6 thousand 9 hundred languages  
in the world today.  
Most of them are *not* written.  
Most of them are sounds *in time* –  
words spoken or sung –  
sounds *marking* time and space;  
culturally based, ambiguous,  
thresholds to meaning:

I am Mariaa Randall.  
I am a Bundjalung woman from the Far North Coast of NSW.  
I am Sarah Mainwaring, I am HaiHa Le,  
*You* are Oedipus at Colonus,  
*We* are here.  
*They* say tragedy is a dialogue between accident, destiny  
and the actions of a hero.

Was it an accident, destiny or the actions of a hero,  
that caused the genocide of my people?

Maybe the victors write tragedies to make sense of their actions  
while the victims write comedies finding succour  
in whim, happenstance, and the unravelling of the day to day:

A blackfella walks into a pub

and asks  
the white publican  
for some wine.  
The publican says:  
'there are 3 types of wine  
red wine,  
white wine  
and plain  
ordinary blackfella wine.'  
The blackfella says:  
'did you know  
there are 3 types of turd?  
Horse-turd  
musturd,  
and you  
you big shit!

Gimme the plain ordinary blackfella wine.'

*We make the world with our words.*

And in this world we give birth to Oedipus, we marry him,  
are killed by him, sired by him, and at Colonus  
we look upon his ravaged face  
and see ourselves.  
We bury him.

We kill our brother and are in turn killed by him.

Because we so love our brother, we honour him with a burial.  
For this we are walled-up in a cave, and in that cave we will tie a veil  
about our neck, and hang ourself.

*In this world*

We do it out of grief  
We do it out of ignorance  
We do it out of fear  
We do it out of love  
We do it because it is our destiny  
We do it because it is our duty.

When I stop speaking *this world* will end, but 'we' will not.