IPHIGENIA AT AULIS:
MYTH, PERFORMANCE, AND RECEPTION

by

George Adam Kovacs

A thesis submitted in conformity of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Classics

University of Toronto

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Abstract

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When Euripides wrote his final play, Iphigenia at Aulis, depicting the human sacrifice of Agamemnon’s first child that allowed the sailing of the Greek expedition against Troy, he was faced with several significant mythographic choices. Of primary concern was the outcome of the sacrifice: there existed a strong tradition in early sources that mitigated the sacrifice by effecting a divine rescue by Artemis, usually with a deer being left in her place on the altar. The extremely troubled textual history of our script – the play was first performed posthumously, and we do not know in what state Euripides left the text – means that we cannot be certain which tradition Euripides actually chose to follow, sacrifice or rescue. Depicting Iphigenia as a willing victim, however, must have been Euripides’ own innovation.

This dissertation explores the ramifications of that self-sacrifice and contextualizes this play within a tradition of mythographic evolution and reception. Chapter 1 surveys the history of criticism of the text, itself a mode of reception, and also examines trends in Euripidean criticism in the modern period, limited until recently by the textual issues. Chapter 2 considers instances of the Iphigenia legend before Euripides’ play. The parodos of Agamemnon, the first source to express the sacrifice in terms of human suffering, receives special attention. Chapter 3 seeks to understand audience reception at the moment of first performance through three different critical lenses: thematic (self-sacrifice was a recurring motif in Euripides’ work), socio-political (by considering the recurring Panhellenic sentiment deployed in the play’s rhetoric), and dramaturgical (by treating the spatial dynamics of the
performance as a point of intertextual contact). Chapters 4 and 5 examine reception of the sacrifice story in antiquity (in the Hellenistic and Roman periods), a process which reveals much about the position of Greek tragedy in the popular imagination following the fifth century. The final chapter brings to bear considerations of adaptations of the play into new genres and new media since the advent of the printing press, all of which open up new possibilities for the creators of these adaptations and the story they wish to tell.
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Chapter 1: Approaches to the Text

Euripides’ final play, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is about a sacrifice. It is about a young woman who goes willingly to her death to allow a military expedition of aggression for which she has no responsibility against a foreign foe in which she has no real investment. And yet in her death, this young woman finds a nobility that the kings and warriors around her cannot. The origins of this story are unknown, but early accounts denied this death by substituting, quite literally, an animal sacrifice for the human and rewarding the young maiden with immortality. Tragedy, on the other hand, embraced that discomfiture, dwelt upon it, and enhanced it by creating a human Iphigenia, one who understood the price she was paying and had a sense (correct or otherwise) of the consequences of her own actions.

There is of course more than one way to understand a text: as literature, as performance, as manifesto, as artefact. The key text of this study, Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, is no exception. The purpose of this opening chapter will be to rehearse, in brief, the history of two distinct branches of scholarship on *Iphigenia at Aulis*, each of which has yielded up a myriad of different interpretations. First is the long standing question of the text, the authenticity of which (at least in its parts) has been subject to close scrutiny since the eighteenth century. This is the philological approach. The other is the more recent phenomenon of engaging with the play as a piece of dramatic literature, which only really found its footing following the Second World War, late even for the study of Euripidean drama. This distinction of the two competing modes of analysis articulates a significant breech in the field of Classical literature, a tension which traces its roots at least as far back as Nietzsche and Wilamowitz. This gap is not unlike the one that divides the archaeologist from the cultural historian: the former “recovers” the material evidence; the latter “interprets” it. Yet the archaeologist can of course interpret and the historian has been known to leave his or her office; the textual editor and literary critic are likewise capable of crossing these boundaries. It is to the benefit of the discipline that the two streams are no longer so separated as they once were.

It is important to trace the development of these two traditions of the scholarship because with *Iphigenia at Aulis* the tension between them is particularly pronounced. The
very serious questions of the text can too easily destabilize a literary interpretation of the
play. Many moments of significant dramatic impact – Agamemnon’s description of the
situation in the prologue, which characterizes the first third of the play; Iphigenia’s entrance
in a chariot, which evokes past dramas as well as (ironically, since it never happens) the
marriage ceremony; and Artemis’ final salvation of Iphigenia, a dramatic reversal in our text
– are all suspected by the textual critics. Even for practical purposes, then, we must establish
a position on our reception of the text: do we accept the received script with its apparent
flaws, or do we reject it selectively in its parts? Serious attention from the literary critics was
slow in coming due in part to the troubles of the textual editors. Investigation of the faults of
the text dominated scholarship of this play throughout the nineteenth century (indeed,
Iphigenia at Aulis may in fact have seen more scholarly attention than the other plays of
Euripides for this reason).

But further to that, the philological and literary interpretations surveyed in this
chapter are part of the struggle to find meaning in this text. “Meaning...is always realized at
the point of reception,” and each of these modes of study strive to give meaning to our text.¹
As such, they inform my own interpretation of the play. I cannot claim to reconcile these two
branches of study in the way that (say) Sean Gurd does for this particular text.² Nevertheless,
the intersections between these two academic streams are such that the philological and the
literary complement each other at least as often as they compete.

The Philological Approach

In the face of the textual problems of Iphigenia at Aulis, a secure philological reading
becomes an elusive goal. The hazards and uncertainties of the received text function as a
Leitmotif in the scholarship of this play, even in many literary studies.³ Study of this play
soon gives the impression that even the most hesitant and cautious conclusion can be swept
away with a well-placed excision of lines.⁴ As we shall see in the final chapters of this study,
the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice – or salvation – is of fundamental importance to later

² Gurd (2005).
³ Grube (1941) 421-38, for instance, takes an apologetic tone, and selects passages “worthy” of literary
assessment, dismissing others.
⁴ See for example, Diggle’s review of Mellert-Hoffmann (1969), in which he takes the author to task for
attempting to use a close philological reading in support of her characterization of Euripides.
understandings of this play, be they scholarly interpretations or artistic adaptations. And yet the moment of sacrifice in the play intersects with the greatest textual uncertainties in our received manuscript. This obstacle is not fatal to our interpretation of the play, but before we can hope to construct a viable understanding of it, we must securely identify the pitfalls of the text. This section will briefly recount the history of textual criticism to which *Iphigenia at Aulis* has been subject for two and a half centuries.

On the face of it, the textual tradition of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is simple. As one of the so-called alphabetic plays, it is preserved in two fourteenth-century manuscripts L (Laurentianus 32.2) and P (Palatinus gr. 287), between which there is little variation. Scholars have assigned this variation to scribal error, assuming that P is a copy of L. Manuscript P became the text upon which the modern print tradition is based, largely through the influence of Musurus, who used it as the basis of his Aldine edition of Euripides. As with all plays found in this manuscript, there are no scholia preserved. Papyrus fragments are few and differ only on minor matters of spelling or syntax, presenting no significant variant reading. The sole papyrus fragment of note is a third-century papyrus which preserves two fragments, out of order, with musical notation. In conflict with the manuscript tradition are three book fragments, the most significant of which is from Aelian (see below). None is ultimately authoritative enough to overthrow the received text. Nevertheless, questions of authenticity abound.

Manuscript L seems to be copied from a papyrus or codex tradition that has suffered some damage, particularly at the end. *Iphigenia at Aulis* falls last in the order of plays in L, and the final pages of the final play (or at the end of a papyrus roll) would be most susceptible to loss or damage (*Cyclops*, which begins with a κ, should come after *IA* but defies the alphabetic order). The issue is further complicated by confusion over the hand in

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5 By textual tradition, I mean the series of papyrus and manuscript editions through antiquity until the advent of print. I do not follow the approach of Gurd (2005) which combines all versions of the text (manuscript readings and modern editions) into a dynamic supertext (his so-called radical philology, see below).

6 Zuntz (1969) 283.

7 There are three: *PColon* 67; *PLeid* inv. 510; *POxy* 3719.

8 *PLeid* inv 510 = *IA* 1500-8, 784-93. It is intended for performance, but as a series of musical excerpts, not of the play in its entirety (so argued by Pöhlman & West (2001) 20, see chapter 4). This papyrus helps to smooth out a difficult reading at 790.

9 Page (1934) 8; West (1981) 74. West notes similar corruption at the end of *Children of Heracles* at the centre of the order of the alphabetic plays, and suggests that L was copied from two scrolls surviving from a
which each manuscript is written. Gilbert Murray, in his OCT edition of the play, states that each manuscript is written. Gilbert Murray, in his OCT edition of the play, states that a different hand completed both L and P after lines 1570 and 1578 respectively. West, however, currently has the last word: L is written by the same hand throughout, though lines 1570-2 have been erased and rewritten (same hand, different nib). As for P a different hand does take over at 1578, but this is irrelevant: “as the text is copied from L, this can have no bearing on the origin of the passage.”

Though it was known in antiquity that Euripides did not survive to produce the play himself, the authorship of Iphigenia at Aulis is not questioned until the eighteenth century. In antiquity, Aristotle challenges the quality of the play, citing problems of characterization and non-conformity to the tragic ideal (Poet. 1454A31-3, see below), but raises no question of authenticity where he might be expected to do so (although the silence of a source is admittedly unstable ground). Early in the sixteenth century, Erasmus muses that the natural style of the play is Sophoclean in nature, while thematically and rhetorically it is Euripidean. He makes no committed challenge to the ascribed authorship, however, and indeed shows little interest in the subject (or even in the play, see chapter 5).

In the modern era, the text began to attract close scrutiny as a result of two developments in Euripidean scholarship. In 1762, Samuel Musgrave discovered what appears to be a book fragment of this play in Aelian. Commenting on whether a female deer may have horns, Aelian quotes two and half lines which he attributes to an Iphigenia of Euripides:

έλαφον δ' Ἀχαιῶν χερσὶν ἐνθήϲω φίλας
κερούϲϲαν, ἣν εφάζουϲτες αὐχήϲουϲι σήν
εφάζειν θυγατέρα.

And I will place in the dear hands of the Achaeans a horned deer, and having sacrificed this they will claim to be sacrificing your daughter.
If the *Iphigenia* attribution is correct, these lines suggest a very different play than the one that survives, a play in which Artemis appears as a speaking character. The reference to ἵνα θυγατέρα demands the presence of either Clytemnestra or Agamemnon, and it is to one of them that Artemis speaks. Most scholars assume a *dea ex machina* situation (either staged or reported)\(^{14}\) if the fragment is genuine and properly attributed to *Iphigenia at Aulis* (though Musgrave himself attributed it to a lost prologue).\(^{15}\) This has proven attractive to some scholars, since the exodos of the received text is extremely troubling on several levels (see below). This passage, however, is not thematically or stylistically linked to the rest of *Iphigenia at Aulis* – if either Agamemnon or Clytemnestra knew that their daughter had been spared, the motif of anger and revenge that underpins the myth of the house of Atreus in the fifth century is nullified, as is the action of the play itself. Even in a play of drastic reversals, this feels extreme. These lines are more likely to derive from an interpolation by a scribe or actor seeking to align the play with *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*.

Four decades after Musgrave, in the introduction of his text of *Hecuba*, Richard Porson established a set of metrical criteria for Euripidean tragedy.\(^{16}\) The iambic exodos of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, with the final messenger speech describing the sacrifice and divine salvation of Iphigenia and the abrupt return of a joyous Agamemnon, violates many of these criteria. The messenger speech which begins at 1531 contains too few resolutions and does not conform to perceived Euripidean style (the messenger does not, for example, summarize his point before elaborating in a full speech, nor does he establish his credibility as eyewitness\(^{17}\)). Up until line 1578 the anomalies of the text are problematic, but not fatal: the metrical and stylistic issues of these verses could be explained as irregular but not impossible stylistic variations. The lines after 1578, however, are highly unlikely to have originated from a fifth-century stylus, betraying the confusion of long and short syllables, misplaced anapaests, and incorrect vowel lengthenings.\(^{18}\) The problems, especially the confusion of metrical quantities, are so pronounced that these lines cannot even be attributed to a

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\(^{14}\) Cecchi (1960) suggested that the fragment could have been part of an original messenger speech reported to Clytemnestra. She would still doubt the veracity of the report, as she does at 1616-18 of the received text.

\(^{15}\) England (1891) xvii.

\(^{16}\) Porson (1802).


\(^{18}\) West (1981) 74-5 itemizes these problems.
Hellenistic interpolator, and certainly not an actor or troupe manager who may be presumed to be intuitively aware of serious quantitative faults such as these. Furthermore, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is in P followed by the hypothesis, *dramatis personae*, and first 65 lines of Euripides’ lost *Danae*, all known to be spurious. West suggests Byzantine reconstruction and dismisses Page’s proposal of a poor reconstruction of a badly damaged exemplar (Page suggests the scribe had the left side of the papyrus or page he was copying from, with the opening characters of each line preserved).

Although the *exodos* presents the greatest trouble for textual critics, further inconsistencies and problems accumulate in the decades following Porson. By 1891, less than a century after Porson first questioned the text, the prologue of *Iphigenia at Aulis* was considered so stylistically problematic with such a range of suggested solutions that England in his edition of the play takes the time to summarize the various views. The received script “opens abruptly with an anapaestic dialogue” (1-48, 115-63) which is interrupted with “a long iambic narrative” (49-114). There is no single argument that can condemn the prologue with certainty (although it has been tried). Arguments in its defence are often flawed as well, but less problematic. The lines of this battle were last drawn in the 1970s, starting with the study of Mellert-Hoffmann (who staunchly defended every line in the prologue), with articles by Willink (genuine prologue, but needs to be reorganized, with some of the iambics opening the play), Knox (defending the received order of the verses) and Diggle and Bain (two prologues, both spurious). There have been a few minor skirmishes since then, but there has been no change in the essential positions. Knox lists

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19 F 1132 Kn. (among the *Dubia et Spuria*). See also Zuntz (1969) 139, 289.
20 West (1981) 76; Page (1934) 196-9.
21 England (1891) xxii-xxv. Most of England’s introduction is dedicated to textual issues, though he does defend the play, noting (ix) that it appealed to Erasmus, Racine, and Gluck.
22 Willink (1971) 343.
23 Mellert-Hoffmann (1969) was not available to Willink before his argument went to press, though Willink was able to append a final note (Willink (1971) 364) addressing her arguments. For further discussion of Mellert-Hoffmann’s study, see below.
24 Willink (1971) proposes the following arrangement: 49-96 (iambics), 1-48 (anapaests), 97-114 (iambics), 115-163 (anapaests).
25 Knox (1972).
27 Foley (1985) 102-5, largely a defence of Knox from the attacks of Bain; Kovacs (2003a) 80-3 finds traces of a prologue in the iambics mutilated by his Hellenistic Reviser, who also wrote the anapaests. See also Irigoïn (1988) 240-43, who prefers the text of England and Murray, in which the iambics are placed, together, at the start of the play.
the major problems, effectively discounting many of them.\textsuperscript{28} The play opens abruptly, which may be attributable to some unknown stage business (see chapter 3). As for the anapaests, only two other plays are known to open with this metre. The first is \textit{Rhesus} which raises its own questions of authorship and is suspected to have lost an iambic prologue (or more).\textsuperscript{29} The lost \textit{Andromeda} opens with a monody, not recitative (like \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}),\textsuperscript{30} but should at least warn us against dismissing the prologue on grounds of metrical style.

The received text contains apparent contradictions – evidence of what a modern film critic might call continuity errors. First, the nature and delivery of Calchas’ prophecy demanding the sacrifice of Iphigenia is alternatively either known to the whole army or just to a small cabal of Greek leaders (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, and Calchas himself), though this conflict is inference rather than explicit fact.\textsuperscript{31} Second, following the \textit{agon} of the first episode, a messenger enters to announce the arrival of Clytemnestra and Electra and describes in grand detail the chariot and the removal of the mares to pasture (414-39). That arrival is later enacted on stage, complete with a chariot mysteriously re-yoked, at lines 590-630. Not only do these two passages conflict with each other, but each one has been condemned independently based on its own (lack of) merits.\textsuperscript{32}

Since Musgrave’s discovery of the Aelian fragment, two other fragments have surfaced which seem to challenge the validity of our text. Both are minor, but worth mentioning here. The grammarian Hesychius has an entry in his lexicon that claims to refer to \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ἄθραυϲτα· ἀπρόϲκοϲπα. Εὐριπίδηϲ Ἰφιγενείϲ ἔν Αὐλίϲδι
Unbroken: not stumbling. Euripides in \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} Knox (1972) 241-2.
\textsuperscript{29} The evidence for this comes from one of three hypotheses transmitted with the play in the manuscript tradition (Hypothesis B in Diggle’s OCT). It states that two different prologues are current. For the first, one grammatically incomplete line is quoted from Dicaearchus. It contains no spatial localization, but possibly a temporal one, referring to the “lovely light of the moon” (\textit{ἐὐϲέληνοϲ φέγγοϲ}). \textit{Rhesus} is set at dawn. The other quotes Hera speaking to Athena as they enter the Trojan camp. The hypothesis condemns it as being too prose-like, but Ritchie (1964) 101-113 is hesitant, noting that this is the very sort of prologue we might expect, defining the \textit{mise-en-scène}. The provenance of these potential prologues is unknown, and they may in fact be interpolations prompted by the play’s lack of prologue.
\textsuperscript{31} Collard, Cropp & Gibert (2004) 156.
\textsuperscript{30} Kovacs (2003a) 78-79 suggests that lines 106-7, 425-34, 518 imply the select few. Lines 87-91, 324, 538-40, 814-8, 1259-75, 1345-57 all state or imply general knowledge of the prophecy. Gurd (2005) 169-71 reduces Kovacs’ conclusions to mere inferences but refuses to declare Kovacs right or wrong.
\textsuperscript{32} Both first by Dindorf in his 1825 edition of Euripides, but followed by Diggle.
The word Hesychius is interested in, ἄθραυϲτα, does not appear in our play, though it does appear elsewhere in Euripides.³³ The most plausible solution thus far is to emend line 57:

τὸ πρᾶγμα δ᾽ ἀπόρως εἶχε Τυνδάρεω πατρί,  
δοῦναί τε μὴ δοῦναί τε, τῆς τύχης ὅπως  
ἀψαιτ᾽ ἄριτα.

The affair was a hopeless one for her father Tyndareus, to give her or not to give her, how he might fix the situation in the best way. (IA 55-57)

Hemsterhuys suggests substituting ἄθραυϲτα for ἄριτα: “How he might fix the situation without ruin.” This emendation is adopted by Kovacs, though usually relegated to the critical apparatus.³⁴

Also, a scholion to Frogs 1310 provides a potential fragment for Iphigenia at Aulis, though the ascription is likely wrong. The Aristophanic passage in question has Aeschylus singing Euripides’ lyrics to mock him. The passage is about sea birds:

ἄλκυόνες, αἱ παρ᾽ ἀενάοιϲ θαλάϲϲηϲ  
kύμαϲι στωμύλλετε

Halcyons, who chatter about the ever-flowing waves of the sea.³⁵

The scholiast identifies Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis as the tragic model for these lines, but no passage in our play resembles these lines. In this instance, we are probably best advised to assume the scholiast has made an error. The dates of these two plays, tragedy and comedy, make the attribution questionable: it is not at all clear that Frogs (most likely Lenaea 405 for its first production) was produced after Iphigenia at Aulis which was produced posthumously, perhaps as early as 405 BCE. There is no mention in Frogs of either Bacchae nor Alcmeon in Corinth, the other two plays in Euripides’ final trilogy.³⁶ Bacchae in particular seems to have made an impact with the Athenian audience when it was produced, and it is difficult to imagine Aristophanes not parodying or referencing it in any way (Helen and Andromeda receive sustained treatments from Aristophanes within a year of their production). Halcyons are mentioned by the chorus of Iphigenia among the Taurians at 1089-95 in a lyric strophe,

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³³ Three times: Hec. 17, Phoen. 1079, Cyc. 292.
³⁵ Frogs 1309-10 = Fr. 856 Kn.
³⁶ Rau (1967) 202-05. Dover (1993) 37-8 speculates that the trilogy may have been produced in the same year, or even at the same festival as Frogs.
but there is no resemblance between the passages beyond the name of the bird. A few lines later in the same song, *Frogs* 1315-16, Aeschylus appears to parody a song from *Hypsipyle*.\(^{37}\) It is possible therefore that the entire song Aeschylus sings in *Frogs* is derived from *Hypsipyle*.\(^{38}\) If these lines are from a lost version of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which is unlikely but still possible, they tell us little. They do not suggest a new character or situation as the Aelian fragment does, but are easily reconciled to the seaside setting of this play. Perhaps the lines could be assigned to the chorus describing their journey to Aulis.

This list of textual problems is not exhaustive, but it does cover the most prominent difficulties. These problems are enough to establish the perceived instability of the text, but some numbers will underscore the gravity of the situation. In the appendix to his Oxford edition, Diggle lists every verse that has been offered up for excision, alongside the name of the first critic to cast a doubtful eye upon it (this is the only play for which Diggle offers such an appendix). Of 1629 received verses, only 222 remain untouched. The only major critic of the text since Diggle is David Kovacs who, in his recent Loeb edition and *JHS* article, excises some 768 verses, reducing the play to a fragmentary (and unperformable) state.\(^{39}\) Kovacs’ red pen touched upon 26 more verses, reducing the count to 196 verses. Diggle’s apparatus identifies proposed textual emendations (proposed or accepted) for a further 88 of those 196 lines. By this (admittedly over-strict) measure, there are now 108 lines of the received text that can be trusted as “safe” (a lacuna proposed by Günther between 739 and 740 would suggest further lost lines). Of course not every proposed emendation or excision meets with universal acceptance, and no editor would print such a reduced text in the first place.

How editors have dealt with this text, however, is interesting, as methods often reflect contemporary scholarly values. England and Murray, for instance, printed the prologue with the iambics preceding the anapaests, adhering to the idea that a proper text could, and should, be reconstructed as closely as possible.\(^{40}\) Kovacs prints the full text in its received order, but,\(^{37}\) The lines bear resemblance to Fr. 752f.9-11 Kn.. See Bond (1963) 26, 66; Rau (1967) 129; Collard, Cropp & Gibert (2004) 231.

\(^{38}\) Rau (1967) 129.

\(^{39}\) Kovacs (2003a) 102. I do not count Gurd (2005) as editor, as he proposes no emendation, and only rarely suggests a preference for different readings.

\(^{40}\) This arrangement of the prologue was first suggested by Hartung (1844) 516-20. Murray, however, was never a confident editor. In his preparation of the OCT, he was heavily influenced by Wilamowitz-
channelling the confidence of those earlier editors, brackets any lines he considers non-
Euripidean and actually interpolates some lines himself, ostensibly to improve the flow of his
text. More subtle and complex is Diggle, who uses four types of bullets to distinguish
categories of verses: fortasse Euripidei, fortasse non Euripidei, vix Euripidei, non Euripidei.
Significantly, there is no certe Euripidei category. If we exclude all lines of the non
Euripidei category (mainly the first messenger, some of the second stasimon and the end of
the exodos), we are left with a slightly truncated – but performable – text.42

Amid all these uncertainties, the next step is to establish a position concerning which
portions of the received text can be trusted as authentic or Euripidean. As noted at the start
of this section, this is a methodologically necessary step. The textual problems of Iphigenia
at Aulis supply an all too convenient scapegoat for critics of any given argument or reading.43
It is of course possible simply to accept the received text. This works well enough for
broader interpretive studies, such as those found in Kitto or Conacher.44 Conacher in
particular frequently dismisses the concluding scenes, since the tragic idea has, in his
opinion, already been expressed.45 He spends little effort on the conclusion of this play:
“With the pathetic effects and final happy ending...we will not be much concerned...there is
no reason why we and the heroine should not be rewarded for our agonies.”46 Foley notes the
problems of the exodos, but does not consider the absence of a genuine exodos a threat to her
reading of the play: “The foreshadowing of Iphigenia’s rescue and survival is so strong that
the disputed final scenes are hardly necessary to an interpretation of the play.”47 And yet
Foley’s use of the chariot entrance as a visual identification with tragic predecessors and as
an indicator of the inversion of the marriage motif will not find acceptance with many, since
most editors excise the scene.48 How then does one establish a firm position on this play?

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41 Lines 630a-c are unnecessary if we preserve either 628-30 or 633-4. Line 685a is entirely superfluous, even
in Kovacs’ Loeb edition which interpolates a stage direction.
42 By comparison, the editions of Günther (1988) and Stockert (1992) are far more conservative. Günther in
particular is reluctant to introduce emendations into the text, preferring to obelize and refer to his very
thorough critical apparatus.
43 I have already noted the review of Mellert-Hoffmann (1969) by Diggle (1971).
44 Kitto (1961) 360-7, Conacher (1967) 249-64.
45 See also Michelini (1987) 28 n.118.
46 Conacher (1967) 250.
48 Foley (1985) 70. To be fair, no reviewer of Foley makes this criticism of her argument. Problems arise
Iphigenia at Aulis was produced posthumously, with Bacchae and Alcmeon at Corinth. As we will see in chapter 4, the limited iconographic evidence suggests that the structure of Iphigenia at Aulis, with the exception of the exodos, was fixed by the start of the second century BCE. This leaves a gap of approximately 200 years in which any major corruption of the text might occur. This is generally considered the period most susceptible to textual corruption, when plays were being reperformed and before the Hellenistic scholars began to take an interest in and preserve the texts of the three canonical tragedians. It is this period that Page and Kovacs target in their discussions of Iphigenia at Aulis (see below).

The exodos is the only section of the play that we must certainly consider spurious. It either replaces a lost exodos or one never written. At Euripides’ death the play was either incomplete, lacking lines or even whole scenes, or in an early stage of revision, with lines or scenes technically complete but not yet written to the poet’s satisfaction. In this case, “incomplete” may mean nothing more than lacking the exodos that now exists, ending with the exit of Iphigenia at 1509 (where Diggle starts to have serious doubts about the text) or at the end of the following choral ode at 1531 (as Kovacs suggests in his Loeb volume). In this case, the play is still technically complete – it can be performed in a sequential manner and comes to a close in accordance with an established mythic tradition – but it would be highly unusual not to receive a report of Iphigenia’s death from a messenger. In this sense, the audience might regard the play as incomplete. It may have been first performed in this incomplete or unrevised state, or developed posthumously by another poet or producer (Euripides Minor?). In either case, there must have been problems in the text not unlike those faced by modern editors: the questions of logical consistency, difficulties with language, and even the stylistic problems of some seemingly non-Euripidean scenes.

from the general approach of Foley’s work, which often does not stand up to close readings of the original plays; see Buxton (1987), Murnaghan (1987), Wilkins (1987).

49 Schol. Ar. Frogs 67.
50 Page (1934) 14.
51 Csapo & Slater (1994) 1, Zuntz (1965) 252-3.
52 For stylistic reasons, I prefer no exodos, with Iphigenia leaving for her death at 1531 (after Kovacs (2003a)), but there is no evidence to confirm or deny this possibility. See my discussion of spatial dynamics in the play in chapter 3.
53 Both Children of Heracles and Phoenician Women provide very cursory accounts of their sacrifices, but both plays have other concerns, whereas it is the major focus of Iphigenia at Aulis. See chapter 3.
54 Kovacs (2003a).
This play was awarded first prize in performance, but as part of a trilogy, alongside at least one play that was well received.\textsuperscript{55} Euripides’ relationship with his Athenian audience (and judges) was a complex and perhaps frustrating one: only four victories are recorded during his lifetime, yet he was awarded a place in the competition on a regular basis and his plays were immensely popular after his death.\textsuperscript{56} Any possible inconsistencies or passages of rough composition in the script at the first performance in Athens may have been eclipsed by the success of the other two plays, \textit{Bacchae} and \textit{Alcmeon in Corinth}. We might also suspect a eulogistic vote, with audience (and judges) biased by the recent death of the playwright. Anecdotal evidence, particularly in the \textit{Vita}, testifies to Athenian appreciation of Euripides immediately following his death.\textsuperscript{57} This is all to suggest that we do not need to assume a play of high quality in our search for authenticity.

Even if the text as it was first performed was problematic in the ways described above, further revision and alteration through repeated performance is still likely. As soon as we recognize that the working script performed in the fifth century is not a series of perfected lines and scenes waiting to be found by the editor who properly detects and deletes the spurious material, we can limit and modify the intuitive process to which so many critics resort. When one critic decrees that one line is good enough to be “by the master himself,” that critic is applying a value judgement that does not properly account for the troubled history of the text. Even a more systematic analysis of metrical and linguistic features (counting resolutions, for example, or comparing the use of a specific word in other works of fifth-century drama) will stumble here. If the text itself is unstable, any close reading of its stylistic elements will be also. We may emend the text until linguistic and stylistic perfection (as we perceive it) is achieved, but if the original text was itself imperfect, our emended text

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\textsuperscript{55} Callimachus has school children reciting a line of \textit{Bacchae} (Call. \textit{Ep.} 48); Aristotle praises an \textit{Alcmeon} of Euripides, but does not specify which play (either \textit{Alcmeon in Corinth} or \textit{Alcmeon in Psophis}, produced in 438), \textit{Ar. Poet.} 1453a19. The didascalic inscriptions record a victory by the actor Thetatus in 341-0 with an \textit{Alcmeon} (\textit{IG} II\textsuperscript{2} 2320). No poet is named. See Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 109, Csapo & Slater (1994) 229. Whether \textit{Bacchae} was first produced in Macedon is here largely irrelevant, but on this see Revermann (1999/2000) 461-2, and Csapo (1999/2000) 414.

\textsuperscript{56} On the popularity of Euripides in Athens, see Stevens (1956), Michelini (1987) 71-74.

\textsuperscript{57} Notable is the story of Sophocles dressing in black at the proagon and presenting his chorus without crowns, \textit{Vita} 45-9. Monuments were erected in Athens soon after his death. See Lefkowitz (1981) 97.
can never hope to be a true reproduction. Likewise, we can never expect to separate the “Euripides” from the “non-Euripides” as though wheat from the chaff.

The troubled state of the text has inspired more than one study that goes beyond the concerns of simply producing a viable critical edition. Two major studies, those of Page and Kovacs, use concerns of performance to inform their sense of authenticity in the text. The third, a monograph by Gurd, incorporates theories of textual criticism to submit that a critical edition of a text contains within it the entire history of that text, synecdochally representing all previous editions. While Kovacs’ study is more narrowly focused (it is an article, not a monograph), Page and Gurd are developing methodological paradigms for a wider corpus of material. Page uses *Iphigenia at Aulis* as his case study for the identification of actors’ interpolations in the plays of Euripides, and his study does indeed look at other texts. Gurd, on the other hand, is less concerned with Euripides or with Greek Tragedy, but seeks to develop broader ranging theories of textual criticism. For both Page and Gurd, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is the ideal sample text precisely for its troubled textual history, while for Kovacs it is more like a riddle to be solved.

In his 1934 study, *Actors’ Interpolations in Greek Tragedy*, Page identifies the fourth and third centuries as the period of greatest vulnerability for the texts of the tragedians. Page develops and applies a systematic identification of the types of interpolations that occurred in this period, specifically those that occurred through revivals of the performance script. He argues that during the fifth century, for the initial productions of these tragedies, individual poets had a fairly great degree of control over their texts, given that they typically directed and often acted. By the fourth century, however, actors had risen in prominence at the expense of the playwrights. Fourth-century poets were, by and large, considered to be inferior to their fifth-century predecessors. Actors, or their producers, might be inclined to augment their texts, adding glosses for clarity, increasing smaller roles, or even simply misremembering their lines until the lapses in memory became established in their working scripts. Furthermore, until the Alexandrians, little emphasis was placed on the text, while the

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58 More on this phenomenon in chapter 4, but see in particular Perlman (1964) and Wilson (1996).
spoken word was privileged.\(^{59}\) The idea of a fixed text did not come naturally to the Greeks at that time.\(^{60}\)

Evidence for interpolation in general is ample and convincing, even if it is much more difficult to identify specific instances. Several tragic scholia attest to the fact that actors did in fact interpolate, although the validity of individual cases is difficult to assess.\(^{61}\) The second hypothesis to \textit{Rhesus} includes eleven lines of a lost prologue, which the author of the hypothesis condemns and suggests could have been composed by an actor. But there is some question of just how actors’ interpolations might find their way into the manuscripts that survive to the present day. In the case of the lost \textit{Rhesus} prologue, it is easy to see the motivation for such a piece: the absence of a prologue was conspicuous, and an actor might want to increase his role(s) and stage time. A longer, sustained compilation, as opposed to modifications of single lines, might have been considered important enough to write out and append to an actor’s manuscript. This manuscript might then find its way to the Alexandrians who would then use it as the basis for their “official” text. There is evidence to suggest that actors did own personal scripts, perhaps truncated to suit their needs.\(^{62}\) Shorter interpolations, Page supposes, might find their way into a prompter’s script, though he acknowledges that there is no evidence for prompters earlier than the first century.

Page’s analysis of \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}, in the end, goes beyond the condemnation of a few interpolated lines. It is rather a careful and informed philological study of the text. Page does attribute several lines to actors’ interpolations, but he is always cautious in doing so. He is frank about the strength of his arguments and openly admits when certain conclusions are tentative or weak, and there is no suggestion of the witch hunt this study could have been. Page’s analysis is systematic, and he makes frequent attempts to categorize, while acknowledging the permeability of his divisions. Thus, in his early discussions of other plays, he proposes four degrees of probability for histrionic involvement: some lines are certain to be interpolated by actors, while others are certainly interpolated, but not by actors.

\(^{59}\) Page (1934) 108.
\(^{60}\) The Homeric epics are a possible exception, depending on how much credibility we give to the “Panathenaic Rule” of sequential recitation and the Pisistratian recension. See Pfeiffer (1968) 8, Burgess (2001) 52.
\(^{61}\) The \textit{scholia} to \textit{Phoen. 246, Or: 57, 268, 1366} identify these lines as interpolations, see Page (1934) 108-9.
This system of categorization (and even the number of categories) foreshadows Diggle’s mode of assessing the authenticity of lines in his Oxford text. Page also attempts to categorize the motivation for these interpolations. Some are for the purposes of spectacle, some for melodrama, or some may have originated as glosses inserted to explain an obscure reference or passage. This is pure speculation, of course, but Page still manages to avoid the pitfalls of assessing textual authenticity on stylistic grounds.

Almost seven decades after Page, Kovacs wrote an article in defence of his liberal treatment of the text in the Loeb Classical Library, published the year before (which, to be fair in light of the following discussion, has many strengths). The original text of Euripides, Kovacs argues, cannot be properly recovered, since it is impossible to determine the state of the script at his death. Instead, Kovacs seeks to distinguish between the First Performance and a fourth-century Reviser. Both are products of performance. The text of the First Performance is the script that was made performance-ready by the younger Euripides mentioned in the ancient sources. The Reviser is also motivated by dramaturgical concerns, as he is updating a script to make it more exciting for his fourth-century audience, who Kovacs assumes demanded greater spectacle and pathos. Thinking of these steps in the textual tradition as performance scripts is a useful strategy. Ultimately, however, Kovacs develops from these dramaturgical considerations a specific literary aesthetic, and his evaluation of specific scenes typically depends on his own assessment of their literary and dramatic quality. He essentially develops a persona for the Reviser, and excises any lines or passages he feels would have been a product of the Reviser’s inferior literary and dramatic tastes.

To the Reviser Kovacs attributes a penchant for ironic or dramatic scenes that do not forward the plot. He therefore excises entire speeches by principal characters, such as the agon and the reconciliation speeches of Menelaus and Agamemnon, Achilles’ response to Clytemnestra’s supplication, and Clytemnestra’s own supplication of Agamemnon. Kovacs even deletes entire scenes, supposing they must replace higher quality compositions. In the

63 Gurd (2005) 152.
64 Kovacs (2003a). Again, we see the unique position of this text: it is the only one that Kovacs defends in an independent piece. Most of Kovacs’ other editorial concerns are discussed in his volumes of Euripidea (1994, 1996, 2003b).
65 Kovacs (2003a) 78.
first episode, for instance, the speeches of Agamemnon and Menelaus replace a scene in which Agamemnon “has come to realize that heaven (ὁ δαίμων 444) has outsmarted his clever dodge (ϲοφίϲματα), and that the only amelioration his situation affords is that Clytaemestra shall not learn the truth until the sacrifice actually takes place.”66 In other words, the same scene, but without Menelaus.

The Reviser also favours scenes of spectacle and dramatic posturing. Thus the chariot entrance of Clytemnestra is excised, a scene which has admittedly disturbed many previous critics.67 More idiosyncratic, however, is Kovacs’ assessment that the infant Orestes was also part of this dramatic posturing: “One satisfying result is that the business of baby Orestes, played by a doll, can be shown to be the work of the Reviser.”68 The argument promised by this statement is absent from the article, and yet is considered valid grounds for deletion of any scene in which Orestes appears. Why the child Orestes is so undesirable, Kovacs does not say: certainly children appeared on stage. It is impossible to imagine Hypsipyle69 or Telephus70 without infants on stage and children, apparently toddlers, frequently appear in Sophocles and Euripides.71

While the title of Kovacs’ article promises a reconstruction of the original play, his efforts are far more concentrated on excision and are motivated by his own aesthetic sense: “Kovacs interprets very much as he edits: he likes clarity. Indeed, he tends to be reductive.”72

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66 Kovacs (2003a) 100.
67 Page (1934) 166-68, but also Taplin (1977) 77, Stockert (1992) 380-81.
68 Kovacs (2003a) 77.
69 The use of the infant must have had significant dramatic impact, with Hypsipyle exiting the stage with the child in her arms and returning without it: see Collard, Cropp & Gibert (2004) 182.
70 There is some debate on whether Orestes appeared on stage in Telephus, and if so whether a doll or living child was used, but most likely a doll was used for a staged scene. For arguments in favour of Orestes appearing on stage, see Taplin (1977) 35n.2, Heath (1987) 275-6, Collard, Cropp & Lee (1995) 24; against, see Handley & Rea (1956) 34, Webster (1967) 46-7, Gould (1973) 101-3. See also Preiser (2000) 89.
71 Sifakis (1979) is the most relevant discussion, though he does not include IA. Zeitlin (2008) 318-19 also reviews the evidence, and discusses more broadly the child-parent relationship in Greek tragedy. In Sophocles OT, Oedipus “hears” his daughters weeping as they are brought on stage (1472-4) and in Ajax Teucer gives Euryaces specific commands, guiding him through the ritual of supplication (1171-81). In Euripides, there is the curious example of the child’s sung grief in Alcestis (393-415) and children appear in Medea (making off-stage cries at 1270-2) and Andromache (501-14, 523-36), as well as in Children of Heracles, Hecuba, Heracles, Trojan Women and Suppliant Women. On plots involving childbirth in tragedy and other genres of performance, see Hall (2006) 60-98.
He is far bolder in his assertions than Page, who is more often aware of the thin ice on which he skates (or at least more willing to show it).

The most recent complete study of the textual issues of this play, but with a very different agenda, is Sean Gurd’s *Iphigenias At Aulis: Textual Multiplicity. Radical Philology* (2005). Rather than focussing on dramaturgical syntax, Gurd studies the play in the context of the history of European philosophy and theory. Kant, Nietzsche, Marx, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and a host of others make cameo appearances in this study, as Gurd fuses traditional, philological textual criticism with modern theoretical approaches to produce what he calls *radical philology* (his italics). This theory-driven approach requires rather specific tastes to be fully appreciated, particularly within the relatively conservative and traditional field of Classical Studies. The author does tend toward jargon, but this book has much to offer.

The thesis of Gurd’s study is that every new edition of a text is not a singular manifestation of the original exemplar but rather a combination or a plurality of all editions that have preceded it. The edited text is an embodiment of the tradition of editing that came before it: it is “singular plural”. This plurality is most evident in the apparatus of a critical edition of a Classical text. In the first of two parts, Gurd defines his understanding of textual criticism in terminology derived from European literary theory. In the second part, twice as long and potentially of considerable interest to more traditional philologists, he examines a range of editions of the text from 1762 (the year Musgrave discovered the Aelian fragment) to Kovacs’ Loeb edition in 2002 (and the defence that followed the year after). Though Gurd is proposing a new way of considering textual criticism, he discusses remarkably few Classical texts. Among the tragedies, only the *Oresteia* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* receive any sustained treatment, and only half a dozen other tragedies of Euripides are mentioned in passing. Gurd has yet to field test his *radical philology* beyond the parameters within which

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73 Reviews of the book are generally mixed. Miller (2005) is uncritical, interested more in Gurd’s agenda of theoretical reflection than its practical application, though still helpful to the theory-challenged reader wishing to unpack Gurd’s compact prose. Scodel (2007b) is sceptical of the project, but finds much of value. Mitchell-Boyask (2006) is the most thorough in assessment of both aspects of the volume, its philological criticisms and its theoretical framework. To these we may now add Michelakis (2009), who questions Gurd’s omission of several recent editors of the text: Jouan (1983), Günther (1988), and Stockert (1992).

74 Gurd (2005) passim.
he incubated it.\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} is, of course, the perfect case for his study, since there is no “original” text: the play had to be edited even before it could be staged. This is a vital point for my later chapters: \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} uniquely does not pre-exist its own history of reception.

Gurd frequently also identifies the editorial process as an allegorical reading of literary interpretations of the texts.\textsuperscript{76} In his final analysis of Kovacs’ text, for instance, Gurd notes that Kovacs creates a rift in the text based on the problem of the secret and public versions of the prophecy of Calchas. This division is interpretive and not nearly as certain as Kovacs asserts, just as the differences between the Euripidean original and later interpolations are also much more ambiguous than Kovacs suggests.\textsuperscript{77} The split created by the problem of the prophecy neatly results in two versions of the text, and that problem becomes one of the primary criteria on which Kovacs bases his own editorial decisions. More generally, the instability of the text mimics the indecision that is a \textit{Leitmotif} of the play.\textsuperscript{78} This allegorical interpretation of the editing process leads to the significant observation that the salvation of Iphigenia, the single most crucial variant of the competing mythical traditions (as well as later interpretive models and artistic adaptations), occurs in the passage that is least secure from the editor’s standpoint.

One curious by-product of Gurd’s championing of the multiplicity of texts is his praise of the works of Page and Diggle.\textsuperscript{79} Page, as noted above, seeks to identify layers of text and even to categorize the types of interpolations that created those layers. Diggle goes even further in his OCT and includes within the text itself sigla indicating strata of textual revision, as well as including the appendix of excisions and the editors who first proposed them. Thus both scholars preserve multiple moments in the evolution of the text in one edition (Gurd is less taken with Kovacs’ simpler policy of excision).\textsuperscript{80} Diggle’s sigla, Gurd

\textsuperscript{75} Scodel (2007b) 356, who further suggests that even the passages from IA are “cherry-picked”.
\textsuperscript{76} Gurd (2004) also makes this point, analysing the editorial practices of Hermann (1847) specifically.
\textsuperscript{78} See, for instance, Jones (1962) 250 on the prologue of the play. The anapaestic opening emphasizes Agamemnon’s indecision.
\textsuperscript{79} Mitchell-Boyask (2006).
\textsuperscript{80} Though Gurd does not mention Homer or the oral tradition, his multiplicity should remind us of the evolutionary model of the development of the Homeric texts first proposed by Nagy (1996a, 1996b, though (2003) 1-3 provides a succinct explanation of the combination of synchronic and diachronic perspectives). Crucial to Nagy’s model – and here we find the closest parallel to the early tradition of IA – is the dimension
acknowledges, are not historical phases: the lines within one of Diggle’s four stages of probability need not be assigned to any one hand or time. The appendix and in-text sigla produce a viable presentation of the pluralized text (though not complete, since Diggle can only list the first deletions of a given line):

Diggle’s text organizes a textual multiplicity within its space. It does not represent an “original text” from which all variants are derived as imperfect copies or descendents, but rather serves as a singular container for a multiplicity of critical texts.81

But as Scodel notes, it is only for this particular play that Diggle includes such sigla and appendix; for the other plays of Euripides in Diggle’s edition, the traditional square brackets suffice to indicate textual uncertainty.82 Again, we need to see Gurd apply his radical philology to a wider range of texts: it will make for an interesting study.

While Gurd’s project may be lauded by those wishing to see more theoretical accenting of the basic methods of Classical philology, it is unlikely to have any direct impact on the practice of textual critics. After all, scholars have recognized for some time that the “original text” is an impossible ideal, an ideal that Gurd terms a “residual Platonism.”83 But the impossibility of that ideal has not, and should not, stop us from trying to establish secure texts. Gurd himself produces several new and innovative readings of individual passages of Iphigenia at Aulis, but his denial of a single textual authority prevents him from ever drawing a firm conclusion. In his appendix, for instance, Gurd discusses those passages which Kovacs identifies as evidence of the public prophecy, and casts serious doubt over Kovacs’ assertions. Gurd refuses, however, to make any final assertion: “It is important that I not be perceived as arguing that Kovacs is wrong: all that is needed from my perspective is that he is not necessarily right.”84

of performance as the distinguishing element between phases in the development of the epics. The most effective presentation of this model is the Homer Multitext Project (zeus.chsdc.org/chs/homer_multitext), hosted by the Center for Hellenic Studies, which “seeks to present the textual transmission of the Iliad and Odyssey in a historical framework” (from the website) by making available to the reader as many editions of the Homeric texts as possible.

81 Gurd (2005) 166.
82 Scodel (2007b) 355.
83 Gurd (2005) 143.
As I have noted, Gurd dedicates little space to other plays or texts. There is, however, one exception. In his first chapter, he demonstrates the wide variety of critical editions, starting with fairly clear examples from *Iphigenia at Aulis* in which line assignments are different (*IA* 6-8) or are printed in different order. But his first sustained examination of a subtle yet significant variation in a text focuses on Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* 228-47: the chorus’ description of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. His reading of the passage is nuanced and he makes several insightful observations (see chapter 2). His argument, however, that Page, in his 1972 OCT, with one seemingly minor textual correction generates a significantly different meaning for this passage, is not thorough enough to provide a convincing conclusion.\(^85\) On the surface, Gurd’s reasons for choosing this passage are obvious: the *parodos* of *Agamemnon* is the text to which Euripides is most clearly responding in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.\(^86\) I have already noted that Gurd suggests the editorial process parallels and allegorizes patterns of literary interpretation. Here Gurd himself, in prefacing a discussion of *Iphigenia at Aulis* with analysis of *Agamemnon* (and only *Agamemnon*), enacts just such a procedure; in this he is followed by many recent adaptors of Euripides’ play (see chapter 6).

*Iphigenia at Aulis* has a textual history that is unique, not only among surviving Greek tragedies, but even within the entire corpus of Greek literature. It is a text without even an imagined “ideal” authorial version for scholars to discover. Concerns about the text have frequently eclipsed appreciation and interpretation of the play at a literary or dramatic level. Given the complexities involved in the generation of our received manuscript, this obsession with the text is not difficult to understand. Just as often, however, those textual concerns have become recast as literary concerns, frequently swaying critical judgement: a passage by Euripides is “clearly” of greater merit than a passage that is not by Euripides. As Gurd notes, such evaluations can become circular and self-sustaining very quickly, distorting our view of the original.

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85 Gurd (2005) 12-19. The primary problem is that Gurd sets Page’s text against the editions of Fraenkel (1950) and West (1990), but does not provide those texts for comparison. The only point that seems to depend on an editorial decision of Page’s is the inclusion of τε at 242, where he prints θ’ὡϲ for τώϲ. But Gurd notes that the reading has manuscript authority only belatedly, and does not acknowledge the fact that other editors have chosen this reading before Page (including Page’s completion of Denniston’s 1957 commentary for Clarendon Press).

86 The choice of a text edited by Page may also be intended to foreshadow Gurd’s laudatory presentation of Page as a visionary editor (a sort of proto-radical philologist) later in the volume.
Again, the *exodos* of the play is the only passage that we can truly reject as “inauthentic” based on evaluation of the surviving script. Whether or not Iphigenia is sacrificed must be up to the reader to decide. Other passages we shall have to assess on an individual basis. In chapter 2, for instance, which deals with early traditions of the myth, we must consider the implications of Euripides’ choosing one version of a myth over another. In chapter 3, questions of panhellenism and dramatic impact will be considered. In the remaining three chapters, we will not need to make a choice, as those chapters discuss receptions of the Euripidean play: the decision of sacrifice or salvation will be made, again and again, by the authors and painters mentioned.

**The Literary Approach**

Despite the dominance of the textual issues in the nineteenth century, several scholars insisted (or perhaps grudgingly admitted) that *Iphigenia at Aulis* has literary and dramatic merits too. The play has gone in and out of fashion in scholarly taste, just as it has with audiences, from Aristotle to the present day. Not surprisingly, assessments of the play are often representative of contemporary trends in Euripidean criticism. It is not my intent to cover here the entire Euripidean tradition, nor even to produce a single, exhaustive treatment of the critical history of this one play: a more selective approach will suit the scope of this study. In later chapters I will more thoroughly engage many of the trends in the tragic tradition introduced here. In particular I am in this chapter more concerned with primarily those works that dedicate significant space to *Iphigenia at Aulis* (for instance, a chapter in a book on tragedy) or whose studies have proved highly influential in my understanding of the play.

To this end, a diachronic approach is the natural one, though I have also grouped works according to their approaches – general studies of Euripides, character studies of Agamemnon, and modern critical approaches – as I have already done with those works focussed on textual criticism. This grouping of works will demarcate more clearly significant trends in the tradition. In particular, the final group, modern critical approaches developed over the last three decades, will be crucial in contextualizing my study against current scholarship.
Aristotle

As is so very often the case with studies of Greek tragedy, criticism of *Iphigenia at Aulis* begins with Aristotle and the *Poetics*. Although Aristotle generally praises *Iphigenia among the Taurians* for its plot twists and near avoidance of kin-slaying (*Poetics* 1454a7-8, 1455a18), he is more critical of Euripides’ later Iphigenia play. In *Poetics* 15, Aristotle singles out the swift change of mind of Iphigenia as an example of inconsistent characterization:

> τοῦ δὲ ἀνωμάλου ἡ ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἰφιγένεια· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐσκευασάτο ἡ ἱκετεύουσα τῇ ἱκετεύουσα τῇ προστείρῃ.

*Iphigenia at Aulis* [is an example] of inconsistency: for in no way does the suppliant [Iphigenia] resemble the later [Iphigenia]. (1454a31-33)

This is the only explicit mention of the play by Aristotle, and yet this passing judgement has influenced and dominated literary criticism of the play for over two millennia. Numerous studies of the play, following Aristotle’s lead, condemn it for its perceived inconsistencies.87 Others seek to redeem the play, either by locating internal signs justifying Iphigenia’s change of mind,88 or by explaining away Euripides’ motivation for having such a swift change.89 Siegel, for example, reads Iphigenia’s speech accepting the sacrifice ironically and suggests that there is no inconsistency of character at all, simply that Iphigenia is accepting the inevitable and putting on a brave face.90 But the context of Aristotle’s assessment is also important. In chapter 15 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle is outlining the four elements of good characterization of which consistency is the final criterion: “In his discussion of tragedy one of the things he does not seem to make allowance for is that the hero or heroine might change their mind”.91 Of the types of inconsistent character, Aristotle says the consistently inconsistent is the least offensive. Given the treatment of other characters in this play, almost all of whom change their mind, perhaps it is this type of consistency that Aristotle has in mind, though he is far from clear on this.92

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87 For example, Kitto (1952) 388: “The two Iphigenias could shake hands.” See also Funke (1964).
88 Knox (1966) 232 identifies change of mind as a *Leitmotif* of the play.
90 Siegel (1980) 314.
92 Michelakis (2006a) 115.
Furthermore, we must be cautious that we do not read Aristotle’s criticism of a single event as condemnation of the entire tragedy. For instance, Aristotle praises *Iphigenia among the Taurians* for the last-minute nature of the recognition scene, but he is less laudatory about the means of recognition (specifically Orestes’ role), which he says is constructed for the plot, not the character, and lacking in artistry (*Poetics* 1453b31-33). Aristotle himself uses a line from *Iphigenia at Aulis* (1400) to support an argument on the inferiority of barbarians (*Politics* 1252b8-9):

διό φαϲιν οἱ ποιηταί
“βαρβάρων δ᾽ Ἕλληναϲ ἄρχειν εἰκόϲ,”
ὡϲ ταυτό φύϲει βάρβαρον καὶ δοῦλον ὅν

For this reason, the poets say:
“It is right for Greeks to rule barbarians,”
meaning that the barbarian and slave are the same in nature.

Just as it would be unwise to suggest that Aristotle is condemning *Iphigenia at Aulis* in the passage from the *Poetics*, so must we be careful not to assume praise here. Aristotle does not cite his source, and in fact suggests it is a sentiment frequently used by the poets: this line may simply be the most concise summary of the position that Aristotle is advocating. It is also important to note that in the fourth century, writers and orators could excerpt from Greek tragedy without context to illustrate a point. This sort of de-contextualized appropriation is best demonstrated in the fourth-century orators, and Euripides was their favourite source by a wide margin.

Aristotle really gives us little to go on, but this has not prevented scholars from trying to understand Iphigenia’s character in terms of near contemporary philosophical models – mainly Aristotle, but also his predecessor Plato. Tracing the development of Greek philosophical thought through the evolution of Greek tragedy, Snell, in an early article, rejects Aristotle’s negative assessment of Iphigenia’s character in favour of a Platonic

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93 On this point, Aristotle seems to prefer the *Iphigenia* of the mysterious Polyidus. The two references to this figure in the *Poetics* (1455a7, b10) are both to the recognition scene, in which Orestes mentions the sacrifice of his sister, comparing it to his own fate. To Aristotle, this was a more natural method of achieving the recognition, rather than Pylades rather oddly demanding to hear the letter read aloud.


95 Further discussion of the relationship between fifth-century tragedy and fourth-century oratory can be found in chapter 4, but see Perlman (1964), Ober & Strauss (1990), Wilson (1996).
model.\textsuperscript{96} Earlier tragedies, especially those of Aeschylus and Sophocles, argues Snell, present models of behaviour in which characters pursue either the path of contemplation to the end or, worse, lose their way. Sophoclean characters, for instance, begin their journeys with confidence but end in desolation and despair. Iphigenia, however, in accepting her fate signals her pursuit of something far grander than her own mean life: she “rises above an existence that is chaotic and dies for an ideal”.\textsuperscript{97} Iphigenia devalues her own life in favour of Platonic absolutes, turning a situation of uncertainty into a positive quest for glory. Snell’s argument requires us to take the rhetoric of Iphigenia’s acceptance speech at face value, which few critics are now willing to do. Nevertheless, Snell’s challenge to Aristotle’s criticism marks an important moment: the liberation of the Euripidean critic from wholesale acceptance of the Aristotelian ideal, and it is for this reason that Snell remains influential throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{98}

McDonald challenges Snell’s Platonic reading to offer a positive portrayal of Iphigenia in Aristotelian terms, if not those of the \textit{Poetics}. McDonald sees Iphigenia conforming rather to a mode of heroism consistent with Aristotle’s notions of \textit{philia} as expressed in the \textit{Nichomachean Ethics}.\textsuperscript{99} Iphigenia eventually demonstrates a dedication to family and friends that is unique among all the characters of \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}, especially when compared to Helen. Iphigenia devalues her own life in favour of others who are important to her. “Iphigenia is not so much devoting herself to an intellectual universal as to the emotional particular...indicative of a new type of heroism validating a cooperative relationship as an element of stability in an unstable universe.”\textsuperscript{100} She must grow into this heroism, however. She argues earlier in the play that bad life is better than a glorious death (\textit{IA} 1252, reminiscent of the disillusioned Achilles of \textit{Odyssey} 11.489-91), but eventually comes to accept her fate. Unlike Snell, McDonald allows for an ironic reading of Iphigenia’s

\textsuperscript{96} Snell (1983) 396-405 (translated and reprinted from 1928).
\textsuperscript{97} Snell (1983) 403.
\textsuperscript{98} It is perhaps significant that Snell’s article is the oldest in \textit{Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy} by several decades.
\textsuperscript{99} McDonald (1990) cites from various passages, but the clearest definition of \textit{philia} comes from \textit{NE} 1168b: “It is true that the good person will do much for friends and country, even die for them if necessary” (McDonald’s translation).
\textsuperscript{100} McDonald (1990) 84. In her earlier study of Euripides in cinema, though she does not expressly say it, she sees this heroic ideal in Cacoyannis’ 1976 film version of \textit{IA} (the chapter on this film is subtitled “A New Heroism”), McDonald (1983) esp. 168-69.
own rhetoric: Iphigenia’s devotion to the glory of her death is sincere, but misguided as she blindly follows her father’s panhellenic rhetoric at 1271-75. She seeks to do what is right for all of Greece, for her father has told her it is what must be done. As with Snell’s reading, Iphigenia becomes a model for behaviour in contrast to the darker portrayals of other characters in the play.

The studies of Snell and McDonald are not the norm, however, for understanding this play, in as much as they are not based on the little direct evidence Aristotle provides: they are speculative discussions based on reading other works in the Platonic and Aristotelian corpus. Later scholarship on the play, by contrast, took Poetics 15 as its starting point when it began to move away from the obsessions of the textual critics. The assessment of inconsistency looms over early twentieth-century scholarship on this play.

**Interpretations of Euripides**

Serious critical engagement with Euripides’ final play developed more slowly than for many other Greek tragedies. The nineteenth century saw no dedicated literary study. This lacuna is not surprising, given that Euripides was out of favour with the scholars of the period, particularly with the German philologists who were very influential at the time. Euripides, despite popularity in the early modern period, was now seen as the least tragic of the poets, disjointed and uneven, as prone to philosophical rambling as he was to true poetic composition. Sophocles, perceived as more economical in his stagecraft and consistent in his characterizations, stood in much greater esteem in this period.

Even when, as the twentieth century began, Euripides slowly attracted more critical attention, *Iphigenia at Aulis* was omitted or marginalized, as other plays found favour with scholars. The popularity of Euripides was motivated, at least in part, by the efforts of Gilbert

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101 Much of this section is indebted to the study of Michelini (1987) esp. 3-51, as I situate important critical interpretations of IA against the evolution of Euripidean scholarship. Michelini’s chapter is valuable in tracing developments in Euripidean criticism of the twentieth century, up to the mid-1970s, though Michelini is concerned with literary criticism at the expense of philological studies, see Diggle (1989b) 357-8. For more recent scholarship on Euripides, Mossman (2003), Gregory (2005), but especially Michelini (2002) 54-59, supply a useful supplement. For IA specifically, Michelakis (2006a) 114-119 is brief but valuable, and Michelini (1999/2000) again contributes though with a narrower focus. For a broader treatment of the tragic tradition, see Goldhill (1997).

102 The watershed, after which literary criticism of Euripides slowly became respectable in scholarly circles, occurred with the works of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (notably his edition of Heracles in 1895) and Verrall (especially his monograph *Euripides the Rationalist*, also in 1895), the latter suggesting for the first time that Euripides could be read ironically. See Michelini (1987) 11-19.
Murray who, it should be noted, did not translate this play. Only *Rhesus* suffered more, for it was not by Euripides (a convenient dismissal given that this play did not fit the tragic template established by current scholarship). *Iphigenia at Aulis* was almost as bad: it was incomplete, and its parts did not add up to an artistic whole. In the first half of the twentieth century, with the exception of Page’s monograph, which again centred on textual issues (see above), study of this play was to be found mainly in chapters of broader studies of the Greek tragedy, usually toward the end.

The primary studies of this period for the current topic are those of Kitto in 1939 and Grube in 1941. For both scholars, *Iphigenia at Aulis* presented a problem: like a number of the plays of Euripides, it could not fit into the template of Greek tragedy they had created, based on the works of all three tragedians. “The *IA* has its merits, but Greek Tragedy has its standards,” wrote Kitto, summarizing the critical framework for his evaluation of the play. Kitto and Grube both evaluated this play according to standards formulated while reading the *Oresteia*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and even *Bacchae*. But these plays do not supply standards to which *Iphigenia at Aulis* can measure up: it is quite simply a different sort of play.

Kitto reconciled the problem of varying quality (as he perceived it) among the tragedies by dividing tragedy into three sub-genres to which he could assign the various plays of Euripides. The first were the tragedies, the “purest” form, including those plays most often touted as being Euripides’ best, including *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and others. These plays were generally early in Euripides’ career (though Kitto resisted assigning to Euripides’ career periods of literary development): they had their flaws of composition, and the influence of Sophocles on the younger playwright could be detected. The second category was that of the tragi-comedies (a term even Kitto himself did not like), including *Alcestis*, *Ion*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and *Helen*. These were plays that, according to Kitto, revealed consummate skill of characterization and plot construction, but nevertheless juxtaposed in a disturbing fashion elements of gravity and levity: the merry drunkenness of Heracles

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103 Murray insisted that *IA* made a strong contribution to Greek literature, but found it inferior to most of Euripides’ other works. He recommends it to those who do not appreciate the “stately conventions of fifth-century tragedy,” Murray (1913) 91. On the popularity and success of Murray’s translations, see Morwood (2007).

104 Kitto (1961) 362.


106 Kitto (1961) 311.
followed too closely on the death of Alcestis. Three of these plays are similar in structure and were all produced in the 410s, but the presence of Alcestis in this category, produced over twenty years earlier and technically of a different genre, signals some of the problems Kitto generated for himself with this system of categorization. The final group of plays received the label of melodrama. These plays were more serious in tone, generally lacking the comedy of the middle set, but were primarily characterized by the poet’s attention to theatrical effect. It is into this latter category that Iphigenia at Aulis falls. The final plays of Sophocles and Euripides, Oedipus at Colonus and Bacchae, fall outside these categories, representing one final, inspired effort on the part of the authors.

Kitto’s contribution, in the English-speaking world especially, to the understanding of Greek tragedy cannot be underestimated, particularly in his insistence that the plays of Euripides be assessed as the literary compositions of an artist, not the treatises of a philosopher, politician, or school instructor. At the same time, it was Kitto’s insistence on the literary approach, without acknowledging the thematic and dramaturgical flexibility of the tragic genre, that proved problematic. His three labels for the plays of Euripides were based on literary judgements, rather than observations of formal features and performance context. We now recognize that there were few rules governing content and composition of a tragedy, and the fragments of plays that have been published since Kitto’s study suggest a far greater variety than is evident in our surviving tragedies.

Those plays that Kitto relegated to the tragi-comic and melodramatic categories were also those he deemed inferior. The creation of these sub-genres enabled a more dismissive tone when discussing certain plays that disturbed Kitto’s tragic model, Iphigenia at Aulis chief among them. This play, insists Kitto, lacks the tragic idea: neither Agamemnon nor Iphigenia are truly tragic figures, and the sacrifice is merely a pathetic incident, which is why Euripides is compelled to rescue her in the end (Kitto makes no mention at all of the play’s textual concerns). The merits that Kitto does find in the play are those consistent with his category of melodrama. These are the scenes that provide the most satisfying dramatic

107 Michelini (1987) 24. On the difficulties inherent in separating the artist from the intellectual, see Lesky (1972) 385-93.
moments: the arrival of Clytemnestra on chariot (and her bearing of gravitas), the pathos generated by the infant Orestes, and the composition of Agamemnon’s second letter. Kitto would have liked Kovacs’ Reviser very much.

Two years after Kitto, Grube published his study of Euripides. Grube also takes a literary approach, but instead of trying to categorize plays tends to assume an extreme realism on the part of Euripides. This leads him to assess the psychology of individual characters far beyond what the text allows. In the case of Iphigenia at Aulis, Grube starts on an apologetic note, outlining the greater problems of the text. He then embarks on a scene-by-scene analysis of the play, in which he dismisses as non-Euripidean those scenes that he deems of lesser dramatic merit. The result of his approach is a rather cynical reading of the play, in which he refuses to accept any of the characters at their word. Menelaus, for instance, is apparently insincere in his reconciliation with his brother, coldly calculating that Agamemnon is too deeply involved to withdraw from the sacrifice plot: Clytemnestra and Iphigenia have already arrived, and Calchas and Odysseus will surely hold him to his course. Iphigenia’s willingness to sacrifice herself is little more than the acceptance of a necessity couched in some noble-sounding rhetoric. Only after echoing her father’s words about the necessity of preserving Greece (1378) does she go about turning her death into a glorious act.

Interest in Euripides continued to grow, though Iphigenia at Aulis remained on the periphery. After Grube, the next general study of Euripidean drama is Conacher’s monograph of 1967. Like Kitto before him, to whom he is primarily responding, Conacher ranks the plays, this time according to their engagement with myth: certain tragedies (notably Hippolytus and Bacchae) are more “mythological” than others. These are the plays which engage with the supernatural world of Greek myth with gravity and are more similar to the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Less mythological plays, in which divine order is questioned, challenged, or even mocked, with increased focus on mortal actions and consequences, tend to strain the traditional tragic form, again measured against the two older tragedians. Conacher’s system of classification produces a wider spectrum than Kitto’s three categories, and allows greater flexibility since plays can be examined according to their type.

109 Several important books were published in this period, including Hourmouziades (1965), Webster (1967), and Burnett (1971), but with little interest in our play.
rather than against a synthetic tragic ideal imported from Aeschylus or Sophocles. Conacher brings a fresh perspective to each play, and herein lies the greatest strength of his study. Conacher is more comfortable in admitting that some plays continue to defy classification, notably *Phoenician Women* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which he groups together under the label *Tragédie Manquée*: tragedy that has somehow failed to live up to its name.

Placing *Iphigenia at Aulis* outside his spectrum did not prevent Conacher from applying a nuanced reading, more sensitive and balanced than either Kitto or Grube, less splenetic than the former and less apologetic than the latter. Conacher finds parts of the tragedy unsatisfying, particularly the contradiction in the presentation of the Trojan War: for Agamemnon to be characterized as selfish, he maintains, the war is a sordid and unpalatable result of the myth, and yet this is precisely the cause for which Iphigenia goes to her noble death. Ultimately, however, both Agamemnon and Iphigenia trumpet the Greek cause so loudly that this, in Conacher’s opinion, must be the final sentiment felt by the audience (I have already noted Conacher’s dismissal of the play’s conclusion). Conacher further addresses the issue of an inconsistent Iphigenia by seeing in this character, before and after her decision to die, traits of generosity, nobility, and naïveté.

Both in and out of the academy Euripides enjoyed a steady increase in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s (see chapter 6). In the 1970s, Vellacott’s study of Euripides, *Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides’ Method and Meaning*, though heavily criticized, is worth mentioning. Vellacott sought not to explain a single play of Euripides the artist, but to penetrate the entire corpus to identify Euripides the social critic. The individual plays, argued Vellacott, could be understood on two levels. First was the surface meaning, a veneer for the vulgar crowd. Buried under a thick layer of ironic presentation, was another, deeper meaning. Critics noted, and Vellacott himself acknowledged, a debt to the rationalizing critics, particularly Verrall, of the early twentieth century. Reviewers were particularly

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110 Wilson (1968) 80: “Professor Conacher’s book on Euripidean drama is better considered as a collection of independent pieces rather than a unified work.”

111 Conacher’s use of another language (only for this category: the others are labelled in English) further emphasizes the difficulty he had in categorizing our play. The other categories are “Mythological Tragedy”, “Political Tragedy”, “War and its Aftermath,” “Realistic Tragedy,” and “Romantic Tragedy”, as well as a discussion of “Satyr (and Pro-Satyric?) Drama”.

critical of Vellacott’s selective, piecemeal approach, in which passages from various plays would be set alongside each other as if the poet had a single meaning in mind, assuming or implying that Euripides intended these specific passages to be read in conjunction. Thus, rather than a dedicated chapter on *Iphigenia at Aulis*, various passages appear throughout the study.

The use of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in this study is a bit surprising, since Vellacott identifies *Orestes* as Euripides’ “last personal address to the Athenians.”113 This would seem to put *Iphigenia at Aulis* outside the scope of his study: it is hard to see Euripides passing on secret messages to the Athenians with a play he wrote in Macedonia (indeed, *Bacchae* plays a much smaller role in Vellacott’s arguments). Nevertheless, Vellacott is the first to assemble the plays of self-sacrifice and attempt to generate a single understanding of Euripides’ views on the topic. He is also influential on a number of later critics in a negative fashion. In recent years, Kovacs in particular is conspicuous for his complete rejection of any ironic reading of the play.114

The 1980s saw publication of the first, and to date only, English monograph on *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Luschnig’s *Tragic Aporia*.115 This is a thin volume containing, in seven chapters, studies of the play with different thematic considerations, all loosely bound to the volume’s professed topic of *aporia*.116 Luschnig never provides a definition of *aporia*, and the various meanings listed in the LSJ – impassibility, lack of means, perplexity, troubles – appear to apply selectively within separate discussions. This ambiguity is embraced by the author, who is ambiguous herself: she is frequently abstract in her discussion and favours generalizing sentiments and rhetorical questions with no immediately apparent answers. The

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114 See for example, Kovacs (1987) ix, where he rejects the notion that “Euripides did not expect that the majority of his audience would understand the full extent of the radical reassessment to which he was subjecting the world of tragedy.” Kovacs does not cite Vellacott’s study in his bibliography, but this methodological rejection can (and has) be seen as an injunction against it, see Diggle (1989b) 360.
115 Luschnig (1988a). There is also Lübeck (1993) who studies depictions of Iphigenia in antiquity. The volume is short, and not confined to Euripides’ play. It catalogues many moments of the reception tradition, but is too short to provide detailed analysis. Lübeck also attempts to synthesize all the evidence into a coheherent whole, a process which I feel suppresses the importance of the mythographic decisions faced by any given adapter of the play.
116 Luschnig’s study of *Hippolytus*, released the same year (1988b), takes a similar approach, with six chapters loosely arranged around the key theme of knowledge. There, as here, Luschnig frequently gives repeated synopses of the same scenes for multiple chapters, see the complaints of Harder (1992), the only review in English.
word itself appears three times in the play, all in the prologue: the Old Servant comments that Agamemnon is nearly mad with troubles (ἀπόρων, 40-41), Tyndareus faces a very difficult (ἀπόρωϲ, 55) situation with the suitors to his daughter, and Calchas addresses the Greeks who have been sitting in confusion (ἀπορίαι, 89).  

Luschnig applies the aporia concept(s) to different modes of literary engagement, with chapters functioning as character studies (Agamemnon and Menelaus in chapter 1, Achilles in chapter 4), studies in Aristotelian unity (chapter 6), and reflections on the nature of war (chapter 3). Though her thesis and conclusions are not clearly defined, Luschnig provides many passing but useful insights into the thematic underpinnings of this play. A noteworthy example is her assessment of the tension between the desires of the characters and the myth in which they find themselves:

The essential aporia in the Iphigenia at Aulis is the inability to cross from myth to what we recognize as reality. What makes this play so interesting is its presentation of the aporia: the near impossibility of reconciling the story of a glorious war with both its sordid cause and the universally tragic reality of war in general.

The sense of this passage and its position in the book (at the end of the short “Prologue”) are suggestive of a thesis statement, though Luschnig returns to this sentiment only sporadically. But Luschnig supplies us with a useful way of thinking about the play by noting this tension between mythical necessity and the intentions of the characters trapped within the myth. Though this book cannot be said to have had a broad influence on studies of this play (it is not found in many bibliographies, and seems to have met with a rather limited print run), it presents many observations that are useful and thought-provoking, and these will inform my own study at various points.

The Character of Agamemnon

Having brought my survey up to the 1980s, I now step back and digress to look at a specific aspect of Iphigenia at Aulis that has motivated a number of shorter studies since the

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117 For the arrangement of the prologue, Luschnig follows Willink (1971). Bain (1977a), who argued for non-Euripidean authorship of the entire prologue, is omitted from Luschnig’s bibliography.


119 This theme of mythic necessity versus human intent and action is more methodically and successfully presented by Sorum (1992).
post-war period: the characterization of Agamemnon. Although Aristotle targeted Iphigenia as an example of inconsistent characterization, it is Agamemnon who dominates the first third of the play and has the most lines. Agamemnon, too, appears guilty of inconsistency at worst and at best of almost crippling indecision: he is certainly a far cry from the decisive and uncompromising heroes of the Sophoclean model, or even from his earlier Euripidean appearance in *Hecuba*. A number of character studies have been focused on Agamemnon, some more sympathetic than others, explaining or condemning his actions. No critic excuses Agamemnon: he has clearly, by any standard, made the wrong decision. But how he makes that wrong decision is one of the dramatic highlights of this play. Agamemnon is, during the course of the action of this play, trapped between a rock and a hard place, but the situation is at least partly of his own making, and one feels that a more decisive and assertive Agamemnon would have fared much better. But of course this suggestion is moot: the myth demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

It will be helpful to recall some of the moments in the play that reveal Agamemnon’s character, identifying key passages used by the discussions that follow. Certainly, Agamemnon’s self-image in the prologue differs significantly from what others see later on. During his iambic prologue speech, after detailing the “theft” of Helen (he makes it clear at 75 that she was a willing victim), he describes his assumption of the generalship (84-86):

\[
κάμε στρατηγεῖν κάτα Μενέλεω χάριν
eἵλοντο, σύγγονόν γε. τἀξίωμα δὲ
ἀλλοϲ τιϲ ὤφελ᾽ ἀντ᾽ ἐμοῦ λαβεῖν τόδε.
\]

For the sake of Menelaus, they chose me to lead, as I was his brother. Would that some other had taken up the honour instead of me!

By Agamemnon’s account, the leadership of the Greeks was thrust upon him, a double obligation of kinship and kingship, an honour he would have preferred to see in other hands. Earlier in the prologue, Agamemnon has already lamented the pressures and constraints of a noble birth to the old servant (16-23), recalling perhaps the yoke of necessity

121 Luschnig (1982) notes that Agamemnon begins his iambic speech with the family history of Helen and Clytemnestra, rather than his own, thereby distancing himself further from the action.
donned by his Aeschylean counterpart in the parodos of Agamemnon (ἀνάγκαϲ λέπαδνον, Ag. 218), which he will recall more explicitly at 443 (see below). Menelaus, however, in the agon of the second episode, presents a very different account of Agamemnon’s rise to power (337–48):

When you were eager to lead the Greeks to Ilium, – in appearance not wanting, but in desire wishing it – how humble you were, taking every right hand, and keeping your doors unbarred to any of the people who wished and granting conversation to all in turn – even if one did not wish it – seeking with your methods to buy honour from the midst of the Greeks. And then, when you had command, turning to new methods you were no longer the friend to your friends as you were before: you were hard to reach and scarce inside your doors. But the good man, when doing well, ought not to change his ways, but should ever be most steady to his friends, whenever it is possible, faring well, to benefit them most.

Agamemnon has been playing the part of the fawning politician, generous when in need, distant when in power. It is significant that in his rebuttal Agamemnon does not answer his brother’s accusations, but rather resorts to his own ad hominem attacks. The closest that Agamemnon comes to addressing Menelaus’ accusations is to suggest that he himself is behaving appropriately in reversing a wrong decision (384).

Following the messenger’s report that Clytemnestra and Iphigenia have arrived, Agamemnon breaks down in another show of emotion. He complains of being under a yolk of necessity (ἀνάγκαϲ ζεύγματα), blames an unnamed god for his troubles, and reiterates

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123 Conacher (1967) 255.
124 The phrase, in different wording, occurs several times in Greek tragedy, Aes. PB 108, Soph. fr. 591, Eur. Or.
the perils of a noble birth (443-50). Menelaus, in his words of reconciliation, speaks of the undesirability of Helen, and the inappropriateness of sacrificing the innocent Iphigenia on her behalf. He capitulates to Agamemnon’s attacks against him in the *agon*, but does not explicitly retract his accusations of political opportunism.

In his dealings with Clytemnestra, Agamemnon comes off even worse. The first encounter of husband and wife on stage reveals Agamemnon as not only indecisive, but weak: he is unable to control his own wife, particularly at 739-41, when he orders her back to Argos only to be ignored. Later, when Clytemnestra, with Iphigenia at her side, confronts her husband about the sacrifice plot, she remonstrates with Agamemnon in a lengthy speech in which he is seen at his very worst. Clytemnestra does not speak of a politician, but a brute, one who killed her former husband and child, and when the Dioscuri marched against him, he was saved only by supplicating Tyndareus (1148-56). Little is known of Tantalus, Clytemnestra’s first husband, or the mythical tradition (if any) that produced him: he is most likely an invention of Euripides to heighten Agamemnon’s apparent depravity.\(^\text{125}\)

The confrontation with his wife and daughter is Agamemnon’s last appearance on stage, unless we count the six-line speech given at the end of the play in the problematic *exodos*. Before he departs, Agamemnon gives one final speech defending his actions and portraying the sacrifice as inevitable. Agamemnon asserts his love for his children, but again presents himself as bound by constraint. He begins by saying that the army is mad with desire to sail to Troy (which will soon be verified by Achilles), and turns abruptly to a more nationalistic argument, suggesting that Iphigenia’s death will mean the freedom of Greece from barbarians (1259-75). This is the first time that Agamemnon has used Greece as a cause by which he can justify Iphigenia’s death. This sudden introduction of the nationalistic ideal has disturbed several of Agamemnon’s critics\(^\text{126}\) while others see it as a minor redemption for

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1330, fr. 475 Kn, see Stockert (1992) 329.

125 These are odd lines. Apollodorus *Ep.*2.15 and Pausanias 2.18.2 report that Tantalus is a son of Thyestes. In *IA*, no reference is made to this Tantalus before or after Clytemnestra brings him up, and he appears in no other early source. How this son of Tantalus escaped the feast of Atreus, our sources do not tell us. There are of course thematic connections: Clytemnestra views her relationship with Agamemnon as characterized by the slaying of her children (Luschnig (1988) 83, Stockert (1992) 524), and when she finally rejects Agamemnon she will rush into the arms of Aegisthus, Tantalus’ brother (Michelini (1999/2000) 50).

Agamemnon, the point at which he has finally and firmly committed to a course of action, however horrible.\textsuperscript{127}

There have been a number of article-length studies of Agamemnon since World War II. Wasserman’s article of 1949 furnished Agamemnon with a complete psychology.\textsuperscript{128} In Wassermann’s reading, which takes as its starting point the speech of Menelaus in the \textit{agon}, Agamemnon assumes the role of the fifth-century Athenian statesman, sorely out of place in a mythical tragedy. When understood in this way, Agamemnon’s plight was much more realistic for Euripides’ audience: contention with an unruly mob was the day-to-day business of the Athenian politician. Agamemnon’s dilemma is thus all the more impossible as he struggles to balance public and private concerns. The reality of this decision enables us again to understand the play in Aristotelian terms, this time as Agamemnon, even as he makes the wrong decision, evokes feelings of \( \varepsilon\lambda\varepsilon\omicron \) (pity) and \( \varphi\omicron\beta\omicron\omicron \) (fear, \textit{Poetics} 1453A.8). The play is thus, for Wassermann, a psychological and philosophical study of the price of supreme power, a sentiment echoed by later scholars seeking “a ‘straight’ relationship between the play and its historical context”.\textsuperscript{129}

Far less sympathetic to Agamemnon was Funke, who saw Agamemnon’s speech of 1255-75, in which he espouses the importance of the panhellenic effort, as coldly calculated to induce his daughter to go to her death willingly, thus expiating himself of guilt.\textsuperscript{130} Taking up once again Aristotle’s criticism of inconsistent characterization, Funke maintains that, since this is the first instance in the play in which the Greek commander actually promotes the ideal of panhellenism, the only way to see consistency in Agamemnon is to assume this unsavoury hidden agenda. Five years later, Mellert-Hoffmann dedicated the first half of her monograph on \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} to challenging this view.\textsuperscript{131} Of all who have published on this topic, she is perhaps most forgiving of Agamemnon, seeing in him a true dedication to

\textsuperscript{127} Notably Grube (1941) 435.
\textsuperscript{128} Wasserman (1949).
\textsuperscript{129} Michelakis (2006a) 117, citing specifically the studies of Goossens (1962) and Delebecque (1967) who go further than Wasserman and seek in the characters of Greek tragedy thinly-veiled caricatures of specific Athenian personalities, usually Alcibiades. I find this approach reductive, as if tragedy were a mere cipher to be decoded by the literary critic, but scholars (and Alcibiades) persist, see Vickers (2008) on Sophocles, for example.
\textsuperscript{130} Funke (1964) 288-94.
\textsuperscript{131} Mellert-Hoffmann (1969) 9-90.
the panhellenic ideal, one that he has consistently maintained throughout, even if he does not speak of it directly. The strength of Mellert-Hoffmann’s argument is directly proportional to one’s preconceived notions: those who are more sympathetic to Agamemnon and his circumstances are more receptive to Mellert-Hoffmann’s defence of him.\(^{132}\)

Siegell also contributes to the discussion, again furnishing a psychological explanation. As previous critics note, Agamemnon only mentions the panhellenic ideal after the revelation of the sacrifice plot. But he argues that Agamemnon’s introduction of a glorious death on behalf of Greece is not, as Funke thought, a cold and deliberate manipulation of Iphigenia’s patriotism.\(^{133}\) Rather Agamemnon’s motivation is more complex, and in fact a total self-delusion on the part of Agamemnon. “By a lie, Agamemnon paradoxically resolves the conflicts of his love, conscience, ambition, weakness and fear.”\(^{134}\) This is another cynical reading of the Greek leader’s motivations, and Siegel again suggests that a stronger-willed Agamemnon might have been able to produce a better outcome.

But Agamemnon does not need to lie to himself or to anyone at this point. He is, as he maintains, now under the yoke of necessity: if he does not sacrifice Iphigenia, the army will kill her anyway, along with the rest of the family. Achilles’ verifies this when he returns and reports that the army threatened him with stoning (1345-57). When Agamemnon says he must sacrifice Iphigenia for Greece (1271-72, ἀλλ' Ἑλλάϲ, ἧι δεῖ, κἂν θέλω κἂν μὴ θέλω, ἔλευθέραν γὰρ δεῖ νιν ὅϲον ἐν ςοί, τέκνον, κἀμοὶ γενέϲθαι, μηδὲ βαρβάρων ύπο Ἐλλήναϲ ὄνταϲ λέκτρα συλάϲθαι βίαι.), he is not speaking of some nationalistic ideal, but of a mob that is ready to lynch his family. It is only the last sentence that Agamemnon says to his daughter that could be construed as a nationalistic sentiment (1273-75):

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έλευθέραν γὰρ δεῖ νιν ὅϲον ἐν ςοί, τέκνον,
κἀμοὶ γενέϲθαι, μηδὲ βαρβάρων ύπο Ἐλλήναϲ ὄνταϲ λέκτρα συλάϲθαι βίαι.
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For she must be free, child, as far as you and I have the power, and being Greeks, we must not have our wives forcibly carried off by barbarians.

\(^{132}\) The book did not receive positive reviews, the greatest variation being which part of the book (the first, on the Panhellenism of Agamemnon, or the second, on the authenticity of the prologue) was subject to greater criticism. Diggle (1971) found the arguments of the first part overly long and unoriginal, even if the conclusion was correct. He was significantly less kind in his review of the second part. See also MacCary (1973-74), van Erp Taalman Kip (1973).

\(^{133}\) Siegel (1981) draws most heavily on the arguments of Funke (1964), but also Blaiklock (1952).

\(^{134}\) Siegel (1981) 265.
Agamemnon contradicts himself here. At line 75, he insisted that Helen had fallen in love with Paris, and that her departure was mutual. This idea of the unfaithful Helen is also key in Agamemnon’s rebuttal to Menelaus in the *agon* scene (389-90). In suggesting that Helen was abducted, Agamemnon is here showing just how unstable his rhetoric actually is, serving the moment, not some notion of Greek superiority which he has been following for the whole play.

**Beyond the Literary Approach: Recent Interpretations**

I have now brought this study up to the 1980s, but it is the last three decades that have seen the greatest developments in Euripidean criticism – not only in quantity, but in breadth as well. The corpus of Greek tragedy is a small one, and yet the number of scholars who dedicate themselves to its study is ever increasing. While the traditional philologists still have a great deal to contribute to our understanding of tragedy, many readers of tragedy have been looking beyond the traditional limits of the discipline. These scholars have been importing new methodologies and paradigms from other disciplines and applying them to tragedy with many positive results. Thus, anthropological, sociological, and politico-philosophical models (to name only a few) have given us new critical frames within which to understand our texts, in combination with cross-disciplinary trends in scholarship, such as feminist criticism, structuralism, and post-colonial theory. By looking at *Iphigenia at Aulis* through one or several of these lenses, a new generation of scholars has developed understandings of its literary merit and appreciations of its value as cultural artefact previously out of reach to the traditional critic. In this final section, I will survey these recent developments in order to position my own study within recent scholarly trends.

The impact of feminist criticism on understandings of this play, and indeed on Greek tragedy in general, simply cannot be underestimated. The consideration of Greek tragedy as a text composed by a male poet for a notionally male audience represents one of the most fundamental shifts in our understanding of Greek literature in modern criticism. Zeitlin’s article, “The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*” (1978) remains seminal.135 In this work, Zeitlin reads the *Oresteia* as a demonstration of the non-tenability of

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135 “Zeitlin...certainly deserves pride of place for demonstrating the way that Greek tragedy reinforces patriarchal ideology,” Foley (1995b) 83.
the female role(s) in Greek myth and society, as female fertility (necessary to the maintenance of the social unit) is in consistent conflict with female sexuality (understood as a corrupting force and a danger to patrilinear succession if not carefully monitored). Both fertility and sexuality are subject to male control, and Clytemnestra’s attempts to match male authority is destructive to herself and to the members of her family (not only her husband, but her children as well), this in spite of the fact that Clytemnestra’s rejection of her role stems from Agamemnon’s negation of her fertility – the slaughter of her (female) child.

This understanding of the Greek female as the usual casualty in the relationship between the sexes is easily applied to the moment that triggered the events of the Oresteia, namely the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Iphigenia dies to enable a war of masculine aggression that has begun with the uncontrolled sexuality of another female, Helen. This reading can be imposed on the epic tradition, but tragedy explores these social issues more explicitly, usually by destabilizing them. Iphigenia’s voluntary death in Euripides can be seen as a validation of the patriarchal system, even as it exposes the dysfunctional nature of that masculine world: war can only proceed with the death of an innocent on the same side as the aggressor. The meaning of Iphigenia’s sacrifice engenders contention. Does Euripides, in dramatizing the death of an innocent female, imply criticism of war? Again, the troubles of the text, which consign the divine rescue (which could be seen as divine disapproval of the masculine project of war) to uncertainty, interfere with our construction of a stable interpretation.

The idea of woman as casualty was further developed by Loraux in her short, but provocative, study Façons tragiques de tuer une femme (1985). Loraux explores how women in tragedy are frequently able to choose the manner of their death (as opposed, say, to epic where women typically are passive), either by committing suicide or assenting to voluntary sacrifice. These deaths are naturally violent, either by rope or sword for the suicide, or sword for the sacrificial victim. Like Foley before her, Loraux identifies

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136 As with the Oresteia itself, Iphigenia remains largely in the background of Zeitlin’s study, always implied, always important.

137 Translated into English by Anthony Forster (1985) as Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman.

138 Knox (1988) 13-14 notes that Loraux’s generalizations are not always accurate: women may choose to die by other means: Evadne in E. Supp. throws herself upon her husband Capaneus’ funeral pyre, for instance, and Ino (in Euripides’ lost play of the same name) throws herself into the sea.
moments of perversion in ritual and the confusion of marriage and death as an expression of the confused position of the parthenos. As an unmarried yet nubile virgin, Iphigenia (along with most other sacrificial victims in Euripides) is sexually available, which puts her in a dangerously liminal position between the control of father and husband. Her violent but voluntary death (and those of the suicides in tragedy) represented an assertion of control: “It was a death that belonged to her totally, whether, like Sophocles’ Jocasta she inflicted it ‘herself upon herself’ [OT 1230] or, more paradoxically, had it inflicted upon her.”\(^{139}\) Though reviewers were critical of Loraux’s tendency toward generalization in favour of her feminist rhetoric (particularly her proposed “law of femininity”: that suicide is expressly female, which forces her to explain away the extant counter-examples and ignore the fragmentary evidence), there is much of value here.\(^{140}\) Her identification of the throat as a point of female weakness, for instance, resonates strongly with both Aeschylean and Euripidean accounts of the Iphigenia sacrifice.

Another study in this vein, longer and more precise, is Rabinowitz’ Anxiety Veiled (1993). In Rabinowitz’ reading of Greek tragedy, Greek society is defined by masculine social relationships, in which women become fetishized objects.\(^{141}\) Rabinowitz opens her study with a chapter on sacrificial virgins, featuring Iphigenia in the first place. In particular, she sees Iphigenia as predisposed toward masculinity and male figures: even at her entrance, she rushes into her father’s arms and later accepts at face value his assertion that she needs to die; her willingness to sacrifice herself is motivated by the promise of marriage to Achilles; and she seeks a masculine kleos in her death.\(^{142}\) Similarly, other sacrificial victims, notably the Maiden in Children of Heracles and Polyxena in Hecuba, define the value of their lives (and deaths) against masculine valour and masculine philia (counting glory gained as compensation for a husband and male children: see chapter 3). Rabinowitz’ feminist rhetoric occasionally leads her to overwrite her subject: to suggest, for instance, that “the heterosexuality of the marriage ploy emphasizes Iphigenia’s relation to the family and

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\(^{139}\) Loraux (1987) 4.

\(^{140}\) In addition to Knox (1988, who again provides the most thorough list of counter-examples), see Foley (1988) and Cockburn (1989).

\(^{141}\) Rabinowitz (1993). Wohl (1998) takes a similar approach, and although IA is not one of her case studies, Agamemnon is and Iphigenia’s role in the Oresteia is important.

women” (as if there were an alternative for her) imposes modern constructs of sexuality onto Euripides’ writing. Nevertheless, even without the apparent denial to Iphigenia of same-sex alternatives, the marriage does indeed link Iphigenia to the notion of family, and Rabinowitz’ basic thesis, in which women are objects of exchange in male homo-social relationships is a useful critical frame. Wohl has explored this theme more broadly, looking at the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles as well, and importing a more explicitly Marxist and economist vocabulary. Iphigenia is again token of exchange (in a chapter on the *Oresteia*), and at the point of sacrifice is at a point of “perfected virginity,” i.e., she is at her moment of highest value. For both Rabinowitz and Wohl, the exchange inherent in Iphigenia’s sacrifice enables Euripides and Aeschylus (and their audience and readers) to explore the problems of a society constructed in solely masculine terms.

The virgin body of the female is repeatedly exposed in Greek tragedy. In her 1993 book *Over Her Dead Body*, Elisabeth Bronfen explores the conjunction between death and femininity in European nineteenth-century art and literature. Though Bronfen only rarely engages directly with classical material, numerous studies have applied her feminist agenda successfully to other periods in world literature, notably Keith in her study of gender in Roman epic, and her work has proved influential. In her chapter on sacrifice, Bronfen posits that the female body becomes a focus for the negative (and unmasculine) values of disorder, instability, and pollution; this is the objectified Other that must be tamed and controlled. The termination of the destabilizing female enacted by sacrifice allows the imposition of definition. The sacrifice of this female body is thus a mode of control, and of containment. This may be so, but I will argue in later chapters that we need to modify Bronfen’s approach: she is speaking of the marital body, sexually active and therefore dangerous if uncontrolled. Iphigenia, however, is a virgin, an as yet unrealized potential.

Foley also contributes to this feminist discourse, particularly in her 2001 *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Of more direct relevance to my study, however, is her earlier *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (1985). This volume is not strictly feminist in its approach, but seeks to understand *Iphigenia at Aulis* (and other plays involving sacrifice) according to

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144 Keith (2000) even titles one of her chapters “Over Her Dead Body” in acknowledgement of Bornfen’s study.
the significance of the ritual frame. The fact that the human victims of sacrifice in tragedy are usually female, however, aligns this study with the feminist critical approach of Loraux, Rabinowitz, and Wohl (and with Foley’s own explicitly feminist studies). Foley draws on (non-literary) structuralist and anthropological models of ritual and sacrifice to explore how Euripides deliberately confuses positive life events, such as marriage, and destructive rituals, such as sacrifice, to generate new (ironic) meaning. For Foley’s study, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is the model text, in which a young innocent must perish in a sacrifice that is consistently identified with marriage linguistically and thematically. When Iphigenia cannot achieve the marriage she has been promised, the sacrifice ritual is a ready substitute (and indeed, Iphigenia’s willingness to die converts Achilles into a willing husband, in name if not in fact).

Roselli, too, brings a broader understanding of sacrifice, though his interpretation allows for the feminist reading by which Iphigenia is subordinated (subordinates herself) to the masculine power structure and ultimately destabilizes it. In his article on *Children of Heracles*, he focuses on the role of the Maiden as sacrifice in Marxist political and even revolutionary terminology. He sees the sacrificial victim as a marginal figure suddenly made the central, key element in a ritual important to the entire community. The Maiden is both marginal and central: she is marginal because she is female, young, and from another polis, but she is still the noble daughter of an important Greek hero. Iphigenia shares many of these qualities: the scene is not a polis but a military camp (to which a young female is intrinsically foreign), and yet she is the daughter of the army’s general. Through the strength of her fundamentally violent act, the marginal character is able to motivate sudden change in the society on whose behalf they are dying. I do not see Roselli’s thesis fitting so clearly with *Iphigenia at Aulis*, however, where the action of Iphigenia enables only death (of both Greeks and barbarians) and her few commands (principally that Clytemnestra forgive Agamemnon) will be ignored. Iphigenia’s death motivates a cycle of revenge, but nothing she does changes the society which demands her sacrifice (especially when we read the play against

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146 The second chapter (65-105) reworks an earlier article from 1982 focussed on *Iphigenia at Aulis*.
147 Roselli (2007).
the *Oresteia* – as I feel we must – which is only resolved by validating the death of the female).

Each of these studies have in common the understanding that Iphigenia is not simply an *ad hoc* victim, the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rather, as a nubile but unmarried virgin, she is the *ideal* sacrifice. She is a force that, occupying the nebulous space between the protection of father and husband, must be controlled, either by marriage (the obvious choice in real life) or death (the tragic substitute). Failure to control her would have dangerous consequences for the accepted social hierarchy, understood in most of these studies in masculine terms. There are other ways to understand the societal structure, of course: Foley explores the meaning of the sacrifice in light of the panhellenic rhetoric employed by a number of characters in the play, and Roselli is analysing the function of the victim in any conservative and change-resistant society that can only be affected by radical change.

In Greek myth, Iphigenia shares her status as the ideal sacrificial victim most closely with Polyxena. Even in early mythical accounts, Polyxena and Iphigenia have much in common: in visual representations, for example, their iconography is almost indistinguishable. The two share many similarities: each is an unmarried but nubile virgin; each is sacrificed to enable the sailing of the Greek ships; and Achilles is involved with both in a quasi-marital role. There are even competing versions of the death of each: a fragment of the *Cypria* tells us Polyxena is wounded during the sack of Troy, not sacrificed. Of course their difference is just as fundamental: one is Greek, the other Trojan. Nevertheless, Polyxena provides an important parallel to Iphigenia, and it is no coincidence that the play that most resembles *Iphigenia at Aulis* is *Hecuba*, at least in its first half. In the critical studies I have been discussing, *Hecuba* is another key text, and Polyxena will often serve as an important comparison in my own study.

The function of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, as well as the conditions which lead up to it, are of fundamental importance to my own study of the play. As I discuss in subsequent chapters, the question of whether the sacrifice will occur is the basic mythographical question facing Euripides, and it is interesting that his version did not overwrite previous mythographic

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148 Fr. 34 *PEG.*
accounts, as did Bacchae or Medea: later representations of the myth, literary or visual, are still faced with this question. This is in fact the issue that must have motivated Euripides’ decision to dramatize this particular moment in the arc of the Trojan War: the desire to explore the series of events and rationalizations that led to the sacrifice of an innocent maiden. I will discuss further in chapter 3 Euripides’ apparent preoccupation with self-sacrifice in his tragedies (at least six plays feature self-sacrifice as major plot points).

I read the characterizations in this play “straight”; I do not seek hidden meanings or agendas in the words of characters, even if the situation itself is ironic or subversive. I see the reconciliation between Agamemnon and Menelaus as genuine, for example, even if this display of fraternal affection heightens Agamemnon’s culpability even further (since he can no longer lay the blame on his brother). Iphigenia may see her death as inevitable, but her rhetoric of panhellenism and desire for kleos is genuine, not a mere justification. Likewise, her request that Clytemnestra not bear a grudge against Agamemnon is entirely genuine, if thoroughly ineffectual (1454, which, with Clytemnestra’s reply that Agamemnon will have to endure a great struggle is perhaps the single most intertextually loaded line in the play, resonating strongly with the Oresteia). The honesty (and naïveté) of her decision to die sets in sharp relief the selfish and impure motives of those who forward the sacrifice: Agamemnon’s indecision and self-serving political agenda which has him trapped, Odysseus’ rabble-rousing, the blood-thirsty army, and even Menelaus’ concern (recanted, but too late) to retrieve a wife he could not hold on to.

Another vector of my study originates in the recent and rapid development of reception scholarship on Greek tragedy, and on this play in particular. It is of course possible to articulate my early chapters in terms of reception: reception of the text artefact, reception of the literary scholarship, reception of the mythographic traditions. These are all attempts to generate meaning in the text, and all are somehow affected by the reader’s own context. Euripides himself is aware of his position in the reception history of this myth: he knows the models of his predecessors (particularly Aeschylus) and is working simultaneously against and toward those models. Euripides fundamentally changes the sacrifice by making it

149 In his short Duckworth study, Michelakis (2006a) includes in his final chapter on “Reception” sections on “The Text and its History,” “Critical Views,” and “Performance History.”
voluntary, even as he prepares his characters for the events of the *Oresteia*. This is, I argue, intertext at work. Although I would not submit the works of Euripides to the same close philological reading as (say) the later Latin poets who function in a more literature-aware culture (at least at their elite levels), I still see the *Oresteia* as crucial to understanding *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Hence, I dedicate significant discussion to the sacrifice of Iphigenia in *Agamemnon* (in chapter 2) and to other points of contact, particularly those realized in the staging of the play (chapter 3).

But more specifically, by reception theory I mean the spate of studies that seek to understand how the meaning of our text is modified (distorted, reconfigured, informed) by later artistic instantiations that intervene between the initial performance of the play and our own hyper-literate period. There is rarely a continuous chain, in which one artist or writer takes up the work of a direct predecessor, but each artistic adaptation is a direct representation of what our text means at that time. Gaps certainly exist, just as multiple versions can exist simultaneously, but every artistic creator is aware of at least one previous version (his or her own exemplar), and likely others. This understanding of the exemplar is then conditioned by contemporary cultural trends. Racine, to pick one example, is a perceptive reader of Euripides, and is capable of synthesizing multiple traditions of myth, but could never, due to the tastes of his audience, actually allow Iphigenia to die. By the same diachronic and synchronic considerations, two bowls depicting images of our play have a great deal to tell us about Greek tragedy in the late Hellenistic period.

In this regard, it is significant for my study that there has been no assessment of the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in antiquity (my chapters 4 and 5). Several works, however, do focus on key moments: Page and Kovacs, for example, employ our understanding of early reperformances of the play to inform their own studies. Visual representations as well have drawn a great deal of attention (especially the painted fresco in the House of the Tragic Poet). Reception in post-antiquity, however, is another story. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, partly through its connection to the *Oresteia*, but also for the popularity it enjoyed in the early modern period, has become a favourite case study in this new sub-field of Classical Studies. Although no English volume exists on the subject (as for *Agamemnon* or *Medea*), Edith Hall, the current prime mover of reception studies of tragedy, has taken an interest in the play (along with its
companion, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*), and two of her articles cover important points in the modern era (from the first English translation by Lady Jane Lumley to Boyer’s translation/adaptation of Racine’s tragedy, and the recent phenomenon of Irish productions). In each of these articles, Hall restricts herself largely to a single genre (play scripts and performances), but seeks to understand the pressures of the cultural context of each new translation or adaptation of our play.

There are also longer studies in French by Gliksohn and in German by Aretz. Each of these studies analyse specific moments in the reception of Iphigenia’s sacrifice (Gliksohn is perhaps most thorough, though he does not look at adaptations in modern media, while Aretz provides close philological study of four key moments without much cross-referencing). In this dissertation, I try to provide a broader survey, while still taking the time for close analysis of what I deem to be key moments in the reception tradition. Thus my chapters are arranged chronologically, looking at the period before Euripides, the context in which his play was performed, as well as three periods of post-Euripidean reception, Hellenistic, Roman, and Modern. Within those chapters, analysis is often arranged according to genre or medium, which frequently provides access to the thematic concerns of the artists involved. This will not produce a continuous chain of reception: there are significant gaps and discontinuities. But these gaps can be just as interesting as periods of activity. Why, for instance, after being one of the most popular plays of the eighteenth century, does *Iphigenia at Aulis* virtually disappear from the creative output of Europe’s playwrights and librettists?

It is also very interesting to observe which elements of the Iphigenia legend recur over time, regardless of any perceived continuity in the history of reception. The script of Lady Jane Lumley, for instance, was not available to Racine, and yet both provide for a more romantic relationship between Iphigenia and Achilles, one through selective translation and the other by simply writing a new play. Other motifs such as the conflict of a king’s ambition and a father’s love, or the vengeance of a woman whose child has been taken away, also recur and suggest clues as to why this play has remained popular over so many centuries.

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150 Hall (2005a, 2005b). To these I should add Michelakis (2006b).
Reception operates in multiple directions simultaneously, and it is for this reason that I often define my own work in these terms: either by looking at Euripides’ innovation of early Greek myth and tragedy, the audience’s reception of his work, and the understanding and deployment of the Iphigenia legend by later artists and creators. For one thing, this approach can help us as readers to step back from the process of creation: to take a bird’s eye view of the decisions made by Euripides and his successors and thereby more clearly detect the conditions which led to those decisions. This process can be thought of as corrective, as we theoretically strip away the later incarnations of the story until we get back to Euripides’ “true” meaning. This is not unlike the traditional philological approach discussed in the first half of this chapter, ultimately disrupted by Gurd. On the other hand, looking at the tradition from within shows us a vital dynamism, in which a powerful story can be retold and reconfigured for an endless series of audiences. Each new telling of the myth, forged according to cultural demands and artistic tastes, imparts its own meaning upon those of the past, and opens up new avenues of understanding. Every time the myth is set down anew, the audience cannot know if Iphigenia will survive. We do not know how we will feel about Agamemnon in his difficult position. We do not know if Achilles will remain arrogant or fall in love with Iphigenia or how Clytemnestra will express her grief. But it is always interesting to find out.
Euripides was an innovative writer, but of course he did not create his stories out of whole cloth. The figure of Iphigenia appears to have been around since before the earliest records of Greek myth, even if Homer is silent about this particular daughter of Agamemnon. In this chapter I explore manifestations of the Iphigenia myth from the earliest sources up to the immediate predecessors of Euripides, namely Aeschylus and Sophocles. The mythographic decisions made in adapting a myth are a fundamental element in deriving meaning from the work of any Greek poet. For Euripides, whose reputation was one of innovation and challenge to generic norms, the importance of these decisions is even greater. Thus the survey and analysis in this chapter will foreground, in particular, my discussion of Euripides’ immediate (if posthumous) reception at the first performance of his play. But the concerns identified here will remain relevant in later chapters as well, as I look at adapters of the myth beyond Euripides.

My arrangement of the material surveyed is both generic and chronological, a fortunate congruence. The two genres of primary importance here are epic and tragedy, and each represents a fundamentally different approach to the sacrifice: epic privileges the (masculine) hero while tragedy orients itself around the suffering victim. This shift in emphasis coincides with a change in attitude toward the very action of sacrifice which, as I will discuss in chapter 3, is more complicated in the fifth-century sources. Lyric too is important, although the two relevant poets, Stesichorus and Pindar, are stylistically distinct, in composition and performance, and their mythographic allegiances, so to speak, are better defined temporally (that is to say, Stesichorus has more in common with the epic poets of his period than with Pindar, who follows the same mythographic tradition as Aeschylus). The limited visual evidence (one archaic vase and two fifth-century vases) will throw the literary accounts into surprisingly sharp relief.

The chronology of these sources is also important in determining the primacy of sacrifice or salvation: which is the earlier version of the Iphigenia story? Though the death of Iphigenia may in fact be the primary version of this myth, the earliest archaic accounts

1 Seaford (1989).
(again perhaps guided by the preoccupations of early epic) tend toward the salvation of Iphigenia, often conferring immortality upon her. In the fifth century, the sources – mostly tragedy of course – prefer the pathos of a mortal Iphigenia, dead and gone. Of course Iphigenia has to die if she is to be a “tragic” figure. This is a tone set most strongly by Aeschylus, and Euripides’ dedication to his own literary predecessors is specifically concerned to create a version of the sacrifice that furnishes Clytemnestra with the justification to murder her husband. An Iphigenia who survives, even one in exile at the edge of the known world, would undermine Clytemnestra’s motivations for vengeance as expressed in the Oresteia (and in Iphigenia at Aulis, for that matter).

One other thematic thread running throughout this study, but most explicitly in the sources gathered in this chapter, is the prominence of two other women, Polyxena and Helen. Both serve as foils and as points of comparison for Iphigenia in different ways in the mythographic tradition of the Iphigenia story. Polyxena’s story, in which she is sacrificed upon the tomb of Achilles, bears many similarities to Iphigenia’s. It is no coincidence that Hecuba most closely resembles Iphigenia at Aulis among the surviving plays of Euripides, nor that among the visual representations, Iphigenia and Polyxena are frequently difficult to distinguish. Helen’s connection to Iphigenia is often more explicit within the myth itself: she is sometimes Iphigenia’s mother; Iphigenia’s sacrifice makes reparations for Helen’s infidelity; the legends of both are subject to revisionist interpretations in which they are substituted (for an animal or eidolon); and Iphigenia herself becomes an erotic image for all the Greek warriors as she stands by the altar at the liminal moment of sacrifice: she is herself a potential Helen. Much of my discussion of Iphigenia at Aulis, in its performance context and in its history of reception, is keyed to the moment of Iphigenia’s sacrifice. An equally valid approach would be to place Iphigenia alongside other notable female heroines of Greek myth: Polyxena and Helen would be foremost among these. Although space prevents me from foregrounding that comparison here, it informs several aspects of my discussion, and is always worth bearing in mind.

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The three sources discussed in this section present several different versions of the Iphigenia story and in fact different versions of Iphigenia herself: in the earliest sources the very name and identity of Agamemnon’s first-born daughter is unstable. Three variations are attested in major literary works of the period, a common phenomenon. These three names are all connected by the initial ἅφι-, “might” or “strength”. It is exactly the sort of prefix we might expect for the daughter of a legendary king. The Cypria is the only archaic epic source to use the name Iphigenia, though of course we have only the late summary of the work by Proclus, and so the possibility of revision or interpolation is high. The Cypria summary in fact records both Iphigenia and Iphianassa, for separate individuals, but this could be work of the epitomizer, since the latter name occurs in Homer. Multiple daughters with the same name is also a possibility. As we shall see below, there is cause for doubt about whether Homer, in his use of the name Iphianassa, is alluding to, or even aware of, the sacrifice at Aulis. On the other hand, Hesiod’s Iphimed, who we are told is sacrificed by the Greeks (and perhaps saved – see below), is clearly the same daughter of Agamemnon that we see in later versions.

There is also an Iphimedeia named in the Odyssey, a consort (or rape victim) of Poseidon and mother of the giants Otus and Ephialtes who unsuccessfully assaulted Olympus (Od. 11.305-20). This Iphimedeia also appears in the Catalogue of Women (Fr. 19-21), and the Catalogue may be a source for the passage in Homer (or they may share a common source). There is no detail of this Iphimedeia story in the Catalogue or the Odyssey that might indicate any connection to Iphimede or any daughter of Agamemnon.

Also likely unrelated is the name I-pi-me-de-ja, found on a Linear-B tablet in Pylos, among a list of other deities. This figure is “almost certainly a pre-Greek deity, whose name has been modified by popular etymology.”

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4 Henrichs (1981) 151 uses this very example.
5 Burgess (2001) 150.
7 Ventris & Chadwick (1973) no. 172 (Kn. O 2).
8 Ventris & Chadwick (1973) 288.
from the Greek Ἱφι-, as the later variants appear to do.\(^9\) This lack of digamma appears to forestall any connection not only to Iphigenia, but also to the consort of Poseidon mentioned in the *Catalogue* and *Odyssey*. It is interesting, however, that Poseidon does feature prominently on the Pylos tablet (which could imply a connection to the Iphimedeia of the *Catalogue* and *Odyssey*). There is nothing on the tablet to suggest the function of this particular goddess.\(^10\)

But while it is true that there is likely no connection between I-pi-me-de-ja, Iphimedeia, or the daughter of Agamemnon, there remains the possibility that Iphigenia began as a goddess in her own right, and only later became subordinate to Artemis in Greek cult.\(^11\) Iphigenia’s alternative (original?) genealogy as a daughter of Helen and Theseus, as given by Stesichorus (see below), might support this theory. Helen, after all, also likely began as a fertility goddess. The nature of this original Iphigenia divinity, however, is a mystery. The most likely possibility is a local deity (local to Brauron? Megara?) similar to Artemis and eventually permanently associated and subordinated to Artemis. Aphaia in Aegina offers a useful parallel: as a local deity with a connection to animals, she was easily assimilated to Artemis. Another possibility is a generic myth of sacrifice followed by substitution or immortalization, again specific to some Greek locale (Brauron? Aulis?), upon which the later myth of the Trojan War was imposed.\(^12\) Traces of an immortal Iphigenia remain in the *Cypria*’s account of the sacrifice.

In any event, these possibilities are mere speculations, and by the time of our earliest literary sources in the Archaic period, Iphigenia’s role as a mortal daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra whose sacrifice is required for the Trojan expedition is already solidifying, even if the finality of that sacrifice is mitigated by salvation or substitution. By the fifth century, the name Iphigenia is used almost exclusively: both Pindar and Aeschylus use it, and

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9 Lloyd-Jones (1983a) 95 presents a suggestion by Bowie that the root is from the middle/passive form of πέτομαι: ἱπταμαι “to fly away.”

10 Initially tantalizing is the list of gifts for the various deities. Bowls or cups for all, but many are given “one man” or “one woman”. Sacrifices are a possibility, but more likely these are slaves or cup-bearers. Regardless, no man or woman is given to I-pi-me-de-ja. Ventris & Chadwick (1973) 284.

11 Though very early, Farnell (1921) 55-8 remains the most thorough discussion of this possibility, but see also Lloyd-Jones (1983a) 95.

12 Dowden (1989) esp. 9-47. See below on Iphigenia in cult for a further exploration of this idea.
the latter is especially influential on the mythographic traditions. Below I will discuss specifically Aeschylus’ influence over Euripides, but for now I wish to look at the concerns of the epic sources.

The evidence provided by the hexameter sources is precious little: a silence; a distillation of a summary of the original source; and a papyrus scrap by an unknown author. Not only that, though all three are hexameter poetry, representing early sources, there are differing generic agenda at work, given that two of these sources (the *Iliad* and the *Cypria*) are, generally speaking, poems detailing (masculine) heroic exploits within the same macro-narrative of the Epic Cycle. They mostly lack the didactic element of the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, as well as the possible gynocentric agenda that the title suggests. I will return to this difference below.

Homer names three daughters of Agamemnon at *Iliad* 9.144-45 (duplicated at 286-87), in which Agamemnon, as part of his compensation package to Achilles, offers marriage to a daughter of Achilles’ choice:

\[\text{τρεῖϲ δέ μοί εἰϲ θύγατρεϲ ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ εὐπήκτω,}\
\[\text{Χρυϲόθεμιϲ καὶ Λαοδίκη καὶ Ἰφιάναϲϲα}\

I have three daughters in my well-built hall: Chrysothemis and Laodike and Iphianassa.

For Homer, the daughters of Agamemnon are all very much alive. Nowhere in the *Iliad* does Homer mention the sacrifice of Iphigenia (or any daughter), nor indicate that the army experienced any delay when gathering at Aulis. In book 2, Odysseus recalls the gathering at Aulis, where the army witnessed the omen of the snake devouring the sparrow and her young on the plane tree (2.300-30). Calchas is present to interpret the omen, but Odysseus hints at no delay in this passage.

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13 One possible exception is *S. El.* 157, where Iphianassa is mentioned alongside Crysothemis. Both names come from *Iliad* 9.145, but it is unclear in this play whether Sophocles equates Iphianassa with the sacrificed daughter of Agamemnon: both Clytemnestra and Electra avoid using any name when they discuss the sacrifice itself at 530 ff.

14 The *Catalogue* can also be understood as part of a larger narrative cycle, continuing the *Theogony*, see West (1985) 126, Nelson (2005) 334, Clay (2005).

15 We must not assume the daughters of Agamemnon are here arranged by age. Neither Crysothemis nor Laodike, which end with anapaests, fit the end of a dactylic hexameter.

16 The meaning of *Iliad* 2.303-4 is unclear: "Yesterday or the day before, when the ships of the Achaeans were gathering in Aulis, laden with woes for..."
I have already noted that the name Iphianassa is a possible variant of Iphigenia, as with Iphimede in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. Lucretius uses the name when he describes the sacrifice (1.84), suggesting that he at least found it a viable alternative to Iphigenia (see chapter 4), though Lucretius must have chosen the name from the various alternatives, an option we cannot guarantee for the earlier Greek epic sources. A scholiast to *Iliad* 9.145 suggests that Homer does not know the story of the sacrifice. Davies has found the names used by Homer to be suspect based on their poetic quality: “Their melodious and etymologically symbolic names may have been invented *ad hoc* by the poet.” Nevertheless, the existence of a sacrificed daughter of Agamemnon, whatever her name, in the *Cypria* and the *Catalogue of Women* attest that if Homer is ignorant of the sacrifice, it is not because the tradition did not yet exist.

Later scholars have suggested that Homer is not ignorant of the story, but deliberately suppressing the sacrifice story. To this end, *Iliad* 1.106-8 is often cited, in which Agamemnon accuses Calchas of being only a bearer of bad news:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{μάντι κακών οὐ πῶ ποτὲ μοι τὸ κρήγυον εἶπεϲ·} \\
\text{αἰεί τοι τὰ κάκ’ ἐστὶ φίλα φρεϲὶ μαντεύεϲθαι,} \\
\text{ἔσθλον δ’ οὐδὲ τὶ πῶ εἶπεϲ ἔποϲ οὖδ’ ἐτέλεϲϲαϲ·}
\end{align*}
\]

Prophet of evils, not once ever have you spoken benefit to me: always for you is it dear in your heart to prophecy wicked things, never have you said some good word nor do you.

In this scenario, the audience’s ability to associate the sacrifice at Aulis in these lines makes for an “enriching allusion.” Agamemnon’s accusation is fuelled by recollection of Calchas’ demands for the sacrifice of Iphigenia. To suggest that Agamemnon’s anger in *Iliad* 1 is an oblique reference to a suppressed tradition is, I submit, to assume a greater subtlety than is

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17 Burgess (2001) 150.
18 Davies (1989) 44.
20 Taplin (1992) 86.
normally found in the *Iliad*. Ultimately, silence cannot be evidence of ignorance or suppression.\(^{21}\)

Furthermore, while Homer is capable of portraying human sacrifice – he does so when Achilles sacrifices the Trojan princes\(^{22}\) – he seems to find kin-slaying distasteful. Seaford identifies five instances in which Homer excludes mention of kin-slaying where we might expect it.\(^{23}\) The murder of Agamemnon does not appear in the *Iliad* but is mentioned several times in the *Odyssey*, usually as a foil to Odysseus’ own homecoming.\(^{24}\) More often Aegisthus is the killer,\(^{25}\) though accounts by Agamemnon’s shade in books 11 and 24 (both books whose connection to the rest of the poem is questionable) make Clytemnestra’s involvement certain. Homer never explicitly states that Orestes killed his own mother.\(^{26}\) Six other instances of kin-slaying are mentioned in passing or very nearly glossed over.\(^{27}\) Just as he suggests Orestes’ matricide would make a poor model for Telemachus, Gantz reasonably points out that the sacrifice of his own daughter would give Agamemnon a tragic dimension inconsistent with his Homeric character.\(^{28}\) In tragedy, Agamemnon is torn between the conflicting emotions of paternal love for his daughter and his military ambitions for *kleos*. *Agamemnon* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the two tragedies that explore this conflict overtly, differ in how Agamemnon resolves it: in the former, the conflict is unfortunate, but the outcome is certain and Agamemnon goes ahead with the sacrifice, while in the latter, Agamemnon is far less decisive. Likewise the two plays feature different aspects of the consequences of

\(^{21}\) Gantz (1993) 582.

\(^{22}\) *Iliad* 23.175. The Trojan princes are deliberately depersonalized. They are unnamed prisoners of war (they would have died anyway) and included in a shopping list of items (including four horses and two dogs).

\(^{23}\) These and the references that follow are found in Seaford (1989) 87 n.1. *Iliad* 4.376-79, Agamemnon speaks of Tydeus at Thebes without mentioning the mutual fratricide of Polyneices and Eteocles; *Il.* 6.130-40, Diomedes speaks of Lycurgus, but omits the usual slaying of his son; *Il.* 9.458-61, Phoenix contemplates killing his father, but does not do so; *Od.* 11.362-67, Odysseus sees the shade of Eriphyle but does not relate her death at the hands of Alcmeon; *Od.* 15.247-55, Polyphides is angry with, but does not kill, his father.


\(^{25}\) Seaford (1989) 87 n.1 suggests Aegisthus’ kinship to Agamemnon is post-Homeric, though he cites no evidence.


\(^{27}\) *Iliad* 2.662, in the Catalogue of Ships, mentions that the Rhodian Tlepolemus slew his father’s maternal uncle, but gives no reason; Hector slays Medon and Epeigus at *Il.* 15.336 and 16.573, both of whom are identified as kin-slayers but no motivation is given and the identity or status of the victim is omitted; *Il.* 9.566-71, Phoenix tells the story of Meleager and refers to the death of Meleager’s uncles without explicitly stating who killed them; *Od.* 11.271-81, Odysseus, on seeing Epicaste, refers briefly to Oedipus’ patricide.

\(^{28}\) Though see Dowden (1996) 53 for the opposite: the sacrifice of Iphigenia adds depth but has details too garish for Homer’s unique taste.
Agamemnon’s actions. In *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus depicts the king’s physical destruction. While Euripides promises this eventual outcome, he chooses instead to explore the psychological effects on the father of Iphigenia as he struggles to validate desires for *kleos* at the expense of *philia*. In epic, however, such ethical conflicts do not arise as they do in tragedy. Homer, especially in the *Iliad*, depicts *philia* as a motivation for military success, either by showing the consequences of its disruption (as with the removal from the home of Helen and, in *Iliad* 1, of Briseis) or the value it has for the warrior (as with Hector’s visit with his family in *Iliad* 6). Homer does not complicate the situation as the tragedians later do.

According to our summary of Proclus, the eighth book of the *Cypria* introduces the details of Agamemnon’s boast while hunting, and the prophecy of Calchas that Iphigenia would have to be sacrificed to appease Artemis:

καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἠθροιϲμένου τοῦ στόλου ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἀγαμέμνων ἐπὶ θήραϲ βαλὼν ἔλαφον ὑπὲρβάλλειν ἔφηϲε καὶ τὴν Ἀρτέμιν· μηνίϲαϲα δὲ ἡ θεὸϲ ἐπέϲχεν αὐτοὺϲ τοῦ πλοῦ χειμῶναϲ ἐπιπέμπουϲα. Κάλχαντοϲ δὲ εἰπόντοϲ τὴν τῆϲ θεοῦ μήνιϲα ν καὶ Ἰφιγένειαν κελεύϲαντοϲ θύειν τῆι Ἀρτέμιδι, ὡϲ ἐπὶ γάμον αὐτῆν Ἀχιλλεῖ μεταμψάμενοι θύειν ἐπιχειροῦϲιν. Ἀρτέμιϲ δὲ αὐτὴν ἔξαρτάϲαϲα ἐἰς Ἀχιλλὲ τοῦ μετακομίζει καὶ ἀθάνατον ποιεῖ, ἔλαφον δὲ ἀντί τῆϲ κόρηϲ παρίϲτηϲι τῶι βωμῶι. 29

And the second time the fleet was gathered at Aulis, Agamemnon shot a deer on a hunt and said that he had outdone even Artemis; enraged, the goddess kept them from the voyage, sending storms against them. When Calchas told of the wrath of Artemis and bid them sacrifice Iphigenia to Artemis, they set to it, sending for her as if for a marriage to Achilles. Artemis, snatching her away, transported her to the Taurians and made her immortal, setting a deer by the altar instead of the girl.

“All of this...achieves a very unHomeric impression.” 30 Details are vague, as is normal for the summary. The *Cypria* appears to lay the blame on Agamemnon’s hubristic boast. Interestingly, when it comes to the sacrifice itself, the summary uses the plural rather than the singular, making the degree of Agamemnon’s involvement in the final event impossible to determine. It would be unwise to suggest, on such slender evidence so far removed from the original source, that the author of the *Cypria* tried to vindicate Agamemnon by putting him among the many. But the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is similarly ambiguous, even after

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29 This text is from West (2003) 74, though I do not reprint West’s interpolations from Apollodorus.
30 Davies (1989) 44.
specifically mentioning Agamemnon (he in fact is the subject of the sentence, but by means of a relative clause, the agents in Iphigenia’s sacrifice become the Greeks).

The *Cypria* is our earliest evidence of the marriage scheme so vital to the plot of Euripides. Feminist criticism has made much of the connection (and confusion) of marriage and sacrifice, of feminine roles and female death in Greek tragedy and how Euripides’ plots in particular emphasize and complicate that connection. The tragic poets allow their female characters to assert control over their lives, often by actively choosing the manner of their deaths. Epic, however, does not allow its women to so disrupt the social order. Women in the *Iliad* remain largely passive, tokens of exchange used to affirm male social relationships (or upset them when there is conflict over possession, as with Helen or Briseis). The *Iliad* even shifts from strife over women (Helen and Briseis again) to strife over male bodies (Patroclus and Hector, both of whom died fighting), and it is only over the latter that accord is achieved between the surviving male warriors. The concept of a female actively pursuing her death is foreign to the heroic code of archaic epic. This is especially true of the Homeric epics: “Although Homeric epic takes as its primary subject the Trojan War and its aftermath, the poems ignore the deaths of these maidens [Iphigenia and Polyxena] in their focus on male death and heroism.” In epic a victim is a victim: the passive recipient of a violent action. There is no room here for the self-sacrificing daughter of Agamemnon.

Women in Greek literature define their familial situations most strongly according to their male family members, as Andromache famously does in *Iliad* 6 (429-30). The use of the marriage to Achilles to lure Iphigenia (it is unclear in our summary whether he is aware of the plot), if invented by the author of the *Cypria*, is perhaps the only valid device that could have justified her presence among the army. In the *Iliad* even the women of Troy, who are perforce near the fighting (Hecuba, Andromache, Helen), do not venture beyond the city

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32 This is the reading of female suicide and self-sacrifice in Loraux (1989). Against this is Rabinowitz (1993), who sees the deaths of these women as ultimately supporting the system of masculine social relationships.
33 Foley (2005) 110-11. Women in the *Odyssey* are given greater agency since they are typically seen in their homes, e.g., Penelope and Arete, see Foley (1995a) 95.
35 Keith (2000) 101. It is interesting to note that the Epic Cycle provides two possible deaths for Polyxena. In the *Sack of Troy* she is sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, but in the *Cypria* she is wounded by Odysseus and Diomedes during the sack. Is the author of the *Cypria* also avoiding a story of human sacrifice?
walls. The potential marriage foreshadows (or recalls, depending on the order in which the epics were composed) Agamemnon’s promise of a daughter to Achilles in *Iliad* 9 and even the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles that will drive the plot of the *Iliad*. There are also echoes of Polyxena’s death in *Hecuba* and the *Sack of Troy* (though not the *Cypria*), in which Achilles is implicated (even if he is already dead). It is therefore unfortunate that our summary does not indicate the scope of Achilles’ involvement in the marriage plot: is he ignorant of the plot as he is in Euripides, or is he a willing participant, as he suggests he would be (*IA* 965-67)?

While the salvation of Iphigenia might find parallels in the *Iliad* (particularly in the divine rescues of Paris and Aeneas at *Iliad* 3.380-82 and 20.325-29 where each is transported away from danger), the gift of immortality has no such parallel. In fact the avoidance of death for mortals, common in the poems of the Epic Cycle, is foreign to the tragedy and *pathos* of the *Iliad*. Our summary does not say what Iphigenia does once she arrives in Crimea: there is no mention of her priesthood or human sacrifice.

While Proclus names only Iphigenia, as noted above, the *Cypria* apparently names both Iphigenia and Iphianassa as daughters of Agamemnon. This we know from a scholion to Sophocles’ *Electra*. The chorus in that play identify Chrysothemis and Iphianassa as living sisters of Electra and the scholiast is uncertain as to whether Sophocles is following the *Iliad* (Chrysothemis, Laodike, and Iphianassa) or the *Cypria* (Chrysothemis, Electra, Iphigenia, and Iphianassa), although Sophocles is consistent with the latter. It is uncertain to what sources the scholiast has access, however, whether he has read the *Cypria* or summaries of it, though at least some of the *scholia for Electra* go back to the Alexandrian period.

Whether the poet of the *Cypria* is following (or incorporating) the *Iliad* or they are both following an unknown, earlier source is equally uncertain.

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36 At least two Hellenistic sources revise the story so that the marriage actually occurs, with Neoptolemus as offspring of Iphigenia and Achilles. The testimony of Douris of Samos is known from a *scholion* to *Iliad* 19.326 (= *FGrH* 76 Fr. 88), and *scholia* to Lycophron (183 and 325) suggest he followed the same tradition. See Lyons (1997) 203.
37 Griffin (1977) 42.
Our other epic source is the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women (also known in antiquity as the Ehoiai, a plural form of the phrase ἠ οἵη, “or such as,” which marked off structural units of composition). We have two fragments that seem to mention Iphigenia. The first actually mentions Iphimede, daughter of Agamemnon, who is sacrificed upon the altar of Artemis:

And on account of her beauty, Agamemnon lord of men married the dark-eyed daughter of Tyndareus, Clytemnestra; and she bore in his halls fine-ankled Iphimede and Electra who competed with the immortals in looks. And the well-greaved Achaean slaughtered Iphimede upon the altar of Artemis, golden-spindled and noisesome, on that day when they sailed in their ships to Ilium in order to take vengeance for the fair-ankled Argive woman, a phantom; but she herself did the deer-shooting arrow-lover most easily save, and poured lovely ambrosia upon her head, so that her flesh would be firm, and she made her immortal and ageless all her days. And now the tribes of men upon the earth call her Artemis by-the-road, temple servant of the glorious arrow-lover.\(^{41}\)

The passage goes on to say (27-30) that Clytemnestra bore Orestes last and that he grew up to kill her, as she apparently deserved,\(^{42}\) one of only two instances in which a woman appears

\(^{41}\) Fr. 23a.13-26 MW, assembled from POxy 2075, 2481, 2482 and PMich inv. 6234.

\(^{42}\) In line 30, Clytemnestra is ὑπερήνορα, an adjective “elsewhere used only of men,” Osborne (2005) 20.
to be condemned for her actions in the *Catalogue*.\footnote{The other is Helen, who in fr. 176.7 MW is said to have disgraced Menelaus. Doherty (2006) 322.} That this Iphimede is to be equated with the later Iphigenia seems obvious enough from the story.

On the final lines of this passage, in which Iphimede becomes “Artemis by the Road,” I will have more to say below. Here, however, it is important to try to determine exactly which version of the story Hesiod is recounting: is Iphigenia really sacrificed or is she saved at the last minute? Solmsen, uncomfortable with the enjambed \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\) in line 21, argues that the lines depicting the rescue of Iphimede/Iphigenia are a later import, introduced by a later rhapsode to a poem that grew organically over the centuries. His main argument is that “the word \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\)...lacks an organic syntactical connection with the preceding lines,” and is therefore “clumsy.” As a parallel he cites *Odyssey* 601-603, a passage with a similar grammatical structure (with \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\) at the start of a line) in which Heracles is presented as an *eidolon* and which has come under fire as an interpolation.\footnote{Solmsen (1981).} If this is the case, Solmsen argues, then it is not Hesiod but a later rhapsode who knows of the last-minute rescue. Griffith suggests that the poet of the *Catalogue* is having it both ways with this enjambment: the audience witnesses the death of Iphimede at line 17 of the fragment, but then she is suddenly replaced in the text by the *eidolon*. The necessary assumption underlying this statement is that as early as the *Catalogue*, there was at least one tradition that had Iphigenia actually perish on the altar. In the absence of strong disruptive evidence (external to what the text itself says) we are obligated, I submit, to accept the text as it is transmitted.

It is not clear, however, that the *eidolon* in fact refers to Iphigenia. It is possible that it is Helen, at the end of the previous line, who is intended (in which case we must suppose \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\), not difficult given that the papyrus lacks the word end).\footnote{March (1987) 88-89, but see Austin (1994) 109, who proposes that the enjambment of \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\), while consistent with epic practice is meant to signal that we should “overlook” Helen.} A scholiast to Lycophron 822 (= Fr. 358 MW) tells us that Hesiod was first to introduce the *eidolon* of Helen. This scholion, dismissed by Austin, places the Hesiodic *Catalogue* in competition with Stesichorus as the innovator of this tradition. Gantz adds to this argument the improbability of the Greeks “slaughtering” (\(\varsigma\phi\acute{a}\zeta\omega\)) an *eidolon*.\footnote{Gantz (1993) 583.} Furthermore, using \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\) to refer to
Iphigenia makes little sense: she is replaced by an ἔλαφος not an ἐἴδωλον. Nowhere else in the Greek corpus is the term ἐἴδωλον used in reference to the daughter of Agamemnon.

Helen is an important figure in the Catalogue, just as she is a frequent and significant foil to Iphigenia. The account of her marriage, with the wooing of the suitors, the oath of Tyndareus, and her desertion of Menelaus, is the concluding narrative of the Catalogue, perhaps looking forward to the epic cycle. We are not told Helen’s thoughts on any of this, just as we are not told of Iphimede/Iphigenia’s reaction to her sacrifice (or those of any woman in the Catalogue). This is the earliest explicit reference to Helen in connection with Iphigenia’s death, but later sources frequently exploit the contrast between the unfaithful wife and the innocent maiden (see below for the comparison of Helen and Iphigenia in tragedy).

As West notes, eidola provide a convenient means by which an archaic poet might reduce the offensive elements of a given myth (in this case human sacrifice and kin-slaying) while still preserving the basic narrative. The inference, then, is that the eidolon signals a process of mitigation and that in the original story, Iphigenia was indeed killed. Solmsen’s conclusion that “the brutal version which Aeschylus used was the original one is intrinsically probable,” is perhaps over-confident, but likely correct.

The possibility raised by Griffith that the audience knows both versions of the story points us to the broader issue of audience and generic expectation. That the Catalogue differs from the Cypria and the Iliad is clear: it is a different type of poem, even if the metre is the same. But what kind of poem is it? As the titles which circulated in antiquity suggest, it was a poem about women: the Cypria and the Homeric poems, by contrast, are heavily androcentric. Although the structure of the poem seems to have followed matrilinear familial connections, the fragments show that the Catalogue frequently dwelt on the exploits of men. Recent feminist critics, however, have detected in the Catalogue (and similar passages of extant literature, most notably Odysseus’ description of women in the nekuia, Od. 11.225-332) traces of a “women’s genre” of poetry, an oral tradition of female storytelling that would have dwelt more on the activities of the women and on topics of more interest to the women telling the stories (perhaps emphasizing familial relationships over battle narratives, for

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47 Clay (2005) 34.
48 West (1985) 130-35.
instance). This oral tradition likely co-existed with the more androcentric genealogical format with which it eventually fused in the literary version that now survives.\(^{50}\) This is certainly a minority view, and the formation of the *Catalogue* can be understood in other ways,\(^{51}\) but it does allow for intriguing speculation: what role might Iphimede/Iphigenia have played in such a lost oral tradition? Would this tradition favour a divine rescue? We cannot say for sure. It is tempting to suggest that the “female” version of the story saw the young Iphimede/Iphigenia sacrificed for war, while the “male” genre of epic was too squeamish to admit such a conclusion. We could even speculate one step further that perhaps the traditional tales told by women might allow for a self-sacrificing woman – a tale that would be suppressed in the masculine war epic. If so, it is possible that such a version was current in the fifth century and therefore available to Euripides, which would mean that his self-sacrificing maiden is not an innovation on the part of the playwright, but rather the plundering of a now lost storytelling tradition.

It is impossible to reconcile these competing traditions of text and interpretation, but we hardly need to. What is important is that the Greek tragedians had a range of material to draw from (likely broader than we can ever say), and their own innovations fit into a backdrop of significant mythographical variation. Euripides himself drew on his previous sources extremely selectively, and indeed followed competing traditions of the myth: the prologue of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* differs even from the received *exodos* of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, though that is likely a later interpolation. In fact, between the *Oresteia* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Euripides can be confident that his audience will have some idea of these fundamentally contradictory traditions of myth, without having to consider the archaic sources. While we cannot establish a primacy of the salvation and sacrifice motifs in these archaic sources, it is clear that the issue of self-sacrifice did not occur until the fifth century, given the reluctance of epic to overturn heroic understandings of masculine agency.

\(^{50}\) Doherty (2006).

\(^{51}\) Irwin (2005), for example, suggests the possibility and influence of sympotic performance. Osborne in the same volume, on the other hand, sees a poem that catalogues sexually attractive women from the male point of view, and the dangers they pose to the men who bed them (resonating with Semonides 7).
Melic Poetry

One final archaic source, notable for a tendency to muddy the mythographic waters due both to frequent mythological innovations and the fragmentary nature of his work, is Stesichorus. To place him alongside Pindar (the epinicians, at least), as I have done in this section, is to expose the strain of the generic labels “lyric” or (more accurately) “melic”. These are two very different poets, separated not only by a good deal of time and geography, but also by fundamental elements of composition and performance. Stesichorus, probably composing in the early sixth century, must have had more in common with his epic contemporaries than with the much later Pindar. Stesichorus’ mode of composition must have been performance-oriented, given that he lived in a less literate age. This is to say that Stesichorus’ process of composition must have been primarily oral, more in keeping with the *aoidoi*, and without recourse to literary composition techniques. There is also much uncertainty about the nature of that performance: the poems of Stesichorus seem far too long to have been performed by a chorus. We have no evidence of this, however: “It might be difficult to show that these doubts...have a more absolute foundation than modern musical conventions.”\(^{52}\) There is debate about the performance of Pindar’s poetry as well, complicated by frequent self-reference: is the “I” of Pindar meant to be the solo performer/narrator, the collective performance ensemble, or Pindar himself?\(^{53}\) The meaning of the distinction between “monodic” and “choral,” a distinction that really only arises in the modern period,\(^ {54}\) is less than clear. It is difficult to say whether the use of a single or a collective voice in performance has any significant influence on the mythographic decisions made by the poet.

More to the point are questions of agenda: what motivates these poets? In the case of Pindar, that motivation comes from a wealthy patron who has commissioned the poem. This patronage means that Pindar’s use of myth can be skewed to fit the concerns of his client, though rarely in a directly propagandistic way: Pindar is more subtle than that. Stesichorus,

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\(^{52}\) Hutchinson (2001) 116. The ancients, for what it is worth, understood Stesichorus to be a solo performer, see, for example, Paus. 9.11.2, Quint. 10.1.62.

\(^{53}\) Further exploration of this point can be found in Lefkowitz (1988), who argues for an independent narrator, Heath (1988) 193, who considers the ensemble voice, and Nagy (2007), who allows for an oscillating notion of “I”.

on the other hand, appears to have more in common with the poets of the epic period. He exhibits, for example, a similar distaste (as far as we can detect) for the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

We have little to go on for Stesichorus’ version of the Iphigenia story, and must mostly work backwards. One papyrus fragment (from Philodemus Piet. p.24) suggests an immortalized Iphigenia becoming Hecate or Artemis, though the reliability of this association is questionable (see below). We know from a papyrus scrap preserving part of a second century CE commentary (PMG 217) that many poets apparently followed the versions of Stesichorus, who followed Homer and Hesiod. That papyrus concludes with a very fragmentary comment on Euripides:

[Εὐριπίδης δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἰφίγενειαν ἐποίησε γαμουμένην Ἀχιλλεῖ...ϲατ...]

And Euripides also made it so that Iphigenia marries [Achilles]...

If this reconstruction is correct (i.e., that Euripides followed Stesichorus), the implication is that Stesichorus, after (or before?) the Cypria also included the marriage plot, presumably to Achilles. A scholion to Euripides’ Orestes tells us that Stesichorus (and Simonides) placed the events of the Oresteia in Sparta, not Argos. Pindar also follows the tradition of a Spartan Orestes (see below), and in his account (Pyth. 11.18) Iphigenia is clearly dead.

But Stesichorus is apparently responsible for another significant revision of the myth. According to Pausanias (2.22.6-7 = Fr. 191), Stesichorus makes Iphigenia the daughter of Helen and Theseus. In this, he is followed (by the same passage in Pausanias), by Euphorion of Chalcis and Alexander of Pleuron, both in the third century BCE. As the Dioscuri are conveying their sister back to Sparta after her abduction by Theseus, she gives birth to a daughter in Argos, whom she gives to her sister Clytemnestra, already married to Agamemnon. Like the eidolon of Helen (and possibly of Iphigenia), the revised parentage of Iphigenia may well be a device intended to soften the theme of kin-slaying in the sacrifice story. As a daughter of Helen, Iphigenia would also make a more appropriate sacrifice in that she is paying for the sins of her mother: in Iphigenia at Aulis, several characters point out that Iphigenia is innocent of Helen’s crimes and should not be punished for them. But it is

55 Schol. Eur. Or. 46 = PMG 216.
56 After that, the alternative Iphigenia is largely forgotten, until Racine incorporates her into his own version (see chapter 6).
57 Menelaus at 494, Clytemnestra 1168-70, 1201, Iphigenia 1236-37
difficult to believe that Artemis would demand the death of any child that was not Agamemnon’s own: the sacrifice of an adopted daughter would not indicate so great a commitment on Agamemnon’s part. Such a sacrifice also raises serious questions for Stesichorus’ own *Oresteia*: does Orestes slay his own mother? What motivates Clytemnestra’s killing of Agamemnon? Certainly Stesichorus’ variant removes much of the *pathos* of Iphigenia’s death (or even near death) and it is not surprising that none of the fifth-century poets chose to appropriate it.

Pindar, probably our earliest fifth-century source, makes only a passing reference to Iphigenia in his Eleventh *Pythian* (22-3). The Ode is dedicated to one Thrasydaioi, who won a victory for Thebes, either in the boys’ *stadion* in 474 or the men’s *diaulos* in 454. Of the two dates, provided by scholia, modern scholars tend to favour the former, based on a reference to a *stadion* in line 49. If that is true, then this Ode is the earliest source which treats Iphigenia as absolutely dead.

Much of the ode is a typically Pindaric digression: while dedicated to a Theban victor, the bulk of the poem follows a non-Theban myth, that of Orestes. The poet speculates on the causes of Agamemnon’s death at the hands of Clytemnestra (22-3):

> πότερόν νιν ἄρ’ Ἰφιγένει’ ἐπ’ Εὐρίπωι
cϕαχθειϲα τῆλε πάτραϲ
ekوية βαρυτάλαμον ὄρϲαi χόλον;
η’ ἑτέρωι λέχει δαμαζομέναν
eνυνχοi πάραγον κοίται;

Was it Iphigenia being sacrificed far from her homeland that goaded her to rouse her heavy-handed anger? Or did nightly loves lead her astray subdued in another’s bed?

Not unusually, Pindar provides an emotionally compact reference that is sparse on mythographic details. It seems clear from the reference that Iphigenia is dead and that he is thinking of a story not unlike that told in the *Oresteia*. It is clear from a reference to “Laconian Orestes” at line 15, however, that there are discrepancies between his and Aeschylus’ version, and Pindar seems likely to be following the version of Stesichorus. 

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58 Finglass (2007a) 5-27 has a very thorough discussion, and includes a summary of previous positions.
59 On the relevance of the myth of Orestes, see Bowra (1936), Instone (1986).
60 The role of the nurse Arsinoe mentioned at *Pyth*. 11.18, although not her name, appears to also derive from
Pindar’s speculation in this passage concerns the motives of Clytemnestra: did she kill Agamemnon in revenge for Iphigenia or in order to continue her own adultery? It is a question that scholars have been asking about the Oresteia itself. The observation that Iphigenia was slaughtered (ϲφαχθεῖϲα - a word that best applies to animals, found also in the fragment of the Catalogue of Women) far from home generates a great deal of pathos, not only for Iphigenia but for Clytemnestra. This possible sympathy for Clytemnestra is undercut in the next line, when base adultery is presented as an equally viable alternative. Furthermore, the primary concern of Pindar’s use of myth is the character of Orestes, and scholars have most typically tried to draw meaning from this text by comparing Orestes and Thrasydaios. Iphigenia’s death begins the cycle of vengeance, though Pindar does not place her death at the beginning of his account (he mentions the deaths of both Agamemnon and Cassandra first). It will be Aeschylus who first foregrounds the death of Iphigenia so clearly.

**Iphigenia in Cult**

In the previous section, I noted the possibility that the figure of Iphigenia may have begun as a local deity, perhaps in a locale that later featured significant worship of Artemis and Iphigenia. The evidence for such a deity, first put forth by Farnell and later by Lloyd-Jones, is highly speculative. The only surviving explicit evidence of Iphigenia’s godhead that survives is the reference in the Catalogue of Women to Iphigenia as Artemis Einodia or Artemis “By-the-Road.” This is the only instance of Iphigenia’s association with this cult title, but it is frequently applied directly to Hecate, who also sometimes appears in association with Artemis. Pausanias is perhaps aware of this when he suggests a more explicit connection in the Catalogue:

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61 Finglass (2007a) 15 cautions us against assuming any direct connection between this Ode and the Oresteia: the question of dating is not automatically one of who influenced who.

62 Bowra (1964) 221, Finglass (2007a) 94-95 notes that the positioning of Clytemnestra’s adultery after the sacrifice of Iphigenia gives greater weight to the adultery.

63 Finglass (2007a) 35.

64 The earliest known use of this epithet for Hecate is in the fifth-century: Sophocles Rhizotomoi = Fr. 535 Radt.
ἐγὼ δὲ ἤκουϲα μὲν καὶ ἄλλον ἐϲ Ἰφιγένειαν λόγον ύπὸ Άρκάδων λεγόμενον, οἶδα δὲ Ἡϲίοδον ποιήϲαντα ἐν Καταλόγῳ Γυναικῶν Ἰφιγένειαν ύκ ἁποθανεῖν, γνώϲι με δὲ Ἀρτέμιδοϲ Ἑκάτην εἶναι· τούτοιϲ δὲ Ἡρόδοτοϲ ὅμολογοῦντα ἡγαραʃ Ταύρουϲ τούϲ πρὸς τῇ Σκυθικῆι θῦει παρθένωι τούϲ ναυαγούϲ, φάναι δὲ αὐτοὺϲ τῇ παρθένου Ἰφιγένειαν εἶναι τῆν Ἀγαμέϲ.ν."n

I have heard another tale about Iphigenia told by the Arcadians, and I know that Hesiod in the *Catalogue of Women* made it so that Iphigenia did not die, but became Hecate by the will of Artemis. Herodotus is in agreement with them, writing that the Taurians near Scythia sacrifice sailors to a Maiden they claim is the maiden Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon.65

This equation of Iphigenia and Hecate is a difficult one. The papyrus fragment of the *Catalogue* tells us only that Iphimede/Iphigenia becomes an aspect of Artemis Einodia, and does not mention Hecate. Whether Pausanias is making the association of Iphigenia and Hecate based on this or another lost passage is unclear, but since it is possible for us to draw this conclusion based on the surviving evidence, Pausanias could have too.

One other explicit connection between Iphigenia and Hecate apparently comes from Stesichorus. The testimony comes from Philodemus in the first century BCE:


Stesichorus in his *Oresteia* follows Hesiod, that Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, is now said to be Hecate.66

The papyrus is damaged. We do not know how Philodemus made the connection between Hecate and Iphigenia: was it explicit in Stesichorus’ text, or was the passage more like the fragment of the *Catalogue* and Philodemus’ reasoning based on probable similarities?67 Philodemus’ suggestion that Stesichorus “followed” the *Catalogue* is interesting,68 though the claim may follow from a Locrian tradition in antiquity that made Stesichorus a descendant of Hesiod.69

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65 Paus. 1.43.1 = Fr 23b MW.
68 *PMG* 217 = *POxy*. 2506 fr. 26 begins by noting that Stesichorus followed the narratives of other poets. The following line of the papyrus scrap notes that there are similarities between Homer and Hesiod.
69 West (1971) 304: variant traditions made Stesichorus either son or grandson of Hesiod.
In addition to a cult title for Artemis and Hecate, Einodia was also the name of a Thessalian road-goddess who later came to be associated with Hecate. Hecate is often found in attendance to or as an aspect of other more prominent goddesses, such as Artemis, Demeter or Persephone. In Attica, Hecate is associated with Artemis Propylaea at Eleusis (H.Dem. 155, 328-29), and the two shared several other cult titles. The association of Artemis and Hecate becomes complicated further by the fact that the word ἑκάτα could be used as an epithet, meaning “far-darter”, just as ἕκατος is for Apollo. Is this the Hecate to which the Philodemus scrap represents? It is certainly a possibility, given the damage to the papyrus. In the Theogony, Hecate is of some importance. A passage in the Theogony (411-52) is effectively a short hymn to Hecate, where she is described as being first among gods in honour. The passage also notes that she cares for animals, tame and wild (444-47), and calls her κουροτρόφος (450, 452) both descriptors which allow for comparison to Artemis.

The connection of Iphigenia to Hecate and Artemis “By the Road” in the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women invites exploration of Iphigenia as a figure of cult as well as myth. One cannot be discussed without the other since “In the archaic period, these two aspects were already intertwined.” Pausanias’ account (1.43.1) suggests that Iphigenia’s connection to Hecate is consistent with her immortalization in the Catalogue of Women and hints at another tale told in Arcadia. The Cypria also makes Iphigenia immortal after her salvation by Artemis, but our summary gives no details of her behaviour. We have no direct evidence that Iphigenia and Hecate were connected beyond the Archaic age, though both were independently associated with Artemis.

By the time of the fifth century, however, Iphigenia appears to have an established cult status in several locations. When Euripides chose to write his Iphigenia tragedies, he was taking a character with not only a rich mythographic tradition, but a complex and variegated role in the landscape of Greek cult. This role(s) in cult would have been known to Euripides and his audience, particularly in her position as a servant (no longer an aspect or

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70 In fifth-century Athens, the goddess Einodia became associated with Thessalian witch-craft, which may account for Hecate’s transition from a relatively benign goddess in Hesiod to the better known mistress of witchcraft and magic, Marquardt (1981) 256.
71 A possible alternative for ἐλαφηβός in line 21 of fragment 23a is ἑκατηβός, suggested by Merkelbach-West.
manifestation) of Artemis. Her centres of worship include Brauron, Aegira, Megara and the Taurid. The legends surrounding each site, and their relationship to each other and to the events at Aulis, are extremely complex. Nevertheless, Iphigenia’s status as a cult figure is consistently rooted in the sacrifice to and/or salvation by Artemis. In this period she is usually the subject of her own hero-cult, particularly in Brauron and Megara, with competing local legends concerning the location of her death to validate those hero-cults.

Worship of Artemis is widespread throughout Greece, and the rituals and customs vary from place to place. Comparatively few sites of Artemis worship feature Iphigenia. Nevertheless, many common elements of Artemis’ role in myth and cult worship resonate with the Iphigenia story. The involvement of pre-marital youths, particularly female, performing what appear to be initiatory dances and rituals, is known for several sites and in myth Artemis is kourotrophos, “nourisher of youth”.73 Iphigenia’s own status as a nubile parthenos, and the promises of marriage that frequently recur in the different traditions, supplies a clear parallel (see the next chapter for a full discussion of the confusion of sacrifice and marriage). Artemis is also the πότνια θηρῶν, the “Mistress of Animals”, or at least an inheritor of that title,74 and thus animal sacrifice – sometimes but not always as a substitution for the human variety – is also common. She is not exactly a protector of animals, but a protector of the boundaries between the wild and domestic worlds: the animals that occupy the wild are her possessions, and men can arouse her jealousy when they violate these boundaries by killing.75 These animals, most often goats, deer, and bears, can be either wild or tame or sometimes even both. The Suda, in attempting to explain the arkteia, tells of a bear wandering into or near the precinct at Brauron and becoming tame.76

In the arkteia, mostly associated with Brauron but also celebrated at Mounychia, young women between the ages of five and ten become “bears” (ἄρκτοι).77 Yellow dresses

74 Assuming a proto-goddess of early worship whose attributes accrued later, more clearly and anthropomorphically defined, to Cybele, Hera, Athena, but especially Artemis, see Lloyd-Jones (1983a) 90.
76 Suda s.v. Ἀρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίοις.
77 This is confirmed by a scholion to Ar. Lys. 645; when the passage itself (Lys. 641-45) includes “being a bear” among a list of ritual services a young girl might perform (the chorus is establishing its credibility as an upstanding member of the community) but appears to set the age of ten as a lower limit for the “bears”. For resolution of this problem, see Sourvinou (1971) and Stinton (1976). On the nature of the various services described in the passage, see in particular Walbank (1981).
(κροκότοι) were worn and apparently shed, and there appears to have been a footrace, perhaps with torches, though dancing is also probable. According to the Suda, the arkteia was ordained as penance for the slaying of the tame bear at Brauron (which had been teased and goaded into scratching a local girl). Modern scholars see the arkteia as a rite of passage, signalling a coming of age. The shedding of the krokotos might be symbolic in this respect. The Attic festival of the Brauronia, which may well have featured the arkteia, took place only every four years, which might also explain the range of age in participants. Evidence of the arkteia in Mounychia and Halai are also likely related to the Brauronia. If the arkteia only took place every four years, it is reasonable to assume that only a select few girls actually served or performed as bears. One very interesting potential parallel to the arkteia is the nebreia. No firm evidence exists, but based on epigraphic sources, Clément proposed a ritual in which young women imitated fawns as part of cult-worship to Artemis at Larissa and Pegasae-Demetrias. Clément further proposed such a practice at Aulis, a suggestion that, while tempting, lacks any supporting evidence.

The Suda’s origin-story for the arkteia has striking similarities to cult legend at Mounychia, also in Attica, though there the penance is the sacrifice of a young maiden, a daughter of Embaros, for whom a goat is substituted. The sacrifice at the Brauronia is also a goat. The substituted sacrifice clearly recalls Iphigenia’s story, even if the victim is now a domestic goat rather than a wild deer. In either case, where a deer or girl (or even bear, see below) is demanded initially, a goat is clearly a more practical substitute (whether or not the deer, girl, or bear was ever actually sacrificed). The fourth-century writer Phanodemus, known for his extreme Atheno-centrism, exacerbated the similarities between Iphigenia’s sacrifice and the arkteia, reshaping the Brauronian legend so that the events of Aulis actually

79 The primary evidence for these activities are a group of vases examined by Kahl in a series of articles (esp. 1965, 1977, 1981).
81 Sourvinou (1971) 341.
82 Ar. Peace 876; Ar. Ath. Cost. 54.7.
84 Clément (1934). See also Sourvinou (1971) 340-41.
85 Suda s.v. Ἐμβαρος.
occurred at Brauron. Iphigenia therefore had a *heroon* at Brauron since that was the place of her death. Furthermore, in Phanodemus’ account, Iphigenia is replaced not by a hind, but a bear. This revision disrupts the symmetry of most accounts of the sacrifice, in which the death of a deer (at the hands of Agamemnon) motivates the sacrifice, which concludes with the death of a deer (again, often at the hands of Agamemnon). In the second century BCE, Nicander has Iphigenia replaced by a calf or bull (ταῦτον), in an attempt to explain the cult title Ταυρόπολος (Euripides provided a different explanation, see below). Both sources come after Euripides, of course, though neither appear to have been influenced by him (nor have they had any influence on later interpolations to the text of the play), and both speak to the instability of the myth and the variations enabled even by local cultic practice.

Although Artemis plays a minimal and distant role in *Iphigenia at Aulis* (particularly if the *exodos* is excluded), her connection to Iphigenia is well known to the playwright and his audience. Euripides himself explored this connection explicitly less than a decade earlier in *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*. In the Taurian play, Iphigenia bathes and purifies victims for sacrifice to Artemis, acting as a sort of filter or buffer, coming into contact with the impure objects of sacrifice on Artemis’ behalf. The *aitia* given by Athena at the end of that play is our most explicit source for Iphigenia’s role at Brauron (1462-67):

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\text{ε} \text{έ δι' ἀμφὶ σεμνὰς, Ἰφιγένεια, λείμακας Ἄμφιες δεῖ τῇδε κληδουχεῖν θεαὶ οὖ και τεθάψῃ κατθανοῦς, καὶ πέπλων ἄγαλμα σοι θήϲουσιν εὐπήνουϲ ὑφάϲ, ἂϲ ἃν γυναῖκεϲ ἐν τόκοιϲ ψυχορραγεῖϲ λήπωϲ' ἐν οἶκοιϲ.}
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86 *FGrH* 325 F14. The variant was apparently recorded by Euphorion, according to another scholion to *Lys.* 645, see Sale (1975) 273.

87 The Phanodemus fragment attests to the bear sacrifice. A scholion to Ar. *Lys.* 645 relocates the events of Aulis to Brauron. The assumption that the former is the source for the latter appears to originate with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1883) 259. Though this assumption is not fact, it would be in character for this writer. Phanodemus also proposed that the Trojans were descended from the Athenians (F 13).

88 The oddest substitution for Iphigenia is alluded to by Tzetzes *Lyc* 183: καθ’ ἑτέρους εἰς γραῦν, “according to others, into an old woman (or sea-crab?)”.

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Iphigenia, you must take up keys for this goddess
about the holy meadows of Brauron;
where having died you will be buried, and to you
they will dedicate the fine-woven clothes as an honour,
which women who died in childbirth
have left in their homes.

The ritual dedication to Artemis of women’s clothing was well known to the Athenian audience, but after that we are in questionable territory. Clothing was not an unusual gift: young women who were sick, or who had survived childbirth, might dedicate clothing to Artemis, and there are inscriptions on the Acropolis attesting such dedications to Artemis Brauronia. Herodotus provides the earliest literary references to Brauron (4.145, 6.138), in which he makes clear that Brauron is a sanctuary specifically for women. Iphigenia’s acceptance of dead women’s clothing is not recorded in any inscriptions that we know of but makes sense in a mythological context: Artemis is a goddess of childbirth, but as an Olympian goddess cannot stand to be in the presence of death (consider her hasty retreat from the dying Hippolytus at Hipp. 1437-9). Whether such a ritual of dedication existed or not, the Athenian audience could conceive of such a ritual in the mythical past. As a mortal, Iphigenia could come into contact with such clothing even though it is tainted with death, and she acts as a buffer between the impure mortal realm and the goddess. Condis suggests that Artemis is a benevolent Olympian goddess with Iphigenia as an almost demonic, chthonic counterpart. But this is to whitewash Artemis, who had many darker functions in the Greek imagination. It also ascribes too broad an association between Iphigenia and Artemis: Iphigenia is not always worshipped with Artemis. And as Artemis is also a goddess of transition, ushering children into the world and supervising their transition into motherhood, Iphigenia, as an immortalized virgin, is an appropriate representative.

Likewise the audience must have been familiar with the rites at Halai, only a couple of miles from Brauron, where a man’s throat was ritually scratched for a drop of blood to appease the goddess (if we are to believe Athena’s aitia at the end of IT). Immediately

89 For the strongest warning against accepting Euripidean aitia as historical testimony, see Scullion (1999/2000), esp. 228-29, where IT serves as his key example.
91 Hollinshead (1985) 424-25
92 Condis (1967) 156-206.
before sending Iphigenia to Brauron, Athena sends Orestes to Halai to build a temple and initiate the rites there (1444-61). Orestes’ mission is an obvious aition on the part of Euripides to explain the cult title Tauropolos (a title which is also held by Athena at certain sites of worship).

*Iphigenia among the Taurians* is not the earliest source linking Iphigenia to the Taurid. Herodotus records that the Taurians sacrifice Greek sailors to a deity whom “the Taurians themselves” report to be Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon (4.103):

> τούτων Ταῦροι μὲν νόμοις τοιούτως ἐχρέωνται: θύουσι μὲν τῇ, Παρθένῳ τοὺς τε ναυηγούς καὶ τοὺς ἄν λάβωσι Εὐρίπιδος ἔπαναχθέντες τρόπῳ τοιῶδε: καταρξάμενοι ῥοπάλῳ παίουσι τὴν κεφαλήν, οἱ μὲν δὲ λέγουσι ώς τὸ σώμα ἀπὸ τοῦ κρημνοῦ ὠθείου κάτω (ἐπὶ γὰρ κρημνοῦ ἵδρυται τὸ ἱρόν), τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν ἀνασταυροῦσι: οἳ δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὴν κεφαλὴν ὁμολογεῖοι, τὸ μὲντοι σώμα οὐκ ὠθεῖεν αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ γῆι κρύπτεσθαι. τὴν δὲ δαίμονα ταύτην τῇ θύουσι λέγουσι αὐτῷ Ταῦροι Ιφιγένειαν τῇ Ἀγαμέμνονος εἶναι.

Among these, the Taurians follow these customs: those who are ship-wrecked and those Greeks they take at sea they sacrifice to the Maiden in this way: having begun, they strike the head with a club. Some say that they push the body down a cliff (the cliff on which the temple is set) and they impale the head. While others agree about the head, but instead say the body is not pushed off a cliff, but buried in the earth. And the Taurians themselves say that this spirit to whom they sacrifice is Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon.

Herodotus says nothing of how Iphigenia came to be in the Chersonese and the connection to Iphigenia may well be Herodotus’ own contribution based on the Tauropolos title at Halai. This account is consistent with the *Cypria*’s report that Iphigenia is set up as an immortal among the Taurians by Artemis, though again the summary of the lost epic may be subject to post-Herodotean or post-Euripidean interpolation. That Euripides owed some debt to Herodotus when composing *Iphigenia among the Taurians* seems clear. Euripides is thus likely the earliest sustained treatment of Iphigenia post-salvation, exploiting popular curiosity in a foreign people only recently introduced to the Athenian world-view and providing an aetiological connection to two Athenian sites of worship.

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93 For doubts about the early date of the Taurian episode in the *Cypria*, see Burnett (1971) 73, Hall (1989) 111. Defending the viability of the original author of the *Cypria* knowing the Taurian version, see Cropp (2000) 44 n.48.
The confusion of the multiple variations of the Iphigenia legend in local cult sites has disturbed some scholars. There must have been a single version current at Brauron: Sale notes the unlikelihood “that devout Brauronians subscribed simultaneously to two different accounts of the origin of their ritual.”\(^94\) Whether they did or not, however, would not have bothered Euripides, and it should not bother us for the present study. Euripides’ intent is artistic, not religious. He is not concerned with justifying or explaining ritual with religious authority, but his aitia are meant to link the mythological past to the present of his audience, a process which scholars have attached to various agendas: political, ideological, or even (especially?) popularity and success in the dramatic competition. Euripides uses known social and religious practices, but he uses them selectively when composing his aetiologies.\(^95\) He frequently invents some or all of the supporting myth and at least some cultic practices described in Euripides seem to be invention also.\(^96\) Thus at the end of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Euripides feels no need to mention bears or the *arkteia* at Brauron, which would have no thematic relevance to the rest of the play (though we might at least find Athena credible when she describes the ritual scratching at Halai and the dedication of clothes at Brauron). *Iphigenia at Aulis* has no aitia to speak of, at least not in our text, though one wonders what sort of aitia might have been found in the lost exodos suggested by the Aelian fragment. Many in the audience at the first performance would be familiar with Iphigenia as cult figure in Attica and indeed with Euripides’ own earlier treatment of that cult figure.

**Tragedy**

“In the fifth century BC, allusions to Iphigeneia’s death are more common than references to her apotheosis.”\(^97\) Hollinshead’s comment identifies the key shift in the interpretative concerns of writers depicting the sacrifice. This shift is not at all surprising, given the prominence of tragedy in fifth-century Athens: tragedy’s preoccupation with inter-familial violence makes the sacrifice of Iphigenia a natural subject. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at the subject of sacrifice, how it developed into a more complex and problematic ritual (in the popular imagination of fifth-century Athens, at least), and in

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\(^94\) Sale (1975) 273.
\(^95\) See, for example, Dunn (1996) 56-7, 94-5.
\(^96\) Scullion (1999/2000) 228-29
\(^97\) Hollinshead (1985) 422.
particular at the self-sacrifice motif which apparently so fascinated Euripides in the second half of his career. Even before Euripides, however, the fifth-century poetic versions are all in agreement that Iphigenia must die at Aulis. In Pindar and Aeschylus, she is dead. In Sophocles’ *Electra*, she is not named explicitly, but her sacrifice is final, according to Clytemnestra (530-38). Euripides’ own *Electra, Orestes, Andromache*, and *Trojan Women* all refer to her death. Even in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* the tradition that she died at Aulis “plays a definite part.”

In the one play that certainly depicts a surviving Iphigenia, her death has been assumed in Greece for many years. Nor is there any business of her being made immortal, as in the *Cypria*: Athena makes it clear that she will die at Brauron, to receive the clothing of women who die in childbirth (1464-67).

One other play that may have depicted a post-sacrifice Iphigenia is the lost *Chryses* of Sophocles. The fragments give no indication of plot, but later sources provide conflicting possibilities. Hyginus (*Fab. 120, 121*) tells us that Chryses, son of Apollo and Chryseis and born while Chryseis was still in Agamemnon’s possession during the Trojan War, has been installed as ruler on Sminthe, where he encounters Iphigenia and Orestes fleeing from Thoas, apparently after the events of Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. Because of his relationship to Agamemnon (whom he must have perceived as a father figure), Chryses shelters Iphigenia and Orestes, kills Thoas, and returns with them to Mycenae. This version is most commonly suggested as the plot of the play.

Another version comes from Dionysius of Byzantium (*Navigation of the Bosporus* 109), who says that Chryses was a son of Agamemnon and Chryseis. Fleeting Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, this Chryses sets out for Crimea to take refuge with Iphigenia, but dies part way, giving his name to the city Chrysopolis (a district of modern Istanbul). This version of the story is interesting in that it implies that Chryses knows his half-sister is still alive (and outside of the *exodos* of *IA*, is the only evidence of a mortal knowing of the salvation of Iphigenia), though he must have been born after the events of Aulis. Finally, Tzetzes, in a commentary on Lycophron (*Schol. Lyc.* 183.48-55), points to other authors (ἕτεροι) who report that both Chryses and Iphigenia are Agamemnon’s children by Chryseis. After the Trojan War, Chryseis attempts to make her

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98 Hulton (1962) 364. *El. 1021-29; Or. 658-59; And. 624-26; TW* 370-72.
way to Greece, presumably seeking Agamemnon’s protection. Chryses dies at Chrysopolis and Iphigenia is captured and taken to Crimea, where she is installed as priestess of Artemis. This last version has the feel of rationalization: the human sacrifice of Iphigenia is replaced with the abduction, by barbarians, of a semi-barbarian daughter well after the War. It also distorts the myth to the breaking point, since having Iphigenia born of Chryseis means that she is born late in the Trojan War, rather than a generation before it. But Tzetzes is so unclear about his sources at this point, we cannot speculate on the time or context in which this alternate version originated.  

Other than Sophocles, no single source can have influenced Euripides as much as Aeschylus – and when it comes to the House of Atreus, even Sophocles cannot compete with the position of the Oresteia in the popular imagination of fifth-century Athens. In the parodos of Agamemnon, Aeschylus presents an interpretation of the sacrifice of Iphigenia that innovates in the earlier traditions. He is the first, as far as we can tell, to focus on the human suffering caused by the sacrifice, and thereby the first to capitalize (dramaturgically) on the consequences for the humans who survive the incident, notably Agamemnon and his family. Earlier epic and lyric accounts of its effects appear either to describe the sacrifice without dwelling on its emotional impact (Cypria, Catalogue of Women) or to attempt to destigmatize the sacrifice (Stesichorus). Aeschylus’ account, rendered in very human terms with an ambiguous portent, troubled decision-making process, pathetic victim, and horrifying result, effectively defines the parameters by which the sacrifice will be understood by almost all later writers and interpreters.

Iphigenia is actually only named twice in the Oresteia, both times by Clytemnestra as she defends her actions before the chorus (1526, 1555). Her words at 1555-59, in which

100 A Roman silver cup preserves an image similar to these versions. BM 1960 2-1.1 (= LIMC v (1990) no. 87). Orestes and Pylades and Iphigenia (holding an image of Artemis under her arm) cling to an altar, faced by Thoas and a spear-bearer. Between the two groups stand Chryses and his mother Chryseis. Date and provenance are unknown, but first century BCE is most probable (with scholars divided over whether the cup is from before or during the reign of Augustus) and the cup is from somewhere in Asia Minor, where the post-Tauric tale was appropriated by several cities. Fragments of similar images apparently also appear on Arretine pottery of the same period and region. See Burrell (2005) 233-34 for discussion and bibliography.

101 Although we have anecdotal evidence that Aeschylus left Athens disillusioned (see Lefkowitz (1981) 71-73), he was clearly popular after his death. We are told in the Vita that Aeschylus was the first to have his plays reproduced, likely before 425; see Bain (1977b) 112, Marshall (2001) 62.

102 The first instance is textually difficult and perhaps should not be included in the text; see Fraenkel (1950) ad loc.
she predicts that Iphigenia is waiting in the underworld to throw her arms lovingly around her father, are particularly poignant (and enacted on stage in IA 631-37 when Iphigenia arrives). Critics have questioned Clytemnestra’s sincerity when she names herself Iphigenia’s avenger, and it is certainly not her only motive. But Euripides’ play certainly presents a Clytemnestra who could be so motivated believably. In the mouth of the Euripidean Clytemnestra, these Aeschylean lines would be completely in character. But whether Clytemnestra’s complaints are valid or not, the pathos of the sacrifice as created by the chorus cannot be denied.

The parodos can be broken down into smaller passages relevant to the sacrifice. First is the portent of the eagles devouring a pregnant hare (104-21). Calchas’ interpretation of the omen, in which he equates the Atreides with the eagles, follows (122-59). The hymn to Zeus intrudes before the chorus sing of the delay at Aulis (184-204). Agamemnon is allowed a short speech in which he laments the offences of either course of action open to him (205-217) before he succumbs to necessity (218-227). A description of Iphigenia at the altar, bound and gagged yet able to shed her garment (228-46), is the final image, as the chorus then “look away” and refuse to comment further (247-49).

The omen of the eagles is a new addition to the story, an invention of Aeschylus. Apparently eyewitnesses to the event, the chorus report (114-20):

οἰωνῶν βαϲιλεὔϲ βαϲιλεῦϲι νε­
ῶν ὁ κελαινόϲ, ὅ τ᾽ ἐξόπιν ἀργᾶϲ,
φανέντεϲ ἵκταρ μελάθρων
χερὸϲ ἐκ δοριπάλτου
παμπρέπτοιϲ ἐν ἕδραιϲιν,
βοϲκόμενοι λαγίναν, ἐρικύμονα φέρματι γένναν,
βλαβέντα λοιϲβίων δρό­̃µων.

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103 See, for example, Sommerstein (1996) 361.
104 Hall (2005c) traces the classical reception of Agamemnon using the character of Clytemnestra as her touchstone. She sees all adaptations of the death of Agamemnon after Aeschylus as softening the character. Even the Clytemnestra of Euripides is presented in a more sympathetic way.
To the kings of the ships there appeared
kingly birds, one dark, one white behind,
close by the halls,
from the spear-hand side,
in position conspicuous to all,
feasting on a hare, fat with the fruit of its womb,
stopped in its final course.

The portent of the eagles greatly complicates the story of Agamemnon and Iphigenia, since it provides neither a clear motive for the sacrifice nor any solid implication of guilt for Agamemnon. Guilt, responsibility, and retributive justice are themes of serious import throughout the *Oresteia*, and the denial of any clear motivation for the cycle of vengeance of the trilogy has disturbed a great many critics. Thus scholars have proposed a wide variety of explanations. None of these is entirely satisfactory, which may in fact be the point: Aeschylus is deliberately obfuscating the issue and denying his audience any clear moral frame. The killing of the pregnant hare has been seen as a symbol of a quarrel between Zeus and Artemis, a quarrel in which Agamemnon is unwittingly entangled. It has been understood as symbolic of Agamemnon’s future crimes: the slaughter of Trojan innocents, the seizure of Cassandra and even the sacrifice of Iphigenia. And the symbolic destruction of a family unit has been observed, especially alongside other portents – the snake in the plane tree (*Iliad* 2.300-30) and the screaming of the vultures, to which the chorus compare the battle cry of the Atreides (*Ag.* 48-54). Some have seen it as merely a dramaturgical device to create Agamemnon’s moral dilemma. However we understand the portent, it represents a deliberate mythological decision on the part of Aeschylus, an alternative to Agamemnon’s hubristic boast in the *Cypria*, where the sacrifice of Iphigenia is demanded as a punishment. Euripides, too, will favour a more ambiguous approach, either by having Agamemnon make a promise, the consequences of which he does not understand (as in *IT*), or removing the portent altogether (*IA*).

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106 This theme has perhaps the largest bibliography dedicated to any single issue in Greek tragedy. Some highlights of the discussion include: Lloyd-Jones (1982, 1983b; both are revisions of earlier material); Lesky (1966); Peradotto (1969); along with a great number of book chapters.

107 For instance, Page (1957) 81.


109 Conacher (1967) 8.

110 Lawrence (1976).
In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the demand for sacrifice comes from Calchas, just as in *Agamemnon*. Aeschylus, however, delays the demand in the chorus’ account, only hinting at it at first. Calchas understands the omen of the eagles logically, carefully noting two eagles and two warrior sons of Atreus (122-24), but upon recognizing the anger of Artemis he attempts to avert any further consequences. In lines 140-55 Calchas sings a hymn of appeal to Artemis, asking that she not delay the fleet and demand further sacrifice (151). Here Calchas already hints at the long-term consequences of the sacrifice, noting the “crafty tender of the home” who will avenge the death of Iphigenia (155). But Calchas’ prayer fails to find favour, of course: he cannot avert the punishment of Agamemnon.

In this context, the audience cannot have high hopes for the hymn of Zeus which follows. The chorus break off the narrative of Aulis to sing of Zeus. While we might read the hymn as “the Chorus’ ultimately hopeful response to the forebodings (including the hints of Iphigenia’s sacrifice and its bloody aftermath) which Calchas’ final prophecies have engendered,” we already know their prayer is doomed.111 The chorus sing that, by the will of Zeus, suffering brings wisdom.112 But the suffering of Agamemnon and the sacrifice of Iphigenia will ultimately bring about only destruction and more suffering.

The hymn to Zeus ends abruptly and we are returned to Aulis (184-204), where the hopes of Calchas are clearly dashed – the fleet is held up, and Calchas is forced to reveal the only solution to the delay. Aeschylus makes clear that Calchas is an innocent conduit, merely interpreting omens, when the chorus note the sons of Atreus do not blame him (μάντιν οὔτινα ψέγων 186). Agamemnon’s acceptance of Calchas’ prophecies stands in stark contrast to both earlier (*Iliad* 1.106-08) and later (*IA* 518-20) accounts of their interactions. Calchas, or the chorus as at the end of the ode, cannot explicitly name Iphigenia (she is only named by Clytemnestra after the double murder at 1526), but instead calls for “another remedy” (ἄλλο μῆχαρ 199): this is literally an unspeakable crime (and speech is a powerful element of this sacrifice, as evidenced by the need for Iphigenia’s gag).

When Calchas does announce the “remedy”, the emotional impact on both father and daughter are emphasized, as the chorus builds up the *pathos* of the play. Both the sons of

111 Conacher (1967) 11.
112 This is a simplification, to be sure. A wise man would not test the will of Zeus and would have no need to suffer. The passage is often compared to Hes. *W&D* 217-18; see Smith (1984) 21-26, Hogan (1984) 43.
Atreus weep openly, and cast their sceptres to the ground (202-04). Agamemnon is quoted (206-17), emotionally decrying the impossible dilemma before him: to refuse the orders of a god or to slay his own child. The speech is markedly more passionate in tone than the words Agamemnon will later deliver himself to his wife. Even here, however, Agamemnon weighs his relationship with his political and military allies, a precursor of his own future fate, when Clytemnestic persuades him to walk on the scarlet tapestry by comparing him to his conquered foe, Priam. It is important to note that Agamemnon justifies his decision based on the desires of the army, not on the will of Zeus – an important foreshadowing of the concerns of the Euripidean Agamemnon five decades later.\(^\text{113}\)

Agamemnon, after his relatively brief speech, succumbs to the “yoke of Necessity” (ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον 218), though the chorus make it clear that they see this as a foolish decision. The chorus note that the war, which now must begin with the sacrifice of a female, is being fought over a female. This concern of an innocent, virginal female perishing for a sexually unfaithful wife is already explicit in the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women and will be a dominant feature in treatments not only of the Iphigenia sacrifice, but of the Trojan War, throughout the fifth century, culminating with Iphigenia at Aulis. It is Aeschylus, however, who first develops the pathos of the innocent victim. Agamemnon orders her to be bound and carried to the altar, despite her cries of “Father”(228), the first time in our sources that she has been heard to speak. This speech is swiftly and severely limited, however, as she is gagged to prevent her cursing the house. As she is bound, she is compared to a goat (χιμαίρας 232), completing the image of animal sacrifice.

As Iphigenia stands before the crowd, she sheds a saffron gown and appears as a painting (239-47):

\(^\text{113}\) Gantz (1983) 76.
κρόκου βαφὰς δ’ ἐς πέδον χέουσα
ἐβάλλ’ ἐκατον θυτήρων ἀπ’ ὄμματος βέλει
φιλοίκτω, πρέπουσα δ’ ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, προεννέπειν
θέλουσ’, ἐπεὶ πολλάκις
πατρός κατ’ ἄνδρώνας εὐτραπέζους
ἐμελυσεν, ἀγναί δ’ ἀταύρωτος αὐδὰί πατρός
φιλοῦ τριτόσπονδον εὐποτμον παιῶνα φίλως ἐτίμα.

Shedding to the ground her saffron garment,
she struck each of her slayers
with a piteous bolt from her eye,
conspicuous as in a picture, wishing
she might speak, as when often
by the man-hosting tables of her father
she sang, unwedded with pure voice
dearly honouring the blessed third libation of
her beloved father.

This passage has attracted a great deal of commentary, not only for its striking poetry, but also for its meaning (both the literal text and implied meaning of the imagery it employs).
The garment (κρόκου βαφὰς) may be related to the krokotos of the arkteia, but it is unlikely.
“What matters is that [Aeschylus] means no everyday garment but something splendid and costly, befitting a king’s daughter.”

The gown, and its removal by Iphigenia herself, carries clear implications of marriage imagery, though a seriously distorted marriage.

Wohl sees the sacrifice as such a perversion of marriage that she goes so far as to identify it as incest (since the father is the penetrator in the act).

Perhaps, but even if we do not push the analogy so far (as I do not think we should), Wohl’s model of the sacrificed virgin as a commodity hoarded by the father (resulting in his own destruction as well as hers) makes clear that Aeschylus’ conception of the sacrifice, if not a self-sacrifice, prefigures Euripides’.
The distorted eroticization of the sacrifice will be thoroughly developed by Euripides in Iphigenia at Aulis to the point that the marriage is accepted by both parties (Achilles and Iphigenia, though of course in the reality of Greek culture, Iphigenia’s consent would be meaningless).

116 Wohl (1998) 71-82 most thoroughly analyses the erotic and marital imagery and language of Iphigenia’s sacrifice in the Oresteia.
Implicit in this passage are questions of agency. Page and Denniston (and others after them) understood the painting simile to arise from Iphigenia’s silence. Iphigenia has already been compared to an *agalma*, “ornament” or “statue”, by her own father earlier in the *parodos* (208). By this reading, Iphigenia is literally objectified, converted into something that is to be looked at. Yet Iphigenia herself looks back, and the language of the passage is highly suggestive that her looking is a substitution for speech. Iphigenia’s gag (which appears in no visual representation of the sacrifice) is a potent symbol of suppressed agency: Iphigenia is not silent like a painting, she is *made* silent. That Iphigenia is capable of speech (as a painting is not) is clear not only from her cries to her father, but also from the chorus’ observation that she used to sing at her father’s table (243-47), which again carries connotations of decoration, enhancing the dining experience of the male guests. In Athenian society, only *hetairai* sang in male company. When Iphigenia goes to the sacrifice in Euripides, there is no need for such a gag, neither in the more secure passages before Iphigenia’s final exit, nor in the transmitted messenger speech. She has already made her cries of “Father” (with her appeal at *IA* 1211-52), and now exonerates Agamemnon in her acceptance of her death. In *Agamemnon*, Iphigenia is incapable of exonerating her father in this manner, and so there is an ambiguity in her death: what would Iphigenia have said upon the altar? If she cursed, who would she curse, her father or all the Achaeans? Certainly the cycle of the Trojan War, in which most of the Greek heroes suffer greatly, could accommodate such a curse.

Iphigenia standing before the suitors is a powerful image, almost literally, as she is compared to a picture. But this passage, with its invocation of painting (our earliest indication of the importance of individual figures in painting), also represents a nexus into which other genres and media intrude to create a complex tapestry of (often conflicting) meanings. It blurs the very limits of the theatrical experience (a fundamentally visual experience), as it simultaneously traces multiple lines of sight: the audience is to imagine looking at a picture, just as the Greek warriors are meant to be looking at Iphigenia (she is

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117 Denniston & Page (1957) at *Ag*. 242.
118 Scodel (1996) has a complete discussion of virgins in Greek tragedy functioning as *agalmata*.
120 Fraenkel (1950) 2.139.
“conspicuous”), who disrupts and even inverts the warriors’ gaze by looking back at them. Eyes and sight and watching are all notoriously erotic, or easily rendered as erotic, and this association was already well established in the genre of Greek lyric, of which the choral element of Greek tragedy is a close relative.  

In the Athenian imagination, painting holds great potential for emotion. Pity is easily aroused, again largely through the eyes, as Iphigenia looks at each of her killers with “a piteous bolt” (βέλει φιλοικτωι) which she actively casts (ἐβάλε), and also as her killers look at her. In chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss the tradition that develops in the fourth century, or perhaps as early as the exodos of Iphigenia at Aulis, of a hooded Agamemnon who cannot bear to look upon his daughter. The eroticism of painting has also been observed, and is made explicit in this passage as Iphigenia disrobes and poses for her audience.

This description of Iphigenia as painting, coupled with Agamemnon’s identification of her as agalma, directs us to comparisons with two women, already established in earlier art and literature: Helen and Polyxena. Within Agamemon, a subtle association is created between Helen and Iphigenia: Helen also produces “bolts from her eyes,” (ὄμματοϲ βέλοϲ 742), again in a description from the chorus, this time envisioning Helen as she enters Troy as Paris’ bride. This suggests a similarity between the two women, and Wohl reads the association as an implication that Iphigenia is a potential Helen, just as Helen was once an Iphigenia: “Helen, at her most desirable, just as she is entering Troy as a bride, recalls Iphigenia”. External to the Oresteia, this passage finds its most frequent comparison not to the Iphigenia plays of Euripides, but to the passage in Hecuba in which Polyxena goes to her own self-sacrifice (Hec. 558-62). Here Polyxena also disrobes before the Greek warriors and appears like an artwork, most likely a statue (ἀγάλματος, 560). Unlike Iphigenia before her (but like Iphigenia after her), Polyxena is able to speak, and offer up her breast for the knife. Polyxena then falls to the ground, modestly covering herself back up, in a scene identified by many critics as expressly erotic (568-70).

121 Wohl (1998) 72, 222 n.27.
In her study of femininity and death in European art and literature, Bronfen suggests that
the elimination of a feminine body serves to stabilize a perturbing ambivalence...a clear boundary between self and Other...can be reaffirmed. At the same time the enmeshment of desire and destructive aggression within and potentially endangering to the self is exclusively directed away from the self as it splits into two, in turn separated figures – the ideal, pure Woman and the dirty, demon Woman.126

As I noted in the previous chapter, Bronfen’s study focuses on the marital body. In the cycle of the Trojan War, this figure is most clearly embodied in Helen; she is the demon Woman, the sexual seductress who must be pursued by an entire army to reclaim her. But Iphigenia is not yet mature. She is virginal and represents neither woman, only the potential to become either. Wohl sees in Iphigenia a potential Helen, a potential for sexual infidelity that is brutally contained by the destruction of her body. But Iphigenia has potential to be the good woman as well. In particular, if she is a potential Helen, she is Helen prior not just to her marriage to Paris, but prior to her first marriage. Helen, before she chooses Menelaus as a suitor, is the potential lovely bride of all the suitors. Likewise, Iphigenia stands at a liminal moment, the moment of sacrifice which is also the moment of marriage, with not one man at her side, but all men watching her disrobe. Euripides will most explicitly recreate this one bride for all men with Polyxena in Hecuba, but he will also appropriate this image in Iphigenia in Aulis, where all men lay claim to (or are claimed by) another feminine body: that of Greece. I will expand on this last idea further in chapter 3.

After describing Iphigenia at the altar, the chorus refuse to speak of the event, except to say that the “skill of Calchas was not unfulfilled” (248). There is no hint of salvation.127 Perhaps even the image of a goat to describe Iphigenia at the altar is a subtle move away from the deer-substitution. But we should note that the salvation story is not necessarily

127 Griffith (2002) 243 proposes that the concluding satyr play Proteus may have inverted the serious themes of the Oresteia, by depicting the phantom Helen. Building on a suggestion from Cunningham (1994) 67, Griffith further suggests that the play may have included a report of Iphigenia’s salvation and removal to Crimea. This suggestion is speculative, of course, but also provocative. By relegating the salvation of Iphigenia to the satyr play, Aeschylus could be inaugurating a set of generic associations for the two versions: a sacrificed Iphigenia is “tragic” while a saved Iphigenia is “comic”. It is this type of convention with which Euripides is experimenting in his “romantic” tragedies of the 410s, in which both Helen and Iphigenia are alive and rescued.
irreconcilable with the version of Aeschylus. There are three possible versions of the story of Iphigenia’s sacrifice: (1) Iphigenia is sacrificed and not saved by Artemis; (2) Iphigenia is saved and the human agents recognize the substitution of the deer; (3) Iphigenia is saved, but the human sacrificers are unaware of her salvation. That option (3) is possible is shown by Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, which is predicated on the fact that no one knows Iphigenia is still alive, and thinks her long since sacrificed. It is important to note that, from the view of the human agents of this myth, there is no difference between options (1) and (3). Whether or not Iphigenia is saved, all the participants in the *Oresteia*, including the chorus who give their famous description of her death in the parados of *Agamemnon*, believe her dead. The perception of the human agents within the myth should dictate our own interpretation, since we have no evidence to suggest we follow another path: Iphigenia is certainly dead.

But despite this detailed and innovative treatment of the sacrifice in *Agamemnon*, Iphigenia does not actually appear as a character – her influence on the action is defined by her absence. Aeschylus must have brought the character on stage for his lost tragedy *Iphigenia*, but that is where our knowledge of this play begins and ends. A scholion from Sophocles’ *Ajax* provides a single line:

οὔτοι γυναιξὶ <δεῖ> κυδάζεϲθαι. τί γάρ;

These things <must> be reviled by women. How could they not? 128

This line is simply too vague to give any indication of what story the play might tell. Given Aeschylus’ known preference for connected trilogies, several scholars have attempted to assign Iphigenia to other plays. But these assignments are pure speculation, especially given the fragmentary nature of these other plays. 129

The only other possible literary treatment of the sacrifice story in the fifth-century is the lost *Iphigenia* of Sophocles. The influence this play might have had on Euripides is impossible to determine, because of both its fragmentary nature and its unknown date. Unlike the dating problem of the two Electras, however, we can at least be certain that Sophocles’ play was produced before, perhaps long before, Euripides’. But for content, we

128 Schol. Soph. Ajax 722 = Fr. 94 Radt.
129 For a list of proposed trilogies, see Radt (1985) 115. Of the proposed companion plays, *Thalamopoioi*, *Hiereiai*, *Telephus*, and *Palamedes*, there survive 1, 2, 3, and 4 small fragments, respectively.
have slightly more to go on than with Aeschylus. Four fragments comprising five lines survive, along with four single-word fragments cited by Hesychius. Of these, the most important is found in the *Suda*:

\[
\text{ϲǔ δ' ω̄ μεγίϲτων τυγχάνουϲα πενθερῶν}
\]

But you, who are getting for your daughter a husband with great parents...\(^{130}\)

That the marriage plot seems to have been an important element of this play seems secure, and so Sophocles’ play must have treated the sacrifice of Iphigenia in some way.

The *Suda* reports that the line is spoken by Odysseus to Clytemnestra and that he is referring to Achilles, hence the somewhat generous translation provided here. But even if the attribution of the *Suda* is speculative, it must surely be correct that this line is spoken by a character who does not appear in Euripides’ play. Odysseus is indeed a good candidate, since later tradition records that it was he who brought Iphigenia from Argos to Aulis (contra *Iphigenia at Aulis*, where a message is sent).\(^{131}\) The suggestion that the play is set in Argos rather than Aulis, and thus centred around Odysseus’ persuading Iphigenia to come to Aulis, is entirely speculative.\(^{132}\)

The remaining three fragments of this play are proverbial, telling us little about the play itself. One advises not putting honey in a jar that held vinegar,\(^{133}\) one advises acting like a chameleon when dealing with a husband,\(^{134}\) and the third warns against the dangers of too much leisure.\(^{135}\) The first is so abstract that we cannot assign any value to it whatsoever. The second might be assigned to Clytemnestra, in a scene not unlike her speech to Agamemnon, in which she extols her accommodation of Agamemnon despite his inappropriate behaviour as a husband (*IA* 1148-65). The third quotation may have resonance with the Greek army at rest in Aulis. In Euripides, the chorus describe in the *parodos* the behaviour of the army in largely positive terms. Ennius, on the other hand, has his chorus also warn that idle time

\(^{130}\) Phot. Galean. 410.4 = Suda π 963 = Fr. 305 Radt. Translation is from Lloyd-Jones (1996) 139.

\(^{131}\) First attested in Euripides’ *IT* at 24-5, and more explicitly in Apollodorus Ep. 3.22.

\(^{132}\) This suggestion originates with Zielinski (1925). See Lloyd-Jones (1996) 139. Michelakis (2006a) 24 is too confident in accepting this suggestion.

\(^{133}\) App. Prov. 4.27 = Fr. 306 Radt. οὔτων ἄγγοϲ οὐ μελιϲϲοῦϲθαι πρέπει.

\(^{134}\) Athenaeus *Deip.* 12.513B = Fr. 307 Radt νόει πρὸϲ ἀνδρὶ χρῶμα πουλύπουϲ ὅπωϲ / πέτραι τραπέϲθαι γνηϲίου φρονήματοϲ.

\(^{135}\) Stob. *Anth.* 3.30.6 = Fr. 308 Radt τίκτει γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐϲθλὸν ἐκεία σχολή,
often has negative consequences,\footnote{Gellius 19.10.12 = Jocelyn 99.} which has led at least some critics to propose Sophocles as a model for Ennius, as well as (or perhaps even instead of) Euripides (see chapter 4).\footnote{Skutsch (1953) 198-200, Brooks (1981) 220.}

**Visual Evidence**

The pictorial evidence for the sacrifice of Iphigenia is extremely limited – one archaic vase has a partial image of what may be the sacrifice, though two more vases in the fifth century are more specific. Even the single vase of the archaic period may not depict Iphigenia, but Polyxena, whose sacrifice has an iconography indistinguishable from Iphigenia’s: we can only be sure of the identity of the sacrifice when the vase is labelled. This dearth of evidence seems to reflect a distaste for the subject like that which scholars have detected in the early literary sources: “les deux épisodes [Iphigénie et Polyxène] sont rarement figurés: les peintres semblent avoir évité ces scènes ‘barbares’.”\footnote{Kahil (1990) 709.} With that in mind, however, we should also note that there are no pictures of the salvation of Iphigenia either – those do not appear until the fourth century, when images of the Taurian episode begin to dominate the visual evidence (see chapter 4).

The single archaic vase in question is a Protoattic Crater of the mid-seventh century (figure 2.1).\footnote{Boston MFA 6.67 = LIMC Iphigenia 2.} Though the vase is fragmentary and the painting damaged, parts of the major scenes on each side of the vase can be seen. These scenes are interspersed with a generous number of ornamental palmettes, rosettes, and lines. On the “front,” we see the feet and the dress hem of a female. She is being carried, face up, toward the left by at least three males. The hindmost figure, to the right, is almost completely preserved. The second figure is partially lost, but appears to be a near-duplicate of the complete figure. Only the back leg of the third remains, with the paint very nearly rubbed away. On the back, we see the bearded head, turned back and facing to the left, of a single male figure, “nearly suffocated in a riot of palmettes.”\footnote{Vermeule & Chapman (1971) 286, who provide the most detailed description of this crater.} Below the scene on the front, part of the lower band is preserved, depicting a row of sea-monsters. These sea monsters are very odd: they look like large fish with curly tails and three heads each, which are animal in appearance, perhaps dogs, bears, or lions. It
is difficult to deny the judgement of Vermeule and Chapman, who suggest that the heads of these monstrous creatures are smiling.

The provenance of this crater is unknown, but based on artistic idiosyncrasies, it has been attributed to the New York Nessos painter, a painter of the so-called “Wild Style,” an early stage of the Black and White Style.\footnote{New York 11.210.1. See Morris (1984) 65-70 for an analysis of this painter.} The experimental use of colour on the vase has led to a slightly later dating than the more complete Nessos vase, and a range between 650-630 BCE is probable. The krater was quite large, standing at least half a metre.

The fragments provide little purchase for any definitive mythological identification. We cannot in fact be certain that a mythological scene is intended, though it is likely. As Vermeule and Chapman note, most other large scenes of this style and period are of mythological scenes (including the Nessos vase, the only other work attributed to this painter.

\textit{Figure 2.1: A possible sacrifice (Iphigenia or Polyxena). Boston MFA 6.67. Image from Vermeule and Chapman (1971) Plate 71.}
aside from a few fragments). The scene is crude and (apparently) without mourners, which make a funeral scene unlikely.

If the scene is inspired by myth, a few options present themselves. Until Vermeule and Chapman in 1971, the scene on the front was believed to be the sacrifice of Polyxena, based on comparison to a black-figure vase of the early sixth century. That vase, surprisingly graphic in its depiction, is labelled, so identification is certain. In that image, three armed warriors (“Amphilochos”, “Antiphates”, and “Aias Iliades”) hold the horizontal body of Polyxena – face down – while Neoptolemus cuts her throat with a sword. She is seen bleeding over a small altar, directly beneath her throat. An altar of this size and placement could not be preserved on the fragment of Boston crater. One major discrepancy between the later Polyxena vase and the crater in question is that the female is held face up, rather than face down, a position more appropriate to (and indeed necessary for) sacrifice above an altar. Given that we only see the feet of this figure, however, we cannot be certain of her pose. Vermeule and Chapman suggest this figure may be twisted at the waist, struggling or imploring the figure preparing to kill her.

In this twisted pose, Vermeule and Chapman see traces of the resisting Iphigenia, as described in *Agamemnon* 228-37, where she is held like a goat, or as depicted in the Pompeii fresco, which may take the painting of Timanthes as its inspiration (see chapter 5 for discussion of this image). To this, they add the suggestion that Iphigenia, and the House of Atreus in general, are slightly more prevalent in the literary and visual fragments of the Archaic period, though Hedreen now argues otherwise, that Polyxena is more commonly featured than Iphigenia. The fact that the men carrying the female are not in armour, but appear as calm civilians or household servants complicates the issue further.

The suggestion of Iphigenia, made with extreme reservation, leads Vermeule and Chapman to further speculation as they attempt to incorporate the various visual elements into a single mythological moment. For the bearded figure on the back, for whom there is no immediate candidate in the Polyxena story, they suggest Calchas. Of course, the two images

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142 Vermeule & Chapman (1971) 290.
143 British Museum, London 97.7-27.2
need not be related. If they are, then perhaps an afterthought by Morris is of some value: that
the female is Macaria, the maiden daughter of Heracles.\footnote{Morris (1984) 69.} The bearded head does bear
resemblance to other portrayals of the hero. But this is unlikely, since Macaria is more than
likely an innovation of Euripides for \textit{Heraclidae}, some two centuries later.\footnote{This assumption originates with Wilamowitz’ 1882 commentary on \textit{Heraclidae}. Zuntz (1955) 111-13 challenges the assertion. See also Allan (2001) 32-33. Pausanias 1.32.6 suggests an existing tradition in Attic legend, but says that Macaria was a suicide, not a sacrifice.} For the band of
sea-monsters, showing both Oriental and Protocorinthian influence, Vermeule and Chapman
suggest that the body of Iphigenia is to be disposed of in the sea, with the monsters literally
grinning with anticipation. This is wild speculation, which Vermeule and Chapman admit
they have done in part for the sheer amusement of it, but the incorporation of the bearded
man and the sea monsters are not necessary and may well be independent motifs.

If we do accept the Iphigenia sacrifice for this vase, it still does not contribute much
to our understanding of this myth in the Archaic period. Even the pose of the victim is not
enough to indicate whether or not the victim is willing, though given that the other literary
sources discussed in this section do not seem overly concerned with Iphigenia’s response to
the sacrifice, there is no reason to suppose she should be struggling here either (as Polyxena
does not appear to do in the later image). If this were the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the most
interesting detail would perhaps be the dress of the men carrying her: there is nothing to
suggest the traditional military camp setting of the sacrifice, on which at least the \textit{Cypria}
insists. As we have seen, the one surviving fragment of Sophocles has suggested to some a
domestic setting at Argos, rather than at Aulis. That association is tenuous, but if we allow it,
then it may not be so far-fetched to see the same setting in this vase. It is ultimately doubtful,
however, and any conclusions we might draw from this crater fragment can only be, as they
were for Vermeule and Chapman, entertaining speculation.

Two fifth-century vases, both fragmentary, depict the Iphigenia sacrifice. The first is
a black figure \textit{lekythos}, dating to about 470 BCE, by the painter Douris (figure 2.2).\footnote{Palermo, Mus. Reg. NI 1886 = \textit{LIMC} Iphigenia 3.} Mythological identification is secure as Iphigenia is labelled. She is standing (or walking)
between two armed soldiers, approaching an altar to the right. She is wearing a diaphanous
robe, and holds part of the garment in her raised left hand. Her expression is calm, but her
head is facing down. Of the soldier behind her (to her left), only the legs and sword remain, and the inscription is lost. Grasping her garment and leading her forward, however, is Teucer, helmeted with his sword held out before him. Only the top of the altar is visible, but it, too, apparently had an inscription: the letters ΑΡ remain, presumably identifying the altar as belonging to Artemis. Beyond the altar, the top of a palm tree can be seen, normally associated with Apollo, but occasionally in vases associated with Artemis.¹⁴⁹ There is a large fragment missing from the far right of the image, and there could have been a fourth figure in this space. A very thin piece remains above the border of the image, however, and there appear to be no feet. One marking seems to be the foot of the palm tree, and another is unidentifiable. A hoof might not be impossible – is there a deer waiting to be sacrificed in Iphigenia’s place? – but the line is a mere squiggle.

The presence of Teucer at the sacrifice, pulling Iphigenia along as he looks back at her, is difficult to explain. Gantz may have the best guess, namely that “the presence of Teukros in a commanding role suggests that the sacrifice was supported by the entire army.”¹⁵⁰ But Teucer is only half Greek, the (usually illegitimate) son of Telamon and a

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Trojan princess, and it is difficult to see how he could represent the entire Greek army. In the fifth century, notably Sophocles’ Ajax and Euripides’ Helen, he is separated from the Greeks due to his Trojan heritage.

Kahil attempts to divide the visual representations of the sacrifice into two categories: images in which Iphigenia appears to be forced to the altar, and images where she goes willingly. Thus some images follow the more traditional version of Agamemnon while others reflect Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis. This division, I feel, does not properly account for the evolution of the myth. The self-sacrifice of Iphigenia is most likely an Euripidean innovation, not a tradition that existed earlier: the only major variants available to Euripides were the accomplished sacrifice or the divine salvation. To suggest, for instance, that this vase is an example of a willing, self-sacrificing Iphigenia almost seven decades prior to Euripides’ play, is to bend the evidence to fit the conclusion. The expression on Iphigenia’s face is not an excited one, but it may only be one of resignation. She is, after all, escorted by two men with drawn swords.

A more profitable interpretation of this scene is that of Jenkins, following on the connection between marriage and sacrifice initially made by Foley. This vase, Jenkins argues, with Teucer leading Iphigenia by the garment, recalls “the act of leading the bride χεῖρ’ ἐπὶ καρπῷ,” in which a bride is led to the wedding ceremony and altar or hearth by the hand. In this configuration, the drawn swords take the place of the wedding-torches usually carried by the groom and celebrants, a theme seen on other lekythoi. If this image was indeed meant to evoke the marriage ritual, it is an interesting early example of the marriage motif in sacrifice, one hinted at in the parodos of Agamemnon, produced at least a decade later. But without the complete image, it is impossible to say: whose legs are those on the far left? What is lost in the missing fragment?

The other fifth-century image is an Attic oinochoe of 430-20 BCE, perhaps by the Shuvalov Painter (figure 2.3), at least fifteen years earlier than Euripides’ Iphigenia at

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151 He is illegitimate in Homer, II. 8.281-84. Xenophon, Cyn. 1.9, is first to identify his mother as Hesione, daughter of Laomedon and sister of Priam.
152 Kahil (1990).
155 Kiel Univ. B 538 = LIMC Iphigenia 1.
Aulis, and at least five years even before *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. But it is to the version of the latter that the image refers, since the salvation is clearly evoked. On the left of the image, Iphigenia is held by the shoulders by a beardless man, with her knees half-bent. Hedreen suggests she has fainted, but her face is rubbed away, so it is difficult to be certain. In front of her is a low stone altar. To the right of this is a bearded warrior, holding a drawn sword in one hand and gesturing to the altar with the other. On the far right is Artemis with a bow on her back and small hind in her hand (she stands ready for the substitution). The identity of the two warriors is impossible to tell. The beardless warrior could be a young Achilles, but no literary account of the sacrifice has him actually participating, and Euripides in his later *Iphigenia at Aulis* has Achilles actually resisting the sacrifice. The bearded warrior could be Agamemnon, but even Teucer is a possibility, after the lekythos five decades earlier.  

**Conclusions**

Proclus’ summary of the *Cypria* and the papyrus fragment of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* make it very clear that the salvation of Iphigenia is a very old tradition of the myth, and perhaps is the original version of the story. The suggestion that the death, permanent

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156 Hedreen (2001) 162.  
without immortalization, of Iphigenia is the original version, with the salvation and immortalization being later additions by Archaic poets who found the subject somewhat distasteful is very tempting, and may well be true, but there is no direct evidence to support such a suggestion. The visual evidence of a Protoattic crater gives no indication of a salvation, but is too fragmentary to be conclusive.

The fifth-century poets, on the other hand, found the idea of an Iphigenia who perishes upon the altar far more intriguing. That the sacrifice can generate a great deal of pathos is clearly shown in the *Agamemnon*, and indeed this pathos is still strong in later versions of the myth by Sophocles and Euripides. The troubled *exodos of Iphigenia at Aulis* makes it impossible to determine the version ultimately preferred by Euripides. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see this poet passing up the pathos of a self-sacrifice like this one, and the prologue of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* makes it clear that even if Iphigenia is saved, there is no reason the mortal witnesses in Aulis should know anything of it.
Chapter 3: The Play in its Original Context

I turn now to the play itself and how meaning was constructed (by poet and audience) in its original context – that is in the City Dionysia in the late fifth century. The fundamental question of this chapter will be: how was this play understood by its original audience? This question will be approached in three separate, yet complementary, modes attuned to Euripides’ own thematic preferences: the virgin self-sacrifice; the historical context of a Trojan war play produced at the end of a long and bitter Greek conflict; and the practical concerns of dramaturgy. While it is always risky attempting to assess the reaction of a spectator across such a great cultural and temporal divide, this process of contextualization (thematic, socio-historical, theatrical) is of crucial importance to any critical evaluation of a text or play.

Each of the above approaches seeks to connect *Iphigenia at Aulis* to a broader context. Assessment of the virgin self-sacrifice motif in the first section of this chapter will situate the play within Euripides’ own work. Euripides, like many great artists and creators, frequently returns to story patterns and scenarios he finds interesting. Each iteration of a pattern, be it the Potiphar’s Wife plays of his early-middle career, the “romantic” tragedies of the 410s or the self-sacrifice plays spanning the three decades of the Peloponnesian War, features sometimes subtle, but always significant, variation by which the core issue is explored. The analysis of historical context of the second section will explore the question of panhellenism in *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Since the play is conspicuously distant from any relevant *polis*, the concerns of Agamemnon’s family are played out against the backdrop of a large and unsympathetic Hellenic army. A large enough portion of the population of Athens seems to have been interested in a panhellenic unity as alternative to the destructive conflict of the Peloponnesian War that the appeals to Hellas of Agamemnon, Menelaus and Iphigenia must have had some resonance with Euripides’ audience. Finally, a pragmatic analysis of the dramaturgical concerns of the play (and necessities dictated by the performance venue) emphasizes Euripides’ final tragedy in a wider (performative if not literary) intertext of the drama of fifth-century Athens and underscores the power dynamics functioning in the relationships between characters. In particular, the plays’ gendered concerns can are played
out physically and visually in the acting space, where they resonate with earlier stories of the House of Atreus, most notably the *Oresteia* and Euripides’ own *Electra*.

The concerns of this chapter will inform those that follow. The sacrifice, after all, with considerations of motivation and impact, as well as socio-political applications and dramatic effect, is why later artists and writers find themselves drawn to this story. While later chapters will consider the reception of the play in antiquity and beyond, Hardwick rightly notes that “the traditional practices of classical philology have an important part to play in developing the broader cultural philology that reception studies needs.”¹ In other words, before we can explore the afterlife of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, we need to consider the initial moment of reception: its first performance at the City Dionysia at the end of the fifth century. In each moment of reception featured in subsequent chapters, the artistic concerns of the creator, the historical context of the adaptation, and the performative/literary/artistic context of the work will clearly inform our understanding of the relationship between exemplar and adaptation.

**Euripides and the Virgin Sacrifice**

The sacrifice of Iphigenia is the single most important interpretive issue of this play. The death of a young and innocent girl to enable a massive military expedition is, after all, what the play is about. Furthermore, the sacrifice is the junction at which most, if not all, methodological approaches to *Iphigenia at Aulis* intersect. Iphigenia’s death has relevance for those studying wider themes in Greek drama and society, including recent studies on gender² and explorations of Hellenic identity (see the next section). From a mythographic standpoint, the primary choice made by Euripides when adapting the myth is whether or not his Iphigenia will actually die: all innovation, such as the willingness of the victim, must be built upon this choice.³ Even the textual critics of the play find the final lines – those that actually describe the sacrificial process and eventual salvation – the most problematic in our received text.⁴ “Today the play is best known for the corruption of its moral universe and the

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In the final chapters, this study will turn to issues of reception, and there too the sacrifice will be of crucial importance. Visual representations (with the exception of the Megarian terracotta bowls – and the reasons for this exception will be discussed in the next chapter) focus on the moment of sacrifice. Literary adaptations, whether for page or stage, must, like Euripides before them, consider the option of Iphigenia’s death before all others. Many of these later adaptations face further challenges beyond those of Euripides: audience taste and sensibilities, for instance, as well as contemporary political concerns (see chapter 6). Like all works of literature, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is malleable to a variety of interpretive agendas.

In this section, I will summarize what we know of the attitudes toward sacrifice in the late fifth century, and survey the self-sacrifice plays of Euripides. This is a theme to which he returns several times in the final third of his career, but with each new play introduced variations in the theme. Thus one play, or perhaps two, features a male victim of self-sacrifice (*Phoenician Women* and possibly *Phrixus*). Usually a parent or elder family member attempts to prevent the sacrifice (*Children of Heracles, Hecuba, Phoenician Women, Iphigenia at Aulis*), even after the youth has accepted its inevitability (as happens in *Children of Heracles, Hecuba, Iphigenia at Aulis*), but again, in one play at least it is the victim’s mother who advocates the sacrifice most strongly, while the child remains (presumably) silent (*Erechtheus*). Euripides, in treating the same theme repeatedly, is conditioning his audience, playing on preconceived understandings of the role and language of sacrifice, and exploring those understandings through variation and experimentation.

Human sacrifice is common enough in the landscape of Greek mythology, \(^6\) even if it is not widely attested historically. \(^7\) The previous chapter traced the incarnations of the sacrifice myth in which Iphigenia is variously murdered or saved at the final moment. But whether or not Iphigenia dies in those previous versions, she is always an unwilling victim, dragged to the altar to be killed by another, her father or the priest Calchas. The *willingness* of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is a key element in the play. Her sacrifice is not a trivializing of the myth, but a necessary step in the process of redemption for the Greeks, and a means of atoning for the sins of their past.

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5 Michelakis (2006b) 220.
of Iphigenia to die on behalf of Greece seems to be an innovation of Euripides, and the exploration of her feelings, as both victim and martyr, brings a new dimension to the tale: “The concept of the voluntary victim who consents to be sacrificed to save the polis is an Euripidean innovation that offers a mitigating reinterpretation of the traditional motif of human sacrifice.”

Prior to Euripides, the parodos of Agamemnon introduced a radical innovation to the tale by treating Iphigenia as a feeling person and individual. Although the chorus’ description of her as a frightened child (207) is sympathetic to her situation, the parallelism between her and an animal victim (215, 233), as she is bound and gagged (235-37), in addition to the distance of the narrative from the audience (a tale told ten years after the fact by a chorus who could not even watch the final act), prevents her from having any individual personality or truly human quality.

The lack of psychological development of Iphigenia as a character is not surprising in Aeschylus’ predecessors: this type of characterization (particularly for a female) is simply not part of the epic agenda. Sacrifice is a ritual, and rituals are dromena, actions. Our modern sense of the term, informed by Judeo-Christian values, tends to focus on the victim rather than the action. Aeschylus inaugurates a shift toward a victim-oriented mode of thinking about sacrifice when he portrays Iphigenia as a sympathetic and suffering victim. Euripides develops this even further, allowing his sacrificial victims to speak for themselves, though neither poet loses sight of the functional significance of sacrifice as action.

Between the archaic epic and classical tragic portrayals of sacrifice, there is a shift which parallels the increasingly complicated approach to the ritual action of animal sacrifice. In Homeric epic, no concern for the emotional state of the victim is exhibited. Kirk observes the patterns of several instances of animal sacrifice in Homer, and several key features of classical sacrifice are not in evidence. Never in either the Iliad or the Odyssey is there

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9 Perhaps more could be said about Aeschylus’ characterization of Iphigenia if we possessed Aeschylus’ Iphigenia, or any fragment thereof. Even then, of course, this would not necessarily imply a specific characterization in Agamemnon, a different play for a different trilogy.
12 Kirk (1981) 63-68. Kirk is expressing caution against what he sees as a tendency toward conflation and generalization, by which many scholars apply fifth-century values of sacrifice to Homeric practice. Burkert (1983) 3-7 gives a full account of a sacrifice, using mostly Classical or post-Classical sources.
mention of the nod of assent from the victim, so crucial to the acceptance of the sacrifice in the fifth century. Absent also is the notion of concealing the sacrificial knife. In the fifth century, the victim’s cooperation, or inferred cooperation, is paramount: an upset victim is a bad omen of the highest order. Purification of the victim is also less important in epic: in Homer water is sprinkled on the hand of the sacrificer, not on the victim. By contrast, Euripides’ victims of sacrifice assert their own willingness, and references to the hidden knife and the purification and garlanding of the victim are common. In the one instance of human sacrifice in Homer, the twelve princes sacrificed by Achilles on the tomb of Patroclus, the victims are unnamed and exist as elements on a list, along with four horses, two dogs, honey, and oil (\textit{Iliad} 23.175).\footnote{The sacrifice is not insignificant, and it has a strong presence in the \textit{Iliad}: it is mentioned six times. Achilles promises the princes to Patroclus at 18.336-37 and their capture occupies seven lines at 21.26-32. Achilles himself twice refers back to their slaughter in \textit{Iliad} 23 at 181-82 and 241-42, see Hughes (1991) 53-54.}

By and large the treatment of ritual in general, and sacrifice specifically, is positive in epic, a contrast to the uncontrolled violence of the battlefield welcomed by the participants. It is not until the rise of the \textit{polis} as the primary social unit (supplanting the \textit{oikos}) in the sixth and fifth centuries, when \textit{polis}-based patriotism displaces the Heroic Code of \textit{kleos}, that we see real psychological and emotional explorations of human sacrifice in our literary sources. In tragedy, ritual frequently supplies the vocabulary used to express inter-familial violence.\footnote{Seaford (1989).} That this exploration begins in tragedy is no coincidence: tragedy is inextricably bound up with the development of the Athenian \textit{polis}. Aeschylus, as noted above (and see chapter 2), begins the process in the extant literature, but it is Euripides who truly explores the topic. Euripides demonstrates a fascination with the subject of self-sacrifice, the notion of victim assent carried to its logical extreme.

Of the self-sacrifice tragedies of Euripides, \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} is perhaps the most fully developed. It is, with the possible exception of the lost \\textit{Erechtheus},\footnote{\textit{Erechtheus} must culminate in Poseidon’s assault on the Acropolis, which is halted by an appearance from Athena as \textit{deus ex machina} (fr. 370 Kn, 55-117); the sacrifice must occur earlier in the play. In her speech, Athena refers to the daughter(s) of Erechtheus in an \textit{aition} (66-89), and so the relevance of the sacrifice is maintained throughout the play.} the only tragedy in which the sacrifice is the indisputable, primary subject of the play. All three movements of the play – Agamemnon’s indecision, the arrival of the women and revelation of the sacrifice,
and the acceptance of the sacrifice – are focused on it. The question of whether the sacrifice will take place drives all conflict and tension in the play, even if the meaning of that tension is in debate among modern scholars. In the other self-sacrifice plays, the sacrifice takes place earlier in the drama,\(^{16}\) and other events distort our understanding of the consequences of the self-sacrifice: the death of Polydorus in *Hecuba*, for example, or the rejuvenation of Iolaus and the trial of Eurystheus in *Children of Heracles*.

Euripides goes to great lengths to problematize the sacrifice of Iphigenia. By omitting any cause of offence to Artemis, denying even the omen of the twin eagles seen in the *parodos* of *Agamemnon* (a crime of which Agamemnon is nominally innocent), he refuses to provide any concrete reason for which the sacrifice must take place. That Euripides was free to use other versions is certain, and in fact confirmed in the prologue of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (6-30), where Iphigenia describes the sacrifice and salvation, of which her fellow Greeks are unaware. Instead, only the word of Calchas motivates the sacrifice, unaccompanied by any omen or sign of divine authority. Later in the play, it is the desires of a Greek army prone to mob violence that demand the death of Iphigenia, at which point the initial reasons for the sacrifice barely matter – the army is out for blood. Even the chief threat to Agamemnon, Odysseus, who will rally the mob and report the secret prophecy of Calchas, is kept off stage. Odysseus’ motives are never made clear: he is ambitious (φιλότιμαι μὲν ἐνέχεται, *IA* 527), as is Calchas (520), but we are not told what he is ambitious for. Power? Glory at Troy? Plunder? We could speculate, given our knowledge of the wider myth, that perhaps Odysseus is vengeful after his exposure by Palamedes and the invocation of the oath of Tyndareus forcing him into the war or that he is keen to earn glory at Troy, but these are straws and we are grasping. It is certain, however, that the quality of φιλότιμος has negative connotations for the Athenians in the late fifth century.\(^{17}\) As is so often the case in Greek tragedy, our playwright is less concerned with the details of events

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\(^{16}\) See the systematic analysis of Wilkins (1990) 183.

\(^{17}\) The only possibly positive use of the word in Euripides is also the earliest by over a decade, in Adrastus’ description of Tydeus (*SW* 907). Φιλότιμος is a rare word in Euripides, used only seven times, four of which are in *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Eteocles is warned against (a personified) ambition at *PhW* 532 by Jocasta who then outright accuses him of such ambition at *PhW* 567 (the line is excised by most modern editors, though Mastronarde defends it). The other character in *IA* accused of being φιλότιμος is Agamemnon. He is accused by Menelaus (342) and tacitly acknowledges the accusation in his rebuttal (385). The word is used more positively by Aeschylus *SW* 658 and *Eum*. 1032, cf. Mastronarde (1994) 299.
than with their impact on the immediate situation and its characters, in this case a father justifying and inuring himself against the sacrifice of his own daughter, eventually giving way to focus on the reactions of mother and daughter.¹⁸

Perhaps even more difficult for critics than the motivations for the sacrifice is its outcome: what does the sacrifice of Iphigenia accomplish? In order to consider human sacrifice, we must examine, at least briefly, blood sacrifice more generally. This is appropriate for Iphigenia, who again and again, from the substitution story told in the *Cypria* to the vivid imagery of *Agamemnon*,¹⁹ is shown as having a close connection with the notion of animal sacrifice. Early interpretive models of sacrifice saw it as a process of “communication between the sacred and the profane,”²⁰ and on some levels this remains appropriate for *Iphigenia at Aulis*, in which the young maiden is intended to mitigate the anger of Artemis. At 1080-81, Iphigenia is compared by the chorus to a mountain-dwelling faun (ἔλαφον ὀρείαν), which simultaneously recalls Iphigenia’s substitution in early versions of the myth, and signifies the inappropriateness of her role as sacrifice: only domestic animals could properly be sacrificed.²¹ Evolutionary theories, most prominently those of Burkert, suggest that elements of sacrifice in the Greek world were informed by the guilt felt by earlier, more primitive, hunting tribes over the necessity of killing for food. As an expiation of guilt, the sacrifice becomes a sacred act, what Burkert terms “the sacred crime.”²² Formal sacrifice evolved as a ritual process that mitigated unavoidable violence, an action that helped the bonding of the community.²³ Burkert and the evolutionists do not go unchallenged, however: Smith, for instance, questions the importance of the primitive hunter in the development of sacrificial ritual, when all known animal sacrifice in ancient Greece is that of domesticated animals, suggesting neither a hunting nor a primitive society.²⁴ Smith’s challenge resonates with a confusion on the level of mythical *aitia* as well, given that many so-called cult legends involve the killing of a wild animal, while the corresponding historical

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¹⁸ Conacher (1967) 254.
²⁰ Roselli (2007) 83 provides a useful summary.
²³ This touches also on the theory of Meuli (1975, first published 1946), who saw Olympian sacrifice in particular as response to feelings of culpability arising from the hunt.
sacrifice is a domesticated animal (see the discussion of the legends of Artemis’ cult in Attica in chapter 2). More recent are the structuralist approaches of scholars like Foley, in which sacrifice as ritual contributes to the demarcation of boundaries, particularly those between gods, animals, and men.  

Each of these approaches is initially limited to the practice of animal sacrifice. The more sinister process of human sacrifice can be incorporated into these models, either by considering human sacrifice as animal sacrifice writ larger, or by extending the social framework within which the sacrifice is performed. For the evolutionists, human sacrifice stems from the same aggression that must be mitigated by animal sacrifice, and can be thought to address periods of anxiety or unrest. For the structuralists, the use of a human victim demarcates social boundaries. For Foley, who integrates a feminist reading with a structural approach, sacrifice delineates the hierarchical strata of a patriarchal society: the ritual of sacrifice becomes eroticized and ultimately confused with other processes steeped in ritual, particularly marriage and childbirth.

David Roselli has most recently revisited the theme of self-sacrifice in Greek tragedy, using *Children of Heracles* as his focus text. He has attempted to move beyond the earlier models, declaring them too “conservative”: he rejects models of sacrifice which explore the function of this ritual as a process only within the system of society (even in the structuralist approach, to which he accords more credit). Earlier models present sacrifice as a ritual that identifies and reinforces the practices of the society in which it operates. For Roselli, sacrifice, and human sacrifice in particular, represents a vehicle of change, in which a normally marginalized sector of society, women, slaves, foreigners *et cetera*, is able, through the death of one of its own, to push that society through a period of crisis and, through its heightened importance, effect change within that society. The violence of the sacrifice replaces the violence of the revolution. When this Marx-inspired approach is applied to

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27 I confess, at the risk of branding myself according to Roselli’s own distinctions, that I find the use of the word “conservative” unsettling in this context. Roselli’s language, particularly in the opening section of his article, implies, I feel, too direct a connection between critical interpretation of a text and the socio-political views of the interpreter. This is not to invalidate Roselli’s approach, but his engagement with ancient sacrifice in the mode of twentieth-century class struggle has a slight ring of the manifesto. Perhaps this is
Children of Heracles (and see below for further discussion), the Maiden not only demarcates the distinctions between centralized and marginalized social groups – the maiden is both elite as a member of an aristocratic family and marginal as a female from outside the polis – she challenges those distinctions as a character of identification for multiple social groups. In order to gauge the impact of the self-sacrifice on the Athenian audience, Roselli then explores treatments of citizens’ sacrifices on behalf of the polis.

Iphigenia at Aulis, however, conspicuously lacks a polis, a detail which has bothered many critics, since Iphigenia does not die in defence of her community, but rather to enable the destruction of another. The issue is further complicated by the rather ambiguous portrayal of that community: as we will see in the next section, although many characters tout Greece as the ideal for which to die, political opportunism deprives the nationalist rhetoric of much of its force. Agamemnon’s rhetoric in defence of his decision to sacrifice his daughter presents the army as a direct danger to the family (1267-68), but the jaded critic simply sees Iphigenia’s acceptance of this argument as proof of her naiveté.28

Euripides does refer to involuntary human sacrifice in his plays, notably Polyxena in Trojan Women and Iphigenia herself in Iphigenia among the Taurians, both cases which are recast as self-sacrifice in other plays. The playwright, however, seems far more interested in exploring self-sacrifice, both as an action that enables and as one that divides and destroys. Most self-sacrifice situations accomplish both: Iphigenia’s sacrifice, for example, enables the Greek expedition, but also dooms the Trojan people to destruction and even sunders her own family, as Clytemnestra declares that she will never forgive Agamemnon. Alcestis, Euripides’ earliest extant play, already demonstrates some interest in the topic, where a female willingly perishes for another human being, a male.29 But Alcestis’ voluntary death is complicated by a post-mortem rescue by Heracles and by her forced silence at the end of the play. Furthermore, the death of Alcestis, like the epic deaths of Hector and Protesilaus, lacks any ritual frame and is thus not part of the self-sacrifice motif that I describe here. Suppliant Women, Heracles, and the lost Protesilaus also show female characters dying on behalf of

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28 Funke (1964) is particularly cynical, see chapter one.
29 Sophocles’ Antigone also has the “germs of self-sacrifice,” Wilkins (1990) 177.
others outside of the ritual context. Ritual sacrifice automatically introduces questions of religious belief and practice that Euripides seems to have found appealing.\textsuperscript{30}

It will be helpful to survey Euripides’ earlier plays of self-sacrifice. By doing this, we can see which parameters of the self-sacrifice story are consistent and with which Euripides is willing to experiment. This is a process of contextualization, defined by the question: what would the audience have expected of a Euripidean sacrifice play? Veteran play-goers in the late fifth century can hardly have been surprised to find Iphigenia volunteering for her own death, even if there were no precedents in the mythological tradition.

We know of six tragedies by Euripides that treat the self-sacrifice motif within a formal ritual context, spread out over a period of about 30 years, covering roughly the second half of Euripides’ career and largely synchronous with the Peloponnesian War. The tradition of self-sacrifice which culminates in \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} most likely begins with \textit{Children of Heracles} which was produced about 430.\textsuperscript{31} Between these two plays, one of the \textit{Phrixus} plays, \textit{Hecuba}, \textit{Erechtheus}, and \textit{Phoenician Women} all feature a self-sacrificing youth. Except for the willingness of the victim, there are few consistent elements to these six plays, but the scenario itself is fairly stable and there is a definite pattern against which Euripides works. We are shown 1) a \textit{polis} or community, threatened by an invading force or calamity. 2) An oracle or prophet reveals that a god or supernatural force has demanded a human sacrifice, usually with an intended victim. 3) After a period of resistance, 4) the young person named volunteers for the sacrifice, 5) usually resolving a political or martial impasse among the other mortal characters. 6) We are often treated to a lengthy speech in which the character outlines her or his motives for the sacrifice.\textsuperscript{32} The young person usually devalues their own personal worth: the individual is sacrificed to save the many,\textsuperscript{33} the female dies for the male,\textsuperscript{34} the potential coward is converted into a hero. The god to whom the sacrifice is made varies, but is usually consistent with the play’s \textit{mise-en-scène}, and the victim is often

\textsuperscript{30} Previous studies of self-sacrifice in Euripides also restrict themselves to the ritual frame. See Foley (1985) 65, O’Connor-Visser (1987) 1-2; this is the implied criterion of Wilkins (1990).
\textsuperscript{31} Metrical analysis suggests shortly after \textit{Medea}, though any date in the early 420s would be acceptable. See Cropp-Fick (1985) 23.
\textsuperscript{32} This list differs in content and intent from Wilkins (1990) 182-3.
\textsuperscript{33} The focal point of Wilkins (1990).
said to have a lasting association with that deity (and in some cases already has one) beyond their death.

Euripides, it must be said, does not repeat himself, or at least not exactly. When he finds a motif or a story-pattern that he likes, he returns to it, but always with variation. The Potiphar’s Wife motif is another example of Euripides’ tendency toward plot variation: a younger man is approached by an older woman and suffers her vengeance when he rejects her, enacted through the woman’s husband, always a man of some authority. The two Hippolytus plays are the best known examples – the second Hippolytus appears to be the culmination of Euripides’ interest in the motif\textsuperscript{35} – but a number of lost plays also explored this story.\textsuperscript{36} This variation of an established model is one of the ways in which Euripides articulates his thematic interests in a given tragedy. Thus in each of Euripides’ plays of self-sacrifice, some variant element(s) distinguishes it from its predecessors. This difference is crucial to the interpretation of a given play.

Euripides’ engagement with the self-sacrifice motif becomes increasingly complex with repeated iterations. *Children of Heracles* presents the simplest and briefest treatment of the theme. Iolaus explains to the Maiden the current situation – that a noble daughter must be sacrificed to protect Athens from the army of Eurystheus – and she immediately volunteers for the job. In a lengthy speech she explains her reasoning, with three main points. 1) The city has made a great commitment in protecting her and her siblings and it would be cowardice not to match it (503-06); 2) this is her best chance to prove herself worthy of her mighty father (509); and, 3) even if she did survive the attack on the city, no man would take her in marriage and she could never have a family (523-24). The Maiden refuses the option of drawing lots among all the daughters of Heracles, feeling that this would introduce an element of compulsion: she stresses her willingness repeatedly (501-2, 531, 551). At line 601, she leaves the stage, the chorus praise her in a brief choral ode and then she is never mentioned again. We have no messenger speech describing her death, as in *Hecuba*, *Erectheus*, and (maybe) *Iphigenia at Aulis*, nor does any character even seem to

\textsuperscript{35} Hutchinson (2004) now challenges the accepted ordering of the two Hippolytus plays.

\textsuperscript{36} Among the titles of lost plays, *Peleus*, *Phoenix*, *Phrixus*, and *Stheneboea* are all probable candidates. The only systematic study that I know of is Cavan (1998) which summarizes a Masters thesis at Queen’s University (Kingston, Ontario), but see also Griffin (1990) 128-31.
remember her deeds. This may be a textual problem: *Children of Heracles* is a problem text, and a lost messenger speech is a possibility.\(^{37}\) Certainly we do have a lacuna at the end of the play, precisely where we might reasonably expect an *aition* for the dead daughter of Heracles. This is Euripides’ first foray into the self-sacrifice motif, and this treatment lacks much of the sophistication of the later plays, as indeed the play itself is often deemed inferior.\(^{38}\) The Maiden is unnamed and undeveloped as a character. She exists, in fact, only to be sacrificed: the very idea of Heracles having any daughters at all seems to be an innovation for this play.\(^{39}\) Her entrance is sudden and unannounced and so we might expect her exit to be as well.\(^{40}\)

David Roselli identifies the sacrifice of the Maiden as an expression of class struggle, in which a marginalized sector of the population (here represented by the Maiden, both female and from another *polis*, in as much as at the time of the play she is an exile, and thus technically *apolis*) exerts its power to affect social change and demonstrates the extreme cost of that change.\(^{41}\) The sacrifice of the Maiden becomes a politically effective act that can be appropriated, ambiguously, by various social strata. The Maiden herself occasionally describes her sacrifice in militaristic terms: she seeks victory over an enemy (530), wishes to die gloriously (534), and her pledge to “stand by” the sacrifice may recall the ephebic pledge never to abandon those who “stand by” them (502).\(^{42}\)

But the Maiden herself does not subscribe to Roselli’s reading. She does not stress her relation to the community, except at the very beginning of her speech. Even here she presents her bravery as something offered in exchange for the sanctuary the *polis* is providing and for honourable treatment of her body (she asks for women of the city to tend her body, apparently not her sisters or Alcmene, 565). The *polis* means little to her, except in its immediate capacity as protector: she would sacrifice herself, it seems, for any *polis* that

\(^{37}\) Originally proposed by Wilamowitz (1882), though scholarly consensus is largely now against a lost messenger speech after 629. More likely is a lacuna in a missing passage at the end of the play. The highlights of this debate are McLean (1934), Zuntz (1947), Lesky (1977), Wilkins (1993) xxvii. Allan (2001) 35-37 summarizes the discussion very well.

\(^{38}\) Allan (2001) 21-22 sums up (and challenges) the negative criticism.


\(^{40}\) Wilkins (1993) xxviii.

\(^{41}\) Roselli (2007) passim.

\(^{42}\) Mendelsohn (2002) 94.
offered protection to her family. It is only the chorus that suggests she is dying on behalf of the city (622), in their choral ode after she has left the stage, just as the audience must infer the significance of Athens as the defending city. Her focus is on the family in three different ways. First, in her emphasis that the sacrifice will make her worthy of her noble lineage (the very requirement that she must meet to appease Persephone). Secondly, she stresses the continued survival of her brothers, even as she ignores her sisters, who have remained in the skene building. It is almost as if she has ascended beyond them, achieved a glory that they cannot – indeed a glory that she jealously guards when Iolaus suggests drawing lots for the role of sacrifice. Finally, in her farewell speech she commands that family unity be maintained: Iolaus will train the sons, and the sons will honour Iolaus and Alcmene. Again, she has no orders for her absent sisters. Her androcentric vision of the sacrifice privileges family, its integrity and survival, but is entirely based on the masculine element of family, with which her gesture of sacrifice has put her on a par. The Maiden’s emphasis on family unity, as well as the privileging of the masculine over the feminine will be important themes in Iphigenia’s own rhetoric.

One other crucial thematic issue is the validity of the prophecy. As we shall see in the next example, this is another element of the motif that Euripides likes to put under pressure. The prophecy of Heraclidae is, in a sense, the most secure of any of the sacrifice prophecies in Euripides, in that Demophon stresses the plurality of the oracles: several oracles are given and they disagree in many details. The only detail on which they do agree is that a noble maiden must be sacrificed to Persephone (402-9). As the only consistent detail, the demand for sacrifice stands out as valid.

About Phrixus and Erechtheus, less need be said here. Both plays exist only in fragments, and details of the sacrifice are difficult to ascertain. In the first play, for which we rely primarily on the plot summary by Hyginus (Fabulae 2-4), the situation and oracle demanding the sacrifice of Phrixus are both part of the scheming of Ino. The fake oracle is unique in Greek tragedy: even the demand of Artemis in our play, suspect as it may be, is not so clearly forged as this one. It may not then be a surprise to see Phrixus escape the sacrifice in the last instance. The sacrifice of an innocent individual through the schemes of a human may be too far for Euripides to go. But the few fragments that survive leave us speculating
on the dynamics of the family interplay: the denial of the sacrifice by a family leader and its subsequent acceptance by the potential victim.

_Erechtheus_ is equally frustrating. Although a lengthy speech in favour of the sacrifice survives, it comes from Praxithea, the victim’s mother. This is a definite inversion of the usual pattern, in which the parent usually protests the sacrifice. The speech is preserved in the only extant speech of the fourth-century orator and historian Lycurgus, in which he uses Praxithea as an example of true Athenian patriotism: a woman willing to sacrifice her daughter.43 Praxithea’s speech suggests that someone protested the sacrifice, and Erechtheus seems the most likely candidate.44 The daughter of Erechtheus is nameless, and we cannot confirm the mode of her death or whether it was voluntary or not.45 What was certainly voluntary was the death of Erechtheus’ other daughters, who apparently committed suicide (or joined in the sacrifice?) as part of a sympathetic pact with the chosen daughter.

Like _Children of Heracles_, _Erechtheus_ is an Athenian play and represents a sub-set in the self-sacrifice plays of Euripides.46 Its setting on the Acropolis is unparalleled in any other known Euripidean tragedy, and the series of Athenian _aitia_ at the close of the play (the transformation of the daughters of Erechtheus into the Hyacinthids, the establishment of a cult dedicated to Erechtheus-Poseidon, appointment of Praxithea as priestess, and the foundation of the line of Eumolpus at Eleusis) all indicate a uniquely pro-Athenian play. In this light, the death of the daughter(s) of Erechtheus becomes an example of laudable patriotism to the _polis_. This is the sense in which Lycurgus quotes Praxithea, who appears to be unique as a parent supporting the death of her child.47 Notably, the daughters are granted a communal grave, an honour usually reserved for fallen soldiers.48 As Praxithea notes, she has had children for the city, not just herself (Fr. 360.38 Kn), a sentiment that Iphigenia herself will echo (_IA_ 1386).

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43 Lycurgus _In Leocr_. 98-101 = Fr. 360 Kn. The speech prosecutes a charge of desertion.
45 In _Ion_ 277-82, Creusa reports that her father Erechtheus sacrificed her older sisters. She also confirms that Erechtheus was slain by the trident of Poseidon.
47 Lycurgus had an agenda, of course, and so we must be cautious in accepting his interpretation of this speech. For more on the appropriation of fifth-century drama by fourth-century orators, see chapter 4.
The first half of *Hecuba* is fully preoccupied with the death of Polyxena, who must die to appease the shade of Achilles and ensure safe passage home for the Greeks: Achilles has actually appeared to them as they were beginning their sail home and sent them back. No play resonates with *Iphigenia at Aulis* more than *Hecuba*. I have already noted in earlier chapters how often the stories and iconographies of Polyxena and Iphigenia overlap; this parallel association will extend into many later representations as well (see chapter 6). Each play has a lamenting mother, each young woman attempts to avoid the sacrifice at first, only to change her mind later on. And both are connected to the Trojan War: one enables the expedition to Troy while the other secures the return of the Greeks. Indeed both women are connected to Achilles with quasi-marital bonds: Iphigenia is lured to Aulis with promise of marriage to him, while Polyxena is demanded as sacrifice by the shade of Achilles.

The sacrifice of Polyxena is established almost from the very beginning, when the ghost of Polydorus tells us that the shade of Achilles has demanded Polyxena as a *geras* (40-41). Polydorus does seem to be conflating events somewhat, however. At 92-5, Hecuba has heard that the shade of Achilles has demanded one of the much-suffering maids of Troy (πολυμόχθων) – she gives no indication that Polyxena might be a candidate. Then during the *parodos*, the chorus, apparently quoting Achilles verbatim, suggest that Achilles is only upset because his tomb has been left ἀγέραϲτον, without prize (114-15). Hecuba’s initial understanding of Achilles’ demand, as well as that of the chorus, suggest that Achilles has merely demanded a *geras*, perhaps a human sacrifice, and that it is the council of the Greeks that has selected Polyxena. The chorus announce as much at 107-9, and spend most of the remaining *parodos* (110-40) elaborating on the council: Agamemnon, swayed by Cassandra, has spoken out in defence of Polyxena and is opposed by the sons of Theseus. It is Odysseus who swings the debate, arguing that Polyxena is only a slave (an argument Polyxena herself will reiterate when she accepts the sacrifice). Odysseus, when he arrives on stage in the next scene to take Polyxena away, twice asserts that Achilles has specifically demanded Polyxena as his *geras* (305, 389-90); but we cannot trust him, and should not be at all surprised that he should transfer full responsibility to the shade of Achilles.

Oracles and supernatural demands are notoriously tricky, but Euripides often goes out of his way to complicate them further, keeping his audience as removed from the source as possible and filtering the divine message through human characters. While the divine command was secure in *Children of Heracles*, we have already seen the intrusion of human hands in *Phrixus*, with an explicitly false oracle. In *Hecuba*, Odysseus may be telling the truth: Achilles may have specified Polyxena, and Hecuba received an incomplete report of his demand at 92-5. But the more likely interpretation is in fact that it is the living, mortal Greeks who have selected Polyxena as sacrifice. This ambiguity exists in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* too, where the demands of Artemis are reported by Calchas to Agamemnon, who relates the oracle to the Old Servant in general terms (*IA* 89-93).

As for Polyxena herself, she initially bewails her fate (197-210). After witnessing the *agon* between Odysseus and her mother, however, she changes her mind and agrees to the sacrifice. She justifies her actions, as we might expect, in a speech directed mainly towards Odysseus (342-68). She tells him that while she must die, she also wishes it. She does not wish to appear cowardly, and, like the Maiden of *Children of Heracles*, stresses that to go bravely to the sacrifice will prove her to be worthy of her father and her noble lineage (she names herself also in relation to her brother Hector). To live in slavery would be beneath her, and she could not endure it. Polyxena of course cannot be patriotic: she has no *polis* any more, and so, like the Maiden of *Children of Heracles*, who is also *apolis*, family and her place in it define her commitment to the sacrifice.

The rest of Polyxena’s scene is largely dedicated to consoling her devastated mother, an emotional scene echoed in *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Hecuba’s immediate response is to offer herself for sacrifice, and according to her understanding of the demands of Achilles at 92-5, she should be worthy. Odysseus deflects her, however, saying that Achilles demanded Polyxena (389-90). Hecuba will not even be allowed to die with her daughter, her second request. Polyxena detaches her mother, who is clinging to her, by pointing out the indignity of being torn forcibly away. In a stichomythic exchange with Hecuba, Polyxena laments what she will lose and again the stress is on family: she will not marry (416) and she will leave behind a suffering family in Hecuba (424), Cassandra (426), and Polydorus (428–
already dead, but she does not know that). After this, Polyxena is led off stage, her head veiled.

*Hecuba* is the only play that gives us a full, reliable account of the sacrifice scene (given the textual problems of *Iphigenia at Aulis*). Talthybius arrives to describe the scene to Hecuba. Polyxena is sacrificed by Neoptolemus, who, considering the confusion of marriage and sacrifice at this point, is family in a way. He pours libations to his father and prays for a safe return for the Greeks (which we know will not be answered). At the raising of the knife, Polyxena addresses the host, demanding that she be released to face the knife of her own free will. Polyxena’s gesture allows her to regain her freedom at the moment of death and restores her to her former status of freeborn princess, worthy again of her familial honour. Polyxena, when freed, tears her garment, exposing her breast for the knife. Her disrobing and exposure asserts her as female and as object of the gaze, and perhaps has connotations of the disrobing associated with a wedding night.\(^{50}\) Out of respect and pity, Neoptolemus does not strike the breast, but rather cuts her throat (though of course to strike the breast would be a violation of the sacrifice ritual), which Loraux identifies as a point of specifically feminine vulnerability. Polyxena then falls demurely to the ground, careful to cover up again her exposed breast. A pyre is then built for her, to which the entire Argive host apparently contributes (572-580). She is fully honoured in death, receiving a heroic pyre while gifts and tribute are brought to her. Polyxena thus comes closest to achieving the goals of the willing sacrificial victim: she restores her status as free woman and is given full honours by the army that sacrifices her.

Like the Maiden of *Children of Heracles*, Menoeceus in *Phoenician Women* seems to have been invented by Euripides for the purpose of this sacrifice.\(^{51}\) Unlike her, however, he does not disappear from the minds of other characters after his exit. The messenger in the next episode reports his death (albeit in only the first three lines, 1090-92, of a speech over a hundred lines in length), and he is mourned by Creon (1310-21). On stage, Menoeceus is mute throughout the entire scene until the exit of Teiresias. He is silent when Creon bids him

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\(^{50}\) This interpretation of the sacrifice in sexual terms, forwarded by Loraux (1987) 32 is rejected by Mossman (1999) 143-44.

\(^{51}\) Craik (1988) associates the character with the older brother Megareus, who died in mysterious but glorious circumstances according to Sophocles *Ant.* 1303, but this is speculation. See Mastronarde (1994) 28-29 for the argument in favour of complete Euripidean innovation.
to help the prophet (850-1), he is silent when Teiresias asks for him to leave (904-910) and he is silent when Teiresias reports that he must die for the city (912-3). He speaks at last, after being on stage for 140 lines, only when told by his father to flee the city, words which he will soon admit were only meant to deceive his father. Foley sees in the death of Menoeceus the devaluation of family against the greater good of the polis that sacrifice usually entails.52 Menoeceus lies to his father so that he may accomplish the sacrifice, and of course he himself will father no children, though he must assume his brother, already betrothed and therefore unsuitable for sacrifice (944-46), will survive and father children.

Menoeceus also recalls the generational issues of sacrifice. No young man, he argues in his one speech, would refuse this sacrifice: only an old man could get away with this brand of cowardice (994-6). As a young male, he is comparable to the soldiers who volunteer their lives for the city on a regular basis, and like the Maiden of Children of Heracles and Polyxena, he feels that to avoid the sacrifice would be a betrayal of his father and brother, as well as of the polis as a whole (999-1002).

In this play, Euripides replaces the question of gender with one of effectiveness: does the sacrifice of Menoeceus actually save the city? At line 890, Teiresias has explained that exile of the sons of Oedipus would be best, but that there is another means of salvation.53 It is this other means that Creon forces out of Teiresias, a pattern inherited from the Oedipus plays of Sophocles.54 In the end, the sons of Oedipus will be removed from the land: they will both be dead. Even Oedipus himself leaves for exile (though we cannot be sure of this: the end of the play is textually problematic).55

In Iphigenia at Aulis, Euripides likewise questions the value of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, putting the burden of judgement on his audience. Calchas’ prophecy is not accompanied by any authoritative omen and uniquely provides an option (89-93):
Κάλχαϲ δ` ὁ μάντιϲ ἀπορίαι κεχρημένοιϲ ἀνεῖλεν Ἰφιγένειαν ᾗν ἔϲπειρ` ἐγ´
Ἀρτέμιδι θῦϲαι τῇ τόδ´ οἰκούϲηι πέδουν,
καὶ πλοῦν τ´ ἐϲεϲθαὶ καὶ καταϲκαφὰϲ Φρθγῶν
θῦϲαϲι, μη θῦϲαϲι δ´ οὐκ εἶναι τάδε.

Calchas the prophet bid us consulting in our helplessness to sacrifice Iphigenia whom I sired to Artemis who inhabits this place and there would be a voyage and sacking of the Phrygians through that sacrifice, but with no sacrifice it would not be.56

The presentation of a choice is unique to this self-sacrifice play, and is connected with many thematic elements of the play. Given that the sacrifice is needed to enable an expedition of aggression, rather than one of defence, the sacrifice cannot really be necessary. Agamemnon is forced to resort to various external motivations – Menelaus, Calchas, Odysseus, and finally Greece and the army – to render the sacrifice necessary. Menelaus repeats the basic elements of this prophecy at 358-60, but does not include the final option, that the sacrifice could be omitted and the voyage forgotten. But Menelaus continues his argument by emphasizing Agamemnon’s willingness, and indeed eagerness, to go through with the sacrifice.

The success of Iphigenia’s sacrifice is questionable. Euripides’ reputation as a poet who presents, if not a consistently anti-war sentiment, at least a critical questioning of war and its causes, must condition his audience concerning the importance of the Trojan expedition, and the price demanded even before it has begun. Agamemnon presents his daughter with the ideal of Greece as a worthy and necessary cause (1269-75), and she dutifully repeats that cause in her own rhetoric (1377-91), but Agamemnon’s words are tainted by his own political and martial ambition, and Iphigenia’s can be ascribed to naïveté or to bravery in the face of necessity (see chapter 1 for negative views of Agamemnon’s rhetoric in these lines). Even the panhellenic unity that the expedition represents will be fragile, since Iphigenia only agrees to the sacrifice after seeing Achilles threatened by the

56 The final line of this passage, which has manuscript authority, was struck by Nauck, and the excision was followed by early modern editors, notably England (1891) and Murray (1913), based on apparent completeness of lines 91 and 92 and the disruption of εἶναι after ἐϲεϲθα. The excision is not accepted by any recent editor, however. See Stockert (1992) ad loc. for the argument against excision.
army: we know that Achilles will always be at odds with the other Greek leaders (see next section).

The sacrifice is of course thoroughly destructive within the family unit: it requires the conscious slaying of a daughter by her father. But it promises even further destruction within the family. Iphigenia’s submission to a necessary sacrifice may be seen to subscribe to and even re-affirm a patriarchal social order, but at the same time it will motivate further disruption to the gendered hierarchy, as Clytemnestra is now poised to assume her Oresteia persona of avenger (Ag. 154-55). Iphigenia’s pleas with Clytemnestra for family unity and forgiveness of Agamemnon, whom she sees as operating under necessity (1454-57), will go unheeded, as the audience well knows. Clytemnestra’s veiled threat at 1455, δεινοὺϲ ἀγῶναϲ διὰ ϲὲ δεῖ κεῖνον δραμεῖν (“He must endure terrible troubles because of you”), makes it clear that the retribution of the Oresteia will happen.

Issues of gender, generation, individual versus community, and even the question of the effectiveness of sacrifice are all raised in this tragedy. Likewise, we know that the sacrifice will assure neither the military victory nor the family peace for which Iphigenia hopes. The war will be long and cost many lives, Greek and Trojan, and many of the heroes will not return home.

**Panhellenist Sentiment**

One of the main criticisms levelled against the play, from the time of Aristotle, is that of character motivation. “Iphigenia the suppliant,” Aristotle tells us, “in no way resembles her later self.” Indeed, argument and persuasion become important thematic elements of the play as characters alternately advocate or resolve themselves to the unthinkable sacrifice. One of the primary rhetorical devices in the play is the juxtaposition of individual versus communal needs, where the community is not an individual polis (as in other plays of self-sacrifice) but rather the nationalist ideal of Hellas. This sentiment is expressed by a number of characters in the play: by Agamemnon, Menelaus and most notably by Iphigenia herself. In each iteration of its expression, the notion of a cohesive Greece worthy of self-sacrifice takes on a new meaning. Yet evidence that Greece is not a coherent whole held together by common interests and ideologies abounds in Iphigenia at Aulis. This dissent is not at all

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57 Poetics 1454a οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ ἱκετεύουϲα τῇ ὑϲτέρᾳ.
restricted to *philoi* or even immediate colleagues, though the early strife between Menelaus and Agamemnon is writ large in the Greek army, a tension that is played out off stage and reported by Agamemnon and Achilles.

The theme of Greek strife is introduced early through Agamemnon’s recollection of the oath of Tyndareus in the iambic prologue (51-65). “Dire threats” (*δειναὶ ἀπειλαὶ* 53) were made against Tyndareus, and Agamemnon reports that violence among the Greeks was imminent until Tyndareus convinced them all to swear the oath of mutual protection and recovery of an abducted Helen. Curiously, Odysseus, as inventor of the placating oath, is omitted from Agamemnon’s account, perhaps because the role of peacemaker among the Greeks would contradict his later characterization by Agamemnon (524) and Achilles (1362) as agitator of the army. Structurally, Euripides balances the conflict of the suitors in Agamemnon’s prologue, caused by a single woman, Helen, with the later resolution of Greek conflict that Iphigenia hopes to achieve with her self-sacrifice (hopes that we know are doomed). Helen’s marital infidelity threatens to set the Greeks against each other, while Iphigenia’s sacrifice, so often troped as marriage, is intended to bind the Greeks into a single cohesive unit that can then project the familial strife onto the foreign Trojan race.

The *parodos* on the other hand presents the individual Greek heroes at rest. Here there is no conflict among the Greeks (some of whom must have been among the suitors of Helen), merely leisure and games as the army awaits the favourable weather required to sail. In the opening triad of the *parodos*, competition is a theme (Palamedes and Protesilaus play at draughts, Diomedes, Meriones, and Odysseus throw a discus, and Achilles races horses driven by Eumelus), but there is no threat of destructive conflict. Early in the play, this more positive view of the Greek army is typical of the chorus, who have come as sightseers looking for Homeric, not Euripidean, heroes (see below).

It is Menelaus who first raises the issue of Greece as a cause worthy of dying for. As he enters carrying Agamemnon’s letter, he accuses the Presbus of bringing evils to “all

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58 The earliest list appears to be from the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, which survives only in fragments. Among the suitors are Odysseus, Ajax son of Telamon, and Protesilaus. Apollodorus (3.10.8) also lists Diomedes, Locrian Ajax, Eumelus, and Meges all of whom are mentioned in the *parodos*. Greeks seen by the chorus who are apparently not suitors of Helen include Palamedes, Meriones, and Nireus. The chorus also see the ships of Nestor and Eurytus who are not listed as suitors, presumably due to their age (their sons, Antilochus and Thalpius are suitors in Apollodorus).
Greece“ (308), and he later threatens to show it to “all Danaans” (324). But it is during the
agon that Menelaus gives the first expression of Greece as an abstract ideal, one worthy of
patriotic loyalty and sacrifice (370-72):

Ἑλλάδοϲ μάλιϲτ' ἔγωγε τῆϲ ταλαιπώρου ςτένω,
ἡ, θέλουϲα δράν τι κεδνόν, βαρβάρουϲ τοὺϲ οὐδέναϲ
καταγελῶνταϲ ἐξανήϲει διὰ ςέ καὶ τὴν εήν κόρην.

Most of all I lament for suffering Greece,
who, though wishing to do something worthwhile, will let loose
the no-good barbarians who laugh at us, because of you and your daughter.

Menelaus, of course, can only define Greece against barbarians, and his nationalistic
sentiment expresses the concerns of a typical shame culture: serve your country so that your
enemies will not mock you. Iphigenia will echo these sentiments sincerely, but we must be
careful about taking Menelaus at his word. Michelakis is right to caution us that the appeals
to Greece are closely “bound up with the needs and desires of the characters who introduce
it.”59 Even if we accept Menelaus’ pro-Hellenic sentiments at face value, the thematic
concerns in this play of indecision and reversal should warn us of Menelaus’ opportunism:
sincerity can exist in the moment. It is quite possible that Menelaus believes his own
advocacy of the Greek nation when he is faced with the prospect of losing his wife
permanently. Likewise, we can accept his reconciliation with Agamemnon as sincere, in
which the concerns of the moment (in this case his fraternal loyalty) trump other desires.

When Agamemnon finally declares outright that Iphigenia must die, he cites Greece
as the ultimate reason (IA 1269-71):

οὐ Μενέλαωϲ με καταδεδούλωται, τέκνον,
οὐδ' ἐπὶ τὸ κείνου βουλόμενον ἐλήλυθα,
ἀλλ' Ἑλλάϲ, ἥ δεῖ, κἀν θέλω κἀν μὴ θέλω
θυϲαί εϲ·

Menelaus has not enslaved me, child
and I have not gone over to his plan,
but it is Greece to whom, whether I wish or no,
I must sacrifice you.

It seems unlikely that an audience could have much sympathy with Agamemnon at this point
in the play, and we should not be faulted if we cannot accept his words at face value.60 This

59 Michelakis (2006a) 78.
60 Agamemnon is not without his defenders, all of whom I have already discussed in chapter 1. Wasserman
defence is untrue in any case: Agamemnon *has* gone over to Menelaus’ plan, twice even, although Menelaus has since retracted it. It should not surprise us that Agamemnon does not mention Menelaus’ repentance to his wife and daughter. Both times Agamemnon actively insists on the need for the sacrifice, to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia (as quoted above) and to Menelaus (following the advent of the first messenger, 511-35), he stresses the danger of physical violence at the hands of his fellow Greeks who are spoiling to go to war. This is hardly inspiring nationalist rhetoric. To Menelaus he does not assign the nationalistic line, perhaps because both realize it is only a convenience. Menelaus, to be sure, does not really require a great deal of convincing to continue with the sacrifice plot.

The third, and perhaps most important character to raise the issue of panhellenic patriotism is Iphigenia herself. In her surprising speech of reversal, she pragmatically notes that Achilles will likely not be able to assist her and her mother and will only succeed in making his own situation with the army worse. Following that initial reasoning, Iphigenia then systematically argues for the nobility that will be brought about by her own death. I have already noted the androcentric notions of family and glory with which Iphigenia expresses herself, but with each point, she also raises the significance of dying for Greece. Iphigenia argues that a glorious death will be hers if she dies for Greece and prevents the theft of Greek women by Phrygians (1378-84). Further, since all the warriors and rowers are prepared to die for Greece, which has been wronged, she will too (1387-90). Then comes her infamous statement that it is better for ten thousand women to die before a single man; as a woman, she will give herself to Greece (1392-97). Finally, Iphigenia finishes with another oft-quoted statement, that Greeks must rule over barbarians, rather than the other way around (1400-01). This claim of ethnic superiority is not at all uncommon in Greek literature of the period and Aristotle cites this line as he praises the notion (*Politics* 1252b8-9). The Greek attitude to the barbarian Other, particularly toward Persians (for whom the Trojans may function as proxy) is far from simple, but the Greeks regularly defined their identity against other cultures.\(^{61}\)

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\(^{61}\) Hall (1989) for instance posits Agamemnon as a fifth-century politician of the mould (if not calibre) of Pericles. Mellert-Hoffmann (1969) 9-90 insists that Agamemnon has always been loyal to the Greek “nation”. Conacher (1967) 262 also finds some redeemable qualities in Agamemnon.
Both Agamemnon and Menelaus are typically seen as weak, indecisive, and opportunistic. Their expressions of patriotism are not credible to most readers of the play, even if they do express other sentiments with convincing force (their affirmation of the fraternal bond after the reconciliation, for example). Iphigenia’s coming glory is confirmed by both the chorus (1402, 1504, 1510-11, 1529) and by Achilles, who is genuinely impressed by Iphigenia’s sentiment of sacrifice on behalf of Greece (1406), in spite of his own self-centred concerns. Neither son of Atreus receives the affirmation of other characters, and neither deserves such affirmation.

Most recent critics have chosen to read the decision of Iphigenia, and her citation of patriotic sentiment as its motivation, as reinforcement of a male dominated status quo, in which a tired heroic and masculine hierarchy is rejuvenated by the self-sacrifice (and affirmation) of a young girl. Rabinowitz denies that Iphigenia is given a choice, so that her panhellenic rhetoric becomes an attempt to convert doom into glory. But the choice of whether or not to die willingly is a choice that Iphigenia can make, and Iphigenia does not need to couch her resignation to death in such patriotic terms. Certainly, earlier self-sacrifices in Euripides are not adorned with such patriotic, nationalistic terms: more often it is a single polis for which the young person dies. Iphigenia, in her reversal speech, speaks the name of Hellas five times (1378, 1381, 1384, 1389, 1397, reiterating it in the remainder of the scene at 1446, 1456, 1502) and refers to the fortunes of the Hellenes another three times (1386, 1400, 1401). Only once does she refer to the Greeks as Argives, at 1393, when considering the possibility of strife with Achilles. Achilles likewise envies Hellas (1406), but is prepared to fight the sons of Danaus (1414).

In my discussion of Agamemnon in the previous chapter, I suggested that Iphigenia is a potential bride for, with a claim to (or the potential to be claimed by), all the Greek warriors at Aulis, who watch her disrobe. In this way, Iphigenia’s position echoes that of Greece in Iphigenia at Aulis. Greece is specifically feminine and also lays claims on its men, especially Agamemnon (1271-72). Iphigenia’s body, which is destroyed, becomes a metaphor for the nation for which it is destroyed, and even the nation itself will be destroyed, or at least

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62 The final messenger also declares that Iphigenia has won undying glory (δόξαν ἄφθιτον, 1606).
64 Rabinowitz (1993) 43.
greatly damaged, in the conflict enabled by the sacrifice. By the same rationale, Polyxena is metonymic of Troy.\textsuperscript{65} She is the conquered bride, ravished by the male Greek warriors; her death is the end of Troy. The fact that these two virginal women can represent, through the same ritual action of sacrifice, their two opposing nationalities indicates the fluidity of the female body as symbol. Fluidity and instability are among the features of the female paradigm, according to Bronfen, and the act of sacrifice forces upon the female body stability and definition. This is to say that it is not until the moment of sacrifice (or some other process that immobilizes, such as presenting Iphigenia as a picture, as in \textit{Agamemnon}) that the female body becomes symbol.

This interpretation of Iphigenia’s body has the potential to expose the paradigm for gender of the ancient Athenians, but they themselves would likely have given it little thought. We must consider further the possible meaning such expressions of patriotism might hold for a late fifth-century audience. The \textit{polis} – meaning the free adult male citizen of Athens – has long been understood as the notional audience of Greek tragedy in the fifth century. Debate on the ways in which Greek tragedy (and comedy) interact with, reflect, and even influence Athenian political ideology has been robust since the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{66} And yet, while Greek comedy, with constant reference to its own political and performative context, is unavoidably Athenian, the Athenian nature of Greek tragedy is much harder to detect. A reader presented only with the texts of Aristophanes, with no contextualizing evidence of any kind, would quickly and correctly deduce Athenian composition. The same reader would have to take greater care in pinpointing the place of origin of most Greek tragedies. Dialect – all iambics are in Attic Greek – must have been a marker, but the choruses, with their tinges of Doric Greek, may have mitigated this effect at least somewhat.

Venue perhaps was also a clue, since Greek theatres were modelled on the large and inclusive (and therefore democratic) theatre of Dionysia.\textsuperscript{67} The issue of theatre size is still

\begin{small}
\textsuperscript{65} Bronfen (1993) 196: “Sacrifice works as a metonymic strategy, with one body killed as representative of an entire semantic realm.”

\textsuperscript{66} The body of work on this subject is large and still growing quickly. The highlights of the debate are Goldhill (1990, 2000) and (particularly polemic) Griffin (1998). Rhodes (2003) goes a long way to mediation, accepting the civic ideology reading as valuable, if not absolute. Heath (2006), without devaluing the social consequences of tragedy, re-examines the ways in which we may define (and therefore evaluate) “function”.

\textsuperscript{67} Both this and the previous point on dialect come from Taplin (1999) 52-54.
\end{small}
heavily contested, with numbers as low as 4000-7000 being proposed, but Aristophanes maintains that the poets could expect a large and influential audience. Seating arrangement within the theatre also seems to have reflected the political structure of Athens, with front seats reserved for public officials, and the various wedges in theatre seating dedicated to the tribes of Athens. This does not mean that a large theatre must indicate a democratic ideology, but tragedy could be – and often was – interpreted by the Athenians as an integrally democratic and Athenian institution. Tragedy of the fifth century was almost always presented as having “universalizing value,” a feature which helps to account for the easy exportation to non-democratic venues and to the fourth century and beyond. In fact, this combination of superficial universal value and embedded democratic ideology could be seen (by those who so chose) to disseminate Athenian political concerns throughout the Greek world. This dissemination began even in Athens itself as “the Athenian Dionysia grew in international prestige and popularity until it became a major Greek festival, by the late 5th c. second only to the Olympics.”

The status and function of foreigners at the City Dionysia is, however, somewhat ambiguous. That foreigners and metics were in attendance is certain, and Aristophanes indicates that the playwrights were aware of and even sensitive to their presence (Ach. 501-8). But metics were specifically banned from serving as choregoi at the City Dionysia while they were allowed to so serve at the Lenaea. Furthermore, though metics participated in the opening pompe, they only carried basins for the mixing of wine (and not the wine itself), and “basin-carriers” apparently became a derogatory term for a metic.

The relationship of tragedy to Athens is a varied one, differing from play to play, and we should resist attempts at genre-wide statements of function and agenda. Some tragedy, to be sure, does provide implicit commentary or even support of the Athenian democracy: the

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69 Csapo & Slater (1994) 289-90. No evidence exists on how, or if, this seating arrangement was enforced, and whether it was in effect for tragedy, which involved no tribal competition like dithyramb.
71 Csapo & Slater (1994) 287.
72 Wilson (2000) 28-31. The primary evidence is a scholion to Wealth 954. Whether they were permitted to serve for the Rural Dionysia is far less certain, Csapo & Slater (1994) 122.
highly Athenocentric conclusion to the *Oresteia*, for instance, which reconfigures divine retributive justice into the democratic Athenian judicial system,\(^74\) or Theseus’ *agon* defence of democracy in *Suppliant Women*.\(^75\) While these examples are vulnerable to a multiplicity of interpretations, the engagement with current political ideologies is nevertheless undeniable. But for many plays such political engagement is not so overt, and though we may argue that the City Dionysia is a venue of inescapable civic and social relevance, it is difficult to envision the Athenian audience being inspired to great political debate. In the above examples, the political engagement is enabled by setting: both *Eumenides* and *Suppliant Women* are set within Attica.\(^76\) Relatively few tragedies, however, are set in Attica, and this fact may contribute to the universal appeal of Greek tragedy.

And even if Athenian democracy is questioned or problematized in Greek tragedy, we must recognize that tragedy, and the different political standpoints it presents, is certainly enabled by it. Euripides is free to question the ideal of a democratic city in a way that he could not question the ideal of tyranny in a city ruled by a single *tyrannos*. While occasional localizations have been detected, possibly meant as crowd-pleasers in Athens or other possible performance venues, no surviving tragedy can be said to be designed to please a specific audience or venue as its primary function, although some interesting trends in the tragic corpus, such as several positive localizations in the plays of Euripides and Sophocles, have been noted (Thessaly, for instance, shows up with some frequency).\(^77\) As a possible counter-example, in which Euripides may not be so free, Hall cites *Archelaus*: a play produced under the auspices of a single ruler with a dual agenda of self-glorification and the Hellenisation of his territory.\(^78\) It is also worth noting that Old Comedy displays a decline in

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\(^74\) This is one reading of the *Oresteia* and is still espoused by many critics. For some time, however, this interpretation “has been opposed mainly by Marxist and feminist critics, who have seen the ‘justice’ at the end of the work not as a triumph of reasoned civilization but as an evolution towards the apparatus of state authority on the one hand, and towards the enforcement of patriarchal authority on the other,” (Goldhill (1992) 33).

\(^75\) Theseus’ defence of democracy against the herald’s attack is problematic in several ways. The herald, as an unnamed interlocutor, is more appropriate to a democratic *agon* than Theseus, who enjoys the position of ruler, even if he rejects the title *tyrannos* at 403-05. *Suppliant Women* presents several political viewpoints, always balanced by counter-arguments, and the herald’s warnings against the eloquent miscreant who could misguide the assembly are not without merit. See especially Michelini (1994) 219-20, 233-35.

\(^76\) Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides *Heraclidae* and *Erechtheus* are other examples.


\(^78\) Hall (2006) 188. Harder (1985) 129 identifies in the testimony of Hyginus *Fabulae* 219 three main elements designed to appeal to the Macedonian king: a genealogical connection to Heracles, a brave and
political engagement and criticism that may begin as early as the end of the fifth century with
the end of the Peloponnesian War, which might speak to a developing restriction in Athens.  

How then do we move from the polis-centric genre of Athenian tragedy to
expressions of Panhellenism? As noted above, panhellenic sentiment in Iphigenia at Aulis is
often deeply ambiguous and is dependent upon our reading of individual characters.
Panhellenism itself is an ambiguous concept:

In one sense, [panhellenism] refers to the notion of Hellenic ethnic identity
and the concomitant polarization of Greek and barbarian as generic opposites
which rapidly developed as a result of the Persian invasions. In its other
sense, panhellenism is the idea that the various Greek city-states could solve
their political disputes and simultaneously enrich themselves by uniting in
common cause and conquering all or part of the Persian empire.  

Flower’s comments are situated in an analysis of various attempts to unite the Greek poleis
against the Persian empire, most notably by Isocrates in his Panegyricus. The former
definition has been explored in some depth by Edith Hall as it developed out of the wave of
Orientalist scholarship of Said and others in the 1970s, and it is the dominant mode of
appreciating Greece as an entity in Iphigenia at Aulis. The second definition of panhellenism
has been of more interest to historians than philologists. Even in Iphigenia at Aulis, while
Menelaus, Agamemnon, and Iphigenia all present the gathering at Aulis as a preparation to
invade and punish a barbarian city, there is never any suggestion that the panhellenic alliance
will outlast the Trojan expedition, and personal motives for glory, plunder, and (most
importantly) a single woman, Helen, frequently intrude.

The concept of ideological panhellenism, though without the nomenclature to identify
it as such, existed in Athens since the time of the Persian Wars, and could be exploited by
Athenian politicians or – with perhaps more sincerity – advocated by sophists and orators of
the later fifth and early fourth centuries. Isocrates is the most prominent of the latter set,
most notably in his *Panygericus*, though Gorgias and Lysias are both clear predecessors. Flower reasserts (after Wilamowitz) a date of 408 for Gorgias’ *Olympic Oration*, in which the orator proposed a united Greek expedition against the Persians in order to cure what he saw as Greek sedition (so Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* 1.9). If this date is correct, then it is likely that the ideal of panhellenism was at least being talked about at some volume in Athens in the years prior to the first performance of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, presumably the years in which it was composed. The idea of a unified Greece against a barbarian foe as a solution to the long-lasting Peloponnesian War must have been appealing to many Greeks, and some scholars have seen such a proposal behind *Lysistrata* 1128-56, in which the title character points to a common (though unnamed) barbarian foe, and reminds the Spartans and Athenians of past martial services rendered to each other.

Is such reasoning behind Iphigenia’s almost zealous defence of her self-sacrifice to Greece? Is the concept of a panhellenic expedition being proposed to redirect Greek aggression outward instead of inward? In *Iphigenia at Aulis* Euripides relocates the familial strife of the *Oresteia* from Argos to Aulis. Indeed Iphigenia, just like the Maiden of *Heraclidae*, explicitly characterizes the sacrifice as a substitution for family (1399) and tells Clytemnestra that the purpose of having children is to serve Greece. Privileging of *polis* over *oikos* is the standard hierarchy for the self-sacrificing individual, and parents are said to have children for the sake of the polis. But Aulis is conspicuously not a *polis*, and the backdrop against which the events are played is that of a gathering of Greek forces. This gathering,

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panhellenism in the early fifth century rests largely on a recent reconstruction of Simonides’ elegiac poem on the Battle of Plataea.

84 Flower (2000) 92. The original proposal of 408 BCE for the *Olympic Oration* is from Wilamowitz (1893) 172-73.

85 Euripides could hardly have been aware of the Panhellenic ideals sponsored by the Spartan admiral Callicratidas in 406 if he was not already dead at the time, though perhaps report of Callicratidas’ sentiment had reached Athens by the time *Iphigenia at Aulis* was produced. After being stalled by Cyrus while seeking funds for the navy, Callicratidas apparently swore to unite Athens and Sparta against the Persians, should he return home safely (he did not: he drowned at Arginusae); see Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.7, Plut. *Lys.* 6.4-7. For a summary of the various evaluations of Callicratidas, see Moles (1994).

86 Sommerstein (1990) 213 suggests the Persians Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus, though Westlake (1980) 45-7 suggests that Tissaphernes was too weak at the time to be of any threat and suggests the Spartan Peisander’s rumoured negotiations with the Spartans. It is possible, however, that Lysistrata does not have any specific force in mind but is simply trying to unite the Greeks.

87 It is possible he did this in *Telephus* as well, though Argos is a more likely setting.

88 Most notably in Pericles’ Funeral Oration Thuc. 2.44.2, but see also Dinarchus *In Dem.* 71, the Aristotelean *Ath. Pol.* 4.2, and the inscribed decree of Themistocles.
though Panhellenic in nature, lacks the unity and function of a proper community: “A Panhellenic force must, in fact, be an *ochlos*, a group lacking internal structure, a mob.”

The mythological backdrop to the play, the Trojan War, can be (and was) construed as the original panhellenic excursion against a barbarian foe. Again, however, Euripides’ Greek force hardly presents a positive image. Foley, for example, reads the odes of the chorus, particularly the *parodos*, as a positive and epic perception of the gathered army, in sharp contrast with the bitter, realistic understanding of Agamemnon, Menelaus and, eventually, Achilles, to which it eventually gives way. And the cost of such an expedition is the life of an innocent young girl, hardly the sort of price that would encourage the policy-makers of Athens. War is terrible in any context, whether civil and internal, or directed toward a distant other: “Euripides makes clear to his fellow Greeks how reasonable human beings, all of whom know better, consent to their own destruction in disastrous wars of aggression like the Trojan War, the Peloponnesian War, or the war against the Persians proposed by Gorgias.” It seems impossible that the poet who wrote *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, or even *Iphigenia among the Taurians* in which the salvation of Iphigenia only leads to the forced sacrifice of more Greeks beyond the end of the Trojan War, could intend his audience to accept the nationalistic ideals of this play without question.

**Theatrical Instantiations**

I turn now to a consideration of *Iphigenia at Aulis* as it was first experienced: a play performed at the City Dionysia in Athens. In the previous two sections of this chapter, I have explored two interpretive issues that contextualize Euripides’ approach within his own artistic preoccupations and within the atmosphere of his audience’s bias on issues of political identity. These sections are intended to respond and contribute to earlier readings of the play surveyed in the first chapter. What I wish to do now is consider how the dramaturgy of this play can reinforce, modify, or even negate these readings.

Stagecraft has seen a great deal of study over the past three decades, and I need not defend its application here. Rather than take a scene-by-scene approach, this section will be

90 Thucydides 1.3.
91 Foley (1985) 78-84.
organized around four key elements of Greek theatre. As an organizing principle, this will provide a more holistic and expansive approach relevant beyond the confines of this single play. All of these key elements can be regarded as generic markers – factors crucial in distinguishing Greek tragedy from other performative and artistic traditions. The first of these is topography, the process of mapping the dramatic world onto the physical space of the theatre of Dionysus – deciding what is where on and off stage. The second sub-section will focus on exits and entrances, integral since the early work of Oliver Taplin to the understanding of plot and structure in Greek tragedy. Proxemics and gesture, studying how characters move on stage in relation to each other, and the manner in which actors express themselves physically on stage, are next. Finally, attention will be paid in full to the chorus, the single most striking element of performance of Greek tragedy.

**Topography**

The first generic marker I wish to explore is space. Theatre cannot exist conceptually without space – the essential dynamic of actor and spectator requires space in which to operate. Likewise, the theatre as physical location is defined by the space it occupies – a theatre is space with physical boundaries usually marked by convention, be they architectural, social, or generic. These physical boundaries will “contain” the world of the drama – again an idea that is essentially expressed in terms of space – though it may extend notionally beyond. The physical boundaries between the reality and the fiction of the drama can be obscured or even ignored to produce a variety of dramatic effects and each individual theatre (and each theatrical genre) will have its own defined set of values assigned to these boundaries. These predefined notions can be used or abused to produce a variety of effects as a performance conforms to or strains against its received context.

Space functions as contact point for intertextual reference within the genre of Greek theatre. Tragedy, to be sure, makes contact with any number of other literary genres – epic, didactic, lyric, comedy, and others – by appropriating or refiguring a motif, language or situation. Iphigenia at Aulis itself is a perfect example, drawing as it does on the epic

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93 Taplin (1971) is the first work to explore this approach, but for a much fuller bibliography, see below.
material of the Trojan War and reconfiguring it for performance in the space of the theatre – it converts diegetic into mimetic, just as it converts the architectural space of the theatre into the dramatic space of the play. In the previous chapter, I explored the various permutations of this legend, and some of the concerns of those earlier genres. Euripides is turning a diegetic narrative derived from non-tragic sources (or his knowledge of that narrative) into mimetic reproduction. Space allows for mimesis, and mimesis is the primary marker of drama. But of course the relationship is not that simple. Euripides is not, consciously or otherwise, going to draw from only one source, nor is he unaffected by other representations of this myth, especially the tragic.

The chorus of elders in the *parodos* of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* describe the events leading up to the sacrifice of Iphigenia in great detail (*Ag*. 104-159, 183-247), but stop just short of the act itself (248-9):

τὰ δ’ ἔνθεν οὔτ’ ἐννέπω·
téxnaí δὲ Κάλχαντοϲ οὐκ ἄκραντοι.

The things that happened there I do not know nor mention. The arts of Calchas did not go unfulfilled.

It is not surprising that the chorus refuses to narrate the sacrifice. The first half of *Agamemnon* is focused on the public, open space of the orchestra. As the chorus sings and dances the *parodos* a natural point of focus is the *thymele*, an altar which has already seen sacrifice at the opening of the City Dionysia, when the space was purified for the festival. But the sacrifices of *Agamemnon*, Cassandra and Agamemnon himself, will take place inside the *skene*. *Iphigenia at Aulis* likewise omits portrayal of the sacrifice of Iphigenia on stage (especially if we consider the messenger’s report to be spurious, in which case it is relegated to beyond the temporal scope of the play itself), consistent with tragedy’s reluctance (and practical difficulties) to portray violence in a purified space.

Because most drama in Athens was produced in the same physical space, the Theatre of Dionysus, intertextual contact between plays was more immediate and the playwright

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95 Wiles (1997) 82. For an argument that places the *thymele* at the centre of the orchestra, see Rehm (1988) 264-74.
97 The exception might be Lenaean productions. Before perhaps 440 BCE, when prizes were established for poets at the Lenaea, the plays may have been staged elsewhere: Csapo & Slater (1994) 123, see also Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 37-9. N. W. Slater (1986) places a Lenaean theatre outside the city walls.
was free to exploit this contact. We can refine this network further since contact was even more immediate between works of tragedy, because comedy (and, to a lesser extent, satyr-play) employed a very different use of space, less strict and more varied. Meta-theatrical reference was commonly enacted on the stage of Old Comedy, which characteristically manipulated and often crossed the boundaries maintained by tragedy, and even scene change (or obscuring the spatial position of one scene vis-à-vis the next) is not infrequent. In tragedy, by contrast, “the action, with its uninterrupted continuity, is always laid before a definite background identified at the very beginning of the performance and remaining unchangeable thereafter.” Exceptions do exist, the most notable of which is Aeschylus’ Eumenides, involving a clearly signified shift in location. Other examples may include Libation Bearers, Persians, the lost Aitnai and Sophocles’ Ajax. In general, however, tragedy employs a fixed use of dramatic space and each play therefore becomes associated with a single locale. This use of space corresponds much more closely to that of New Comedy which rarely – if ever – changes scene but rather expands the dramaturgical range of its locale by setting it in front of more than one home or building.

If space is the primary requirement of theatre as an artistic medium, then the generic signifier of Greek theatre must be size: the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens was very large, more in keeping with a modern sporting arena than a dramatic theatre in the modern era. The orchestra was large, perhaps 20 metres or more in diameter (if we are assuming a circular orchestra, though it would not undermine this discussion were it otherwise) and was

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98 Taplin (1986) 165.
99 Hourmouziades (1965) 37.
100 There is also a possible second shift of scene at Eum. 488-685 with a refocalization from the interior of the temple of Athena on the Acropolis to the exterior of the Areopagus; see Taplin (1977) 390-1, Brown (1984) 11. Against them is Scullion (1994) 77-86. Scullion is always opposed to any change of scene that is not explicitly defined by both text and movement on stage. Wiles (1997) 83-4 argues that the localization is symbolic rather than geographically specific, using the statue of Athena on stage “to create a syncretic Athens in which aristocratic, political and religious centres are fused.”
101 For LB, see Taplin (1977) 338-40, Brown (1984) 11, Scullion (1994) 71-7; for Pers. Taplin (1977) 103-7; for Soph. Ajax, Scullion (1994) 109-116. Scullion 68-70 considers the Persians to pre-date the use of the skene, and so location is a more flexible concept. We cannot comment on the scene changes of Aitnai, for they are known only through the fragmentary hypothesis (POxy 2257 = Fr. 451t Radt); see also Taplin (1977) 416-8, Revermann (2008) 246.
102 Taplin (1978) 10 suggests 20 metres. Moretti (1999/2000) 396 suggests a width of up to 28 metres at the point between the two eisodoi (which assumes a non-circular orchestra). Wiles (1997) 44-52 offers a good
backed by a skene building of up to 30 metres or perhaps even more. In a space this size, an actor can appear very small. Even a chorus of fifteen would have a great deal of space in which to manoeuvre.

This is not to say that an actor is randomly moving about a very large area, adrift, without any sense of connection to the space around him. The broad space of the ancient theatre is limited, or controlled, by a handful of focal points. These focal points are areas in the acting space that are vested with visual importance through their theatrical function, position, or both: places in the acting space naturally inclined to attract the movements of an actor, particularly during exits and entrances. It is this mimetic interaction of the dramatic (fictional) space with the architectural (physical, real) with which this subsection is concerned. The eisodoi each represent such a focal point, assuming a specific direction within the world of the drama that is then mapped onto the real world: abstract (but usually absolute) geographical references assume concrete (but relative) directions as part of the mimetic process. Argos, for example, is a geographical abstract until an individual takes the time to orient him or herself relative to it (“Argos is west, because I am east of Argos”). It assumes a concrete point in the dramatic world (say to the left) and maintains that direction throughout the performance. In Iphigenia at Aulis, the concrete position of Argos in the fictional world is established when the Presbus exits with the letter towards Argos. It does not need to be consistent with the Argos of the real, physical world of the spectator. The double doors of the skene represent an immediacy that the eisodoi, far from the centre, do not. The thymele visibly marked the centre of the acting space. The strongest acting space, in terms of focus, must have been between the thymele and the skene doors. Once the topography of Iphigenia at Aulis is mapped onto the Theatre of Dionysus and fused with


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103 Taplin (1978) 11 suggests 12 metres, but see Mastronarde (1990) 249 for a 90 foot (27 metre) skene, Csapo & Slater (1994) 80 for 20 metres.
104 Taplin (1977) 9.
105 This is not uncontested. Rehm (1988) 264-74 is still the most convincing discussion, relying primarily on testimony and the plays themselves as witness. Ashby (1999) 42-61 finds the hole at the centre of the Theatre Dionysia unconvincing evidence for a permanent and central thymele and proposes instead a marginalized thymele, existing on the edge of the orchestra, used as necessary. His arguments, however, do not address Rehm’s reluctance to use archaeological evidence from a site that was rebuilt several times in antiquity.
these areas of focus, certain dynamics within this context can be identified and monitored as
the action of the play progresses. Space can be read as a dynamic catalyst within the play,
producing enhanced meaning in combination with other dramaturgical elements (such as
actors moving about on a stage).

The topography of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is simple in relative terms, though difficult and
probably impossible to align absolutely. One *eisodos* leads to the Greek camp (and the sea
and beyond it Troy) and one towards Argos and the rest of Greece. That the grove and the
army camp are in the same direction seems confirmed by Iphigenia’s own words at 1492-96:

\[
\text{συνεπαείδετ' Ἀρτεμίν}
\text{Χαλκίδοϲ ἀντίπορον,}
\text{𝑖να τε δόρατα μέμονε νάι'}
\text{όνομα δι' ἐμὸν Αὐλίδοϲ}
\text{ϲτενοπόροιϲ ἐν ὅρμοιϲ.}
\]

Celebrate with me Artemis
across from Chalcis
where the ships dwell chafing because
of my name in the narrow
anchorages of Aulis.\(^{106}\)

This polarization, in which the familial home, the feminine sphere, is located on one side (let
us say the audience’s left\(^{107}\)) and the martial camp, the masculine sphere, is on the other
(audience’s right), invests any exit or entrance with immediate associations. In this
structuralist approach the alignment of space in *Iphigenia at Aulis* externalizes Agamemnon’s
personal conflict and his movement within that space foreshadows his eventual determination
to proceed with the sacrifice. Agamemnon never exits towards Argos – in fact, the only male
to exit in that direction will be the Presbus, who repeatedly affirms his loyalty to
Clytemnestra over Agamemnon (46-8, 153-4, 860, 867-71). The action of *Iphigenia at Aulis*
must produce a result that is in keeping with the *Faktenkanon* of the Trojan Cycle and the

\(^{106}\) Wiles (1997) 134-40 attempts to assign absolute values to each *eisodos* in any given tragedy (which would
result in the same assignments I have made here by defining the Greeks as an eocentric, or East-privileging,
society). Wiles (pp. 111-12), however, envisions a different topography, with Argos and the grove of
Artemis on one side and Aulis and the Greek camp on the other, based on his reading of the *parodos* as
mimetic action.

\(^{107}\) This is an entirely arbitrary decision. Like all of European decent I am trained to read left to right and
therefore want to impose that direction on any progressive motion, such as Iphigenia’s assumption of power
within the male sphere. It is the relative polarity that matters.
myth of the House of Atreus. In fact, a great deal of the play’s dramatic impact is a product of the tension created as the traditional sequence of events is threatened, either by the business of Agamemnon’s second letter, Menelaus’ change of heart, or Achilles’ threat to actualize the marriage deception. For Iphigenia to exit towards Argos would be too great a violation of this traditional sequence, just as her exit towards the Greek camp is a final and total affirmation of it. Her progression towards the army camp, with a stop in the skene, affirms for the spectator the correct sequence of events, culminating in Iphigenia’s sacrifice, despite the earlier threats to this continuity when Achilles proposes actual realization of the false marriage.

At the centre of the left-right/female-male polarity is the skene. But the skene is not so neutral as its position might suggest. It is available to Agamemnon and his immediate family, but Agamemnon himself is free to use the skene only early in the play (he spends the parodos and the first stasimon there). He loses dominion over that space with the arrival of Clytemnestra. He has some control when he orders Iphigenia inside (678-80), but she is naturally more pliable to his authority and when he orders Clytemnestra to return to Argos (731) she refuses. Clytemnestra makes it very clear that she will assume control of the skene interior at this point: ἐλθὼν δὲ τἄξω πρᾶϲϲε, τἀν δόμοιϲ δ’ἐγώ (“Go and do the things outside, and I will do those in the house”, 740). Again, the only male to pass through these doors from this point in the play will be the Presbus.

I have already noted that any dramatic treatment of the house of Atreus will inevitably draw comparison with or connection to Aeschylus’ Oresteia. Clytemnestra’s assumption of command over the skene here is a subtle assumption of the inside/outside binary of Agamemnon (and the whole Oresteia). Throughout Agamemnon the entrance to the palace

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108 The term Faktenkanon is borrowed from Homeric scholarship and Kullman in particular. I use it here to imply a series of (expendable, mutable) events that might define a myth – the general sense a reader or audience member might have of the myth beyond the work they are seeing. Controversial because it implies stability of myth, it is nevertheless useful here: we need not assume a strong, well-known canonical version of any particular myth, but can certainly expect a spectator to have some notion of how the myth “goes”. See also Burgess (2001) passim and (2009) esp. 27-30 where he discusses the “notional narrative of a chronological series.”

109 Foley (1985) 77. See also Sorum (1992) and further discussion in the first chapter of this study.

110 The Oresteia appears to be the earliest dramatic use of the skene, given that it is not used in the earlier plays of Aeschylus. If this is the case, we might be surprised at how fully developed Aeschylus’ use of the skene is in these three plays. See Taplin (1977) 452-9, Wiles (1997) 161.
is controlled exclusively by Clytemnestra, allowing her the freedom to commit murder. In *Libation Bearers*, Orestes and Pylades drive first Aegisthus and then Clytemnestra into the *skene* building where they will be killed, thereby reasserting male control of the palace and by extension the throne and the *polis*. The inside/outside dynamic of the *Oresteia* will not be so pronounced in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but it will still function: both the Presbus and Iphigenia consider it a safe place (855-63, 1340) and Clytemnestra makes it clear that she is going to assert control over the space (740). By appropriating this stage convention, *Iphigenia at Aulis* looks back to *Agamemnon*, a play that figures heavily in shaping the tradition of myth against which our play is set – if not the tradition of myth itself, at least the tradition within the genre of tragedy. But in the chronology of the myth, the events of *Iphigenia at Aulis* precede those of *Agamemnon* and so pre-figure the power dynamic (Agamemnon, male, army, outside versus Clytemnestra, female, family, inside) that will eventually lead to Agamemnon’s death. Iphigenia herself is aware of this possible outcome and expressly forbids it at 1454. Clytemnestra’s reply shows that her attempt will be in vain (1454-5):

Iph: Do not hate my father, your husband.
Cl: He will have to endure some terrible trials because of you.

Finally, the female assumption of control will continue with Iphigenia’s left-to-right progression, as she, under her own power, makes the last significant exit towards the male realm of the camp. Her exit in this direction is a physical marker of all that she has accomplished: she will die, but her death will have strong meaning (even in the male sphere) and she has risen above the selfishness that leads to Agamemnon’s decision. She has privileged family (her sacrifice will be her marriage and children, 1399) but her actions have also allowed for Greek military glory.

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112 It cannot be. The *skene* is here simply a tent (*skene*) rather than the familial *oikos*, a symbol of paternal heredity. That symbolism is integral to the inside/outside dynamic of the *Oresteia*, see Zeitlin (1990) 76.
113 Kovacs (2003a) 98 suggests that the play should end here, with the final choral ode and *exodos* excised.
114 There is a certain unity in this, though Euripides frequently includes a final messenger speech to describe the death of the tragic character (e.g., *Hipp.*, *Bacc.*).
114 Foley (1985) 76.
The *Oresteia* ultimately reasserts the primacy of public, masculine space, first by depicting the re-establishment of male control in the home in *Libation Bearers* and then by clearing Orestes of kin-murder in the public court of Athens in *Eumenides*. But it is more difficult to say how this dynamic is left at the end of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. In the ending of the received text, one would expect Clytemnestra to depart for Argos (on her chariot?) and Agamemnon to return to the camp (whence he has come). The chorus presumably would deliver its closing couplet on stage, covering the exits of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and then itself depart, signalling the play’s end. In this case, the equal exits of husband and wife work to negate the gendered charge of the acting space: both the feminine and masculine within the family have met with disaster. If, however, the text ends at 1531, Clytemnestra leaves for Argos, the chorus for Chalcis and the female usurpation of the space is left untouched. This ending is attractively balanced and in keeping with the tone of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but of course there is no evidence to confirm it.

**Exits and Entrances**

The previous subsection applied a structuralist approach to the temporary and artificial topography of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. A polarity is established between the male and female spheres, which assigns thematic meaning to spaces within the theatre, particularly the two *eisodoi*. We have already seen how movement within this topography can automatically generate or affirm thematic meaning. As Iphigenia decides to sacrifice herself for the masculine enterprise of war, she exits in the corresponding direction. The next step is to look at movement in the constructed world of *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

Taplin’s system of using character entrances and exits to define the structural elements of a tragedy has been the standard practice for some time. “Scenes” almost always end with a character coming or going, and the introduction of a new character always signals a significant dramatic turn. This is particularly significant in a dramatic tradition

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117 The first study of this type is Taplin (1971), where the tension of the plot of *Philoctetes* is seen to derive largely from delayed or false exits: the outcome of the play depends on Philoctetes and his bow exiting along one specific *eisodos*.
that allows itself only three speaking actors, where many character entrances must be
facilitated by an earlier exit. We have already seen how topography affects an exit, notably
in Iphigenia’s progress towards the army-camp eisodos and Clytemnestra’s exit into the
skene after refusing an order from her husband to exit towards Argos. Other factors can also
add dramaturgical relevance to a specific exit or entrance, such as the manner in which it is
accomplished and the characters in accompaniment.

We must pay careful attention to exits and entrances in this play in particular because
after the problems of the text, it is in these exits and entrances that critics find the greatest
cause to separate Iphigenia at Aulis from other Greek tragedies. Modern critics associate
sudden entrances (such as those of the Presbus at 1 and the Messenger at 414) with New
Comedy, while the entrance of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia is derided as being overly
spectacular and derivative of earlier plays (especially Euripides’ own Electra). Iphigenia at
Aulis has many urgent or active character entrances that change the emotional register of a
scene or alter the course of events rather swiftly. The entrances of Menelaus, the first
messenger, and the Presbus are of this type.

Despite the textual problems, we can assume the circumstances of the prologue to be
identical to the received text: Agamemnon, in a moment of remorse, has dispatched a letter
bidding Clytemnestra and Iphigenia turn back to Argos. The first episode following the
parodos then begins frenetically with the entrance of Menelaus from the Argos eisodos,
where he has been awaiting the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia. The Presbus pursues
him from the same eisodos. The two characters are engaged in a stichomythic exchange,
which has begun off-stage, an unusual technique in tragedy, though familiar from New
Comedy. The Presbus follows Menelaus, calling him by name (303). The identification of
Menelaus is necessary for the audience’s sake, since Menelaus must strongly resemble his

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118 Only at Phil. 1217, Hipp. 601 and here. See Taplin (1971) 40. For entrances in stichomythia which do not
continue off-stage conversations, Phil. 730, IT 67, Rhes. 565, Alexandros Fr. 62a Kn. For examples of mid-
conversation stichomythic entrance in Old Comedy, Taplin cites Birds 801, Frogs 830; and in New Comedy,
Dysc. 50, 611, Sic. 150, Georg. 22, Aspis 250, Fr. 161 Koerte (= Fr. 137 Kassel-Austin, assigned in that
volume to Eunuchus).

119 Attempts have been made to codify the announcement of entering characters. See especially Hamilton
(1978), who is primarily interested in entrances after choral stasima. The article is especially useful for its
appendices of character entrances in all extant tragedy. The entrance of Menelaus does not come under
Hamilton’s scrutiny as Menelaus has already entered once he is addressed. See also Mastronarde (1979) 19-
34.
brother Agamemnon, who has recently been seen to exit into the *skene* and will enter the stage soon after the start of the scene. Even the props are the same. Menelaus carries a sceptre (311) and the tablet used in the prologue (307-9). Agamemnon, too, seems to carry a sceptre (412) and we have seen him carrying the same letter in the *parodos*. Menelaus, following Homer, may be fairer than his brother, but the two are still of an age and wearing masks of a similar type.\(^{120}\) This type of encounter – two figures of the same gender and similar age – is often reserved for family members and becomes a trope not just for tragedy but again for New Comedy as well.\(^{121}\) In Sophocles, both *Antigone* and *Electra* have sisters on stage together, each of whom is clearly identified as they come on stage.\(^{122}\) In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where the two old men of Corinth and Thebes are not related but of equally low status (representing Oedipus’ twin loyalties to Corinth and his “parents” and to Thebes, respectively), the Corinthian messenger is on stage and ready to identify the Theban shepherd (*OT* 1110-1120). Even when siblings appear on stage separately in the same play, they are identified upon entrance. In *Ajax*, both Menelaus and Agamemnon are identified as they approach Teucer, the former by the chorus (and Teucer confirms the recognizability of Menelaus), and the latter by Teucer himself rushing on stage in advance of Agamemnon (*Ajax* 1045-6, 1224). In *Rhesus* we are shown three matched pairings – Hector-Aeneas, Hector-Rhesus, and Odysseus-Diomedes – though *Rhesus* is a problematic play, highly innovative at best, and therefore constitutes an unreliable comparative example.

A close Euripidean parallel can be found in the Eteocles-Polyneices scene of *Phoenician Women*, where the two brothers compete in an *agon* format. Throughout the play, much is made of the equality of these two brothers: they must be equally matched to slay each other believably in the final duel of the play, and the dramatic interest is less in the individuals than the issues which they represent. Can Euripides then be said to be treating the Agamemnon-Menelaus scene in the same way, using two similar characters to represent not individuals, but notional standpoints on two opposing sides of an argument? On one side


\(^{121}\) Twins were particularly popular. Consider Plautus’ *Amphitruo*, *Bacchides* (based on Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*), *Captivi*, *Menaechmi*, and Terence’s *Adelphoe* (based on Menander’s play of the same name).

\(^{122}\) Antigone and Ismene identify each other in the prologue (*Ant*. 1,11) while the chorus announces Ismene’s second entrance from the *skene* (*Ant*. 526); the chorus announces to Electra the arrival of Chrysothemis (*S. El*. 326).
is Agamemnon, currently defending the value of family. On the other is Menelaus, arguing for the needs of the army and the glory Agamemnon once desired. This is the conflict that troubles Agamemnon in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and it is a major theme throughout the play. This juxtaposition of ideas collapses rapidly, however. Agamemnon, through Menelaus’ accusations and his own actions, is characterized as indecisive and then as a seeker of glory (see chapter 1). Menelaus will also give in, after his stormy exit at 414 is abruptly stalled mid-line. Upon seeing the emotional response of his brother to news of the arrival of Iphigenia, Menelaus experiences a change of heart, uncharacteristic for Greek tragedy, and particularly unusual for a character making a single appearance. Menelaus’ surrender foregrounds Agamemnon’s indecision, balancing the Homeric quest for glory against the humanity of this tragedy.

Another problematic entrance (and exit) is that of the messenger at 414. The entire messenger speech is generally excised. Linguistic problems are cited, but the primary offence is the entrance (413-6):

Mē ἐγὼ δ’ ἐπ’ ἄλλας εἶμι μηχανάς τινας
φίλους τ’ ἐπ’ ἄλλους.

Ἀγ ο Πανελλήνων ἄναξ,
Ἀγάμεμνον, ἥκω παῖδά ςοι τὴν ςὴν ἄγων,
ἥν Ἰφιγένειαν ὠνόμαζεϲ ἐν δόμοιϲ.

Men I will go now, to other schemes
and other friends.

Mes O lord of all Greeks,
Agamemnon, I come leading your daughter to you,
whom you named Iphigenia in your home.

The single greatest problem for this scene is the mid-line entrance of the messenger, which has no other tragic parallel. Page notes that this is a feature of New Comedy, citing three instances of mid-line entrance from *Epitrepontes*. Kovacs adds fifteen more examples from later papyrus finds. The presence of a comic feature might suggest excision of the messenger’s lines (although by now such features are building up), but this causes another problem. This speech and the chariot entrance at 607-30 are logically exclusive of each other.

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123 Conacher (1967) 256.
125 Kovacs (2003b) 80. Men. Asp. 233, 305, 467; Dis Ex. 102; Dys. 206, 211, 402, 621; Epit. 382, 442, 852, 932; Sam. 532, 556, 690.
– the former describes as completed the actions of the latter (specifically, the horses have been released to pasture at 422-23). The chariot entrance, however, is also commonly excised. If both scenes are removed, no entrance scene remains for Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. Furthermore, the messenger speech serves a specific dramaturgical purpose: it not only ends the agon scene, which has met with a stalemate, but it motivates the reconciliation between Agamemnon and Menelaus and does so in an unexpected and innovative way.

The Presbus, servant of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, also has some unusual entrances and the character himself is likewise reminiscent of New Comedy. He, too, enters at mid-line when he is summoned from the skene in the second line of the play (1-2):

\begin{verbatim}
Αγ Ὀ πρέϲβυ, δόμων τῶνδε πάροιθεν
ｓτεῖχε.
Πρ στείχω. τί δὲ καινουργεῖϲ, Ἄγαμεμνον ἄναξ;
Αγ σπεύδε. Πρ σπεύδω.
\end{verbatim}

Ag Old man, come out here before the house!
OM I come! What is this new business, lord Agamemnon?
Ag Hurry!
OM I am hurrying!

The antilabe of the dialogue not only has a comic tone, but adds a sense of urgency to Agamemnon’s commands – he is clearly in distress, and needs the services of the Presbus. Indeed, each entrance of the Presbus is accomplished with some sense of urgency. He is sent off at the end of the prologue with letter in hand, but appears immediately after the parodos, pursuing Menelaus in an agitated manner (303). Almost immediately a tug-o-war breaks out between Menelaus and the Presbus, another comic element.

The Presbus’ third and final scene will also be un-tragic. With Clytemnestra and Achilles about to depart, embarrassed to be in each other’s company, he calls them both back from inside the skene (855-6). He refuses to come out until Clytemnestra pledges his safety. Door scenes in tragedy are rare (there is the formal approach of Orestes to the palace at
Libation Bearers 652-67\(^\text{126}\) and the less serious approach of Menelaus at Helen 435-40), and there is no tragic example to compare to this scene. The entire discourse between Achilles, Clytemnestra, and the Presbus is comic in its tenor and delivery, even as it forwards the tragic plot.

In the previous section I tried to establish for Iphigenia at Aulis a polarized topography. We must be careful, however, not to elevate this topography to the level of agent – space does not “affect” a movement or “change” a scenario in any active way.\(^\text{127}\) Rather space is the framework upon which a performance can build and retain dramatic value or significance. But this value must first be created or expressed by some other means, most often movement or speech in the play. Exits and entrances in Iphigenia at Aulis reinforce a gendered, structuralist reading of the play, establishing the capacity of a young, unmarried girl to influence the masculine, military sphere. When we consider the manner of these entrances, with frenetic interruptions frequently re-routing the course of the action, questions of genre are raised. The next section will further study movement, this time limited to on-stage movement and gesture.

**Proxemics and Gesture**

A number of typologies have been used to classify theatrical signs. One of these typologies presents four broad categories: linguistic, paralinguistic, gestural and proxemic.\(^\text{128}\) In brief, linguistic signs derive from the text itself and have been considered by many scholars the dominant signifier for almost any reading of Greek drama for the simple reason that the text of a play is the single most direct and reliable surviving witness of any performance. Paralinguistic denotes meaning conveyed through mode of delivery (pitch, tone, etc.) as well as by non-verbal utterances that might not be recorded in the text.\(^\text{129}\)

The gestural register, as the name implies, encompasses body movement and also facial expression. Since Greek theatre is a masked tradition, facial expressions are fixed. This limits the gestural category. The distance of the audience is also a factor, since large

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\(^{126}\) The formula (though not this scene) is parodied by Aristophanes in Birds 57, Acharnians 395, Clouds 132.

\(^{127}\) On the dangers of this, and a warning against an over-rigid structuralist approach in general, see Rehm (2002) 1-34.

\(^{128}\) Revermann (2006a) 40.

\(^{129}\) An example of such would be the maddened laughter of Ajax, which occurs at Ajax 104-5, but is not recorded in the text until recalled by Tecmessa at 303.
gestures are required for visibility. For fifth-century performance, this limit on gesture results in an economy of movement that strictly defines the degree of realism that can be achieved.\(^{130}\) Given the static expressions of masks and the distance between actor and spectator, speaker changes must be indicated by movement, either gesture or even physical movement in the acting space, while non-speakers remain still. Indeed, this remains the general practice on the Western stage. Proxemics, a term borrowed from anthropology (coined by Edward Hall in the early sixties\(^{131}\)), refers to the relative spatial positions and dynamics of actors and encompasses the interaction between characters as it is physically enacted in performance. Normally considered a sub-set of gestural signs, the proxemic sign is more important when applied to Greek theatre. Movement on the stage has been a consideration of classical scholars for the past thirty years, given impetus by the scholarship of Oliver Taplin in the seventies. In his study on exits and entrances, for example, Taplin systematically begins to collect the proxemic and gestural signs (though he uses different terminology) indicated by the text. His analysis ultimately assumes that the movement and text are, in Greek theatre, entirely co-dependent, culminating in his statement that all significant action is directly implied by the text.\(^{132}\)

Whether we agree with Taplin or not, the text is still our primary witness, and we must gather and collate proxemic and gestural signs from it.\(^{133}\) The opening scene of the received text will demonstrate some of the difficulties of using linguistic markers to identify gestural signifiers. At the outset of that scene, Agamemnon has been writing a letter and has been having some difficulty with it, as the Presbus observes (37-40):

\[
καὶ ταὐτὰ πάλιν γράμματα εὐγχεῖς
cαὶ εφαραγίζεις λύεις τ’ ὀπίςω
ῥίπτεις τε πέδωι πεύκην, θαλερὸν
cατὰ δάκρυ χέων
\]

\(^{130}\) Csapo (2002).
\(^{131}\) Edward Hall (1963) 1003: “The study of how man unconsciously structures microspace – the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of his towns.”
\(^{132}\) Taplin (1977) 54-5.
\(^{133}\) Only rarely are we given any external evidence. See the next chapter for a discussion of the Megarian Iphigenia bowls, which give some indication of acting style in the late third, early second centuries.
And the things you have written you erase again,
and you seal it and unseal it again
and then you throw the pine to the ground, shedding
an abundance of tears.

Agamemnon’s indecision will motivate the plot for the first third of the play, until the arrival of his wife and child. This motivation shifts gradually as their arrival is announced at 414-39 and enacted on stage at 590-606. Between these two events, Menelaus removes himself as a proponent of Iphigenia’s sacrifice and Agamemnon declares that the sacrifice plot must go ahead, shifting the blame to Odysseus and the army.\textsuperscript{134} Agamemnon is also described by the Presbus as weeping in this initial scene. This description, combined with anxious movements and a mask with a troubled expression, characterizes Agamemnon immediately.

The modern critic must infer from the text what is made explicit to the audience in performance. Some critics are unhappy with this apparent lack of decorum shown on stage, however, and present an alternative: the writing of the letter can be assumed to have taken place before the play’s opening, with the Presbus describing what he has recently seen inside the skene.\textsuperscript{135} To have Agamemnon throw his writing tablet to the ground on stage is too base, too real, to meet the perceived standards of Greek tragedy. But through the fifth century (and into the fourth) there is an increasing realism applied to the costume and gesture of the stage actor, though this evidence is almost entirely circumstantial.\textsuperscript{136} Acting seems to have originated as the province of elite, private citizens without formal or institutionalized training: professional actors are as yet unknown.\textsuperscript{137} The establishment of the actors’ competition at the Dionysia in 449 and at the Lenae in 432 (?) attest to the increasing importance of actors, but we have little evidence of payment.\textsuperscript{138} The fifth-century Athenians had strong views on how a proper male citizen should behave and this may well have resulted in a restrained acting technique with limited gesture and only grand emotional outburst. By the fourth century, however, this has given way to a system in which actor outranks playwright, with huge salaries and even the establishment of an international guild

\textsuperscript{134} Conacher (1967) 253-64.
\textsuperscript{135} E.g. Bain (1977) 14.
\textsuperscript{136} Csapo (2002).
\textsuperscript{137} Green (2002) 94.
\textsuperscript{138} The only fifth-century evidence is a fragment from Strattis’ Anthroporestes (PCG fr. 1), in which a nameless someone is criticised for hiring the (apparently bad) actor Hegelochos to play the first part in Euripides’ Orestes, produced in 408, see Csapo & Slater (1994) 230.
in the 330s. Exactly when this shift occurs is not known. It has traditionally been thought to be a late transition, marking a degradation of the craft after the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides, but it is more likely to have been a gradual process with its roots in the late fifth century.

“Realism” here is a relative term, and cannot be stretched so far as its modern conceptual partner. But when Sophocles says that he represents men as they should be (Ar. Poet. 1460b34), he (or Aristotle) may simply mean that his characters are restrained, without unnecessary movement or behaviour. Euripides on the other hand portrayed men as they are, and gained a reputation for presenting heroes in a non-heroic state. In this non-heroic mode, the frustrated Agamemnon may pace about and toss his tablet to the ground without disturbing the contemporary norms of stage acting. It is not unreasonable that this action should occur on stage before the opening lines of the prologue. The Presbus can be assumed to have been near the door, observing or listening to Agamemnon – as he does in the first Clytemnestra-Achilles scene later on (revealing himself at 855). Possible, though less likely in a large open-air theatre with (perhaps) a packed-dirt floor, is having the sound of the letter (on a pine frame) as it strikes the ground attract the attention of the audience and signal the starting point of the play.

It is impossible to state with any certainty whether lines 37-40 were staged. But in performance, these actions would, if staged, instantly characterize one of the principle figures of the play more effectively and efficiently than any narrative account. Other characters will also be defined by their initial actions on stage. Menelaus, for example, will enter as an

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139 By 343, even a tritagonist earned enough to live comfortably (if Demosthenes is not exaggerating in his accusations of Aeschines, Dem. De Falsa Leg. 199). On the actor’s guild, or the technitai of Dionysus, see Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 279-323, Csapo & Slater (1994) 239-55, Lightfoot (2002).

140 Csapo (2002) 133.

141 Even Agamemnon’s words may suggest this realistic indecision. In lines 6-8, he asks: 
τίϲ ποτ’ ἄρ’ ἀκτήρ ὄδε πορθμεύει
σείριοϲ ἐγγ ὑϲ τῆϲ ἑπταπόρου
Πλειάδοϲ ἄϲϲων ἔτι μεϲϲήϲ;
What hot star is that there, 
shooting along midway 
near the sevenfold Pleiades?
How these lines should be printed is a matter of some debate, and even more so what they mean: Agamemnon has just called his servant out in a hurry, and then begins commenting on the positions of the stars. Kovacs (2003b) 141 is likely right in following Matthiae, who suggests that Agamemnon is indirectly approaching a difficult topic of conversation.
aggressive, interfering force as he comes on stage pursued by the Presbus and then engages
in a “tug-o-war” over the letter. His initial physical contact with the Presbus is significant
and must be juxtaposed with his physical contact with Agamemnon at the end of the scene.
This is another scene that lacks the decorum of the Sophoclean actor, yet one that leads to an
increased sense of realism: Menelaus is base and petty, but all the more real a character for
that.

As noted above, the acting space was very large. The size of the theatre can diminish
an actor, and so the actor must take steps to establish himself as a functional and effective
part of the performance. This is accomplished in part by over-emphasizing gesture but also
by maintaining a zone of personal space about each actor. A reasonable distance (say one or
two metres) can be expected between actors without straining the realism of the Greek stage.
The use of static masks and the distance at which much of the audience sat from the actors
must have made it more difficult to differentiate between speakers. Distance, accompanied
by movement, between the actors allows for easier identification.

But characters in tragedy also make direct physical contact with each other
frequently. Points of contact between two characters are dramatically important in scenes of
supplication, greetings, expressions of love or support, or even moments of violence
(threatened or otherwise). After the arrival of Iphigenia is announced, Menelaus offers his
hand to his brother in fraternal solidarity (471-72). He has changed his mind and pledges to
support Agamemnon in trying to save Iphigenia’s life. The contact made between them
embodies Menelaus’ renewed dedication to the fraternal bond (which I read as sincere, see
chapter 1). It also shifts the responsibility for the sacrifice from Menelaus to Agamemnon.
Up to this point, it has been Menelaus who has been the chief mover of the plot against
Iphigenia: it is he who watches for signs of weakness (thereby intercepting Agamemnon’s
letter) and moves to refocus the plan. Once Menelaus withdraws from this plot – and the
handshake is the visual and physical embodiment of that removal – Agamemnon must
confront a decision that he is unwilling to make: if he values his family, he will stop the
sacrifice, but if he gives priority to political ambition and martial glory, he will now have to
assume the role of mover of the sacrifice plot. In the end, his solution is to assign the blame
to the absent Odysseus and the rest of the Achaean forces.
As Iphigenia enters, she immediately interposes herself between her mother and father by running ahead of Clytemnestra, oblivious to any potential tension between her parents (631-632):  

ὦ μήτερ, ὑποδραμοῦϲά ϲ' – ὀργιϲθῆιϲ δὲ μή – 
πρὸϲ στέρνα πατρὸϲ στέρνα τἀμὰ προϲβαλώ.  

O mother, I will rush ahead – do not be angry with me –
since I wish to throw my breast against the breast of my father.

The lines, reinforced by movement in performance, characterize Iphigenia as young and impetuous, introducing a new force to the action – youth and the accompanying idealism will soon drive the plot forward and indeed bring it to its resolution through the actions of Achilles and Iphigenia. The audience would have no reason to suspect any marital strife at this point, although Clytemnestra’s words speak of spousal duty rather than any familial devotion (633-634):

ὦ ϲέβαϲ ἐμοὶ μέγιϲτον, Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ,  
ἔκομεν, ἐφετμαϲι οὐκ ἀπιϲτοῦϲαι σέθεν.

O lord Agamemnon, most great and revered by me,  
we have come and have not disobeyed your injunction.

In any event, we are presented with a visual representation of the situation to come, both in the myth and in the play: husband and wife separated over their daughter. And in the polarized topography, it is worthy of note that Clytemnestra stands near the Argos entrance, while Agamemnon will be on the side of the army entrance. We will later learn that Clytemnestra has reason already to resent Agamemnon for the death of her first husband, Tantalus, and her child from that union (1148-52) and thus may have cause to hang back when greeting her husband. There will be no physical contact of any kind between this husband and wife. As the play draws to its conclusion, Iphigenia will again interpose herself

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142 Modern editorial responses to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia’s first exchange with Agamemnon include excision, reorganization, or, in the case of Kovacs’ Loeb, interpolation of lines. Nevertheless, the basic sequence of this scene must be as follows: a) enter Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, from the Argos eisodos; b) enter, either simultaneously with or shortly after, Agamemnon from the skene; c) Clytemnestra greets Agamemnon in a perhaps perfunctory way, but Iphigenia rushes ahead to greet her father; d) an exchange loaded with dramatic irony takes place and ends when Iphigenia is sent into the skene by her father.

143 Page (1934) 163 condemns these lines as spurious, based on the rare nominative form Ἀγαμέμνων and the use of ἐφετμαϲι, rare in tragedy: the word is only used four other times in extant tragedy and only in Aeschylus. The extensive textual problems of IA make it susceptible to over-compensatory emendation, and we should be cautious here. After all, the coolness of Clytemnestra toward her husband recalls/anticipates her interaction with him in Agamemnon 855-930.
– not physically, but emotionally – between her mother and father when she forbids her
mother to be angry with Agamemnon for the sacrifice (1454). She attempts to act as keeper
of the peace even beyond her lifetime. We, as audience, know that she will fail in this, just as
we know that when Iphigenia makes her entrance there is destined to be great strife between
Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.

Iphigenia senses that her father is preoccupied, and at first treats it lightly, exhorting
him to cheer up (648-50):

Ιφ μέθες νυν ὀφρὺν ὀμία τ' ἐκτεινον φίλον
Αγ ἰδοὺ, γέγηθα σ' ὥς γέγηθ' ὄρων, τέκνου.
Ιφ κἀπειτα λείβειϲ δάκρυ' ἀπ' ὀμάτων σέθεν;
Iph Unknit your brow now and show a welcoming face.
Ag There. I am happy, seeing how happy you are, child.
Iph Then you shed your tears from your eyes?\textsuperscript{144}

The actor playing Agamemnon obviously cannot change the facial expression of his mask
nor can he weep. Here the linguistic signs (Iphigenia’s request, Agamemnon’s word of
compliance) must supplement or replace the gestural, which would be limited to Agamemnon
looking down or away: as Agamemnon “cheers up” perhaps he redirects his gaze upwards or
towards Iphigenia. We may supplement our reading of this passage with reference to the
Megarian terracotta bowls discussed in the next chapter. One scene (scene 6 in my
discussion – see chapter 4) depicts Agamemnon seated on the right, with his right hand to his
face, while Iphigenia reaches towards him, knees bent and arms outstretched, with the right
arm slightly higher, so that one arm points to his chin and one to his knee in an almost
supplicatory gesture. Clytemnestra stands to the left with the child Orestes, looking away in
an aloof posture. The suggestion of the text is that Iphigenia seeks intimate contact with her
father and is at first denied. The iconography of the terracotta bowls shows us how that

\textsuperscript{144} Iphigenia’s sensing of Agamemnon’s anger might be anticipated at lines 635-7:

ἐγὼ δὲ βούλομαι τὰ σα στέρν’, ὦ πάτερ,
ὑποδραμοῦϲα προϲβαλεῖν διὰ χρόνου
ποθῶ γαρ ὀμία <δὴ> σὸν ὄργιϲθηϲ δὲ μῆ.
I wish, O father, to rush ahead and throw my breast
against yours, after such a time;
I long to see your face; do not be angry with me.

These lines, however, are likely spurious. They derive from 631-2, and 635 has no proper caesura and
violates the final cretic, see Page (1934) 163.
scenario might be acted out. Iphigenia eventually gets her wish when Agamemnon finally bids her to go inside, first taking her hand and asking for a kiss (678-80).

We see a similar attempt at physical contact when Clytemnestra enters from the skene and finds Achilles, whom she believes to be her future son-in-law. Achilles almost immediately attempts to leave, shocked at the breach in decorum in seeing a matron out of doors in a martial setting. Clytemnestra reaches to prevent him, asking to join his hand to hers (831-834). Again, the terracotta bowls of the next chapter help. The second bowl has Achilles to the left, with his hips turned as if to depart and his arms extended towards Clytemnestra, but this time his palm is turned towards Clytemnestra, in what is perhaps a warding gesture, keeping her at bay. The physical reactions of Achilles, moving away from Clytemnestra, do much to establish the foreign nature of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia’s presence at Aulis.

These two scenes of denied contact, with Iphigenia and Clytemnestra trying to establish physical contact with Agamemnon and Achilles respectively, both on pretences that will prove false, prefigure two later scenes. Mirror scenes are common in tragedy, and although scenes are rarely duplicated exactly, heavy verbal or visual echoes (such as the placement of characters, as here), indicate that close attention should be paid to their differences. Since “the similarity is there in order to bring out the contrast between them,” these scenes frequently “come on opposite sides of the περιπέτεια” (in this case, the revelation of the sacrifice plot to Clytemnestra). In Iphigenia at Aulis, once Iphigenia and Clytemnestra each know the truth of the sacrifice plot, they will again attempt to touch Agamemnon and Achilles. In each case, an attempt at physical contact to express natural, familial affection has been replaced by an attempt at supplication to preserve the family unit (i.e. prevent the sacrifice of Iphigenia). Supplication presents a situation in which physical contact is of utmost importance – supplication can be denied only if the suppliant fails to touch the hands and knees. Consider, for example, the failed supplications of Hecuba and Polyxena to Odysseus and then Agamemnon: in each case the supplicated individual is careful to avoid any physical contact (Hec. 271-8, 342-5, 806-13).

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145 Taplin (1977) 100.
146 Gould (1973) 84-5.
The first instance of supplication in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is between Clytemnestra and Achilles, immediately after the Presbus has revealed the sacrifice plot. She falls at his knees (900), touches his chin and his knees (909), invokes his (false) marriage to Iphigenia (904-8, 986-9) and even goes so far as to threaten to bring Iphigenia from the *skene* to supplicate him herself (992-994). This final proposed breach of decorum is particularly horrifying to Achilles. But it is the use of his name without his consent that angers him most, not so much the plight of Clytemnestra. Fixated on appearances as he is, Achilles cannot deny the supplication once it is made, but he employs some tricky wording to get out of the responsibility. He promises several times that Iphigenia will not come to harm, but implores Clytemnestra to try first to convince Agamemnon to give up his plan. If this plan meets with success, Achilles will be freed of responsibility, and not called upon to enforce physically the promise of supplication. At 1002-3, he suggests that the supplication is irrelevant, that he would move to protect Iphigenia in any case.

The second supplication happens between Iphigenia and Agamemnon, and recalls the daughter rushing to embrace the father in their first scene together. Clytemnestra herself makes no attempt at supplication, again avoiding any physical contact with her husband, but makes sure that Iphigenia is present while she accuses Agamemnon of plotting to kill their daughter. Iphigenia kneels before Agamemnon (1216-7), touches his knees (1221-2) and chin (1226-7), working these into references of her relationship to Agamemnon as a small child. Orestes is also brought forward in silent supplication (1241-8). Agamemnon refuses the supplication, despite the fact that Iphigenia indeed makes contact with him, citing the anger of the army and greater calamity if he should not follow through with the sacrifice.

Once again, we must use caution. The movement of characters does not follow a specific pattern that can be decoded to an absolute or simple meaning. Nor is such a decoding strictly necessary. Yet the general impressions created by character movement, particularly in relation to one another, convey much of the theme and tone of the play more quickly than words alone. This section has considered movement of single actors; the next will look at the greatest source of movement on stage – the chorus.
Chorus

The chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is unusual. Made up of sight-seeing women from Calchis, these women are out of place in a military camp. Being from Calchis, they do not represent an area that was particularly important in either Homeric or Classical Greece. As with the above section on panhellenism, this section will consider the dramaturgical benefits of this particular chorus to see if there is any discernible pattern or shift in Euripides’ use of the chorus to distinguish *Iphigenia at Aulis* from earlier plays.

It is appropriate, however, to first remark on the role (or roles) of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Modern scholarship on the subject effectively began in the early nineteenth century. Schlegel identified the chorus as the “ideal spectator”:

> [The chorus] mitigates the impression of a heart-rending or moving story, while it conveys to the actual spectator a lyrical or musical expression of his own emotions, and elevates him to the region of contemplation.

The notion is romantic: tragedy, as poetry, represents access to the sublime, a gateway to a realm of fundamental emotional elevation, transcendent of ordinary mundane daily life. The chorus softens the impact of this extreme emotional experience, allowing the spectator to absorb comfortably the events unfolding before him. For Schlegel, the chorus was both a model of reception for the spectator as well as a guide for speculation and response to the action of the play. Although this theory has been frequently criticized (and I will return to these criticisms throughout the following discussion as I identify the key components of choral participation in a tragedy), it has proven to be extremely influential, and it survives today with modifications accounting for the collective nature and early ritual function of the chorus. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, for instance, see in the chorus’ collective nature a representation not of the single spectator but of the collective and democratic *polis*, an

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147 In the *Iliad*, Chalcis is mentioned only in the catalogue of ships as part of the contingent of Abantes (2.537). In Euripides’ own time, Chalcis had been a staging point for raids into Boeotia (Thuc. 7.29) until Euboea’s revolt from the Delian League in 411, Carter (2006) 165. Interestingly, the chorus does not include Chalcis or Euboea in its own catalogue of ships in the *parodos*. Hesiod identifies the reverse journey (from Aulis to Chalcis) as the only time he ever rode in a boat, *W&D* 650-53. He mentions the gathering of the fleet at Aulis, but it does not seem likely that Euripides intended any greater resonance.

148 From his lecture series originally delivered in Vienna in 1808. Published in a third edition as Schlegel (1846) 77 (translation Black (1973) 69).

interpretation readily taken up by those critics of the 1990s who saw political ideology in every aspect of the theatre.

Gould, however, finds the association of the chorus with the contemporary political landscape of democratic Athens problematic, noting that while the audience of Athenian drama is (notionally) male, choruses of Greek tragedy are often marginal: women, slaves, foreigners or old men. Foley responds by pointing out that choruses of old men can indeed represent the polis, particularly in the plays of Sophocles. In addition, three extant plays have military-aged male choruses: Ajax and Philoctetes, in each of which the chorus affirms its dependence on a main character (Ajax and Neoptolemus), and Rhesus, often discounted for its dubious authorship but a play which nevertheless demonstrates that “an active, assertive, responsible chorus of men of military age is not incompatible with the loosely defined and constantly evolving tragic genre of the fifth and fourth centuries.” The playwright is free to choose any chorus he wishes.

The issue of choice is an important one, since the identity of the chorus is never mandated (if sometimes suggested) by the myth, and choral identity represents the greatest range of choice available to the playwright when fashioning his story. Euripides, particularly in his later plays, often selects choruses that are not immediately inspired by or connected to the locale of the given tragedy. Yet these choral identities add a new, subtle depth to a play’s mise-en-scène or serve to emphasize a hero(ine)’s isolation or predicament. The chorus of Phoenician Women, for example, is made up of slave women who are not of the city of Thebes, but are travelling through it. They have spent some time in the city – they are able to summon Jocasta from the palace (296-300) – on their way to Delphi, where they will serve Apollo. Being slave women, they have no imperial authority, but through their Phoenician roots, they have a distinct familial connection with Cadmus, founder of Thebes, which the chorus itself emphasizes. When the chorus sings its odes, it has access to a wider world view that contextualizes the Theban conflict. In the first stasimon of Phoenician Women, for

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150 For the debate on whether women were present in the theatre, see (for women in the theatre) Podlecki (1990), Henderson (1991), Csapo & Slater (1994) 286 and (against) Wilson (1982) 158-59, Goldhill (1994). In any event, Goldhill (1994) 368 sums up the scholarly consensus: “If women were present...the proper or intended audience remains the citizen body.”


instance, the chorus sings of the original offence against Ares – Cadmus slaying the serpent (657–65) – which foreshadows the sacrifice of Menoeceus, the last descendant of the Spartoi, later in the play. Here an itinerant and foreign choral identity serves to contextualize the long history and permanent locale of the principal characters. In other plays of Euripides, the relationship is reversed, with a displaced heroine surrounded by a chorus of local origin (*Medea, Andromache, Hippolytus*). In still others, a foreign heroine is accompanied by a chorus of similar origin (*Hecuba, IT, Ion, Helen*). As we shall see, *Iphigenia at Aulis* introduces a chorus and heroine who move on parallel, but not identical vectors. Both arrive under happy pretences (sight-seeing, marriage) which are soon dampened by the revelation of the sacrifice plot.

Gould raises further issues against the ideal spectator theory, including the observation that use of the chorus pre-dates Athenian democracy and so could not be expected to mirror the reaction of the democratic spectator. Goldhill, in his response to Gould, counters this argument by noting that dithyramb, the other great choral art form of the fifth century, became a highly democratic institution, through its competitive and public nature. But the tragic chorus does not correspond to the *polis* in the same way as the dithyrambic. For one thing, the tragic chorus is not selected tribally. Dithyramb is in fact a contest of choruses with tribal allegiances and therefore represents competition between socio-political units of the population. Furthermore, tragic choruses are much smaller and choristers are chosen according to ability. Or at least so we are told: the emphasis on competition may indicate ability as the first factor but a study of any loose-knit theatrical community in an area will quickly reveal that factors such as favouritism, nepotism, and seniority within a perceived hierarchy often supersede the supposedly unassailable commitment to quality. We know little enough of the institutionalized, publicly sanctioned selection process, let alone the social and political currents that must have run through the Athenian artistic community.

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156 Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 76. Age and class seem to have been less important factors as well, see Wilson (2000) 77.
158 Here we miss the loss (if it ever existed) of Sophocles’ prose manual on the chorus (*Suda* c 815).
Goldhill’s attempt to democratize the chorus is an attempt to assign to the chorus a very specific voice – that of the Athenian polis and therefore of the (ideal) spectator himself. This would give the choral voice a certain authority, but Gould sees a (literally) different authority: that of the collective other. “The collective experience and the collective voice of the chorus may oppose that of the individual tragic agent in an almost bewildering variety of ways. The choral experience may constitute an image of stability and rootedness, of threatening disorder, of human vulnerability, to stand against the experience of the protagonists.”

While the individual perceives events only from his or her immediate circumstance, the collective memory of the chorus draws from a broader spectrum of myth and history – and not just of the past. The chorus can be threatened but never killed – it is the implicit survivor of every tragedy. Thus the song of the chorus becomes something of a survivor’s tale, transcending the temporal boundaries of the tragedy itself – just as it can be trusted to import collective memory from before the tragedy’s opening – and reporting to another implicit survivor, the spectator.

The chorus is thus not confined to the time of tragedy, but its border-crossing nature goes beyond tragedy in other ways. Earlier in this chapter I identified space as the defining feature of theatre. In a very similar sense, the chorus is the defining formal feature of Greek theatre in the fifth and fourth centuries. To be granted a chorus (χορὸν διδόναι) was to be allowed to produce a Greek play and to lead the chorus in to the orchestra (χορὸν εἰϲάγειν) was to start the play. The large spatial demands of Greek theatre are a product of the chorus’ needs. This status as a core element allows the chorus to transcend the single tragedy in which it features. In a practical sense this same group of singers will function in two other non-related tragedies, Bacchae and Alcmeon in Corinth. And in a broader sense the presence of a smaller chorus (as opposed to the larger dithyrambic chorus) is a declaration of participation in a specific performance tradition. This transcendence can be read as intertext. As we read Iphigenia at Aulis, we must remain alert to possible resonances with earlier tragedies, whether in general ways, such as the pattern of interaction between

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161 Aristotle Poetics 1449b and Plato Rep. 2.383c both use this phrasing. At Aristophanes Knights 413 a poet asks for a chorus. See Wilson (2000) 6 on chorus-related technical nomenclature.
162 Acharnians 10-11.
chorus and heroine (as noted above), or in specifics, such as the chorus’ invocation of the suffering of the Trojan women in the second stasimon (see below).

Schlegel’s ideal spectator theory can also be refuted on the level of perspective: the actual spectator invariably has a wider perspective of the dramatic action than the chorus, which perforce functions within the dramatic world and is therefore more limited in its understanding of the events on stage. Information given in the prologue before the parodos or a spectator’s general knowledge of a given myth and its traditions typically privilege the spectator over the chorus. This privileging of the spectator can vary in degree. In Trojan Women, for example, Athena informs Poseidon (and the audience) that she wishes to disrupt the return of the Greek forces (65-6) and the two gods plot together. Athena and Poseidon plan destructive storms though they do not plan the fates of specific individuals. The Athenian spectator can supplement these from his own knowledge of past epic and tragedy. The application of this knowledge is somewhat abstract, however, since it “sheds an ironic light on the Greeks’ actions,”¹⁶³ but in no way detracts from the pathos of the ensuing episodes; and it is arguable that the prologue is not vital to the play’s overall impact.¹⁶⁴ The only time the plotting of Athena and Poseidon is again directly relevant is during Cassandra’s madness at a point where the chorus is disadvantaged: the rules of the mythical world are such that they are unable to comprehend as truth what Cassandra is telling them. The spectator is privileged in this instance, but given that Cassandra predicts her own death as well as that of Agamemnon, audience sympathy and concern is not shifted away from the Trojan women.

The issue of chorus perspective opens some interesting avenues of exploration. The marginalized nature of the chorus often means a polarizing perspective, as the chorus holds a position societally counter to that of the hero,¹⁶⁵ just as the chorus’ inability to affect the outcome of events (whether it has a vested interest or not) stands in stark contrast to the hero, who is portrayed as responsible for his or her own action (δράϲαντι παθεῖν, Aes. LB 313, one of the few unchallenged tenets of Greek tragedy). Many tragedies use this polarization

¹⁶⁴ Michael Cacoyannis, for instance, is able to omit the prologue and still create a moving, complete film (see chapter 6).
in order to highlight a character’s pathos with a foreign chorus that sympathizes with a hero or even reflects his or her situation. This dynamic can be explored in a variety of combinations. *Trojan Women*, discussed above, has a non-Greek chorus whose fate is the same as that of the central, non-Greek Hecuba. In the case of *Medea* a domestic, female chorus should revile Medea, a foreigner who represents a threat to the polis. That the chorus still sympathizes with her, a foreign woman who should be shunned, goes a long way toward generating sympathy for Medea. As the play progresses, however, the chorus becomes increasingly critical of Medea’s actions, until the condemnation of her infanticide. In this instance, a more complex example because it involves a changing, dynamic relationship between chorus and character, as opposed to the static one of *Trojan Women*, the chorus serves as Schlegel’s ideal spectator, soliciting at first sympathy for an abandoned mother of children and later condemnation and horror as she becomes the monstrous killer of those children.

Even if we reject the ideal spectator theory as an absolute rule though, several dramaturgical functions remain for the chorus. A chorus that resembles the central character amplifies that character’s situation and emotional state. In contrast, a dissimilar chorus can be employed to define a heroine’s character in relief. The chorus can present a narrow world view or it can contextualize a play’s characters and setting. With these possibilities in mind, we turn now to *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

The identity of the chorus in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is not one that lends itself obviously to wider contextualization, given that the women are from nearby Chalcis, an area of little importance, and likely (being women) limited in world experience. But as we shall see, the chorus does ground the events of the play against the backdrop of the Trojan War through a variety of literary techniques: recollection of stories, (accurate) speculation of the future, self-comparison to figures in the war, report of prophecy, literary allusion, and veiled foreshadowing. But these techniques are not enabled specifically by this choice of chorus: in other words, there is no unique quality about this particular chorus that puts it in a privileged position to comment on the mythical context of this play.

What the identity of the chorus does have that would appeal to Euripides is initial neutrality in several of the play’s central conflicts: Agamemnon versus Menelaus (at a time in
the play when the chorus appears to be of no consequence at all), Agamemnon versus Clytemnestra (and Iphigenia) and Agamemnon versus Achilles (not played out on stage, but surely relevant, given the prominence of Homer in the Iliadic tradition). Within the context of the mythical setting, there are two options for the identity of the chorus that would be, in a naturalistic theatre, more appropriate than the one Euripides chose, but each is complicated by allegiance to one character or another.

The first of these options is to populate the chorus with the soldiers of the army. In this case, the chorus might owe allegiance to Agamemnon but under no circumstances could such a chorus display empathy for Iphigenia: if the army does not wish to sacrifice Iphigenia, then there is no reason to do so and the tragedy is undone. Furthermore, the absence of any direct representation of the army from the stage allows a great ambiguity within the play: since we only hear of the army’s insistence on the war through the speculation of Agamemnon (516, 533-35, 1259-72, conspicuously not in the prologue at 95 ff. when Menelaus can still be considered responsible) and report of Achilles (1345-57), both of whom are implicitly involved in the sacrifice plot, it is left to the spectator to decide if Agamemnon’s use of the army as scapegoat is legitimate or not. Much like the distancing of the prophecy of Calchas, Euripides’ rejection of a soldier chorus is a removal of stimulus for the characters who are on stage: without Calchas, there is no direct divine motivation; without the army, there is no threat of mutiny.

But a chorus of soldiers would be highly unusual in any case. No military-aged male chorus can be confirmed for Euripides and the choruses of his final decade are almost exclusively female. Thus the other option is a female chorus faithful to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, perhaps handmaidens in attendance on their mistress as in Ion (another sightseeing chorus). But if this were the case, these women could not be reasonably expected to keep

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166 Hose (1990) 1.153.
167 Rhesus, if we accept Euripidean authorship. Telephus and Palamedes are both likely, but there is no direct evidence.
168 No male choruses in extant tragedy after Heracles in 416, Kranz (1933) 237. Archelaus is a likely exception, with a chorus of elder males, but was produced under unique circumstances, in Macedonia for a patron king with the same name as the hero, Revermann (1999/2000) 464, Roselli (2003) 173-74. For his full career, Foley (2003) lists 27 (3 uncertain) plays with female choruses as opposed to 16 (7 uncertain) male choruses (Skyrioi/Skyriai is included in both lists). Mastronarde (1998) 63 lists 26 and 15, with 34 indeterminable choruses.
silent once they have learned of the sacrifice plot, and of course there is the logistical problem of their arrival ahead of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia. A local chorus would have no problems of either allegiance or logistics, but a female chorus could be expected to ultimately align itself with Iphigenia as the play progresses. In the second century Ennius will create a different tragedy by introducing the soldier chorus, though this decision may owe as much to concerns of a Roman audience as to Ennius’ own tastes for a “natural” chorus (see next chapter).

The Calchian maidens contribute little to the play as interlocutors. There are, for instance, no single-actor scenes in which a character converses with the chorus or chorus leader in iambics. The greater contribution made by the chorus is in the five songs sung throughout the play. The *parodos* (164-302) describes the warriors gathered at Aulis. The three *stasima* have the chorus wishing for love only in moderation (with Helen as the counter-example that results in suffering, 543-606), predicting the suffering that will happen in Troy (with emphasis on the suffering of the women, 751-800), and recalling the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (1036-97). The *stasima* are surprisingly regular in their structure: a simple triadic structure of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The final, astrophic song, initiated by Iphigenia herself, is sung in farewell to the virgin as she leaves for the altar and her death (1500-31). All five songs relate, though not in chronological order, significant moments in the arc of the Trojan War. The first and the last are focused on the present situation, the first admiring the wide range of masculinity on display, the last lamenting the fate of a single female. The three *stasima* look backward or forward to the causes or consequences of the war. Caught up in the glory of the army they have come to see, the chorus, after tracing the greater arc of the myth, only at the end finds itself grounded in the unhappy reality of the moment, and must sing a lament for the play’s heroine. This evolution of relationship between Iphigenia and the chorus is more interesting dramatically than a chorus of handmaidens functioning as duplicates of the heroine.

The chorus enters for the *parodos* unannounced to an empty stage, which is not at all unusual. The first strophe is occupied with self-identification and justification of their own

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169 Mastronarde (1994) 207 suggests that this is “probably the more archaic technique.” In later Euripides (and Sophocles), entrances to tableaux scenes and exchanges with actors during the *parodoi* are more common.
presence, unsurprisingly for a chorus which has quite literally a passing connection to the play’s locale. The chorus also immediately begins a process of localization which will occupy the entire parodos. This localization is not only geographic, but temporal and mythical, “a full skenographia, a painted backdrop to frame the drama of Iphigenia.”

Agamemnon and the Presbus have already identified the place (near the straights of Euripus (11) at Aulis (15)) and the time of day (dawn, 6-15), and the very presence of Agamemnon establishes the mythical context, but the chorus establishes the locale far more thoroughly. They begin by evoking a geography (Chalcis, Arethusa, the straights of Euripus, 165-68) which may well be familiar to the spectator and juxtapose it with a historio-mythical one, the banks of the Eurotas, where Helen was kidnapped (178-79). In an ominous reference, they have passed through the grove of Artemis (also known to the fifth-century spectator?) on their way to the army, which it describes in some detail. The location of the groove of Artemis is important. Agamemnon in the prologue has already established the separation of Argos and the army camp. The geographical association of the grove with the camp dictates the direction of Iphigenia’s final exit. The incongruity of the female chorus entering from this side establishes a subtle female presence (which will be fully realized by the end of the play) in this eisodos, even as they sing of its overt masculinity – of both individual heroes and the collective “navy”.

There is Homeric colouring to this parodos. Not only are there some linguistic echoes, but the focus on individual heroes stands in contrast to the rest of the play. To the

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170 Zeitlin (1995) 182 distinguishes between the sightseers of this play, who establish a temporary setting (the Greeks will eventually move on), and the sightseers of Delphi, a well-known and permanent locale, for which description is not strictly necessary to characterize the locale.


172 Wiles (1997) 105-12 sees the chorus establishing a different topography by means of a split entrance. One half of the chorus enters singing the first strophe associating one eisodos with Aulis and the army camp. The first antistrophe associates the other eisodos with Argos and also the grove of Artemis. This establishes a polarity separating ideas like Aulis/sea/Aphrodite and Argos/land/Artemis. This polarity disrupts my own gendered conception of the play’s topography. It cannot be falsified, but Wiles’ dichotomy seems to me of less thematic relevance. It also (though this is of admittedly less significance) does not correspond to the regional geography: the grove of Artemis and the straight of Euripus are both to the north of the harbour, Carter (2006) 165.

173 Page (1934) 147 identifies half a dozen “verbal reminiscences” of Homer in the first three metrical units at 175, 201 (two), 204, 207, 208. But note, for instance, ἡμιθέων at 173, a word that is distinctly non-Homeric in spite of (or perhaps emphasized by) its appearance at Iliad 12.23, although it seems to have been common enough in other epic works. The word is common enough elsewhere, however, and likely retained an otherwise epic flavour in the fifth century, see Nagy (1979) 159-161, Scodel (1982) 34-36, Foley (1985) 79.
other characters of the play, the army is a mob and only off-stage characters stand out for their power to influence the crowd. So Calchas and Odysseus are a threat to Agamemnon (517, 526) and Achilles is unable to influence the army and is drowned out by the din at the assembly (1349). On stage, any gathering of men is potentially dangerous, based on Iphigenia’s reaction to the approach of Achilles and attendants (1338).

The activities of the heroes have Homeric overtones as well: we have a council between the two Ajaxes, athletic games with Diomedes and Meriones throwing a discus, and Protesilaus and Palamedes playing at draughts, perhaps as substitutes for Achilles and Ajax in the popular vase motif (as inventor of the game, Palamedes is a particularly fitting substitute and his presence, along with Protesilaus confirm the play setting in the early days of the Trojan cycle). The epode is of course reserved for Achilles, both as Homeric hero *par excellence* and as a subject of the play. As the chorus describes watching him, they establish the fascination (brought on by looking at him) they will maintain throughout the play and which they will share with Iphigenia (who will also have ample time to gaze upon him as she makes her final decision), with whom they will eventually be aligned.

The five remaining metrical units, two strophic pairings and an epode (231-302), also emphasize numbers in the army with a catalogue of ships, but are problematized by suspicions of the text. “None of those who claim the passage as an interpolation can, however, explain why it has been interpolated.” Page condemns these verses based on numerous *hapax legomena*, frequent repetition, and poor style, and one must wonder if such lines truly made engaging theatre (but compare the teichoscopia of *Phoenician Women* 88-201 for a model). The question of source is also a problem: the numbers given by the chorus do not correspond to the Homeric catalogue, nor do the discrepancies seem to have any dramatic purpose. Decreasing the Argive contingent from 80 to 50 may put greater emphasis on Agamemnon’s Mycenaean contingent, but why increase the Athenian ships from 50 to 60? This does not seem enough of a jump to be motivated by propagandistic intent (perhaps entirely irrelevant if Euripides is composing in Macedonia). Furthermore, why have

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175 Wiles (1997) 105.
Odysseus’ Ithacans been omitted? Both Page (who sees the lines as spurious) and Stockert (who does not) suggest the Cypria – or some form of it – as a possible source. If so, this catalogue stands in relation to Iphigenia at Aulis in a way similar to that of the Homeric catalogue: of separate and unique origin but now integrated into its context. The origin of the Achaean catalogue and inclusion in Iliad 2 has been a source of long debate, one that I am perhaps guilty of over-simplifying here. In any event, no Athenian spectator could hear these verses and not be put in mind of the second book of the Iliad.

Page suggests that the lines must have been added to the play early, due to the declining significance of the tragic chorus in the fourth century. But we do not know enough about choral practice to justify this. Of fourth-century choruses, we know next to nothing, since the plays of Menander do not include their choral odes, leaving only the notation ΧΟΡΟΥ or (more rarely) ΧΟΡΟΥ ΜΕΛΟϹ. We do not know how long those choral odes were, nor do we know if there were odes written specifically for this play, or if local producers were simply inserting their own or perhaps older, popular choral odes. In the Poetics (1456a19-20) Aristotle complains that odes have become interchangeable, and the chorus no longer an integral element of tragedy. This process, he implies, begins in the fifth century, since he says it is Agathon who started it. In the case of Dyskolos, at least, the identity of the chorus, worshippers of Pan, whose temple neighbours the house of Knemon, has some relation to the play itself. But even here the introduction of the chorus (“Here come a bunch of revellers”) is standardized: the chorus is not mentioned again and Menander incorporates several dramatic devices meant to cover the interruption of choral songs. This suggests independent composition for the choral odes, either by Menander himself or by another poet of less repute (and presumably cheaper). An acting troupe (or a local chorus hired by a troupe manager) might have a repertoire of choral songs to be inserted into Menander’s plays, perhaps a variety of odes to different gods. It is interesting to speculate

177 Menelaus is also omitted, although perhaps he is to be incorporated as part of the Mycenaean contingent. See also Stockert (1992) 230.
178 Kirk (1985) 168-70 outlines some of the difficulties and includes bibliography.
179 So on a fragment supposed to be from Astydamas’ Hector (= PHib 2.174). The notation confirms that the choral interludes were in fact songs, rather than just dances. See Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 10, Revermann (2006a) 275-81.
180 Agathon is gone from Athens by 405 (Frogs 83-85).
that the catalogue found here in *Iphigenia at Aulis* could in fact have originated in one of these independent choral songs or been taken from another fourth-century play and adapted as necessary. If a troupe manager had a script of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (for which he surely would have paid someone) and a catalogue-ode which fit the theme (for which he also paid, or which he composed himself), this might provide the motivation to expand this *parodos*. But it is still difficult to see how a producer would find the first strophic pair and epode of the *parodos* inadequate and feel the need to expand them: such an expansion could hardly have been thought to attract a larger audience, unlike the possible addition of a chariot entrance after the first *stasimon*.

Although the chorus reinforces localization and theme throughout the *parodos*, it is thus far largely disconnected from the action of the play. The women are as yet unaware of the sacrifice plot and, once they have finished singing the *parodos*, do not effectively contribute to the *mise-en-scène*. In fact, as a group of sight-seeing women, they are at odds with the military camp setting and make inappropriate witnesses to the *agon* between Agamemnon and Menelaus which follows the *parodos*. This disconnect is what allows the chorus to apply a broader perspective: Agamemnon sees only his own private troubles and the army as the threat it represents to him and his family. The chorus on the other hand sees the whole army and will envision the full run of the war in the ensuing *stasima.*

Following the *parodos*, the chorus falls silent and has little to contribute to the long subsequent scene(s). There are several entrances, for instance, but none are announced by the chorus. Agamemnon is summoned outside by the Presbus (314-16), and the other entrances – the Presbus pursuing Menelaus (303) and the messenger (414) – are surprise entrances. The chorus’ contribution is limited to brief interjections during the post-messenger reconciliation scene. None of these comments are acknowledged by Agamemnon or Menelaus, and the only acknowledgement the chorus does receive is the dismissive command for silence by Agamemnon at 542.183 During the *agon*, the chorus’ comments are general and gnomic (“brothers should not fight” (374-75) and “it’s good not to kill your children” (402-03)) and they give no reaction to the revelation of the sacrifice plot. Even

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182 Foley (1985) 80.
183 No editor has singled this line out for excision, though Dindorf excised Agamemnon’s entire speech in 1839.
after Agamemnon’s exit at 542, when the chorus is alone on stage, they sing of broader matters – the consequences of love run amok – perhaps in obedience to Agamemnon’s command for silence. But after the messenger speech the chorus begins to express pity at the plight of Agamemnon’s family and admiration for Menelaus’ new-found familial loyalty. This is the first sign of the chorus’ engagement with the events of this tragedy.

After Agamemnon commands silence, he enters the skene and the chorus is left alone on stage to sing the first stasimon. As with the parodos, it begins with a strophic pair and an epode, and (again like the parodos) the lines that follow are suspected by many editors. The opening triad does not comment on the action just witnessed by the chorus, but its sophistic theme of the desirability of love only in moderation (μέτριοϲ, 542, 554, σοφροϲύνη, 544) is clearly relevant to the play. It is, of course, the uncontrolled lust of Helen and Paris that has led to this war, as the chorus reminds us in the epode (573-91). The submission of a woman to eros and the disastrous consequences are a common tragic motif: Phaedra and Deianeira are prominent examples.184 The chorus is explicit in connecting education (561) and wisdom (563) to the moderated passion of the blessed, a theme of fifth-century Athenian philosophy rather than a mythological element of the Trojan War. There is an irony in the chorus declaring that fame arises out of the good life (566-67) considering the atrocities of myth that fuel tragedy. The connection between love (ἔρωϲ) and strife (ἔριϲ), particularly in the epode where each is repeated (585, 587) has been noted before.185

The remaining lines of this stasimon (590-606) have the chorus greeting Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, and the infant Orestes (who is not mentioned in this stasimon) as they arrive by chariot. I have already discussed editors’ motivations for excising these lines based on the excessive spectacle of the chariot entrance. But the chorus’ attitude to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia presents further problems. In the final lines of their song (598-606), the chorus, in its role as women of Chalcis, exhorts itself to assist Iphigenia from the chariot, taking care not to startle or alarm her. These lines show respect to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia without violating Agamemnon’s dictum of silence at 542. Lines 590-97, on the other hand, cause a great deal of difficulty:

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185 Foley (1985) 77.
ἡ ἱώ· μεγάλαι μεγάλων
eὐδαιμονίαι· τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως
ἰδεὶ Ἰφιγένειαν, ἄνακας ἐμῆν,
τὴν Τυνδάρεω τε Κλυταιμήστραν,
ὡς ἐκ μεγάλων ἐβλαστήκας`
ἐπὶ τ' ἐμηθείς ἤκουσι τύχας.
θεοί γ' οἱ κρείςοι οἵ τ' ὀλβοφόροι
τοῖς οὐκ εὐδαιμοσι θνητῶν.

Oh oh! The blessings of the great
are great! See the king’s daughter
Iphigenia, our mistress,
and Clytemnestra, daughter of Tyndareus.
How they have grown up from great ancestors,
and they move toward grand fortunes.
They, strong and blessed, are gods
to those mortals less fortunate.

The chorus greets the two women by recognizing them as having royal status over them
(591-92), descended from great ancestors (593-94), and destined for great fortune (595-97).
Agamemnon has demanded silence, but has made no further request for complicity. As
Kovacs notes in his Loeb edition, “[The women] know what is in store for Iphigenia and
have no reason to engage in cruel irony.” Murray’s suggestion of a sub-chorus of Argives
(in his Oxford Classical Text of 1909) is a possibility, but it is difficult to see why either
Euripides or an interpolator would introduce a new chorus for so few lines (14 at most, 7 if
we assume the original chorus to deliver lines 598-606 after Kovacs). Page condemns
lines 590-97 based on two unique words (ὁλβοφόρος, 596, and εὐμήκεις, 595) and the
passage’s similarities to Euripides’ Electra 988-97. But the chariot scene serves specific
dramaturgical purposes. It signifies the perversion of the marriage ritual and its confusion
with sacrifice, a common theme throughout the play, and it recalls both Agamemnon and
Euripides’ own Electra, two plays against which we must read Iphigenia at Aulis.

186 Kovacs does not discuss these lines further in his accompanying JHS article (2003a). It is enough for him to
excise them based on the chariot entrance.
187 Three instances of sub-choruses occur in Greek tragedy, at Eum. 1032 ff., Hipp. 61-71 and Phaethon fr. 781.
In each case, their identity is made clear before they sing.
188 Page (1934) 160. The first word is hapax. Page believes the second to be only here in poetry, but it is also
found in the Homeric Batrachomyomachia (130), admittedly not very useful for establishing a precedent in
poetry.
Having looked back to the cause of the war in the parodos and first stasimon, the chorus looks forward in the second stasimon, singing (again in triadic structure) of the Greek arrival in Troy and of the suffering which will befall the Trojan women. The mention of women mourning their husbands and anxious about being taken as slaves (791-93) must surely have recalled Euripides’ own Trojan Women, produced a decade earlier, and the allusion must have been all the stronger given that we have a female chorus imitating another female chorus. Helen, a constant theme of the chorus, is mentioned again (twice if we keep lines 773-83, and the evidence against them is not strong\(^{189}\)), as the chorus anticipates the women of Troy blaming Helen for their troubles (794).

The third stasimon is probably the best known of the play. It is another triadic structure, as the chorus sings of the marriage of Thetis and Peleus (strophe), Achilles’ future glory (antistrophe) and the sacrifice of Iphigenia, mixed heavily with marriage imagery. The strophe, describing the marriage with the music of the cithara and pipes and a procession of the Muses, begins cheerfully and out of context could be taken as a celebration of a hero (Achilles) or a marriage (Achilles and Iphigenia): Foley sees in this ode a heavy debt to the epithalamic tradition, for which little evidence now remains.\(^{190}\) The division between this ode and the events of the play have not gone unnoticed: “The third stasimon of the Iphigenia in Aulis stands out in contrast to the dramatic situation and serves to define it by showing us what it is not.”\(^{191}\) Walsh notes Euripides’ suppression of any negative aspects of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (the physical subjection of Thetis to Peleus, Zeus forcing the marriage upon Thetis, the eventual outcome of the marriage, namely the Trojan War and the sacrifice of Iphigenia) in order to increase the sense of Iphigenia’s loss: the marriage is construed as the happy occasion Iphigenia will never experience. The antistrophe is also paradoxical: as they praise the heroic Achilles (very different from the man revealed in the previous scene), they include the prophecy of Chiron which makes it clear that Achilles will win his glory at Troy, which means Iphigenia cannot be saved. The chorus is still subscribing to the Homeric persona, but reality can no longer be kept at bay: Achilles will be glorious, but not here, and the epode admits that Iphigenia will be sacrificed amid a loss of \(\alpha\iota\delta\iota\omega\gamma\) and \(\alpha\rho\epsilon\tau\iota\).  

\(^{189}\) Page (1934) 170. 
\(^{190}\) Foley (1985) 82-83. 
At this point in the play, the chorus is in full sympathy with Iphigenia. The epode of this *stasimon* is sung directly to her, grieving that she is about to be sacrificed. She will be garlanded like a sacrificial deer or heifer (1083-84) and cut down. At this point they fully condemn the murder of Iphigenia. In the following scene the chorus joins in the entreaties of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, directly urging a course of action upon Agamemnon (1209-10) – the first time in the play that they do so. When Iphigenia sings her lament (1284-1335), she again recalls the judgement of Paris, signalling that she too sees the world in heroic, mythical terms just like the chorus. And she, like the chorus before her, will be smitten with the image of Achilles as he speaks of defending her.

After forbidding her mother to mourn her or seek vengeance against her father, Iphigenia bids the maidens to sing with her a paean to Artemis, and opens the song with a monody (1475-99). In these lines, Iphigenia calls for the accoutrements of the sacrificial victim (garlands, water to wash, a dancing procession 1477-1481), sings in honour of the goddess (1481-82) and appropriates for herself the heroic epithet of sacker of cities (ἐλέπτολιν 1476). The chorus joins in, and after she departs at 1509, continue the paean themselves, echoing the sentiments introduced by Iphigenia: the garlands and sprinkled water (1513) and her role as city-sacker (repeating ἐλέπτολιν at 1511). And at 1521, the chorus shift from Iphigenia to Artemis, and the closing lines of their song is a short hymn asking for her favour and for victory for Agamemnon.

Kovacs and others (as noted in the first chapter), not willing to accept the last 98 lines as authentic, choose to see this paean as the closing lines of the play. If the play did conclude here, this would certainly be a powerful conclusion: the messenger speech describing Iphigenia’s rescue is at variance with the inexorable progression of the sacrifice in the rest of the play, and is even undercut by Clytemnestra’s doubts and Agamemnon’s extremely hasty and dismissive appeal to Clytemnestra to forget the entire incident. Interestingly, a conclusion at this point would put the chorus of this play in a similar position to that of the Argive elders in the *parodos* of *Agamemnon*: witness to the events leading up to the sacrifice (with significantly different details, of course), but unable to describe first hand the sacrifice.

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192 Vellacott (1975) 175.
193 It is interesting to note that, for all her lamentation, Clytemnestra does not sing in this play (or in Euripides’ *Electra*). She is perhaps too masculine.
itself. While the Aeschylean chorus sings of the bound young girl, in this paean emphasis is placed on the suffering heroine (we are to see her (ἰδέϲθε, 1511) and therefore remember her) and the chorus ask for crowns of victory for Agamemnon. Not only is Iphigenia no longer gagged, but able to speak, and the chorus sing their final song after taking verbal cues from her. But if the chorus concludes on a victorious note, they do so on a troubling note. “The paean here seems to retain the ambiguity of occasion and function: at a marriage or at the inauguration of battle, for celebration or propitiation.” The chorus, who came to see the male gathering of heroes, sings farewell to the young woman who has assumed the heroic mantle. The marriage she thought she had come for has not materialized, and yet the chorus sing to Artemis, commonly hymned at weddings.

It is perhaps appropriate that this chorus, so out of place in the early stages of the play, should reinforce the ambiguity of Iphigenia’s sacrifice. It is Iphigenia who in a dramaturgical sense justifies the presence of the chorus – she is the character to whom they naturally respond, and it is her plight that they are to lament. But they are not Iphigenia, of course, and her situation is not theirs. They will survive to tell the tale, hopefully more objectively than Agamemnon or Clytemnestra (neither of whom, we are aware, will survive the full arc of this myth).

**Conclusions**

When Iphigenia advances toward the Argive camp, she has achieved a nobility beyond the reach of the other characters in this drama. She actively accomplishes what her seniors can only argue and bluster about. She sacrifices herself for an ideal in which no other character seems actually to believe. Even Achilles’ willingness to fight to the death to protect Iphigenia is undercut by his preoccupation with his own good name. The three modes of analysis which I have applied in this chapter each accentuates different, but not mutually exclusive, interpretative approaches, each of which might explain the popular reception of the play. The self-sacrifice story is, for the audience, something of a known quality: a pattern

194 Compare especially the closing lines of *OT*, where the chorus directs the audience to look upon (ἀailability) the hero Oedipus.
195 The formulaic closing lines of *IT* (1497-99), *PW* (1764-66), and *Orestes* (1691-93) have a similar call for victory, this time for the poet himself. *Rhesus* 995-996 calls for a military victory for Hector in the same manner as the chorus does here for Agamemnon.
196 Foley (1985) 76.
familiar from previous plays, and yet always open to new explorations and understandings. For Euripides, the self-sacrifice story in its variants also opens up new areas of discourse, enabling critical assessments of social hierarchies, be they along the lines of class, ethnicity, or gender. Likely of most relevance to his immediate audience in the fifth century was the notion of ethnicity, at a time when most of Greece was involved in a long and destructive war.

The most immediate response of an audience is governed, subtly, by the performance itself. The movements of Iphigenia, as she moves from one side of the stage to the other, as she runs from her mother to her father upon her entrance, and as she leaves for the Argive camp, all carefully underscore Iphigenia’s dedication to her father and the patriarchal power that he represents. If the play ends at 1531, then Iphigenia’s exit toward the Greek camp is an extremely significant one, to be ranked with, say, Oedipus’ exit toward the grove of the Eumenides in *Oedipus at Colonus*, or Philoctetes’ toward the ship of Neoptolemus in *Philoctetes*. I personally do not accept the concluding hundred lines of the received manuscript as genuine, but Agamemnon’s sudden re-entrance only nine lines from play end drastically undercuts the importance of Iphigenia’s gesture. He should be on his way to Troy, but instead feels the need to return to assure himself of his wife’s acceptance of the situation.

Iphigenia’s self-sacrifice, for all the good intentions and patriotism of the girl herself, is a destructive act. Literally, of course: she herself is destroyed. But that destruction extends beyond herself, to include her family and all the Greek army. This is not to say that Iphigenia is at fault, or that she is to be held accountable: responsibility most certainly lies elsewhere, with Agamemnon, Odysseus, or even the whole army. Perhaps with Artemis as well, but that is never clear in this play, since Euripides carefully excludes her from the stage. Even if we accept the *exodos* of this play (which not even Clytemnestra is willing to do), the lame salvation of Iphigenia has done nothing to prevent any of the consequences of the self-sacrifice, except to save the girl, though her destination is unknown to any of the mortal characters. While the Iphigenia myth could be more positively construed, as an act of uncomplicated patriotism rewarded with immortality or a favoured position in cult (and indeed Euripides himself explored that positive construction in his earlier Iphigenia play), at
this point in his career, in self-appointed exile from a city engaged in a long and destructive war, Euripides was in no mood to construct a happy play.
Chapter 4: Classical and Hellenistic Receptions

The final three chapters of this study are concerned with and informed by the rapidly expanding field of Reception Studies. As a sub-field in Classics, Reception has seen a significant increase in breadth and sophistication in recent years, particularly since the turn of the millennium. Thus far, a great deal of scholarly attention has been focused on reception of performance and especially on tragedy. The genre, in its own time and in the centuries that followed, has always enjoyed one of the favoured positions in the Classical Tradition. The past four decades have seen a remarkable surge in performances and adaptations of Greek tragedy on stages around the world. The subject of this study is of course a tragedy that has been and will be performed and adapted repeatedly, and so it is natural that we draw on the rich, if recent, body of material on performance reception.

We can at this point in the development of the study of reception distinguish between different modes of reception, even if those different modes will frequently overlap or intersect. To speak of Performance Reception as a mode of reception is to define the approach generically. But this chapter and the two following will be concerned with the transition of the Iphigenia sacrifice story from a performance genre into other non-performed literary genres (inter-generic reception), and even into other artistic media (inter-medial reception). In either case, reception implies a change of context, and we must examine that

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1 Important work has been done before this, of course. But in the first decade of this century, monographs like Hardwick (2003), Walton (2006), Martindale & Thomas (2006), Hardwick & Gillespie (2007), Kallendorf (2007), and Hardwick & Stray (2008) have led to the coalescence of Reception Studies into a recognizable and respectable (if often difficult to define) sub-discipline.

2 This is not to deny the other important areas of study. Studies in the reception of Homer, for instance, have increased as well, see the useful survey article of Burgess (2008). Comedy has seen some attention as well. For Aristophanes, Hall & Wrigley (2007) will be influential. For Menander, see the doctoral thesis of Nervegna (2005).

3 The literature on this subject has already grown too vast and disparate to list, but some important studies include Easterling (1997), Revermann (1999/2000), Hall, Macintosh & Taplin (2000), Garland (2004), Hall (2004), Hall, Macintosh & Wrigley (2004), Hall & Macintosh (2005), Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall & Taplin (2006), Goff & Simpson (2007). Several of these studies, particularly those of Hall and Macintosh et al., range from the ancient to the modern as they attempt to establish a continuous and significant tradition of reception.

4 The commonly accepted watershed is that identified by the editors of Dionysus Since 69, Hall, Macintosh & Wrigley (2004): the production of Richard Schechner’s Dionysus in 69, first performed in the Performance Garage, New York, June 6, 1968.

5 I borrow these useful categories of reception from the introduction to Gildenhard & Revermann (forthcoming).
new context, how it affects the story under transition and how it affects our own understanding of the exemplar.

Text, art, and performance all contribute to the living tradition of Greek theatre, and all must be accounted for if we are to produce a constructive model of reception and properly understand the process of appropriation.\(^6\) If we think of a tradition of a myth as a living entity, one capable of change and adaptation, we see that the change implicit in reception is absolutely necessary to the survival of that myth. A story becomes popular, and so a tragedy is composed (or an epic or an elegy). Tragedy as a genre enjoys for a time a heightened popularity and exerts influence over other genres and media. Eventually the original tragedy inspires new writers and new artists to articulate or illustrate the story in different ways. These new modes of expression themselves become popular and the cycle of renewal continues. Long after a tragedy first popularized the myth, the story continues to be popular in new media. If the story remains well-known, the important moments in its tradition will be preserved (although such preservation is hardly secure over time). A tragedy which made a specific myth popular may in fact be preserved or even remain popular because of the very myth it told. It is this process of renewal and survival with which these final chapters are concerned.

While the sixth, and concluding, chapter will examine the fate of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in the modern (post-printing press) era, the current chapter and the next are concerned with reception of the play in antiquity. This chapter moves from the death of the author into the Hellenistic period, while the next chapter will look at Roman instantiations of the Iphigenia legend. Given the available evidence, this chapter will largely look at inter-medial reception, namely the reception of tragedy in visual representations, on vases, bowls, and frescoes. This is in contrast with the next chapter which will have more (if limited) literary evidence: the remains of another Iphigenia tragedy (that of Ennius) and late Republican interventions into the sacrifice story.

We have little by way of reliable eye-witness accounts of fifth-century performance, and this complicates our understanding of the immediate reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* before an Athenian audience. But the *Iphigenia at Aulis* is an interesting case for reception,

precisely because the reception of the first performance and the beginning of the posthumous tradition occur at the same moment. Aristophanes is our closest eyewitness to Greek tragedy, but his testimony is filtered through a comic agenda, and in any case no reference to *Iphigenia at Aulis* has been identified in his extant work. Thus we must be careful in assessing the impact – if any – of this play in its initial context.

At its first performance, *Iphigenia at Aulis* received first prize in competition at the Great Dionysia. We must not be misled by this evidence, however. *Iphigenia at Aulis* was not performed alone, but as part of a group of four plays (or three, as no satyr play is attested):

οὕτω γὰρ καὶ αἱ Διδαϲκαλίαι φέρουϲι, τελευτήϲαντοϲ Εὐριπίδου τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ δεδιδαϲχέναι ὁμώνυμον ἐν ἄϲτει Ἰφιγένειαν τὴν ἐν Αὐλίδι, Ἀλκμαιῶνα, Βάϲχαϲ.

For so the Didascalia report that, Euripides having died, his son of the same name produced in the city *Iphigenia at Aulis, Alcmeon and Bacchae*. Furthermore, Euripides was only recently dead. During his lifetime, Euripides’ Athenian audience had an ambivalent attitude toward his work: only four victories in his lifetime and a death in (self-imposed) exile from Athens, and yet continued grants of a dramatic chorus (and with increasing frequency). Although he could easily be mocked or parodied, Euripides commanded a great deal of respect, as we see in *Frogs* when Dionysus, after reading *Andromeda*, is compelled to seek the poet out to save the city (52-54). Thus we cannot rule out a sympathetic or eulogistic vote in favour of a recently deceased poet. If the vote was indeed sympathetically biased, the judges may have been willing to overlook a weak script with some structural problems, especially when produced with *Bacchae*, a superior drama which had no such problems.

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7 Gurd (2005) 72.
8 Rau (1967) 216. Nor does Aristophanes refer to *Bacchae or Alcmeon in Corinth*. This is not necessarily a comment on the quality of these plays, since *Frogs* may have been produced before these plays and in any case tragic allusions drop off sharply in the two post-*Frogs* plays of Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazousae* and *Wealth*.
9 Suda, s.v. Εὐριπίδηϲ.
10 Scholia Ar. *Frogs* 67.
11 Although it is ultimately Aeschylus who is chosen, the implication is that Aeschylus is worthier, not that Euripides is unworthy.
12 Unfortunately, we do not know the results of the competition of 401, when Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* was produced.
Another issue that complicates our understanding of this play’s immediate reception is the unknown notional audience. Euripides spent his final years in Macedonia at the invitation of Archelaus, who began a concerted effort to Hellenize his land and people. Theatre, and especially tragedy, was an essential component of this process: with tragedy, one could import “cultural self-assurance, Hellenization and the potential of being tinged with, and contextualized within, ruling-class ideology.”\(^{13}\) The title and eponymous hero of *Archelaus* incorporate, if not directly, Euripides’ royal benefactor into Greek heroic myth and the play would have been embraced by a Macedonian audience as their own cultural artefact.\(^{14}\) This practice of writing tragedies for non-Athenian audiences had been going on for decades across the Greek diaspora, from at least as early as 476/5 when Aeschylus produced *Aitnaiai* in Sicily.\(^{15}\)

But the plays produced in Euripides’ final trilogy give no indication that they might be intended for an audience outside Athens. At least they do not contain the localizations that might indicate a change in audience. *Bacchae* is set in the city of Thebes but does not cater to a Theban audience.\(^{16}\) In fact the Thebes of that play is consistent with other instances of Greek tragedy in which the Boeotian *polis* is portrayed as the political Other.\(^{17}\) There is no reason not to assume the same for *Alcmeon of Corinth*. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, on the other hand, is notably panhellenic in its setting (see chapter 3) with little to suggest an Athenian or indeed any regionally specific point of view. The play focuses on the start of a panhellenic expedition, with heroes gathered from all over Greece. Mention of specific Greek *poleis* occur as references to individual homes and domestic spheres, rather than as the apex of political allegiance. In fact, Agamemnon’s political power is directly dependent on his influence over a Greek army, not just his Argive warriors. Thus the contrast of *polis* and *oikos* often explored in other tragedies is here replaced with a more extreme dichotomy – that

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\(^{13}\) Revermann (1999/2000) 465. This article explores the dissemination of Athenian tragedy through the Greek speaking world, using the process of Macedonian acculturation in the late fifth and early fourth centuries as a key example.

\(^{14}\) The surviving fragments preserve part of a lengthy genealogy, a common feature of the Euripidean prologue. See Collard, Cropp & Gibert (2004) 333.

\(^{15}\) See also Allan (2000) 152-60 on *Andromache* in Molossus and Thessaly.

\(^{16}\) *Bacch.* 409-11 are complimentary to Pieria and 568-75 to the valley of the Ludias, which Euripides may well have visited during his time in Macedonia. The sensibilities of the play, however, are still “surely meant for Athenian ears.” See Dodds (1960) xl and notes.

\(^{17}\) Zeitlin (1986), esp. 106-111.
of nation (or at least a cultural state comprised of multiple independent units) versus *oikos*. In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Euripides offers an expanded “nationalistic” perspective, inspired perhaps by his own voluntary exile and in response to almost three decades of war in Greece. If Euripides wrote the play a few years before his death, it would have been at a time when many Athenians still felt that the Peloponnesian War could be won and the Athenian Empire expected to expand. But even if Athens’ outward growth was halted, the expansion of its literary offspring was not: “tragedy was thoroughly panhellenic by the third century BCE...popular and shared throughout the Hellenic world”.18

**Tragedy in the Fourth Century**

The fourth century brought a new era for Greek tragedy. By the end of the fifth century, the great masters were all dead, and the perception articulated in *Frogs* (71-72) is that there are no new masters waiting in the wings:

δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιοῦ.  
οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ᾽ εἰϲίν, οἱ δ᾽ ὄντεϲ κακοί.  
I need a right-thinking poet.  
For they are no more: those now living are crap.

Since no tragedies of the fourth century survive,19 despite the increase in popularity and number of (larger and larger) venues throughout the fourth century in the Hellenistic period, we can neither confirm nor refute Aristophanes’ claim.20 Aristotle complains that vulgar audiences had a negative impact on the genre (they are pleased by double plots, an inferior type, *Ar. Poet*. 1453a33-35), yet this does not stop him from citing several fourth-century tragedians as positive examples of the genre.21 The institution of a separate performance category for “old tragedies” alongside (*παραδιδάϲκειν*) newer productions at the City Dionysia in 386 (though when this became an annual practice is less clear) also suggests a perceived difference between fifth- and fourth-century drama.22

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19 *Rhesus* is, as always, a possible exception.
20 The single complete study of fourth-century tragedy remains Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980).
Many of the statements in the preceding paragraph need to be further nuanced if we are to truly understand the perception of tragedy in the fourth century, particularly the difference between fourth- and fifth-century tragedy. To return to Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, this play is perhaps the single most important document of reception in the fifth century. Such documents form an admittedly short list, but the impact of *Frogs* on later literary tastes is significant. Aristophanes is writing from an extremely privileged position, not only writing at the end of the fifth century (a distinction of course meaningless to him), but also boosted by the convenient (from a historio-literary perspective) proximity of the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides (both to each other, and to Aristophanes’ own production). The near coincidence of the deaths of not one but two recognized masters of tragedy must have signalled to many, Aristophanes included, the passing of an era. The evolution and impact of a literary (or any artistic) genre or sub-genre (in this case fifth-century tragedy) cannot truly be assessed until it can be understood as complete, and this sense of completion cannot be felt until its masters are done writing and safely deceased. A living poet might change his writing style, or suffer a decline in quality, or even spawn a successor to carry on his legacy, but a dead poet can be trusted to do none of these things. Aristophanes’ earlier plays, especially *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazousae*, parody and mock Euripides, but *Frogs* judges, literally and comically. Once the era of fifth-century tragedy is finished, it can be studied, evaluated, appropriated. Its figures can be established as cultural icons, now safely contained and defined (even if there are different opinions concerning how to define them) with their works declared classics. This Solon-esque appraisal of the dead poets and their chosen artistic medium is begun with *Frogs*.

The terminus of this literary era is at least somewhat arbitrary, of course, since the writing and performance of tragedy continued and even increased in the fourth century. But Aristophanes detected – or initiated – a shift in the understanding of tragedy between the two centuries. This shift can be thought of as natural: the shock of the loss of the two master poets would have left a perceived gap or caesura in the evolution of the genre. The fourth-century poets, no matter how good they were, could not avoid being compared to Aeschylus.

Hunter (2009) esp. 10-52 provides a thorough study of Aristophanes’ literary tastes as seen in *Frogs*, and situates *Frogs* at the beginning of the tradition of literary criticism in antiquity.
Sophocles, and Euripides, and the nostalgia attached to these poets was too great to overcome.

The fourth-century bias for “old” tragedy is best demonstrated by the Attic orators. The interrelations between tragedy and oratory are close. Both are simultaneously literary and performative genres, both follow genre-specific rules (institutional or otherwise) and there is considerable cross-fertilization.\(^{24}\) Tragedy, and Euripides in particular, exhibits a predilection for argument and persuasion,\(^{25}\) an integral element of the developing fifth-century oratorical tradition,\(^{26}\) while *ethopoiea*, “character building”, is important for the successful speech writer.

But the fourth-century orators, like all readers of tragedy, follow their own complex rules of appropriation, designed to accommodate both the practical needs of their profession and the expectations of their audience. The orators navigate a tricky path: tragedy and poetry add weight to an argument and appeal to the masses, but if employed too frequently there is a risk of appearing elitist and losing the sympathy of the crowd.\(^{27}\) Demosthenes is able to attack Aeschines for his use of tragedy, since Aeschines was a former actor and simply knew the lines from his performances (at least according to Demosthenes, 19.247).\(^{28}\) More than that, Aeschines was a τριταγωνιϲτήϲ who frequently played tyrants and other unsavoury characters – a detail that Demosthenes did not hesitate to exploit in the law courts. Poetry (not just tragedy, but epic and elegy also) was often used to add grandeur to an argument, either by providing a mythical paradigm or a gnomic sentiment, but crucially “all...the accredited citations of tragedy are without exception from Sophocles and Euripides.”\(^{29}\) In the 330s, Lycurgus established performance texts for the the three fifth-century poets, and had bronze statues erected.\(^{30}\) This appropriation of fifth-century tragedy taps into a nostalgic

\(^{24}\) Buxton (1982) 17-18. Hall (2006) 366 (a revision of her 1995 article) notes that such cross-fertilization must have occurred on a social as well as literary level, given that the poets and orators would have come from the same circles of the educated elite. Aeschines is perhaps the best example (see below).

\(^{25}\) See, for example, Lloyd (1992) on the use of the formal *agon* in Euripides.

\(^{26}\) Tragedy was not the only genre influenced by oratory. Comedy and historiography (especially Thucydides) use persuasion and rhetoric to various ends and effects.

\(^{27}\) Ober & Strauss (1990), especially 250-255.

\(^{28}\) “It seems that on the whole Aeschines’ interpretations and explanations of his quotations from poetry do not show great oratorical skill or mastery.” Perlman (1964) 170.

\(^{29}\) Wilson (1996) 315; see also Perlman (1964) 163.

\(^{30}\) Plutarch *Ten Orators* 841f. The establishment of these scripts also likely elevated Athenian tragedy to the status of panhellenic poetic texts on par with Homer, which already had an official text for the Panathenaeas,
view of Athens’ past, capitalizing on the idea of a Golden Age of literary wisdom.\textsuperscript{31} New tragedy simply did not carry this weight.

Thus very soon after the process of iconization has begun, Euripides and Sophocles come to represent an idealized past. But their significance can be understood in atemporal terms as well. Once the genre of fifth-century tragedy has been “closed” and its works identified as “classics”, the tragedies can be thought of as having access to and presenting some kind of universal truth. It is this sense of perceived universality that lends such argumentative weight to passages that are not necessarily logically connected. The lengthiest example comes from Lycurgus’ speech \textit{Against Leocrates}, in which a blacksmith is accused of having fled Athens upon hearing news of an Athenian defeat before the Macedonians at Chaeronea. After a discussion of the evidence and countering potential arguments from the defence, Lycurgus then makes several broad references to bravery in the past and the necessity of every citizen’s devotion to the \textit{polis} of Athens. In this context, Lycurgus recites 55 lines from Euripides’ lost \textit{Erechtheus} (\textit{Against Leocrates} 98-101). The lines belong to Praxithea, who justifies the Athenian sacrifice of her and Erechtheus’ unnamed daughter to secure victory over an invading force. The sacrifice theme resonates with several other Euripidean tragedies, including \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}, but the play’s characters, setting and aetiologies establish it as unusually and distinctly Athenian (see chapter 3). This may well be why Lycurgus chose this play, since the passage has to be manoeuvred somewhat awkwardly into the argument: an Athenian woman was willing to sacrifice her daughter against her maternal instinct, therefore Athenian men of today should not forsake their \textit{polis}. Lycurgus goes on to cite Homer and Tyrtaeus, but neither is used at such length: all are examples of venerable poetry, but in both genre and content, \textit{Erechtheus} is Athenian.

The natural affinity of the orators for Euripides contributed to his popularity after his death. Euripides became increasingly popular in the fourth century, apparently more so than in his own lifetime.\textsuperscript{32} One didascalic inscription suggests a possible reperformance of \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}:

\begin{quote}
see especially Scodel (2007a) 149-52.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31} Wilson (1996) 315.

\textsuperscript{32} This assessment is typically based on the didascalic information, in which Euripides is said to have won only four victories in his lifetime.
Neoptolomus [won] with an old [play] *Iphigenia* of Euripides

The inscription refers to the City Dionysia of 342/1. The reference to Euripides’ *Iphigenia* is regrettably vague, as ancient references to play titles often are, and there is no way of determining which is meant. Aristotle makes familiar reference to both plays and iconographic evidence (often combined for the two plays, see below) attests to the popularity of both *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.

Another very interesting scrap (literally) of evidence is an early third-century papyrus which preserves two passages from *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The passages are preserved out of order (1500-08, then 784-93), but with musical notation. Not surprisingly, the two passages are both lyric: the first preserved passage is from Iphigenia’s farewell song, sung in counterpoint to the chorus (these are Iphigenia’s final lines in the play). The second passage preserved is from the chorus’ second stasimon, after the arrival of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, but immediately preceding the revelation of the plot to Clytemnestra and Achilles. In this passage, the chorus sing of the anticipated suffering of the Trojan women. It is unlikely that the musical notation would allow for an accurate reconstruction of the music heard by the original audience of the play: musical styles may well have changed in the intervening century. Furthermore, the mode of performance has changed. That the two passages were preserved for performance is clear, and that they were not meant for a performance of the entire play in its linear sequence seems equally clear. Rather, these lines were meant to be performed as excerpts from the play, perhaps for a single singer in a sympotic setting or at a dinner party (larger, more grandiose banquets thrown by the wealthy elite) in a private, not public, performance (and presumably held indoors rather than out).

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33 IG II² 2320.
35 Aristotle praises *Iphigenia among the Taurians* at Poetics 1452b6-8, 1454a7-8, 1455a18, 1455b1-15 and criticises *Iphigenia at Aulis* at 1454a33. IA is also quoted at Politics 1252b8-9.
36 It is interesting to note that the actor Neoptolemus also won in the old tragedy category the following year with Euripides’ *Orestes*. Could the actor have played Orestes in consecutive competitions?
37 P Leid inv 510.
This papyrus scrap, if it does indeed include lines for a private performance, represents a vector in the dissemination of Greek tragedy and myth about which little is known. That Greek tragedy could be recited or sung in the symposium from as early as the fifth century is known from *Clouds* 1364-72, in which Phidippides reportedly refuses his father’s request that he recite Aeschylus and chooses Euripides instead.\(^{40}\) In roughly the same period, we know the kings in Macedon were establishing a tradition of privately commissioned performances.\(^{41}\) By the Roman period, privately sponsored performances could be major events, but evidence for much of the Hellenistic period is less clear. There is debate on whether whole tragedies would be produced at these smaller, private events,\(^{42}\) but this papyrus seems to suggest that at least some performances were of excerpts only. We really have little idea how popular this type of performance was, but it must have been largely the privilege of the elite (the poorer classes would have attended public theatrical events if they were interested), and found itself in competition with mime and pantomime, which were popular performance genres throughout antiquity.\(^{43}\) This last point might explain the need for musical excerpts: shorter lyric pieces would more closely resemble mime and pantomime in performance and in length.

The popularity of Euripides and *Iphigenia at Aulis* in this period is vitally important to the survival of the play to modern times. Although there was an infant book trade in Athens at the time of the play’s first performance,\(^{44}\) these tragedies would have been known only through performance to all but the few elite and academically-minded citizens, who could both afford to read and be bothered with the process of acquiring and reading texts. Small private collections, particularly family archives, must have existed and were likely called upon for consultation when Lycurgus legislated the creation of master performance

\(^{40}\) Earlier, at 1354-58, Phidippides refuses to sing (ἀἰϲιϲ) a song by Simonides, saying it is old-fashioned. Instead he recites (λέξαϲ, λέξον) from tragedy.

\(^{41}\) Revermann (1999/2000).

\(^{42}\) Fantham (1984) 300 (a position she reiterates in 2002) suggests speeches and excerpts, but Handley (2002) 169-70 and Nervegna (2005) 102-3 are at least willing to entertain the possibility of longer performances. All of these discussions are keyed to the works of Menander, for whom there is more (later) evidence. Nervegna (2007) presents and considers all the evidence for tragedy and comedy, and considers the importance of travelling troupes who likely included entire plays, comedies and tragedies, in their repertoires.

\(^{43}\) Fantham (1984).

\(^{44}\) *Frogs* 52-54, 1105-08, Xenophon *Anabasis* 7.5.14, Csapo & Slater (1994) 1-2. At least one play, the revised version of Aristophanes *Clouds*, can be said to derive from a completely textual transmission.
scripts in the 330s. The popularity of these plays in performance must have led to demand in the book trade.

Ironically the performance tradition of the fourth century was also the greatest single threat to the textual authenticity of the scripts we now possess. Until Lycurgus’ edict, there is no evidence of adherence to an original script. Even this establishment of performance scripts is problematic, as Plutarch reports neither the jurisdiction of this edict (was it applied only to the Great Dionysia?) nor the method of monitoring and policing this rule: we are only told that the scripts were to be read to the actors. As a play was taken to new venues and new cities, the script must have been highly vulnerable to revisions by troupe managers and star actors. The former may have introduced crowd-pleasing regional localizations, such as those possible at *Trojan Women* 197-229, or manipulated speaking roles to accommodate more or fewer actors. The actors themselves were enjoying increased star power and soon began to overtake the poets in terms of popularity (Ar. *Rhét.* 1403b33). Star actors may well have re-written their roles to give themselves more palatable characters to play or even just to increase stage time.

It is therefore something of a miracle that the texts survive as well as they have. Such post-authorial interpolations are difficult to detect, much less to verify, in tragedy, since we must generally rely on internal evidence. Yet large-scale problems seem to be relatively few, and most scholars have been comfortable accepting our texts, after appropriate editing, as original performance scripts.

In this context, then, *Iphigenia at Aulis* stands out. It is a play in which many components are flagged for us as inauthentic, even if we do not know the full extent of the problem: is the exodos, for example, complete post-authorial innovation, or does the scribe have some notion of the original script? These problems led Page to use *Iphigenia at Aulis* as

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45 Plutarch *Ten Orators* 841f, Csapo & Slater (1994) 5. We cannot know from what exemplars these standard texts were created, nor how widespread their use was outside of Athens. Blum (1991) 83 notes that had official copies been kept in public archives, these texts would not require standardization.

46 Westlake (1953).

47 It is always difficult to determine how likely these interpolations were to find their way into a text, especially since many of these interpolations must have been ad hoc, oral insertions by the actor. But for some examples of possible interpolations, see Revermann (2006) 77-78.

48 The case for authenticity in comedy can be made with much more confidence, as a result of its highly topical and regional focus. See Revermann (2006) 74-81.
the prime example in his study of actor’s interpolations, and they should serve as a reminder just how far a text can go astray. Thus Kovacs’ recent reconstruction of the first performance script (by and large through excision) has produced a radically altered script (one unperformable as a complete tragedy), omitting entire thematic elements in the play (Calchas’ secret prophecy, the baby Orestes).

But from the perspective of Reception Studies, these textual issues pose less of a problem. They are in fact part of a living tradition, both performative and literary. Instead, we must ask why such interpolations have been made as they have. Again, the exodos of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is an important crux, given that it has serious impact on any critical interpretation of the play. Is, for instance, Agamemnon in any way redeemed by the salvation of Iphigenia? An argument can be constructed that he is: he has shown himself loyal to the gods and there is no blood on his hands, aside from a sacrificed hind. Would the final lame lines of Agamemnon in this play – our daughter is with the gods now, so let us not be angry with one another – be enough to make his character more palatable to an egotistical star actor?

As I have argued earlier, the final lines of the play are not likely to be authentic. The problems are flagged not only by the different metrics and language, but also, on an interpretative level, by a contradictory and disappointing ending. Up until 1531, Euripides has invested heavily in false hopes of salvation that prove fruitless (Agamemnon’s letter, Menelaus’ change of heart, the Presbus’ revelation, Achilles’ commitment to his own honour), and one of the most significant elements is the family tension between Agamemnon and his wife and child as Clytemnestra is converted from a devoted wife and mother into the vengeful creature of the *Oresteia*. The last-minute salvation of Iphigenia undoes those tensions and effectively wrests *Iphigenia at Aulis* from its literary tradition.

The ending of *Iphigenia at Aulis* will be a continued crux for the reception of the play. While critics have argued over the value, motivation and even authenticity of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, any artist or writer must consider exactly the same issues. As we move forward in

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49 Page (1934).
this chapter and into the next, we shall see specific examples of reception, and the individual appropriations of the play’s ending will tell us much of the artist’s agenda and context.

**Visual Evidence and the Megarian Iphigenia Bowls**

Our literary evidence in the fourth and third centuries for the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is slim. We fare slightly better with the visual arts, however. Vase painting, sculpture, fresco, and other plastic media represent a vital link in the reception of a myth, even if we must be careful how we interpret the evidence.\(^{53}\) LIMC lists thirteen visual representations from the Greek world that may or may not be linked to this play. These include two relief plaques, broken and worn, that depict on one side Iphigenia approaching or kneeling upon an altar before Artemis and on the other three standing figures, two female, who cannot be securely identified; a marble statue that preserves, apparently, the torsos of Iphigenia and Artemis;\(^{54}\) and a plastic moulded cup in the shape of a female head with horns which may be the head of Iphigenia.\(^{55}\) The remaining images represent three moments of reception in the pictorial record about which more can be said. The first is an Apulian volute-krater depicting the near-sacrifice and salvation of Iphigenia (figure 4.1). The second is a Pompeiian fresco (figure 5.1) reportedly copied from an original by the fourth-century painter Timanthes. In both of these cases, the connection to the play is ambiguous and limited. The third example, however, is a pair of Megarian bowls that make an explicit claim to direct connection with a performance of the play.

Since the current study is concerned with the reception of a specific instance in the tradition of a myth – namely dissemination and appropriation of a play performed in the late fifth century – we must take a moment to define the relationship of art and performance, specifically tragedy. The majority of theatre-related visual evidence, at least in the fifth and fourth centuries, comes to us through vase painting, and it is here that most scholarship has focused. The lion’s share of these vases are not from Athens, however, but from Southern Italy, so we must be cautious in drawing conclusions about Athenian tragedy. The vases and frescos on which these images appear also exist for different reasons than the tragedies to

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\(^{54}\) Copenhagen, Glypt. 481-482.

\(^{55}\) Matera, Mus. Naz. Ridola 11013.
which we are now comparing them, and issues of function – how a vase is used and displayed – will affect our understanding of the images.

The traditional debate (even if we use more recent terminology) is between the “philodramatic” and the “iconocentric” schools. The first position, the philodramatic, stresses the importance of theatre and assumes a direct correspondence between play and image. It essentially develops out of the approach of the dedicated philologist, emphasizing the text and assuming that the images “illustrate” that text. The iconocentric, on the other hand, rejects this connection, finding in these images the product of a strictly independent visual tradition. This position is that of the traditional art historian, seeing these images as a solely visual medium and independent of a textual tradition for validation or understanding.

As argued first by Giuliani and more recently by Taplin, neither approach can fully appreciate these images and what they mean to the Classical tradition. The philodramatic approach, in overemphasising the text, attempts to fit these images to a literary template, dismissing or skewing elements that do not easily correspond. The iconocentric, on the other hand, while fundamentally true, is reductive: every part of an image is indeed part of an iconographic tradition, a choice made by the painter from within a repertoire of visual tropes and motifs, but our understanding of that tradition can certainly be enhanced by careful and cautious comparison to the literary.

Given its development from the standpoint of the philologist, the philodramatic is the more traditional point of view which identifies the images on Greek vases as direct “illustrations” of performances. This case is easier to make for comedy, since comic portrayals tend to signal theatrical content, imitating the comic subject matter to step beyond the confines of the theatrical illusion and let us know we are seeing a theatrical moment: stages, masks, costumes, and props are all frequently visible. When it comes to serious mythical subject matter – in other words the stuff of tragedy – almost no vase of the fifth or fourth century gives any signal of performance: the illusion of the theatre is maintained.

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57 The extreme position has been taken most recently by Small (2003).
59 Taplin (1993, 2007), and also Lada-Richards (2009) in her article length review of the latter.
60 There are a few counter-examples: the vase of the Basel dancers has been known since the late 1960s (Basel, Antikenmuseum BS 415). Even here, the clearest evidence that this is a performance situation are the rather
Furthermore, these vases rarely depict a scene from tragedy without some alteration, minor or major, to the tradition received in our texts. These variations can be extra characters, details not explicitly mentioned in the script, or even conflation of multiple scenes. Finally, a good many of the vases that depict tragic subjects actually portray scenes that would not appear on stage in a performance (often, for example, showing the events of a messenger speech).

One example of such variation comes from a vase depicting the “sacrifice” of Iphigenia (see figure 4.1). In this image, Iphigenia is in the process of being replaced by (or transformed into) a young deer. It does not take much scrutiny to determine that this vase cannot be an illustration of the conclusion of Euripides’ play. Artemis looks on from an upper register, but so does Apollo. The character performing the sacrifice is not identified

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subtle lines of the dancers’ jaws suggesting masks. The recently published Kiev Chorus (Kiev, Museum of the Academy of Sciences, unnumbered) has more clearly defined white masks, but the image is very fragmentary. Published only in Froning (2002) 73 and now Taplin (2007) 30.
with a text label, but the sceptre he carries suggests he is Agamemnon. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter in the parodos of Agamemnon but not in the messenger speech of Iphigenia at Aulis – Agamemnon rather stands apart and looks at the ground. Furthermore, no female should be present – the female looking on (presumably Clytemnestra?) should not be there if indeed Iphigenia at Aulis is the “source” for this image. The vase may represent an alternate version of the play’s close, but it is difficult to envisage and comparison with other vases of this type suggest that even then we could not expect an exact representation. The scene comes closest perhaps to Iphigenia’s description of her own sacrifice in Iphigenia among the Taurians (6-30), but the flame mentioned at IT 25 is absent.

This vase serves to illustrate just how greatly an image can differ from any known literary tradition, including as it does several elements that must owe more to a pictorial tradition than a literary one. The presence of Apollo, for instance, is difficult to imagine in any portrayal of the sacrifice, a story in which he takes no part in any known version. He is easier to explain, however, if we look beyond the confines of the known texts to a broader mythological context. Apollo, as twin brother, is a natural companion to Artemis, and the two are frequently paired together. Indeed the two appear in another vase depicting the Iphigenia story, this time the story of Iphigenia’s rescue by Orestes and Pylades. On this vase, Orestes sits on an altar, with Pylades and Iphigenia standing on either side of him. The corner of a temple can be seen in the “distance”, and Apollo and Artemis are seen looking down from an upper register, as in our example vase. If either vase is inspired by Iphigenia among the Taurians, we should still not be disturbed by the fact that neither Artemis nor Apollo appear in that play: in fact the coup de théâtre comes with the appearance of Athena in their stead, despite the fact that they have been the two driving forces behind the action of the play (Artemis brings Iphigenia to Tauris, Apollo brings Orestes). But even without reading Euripides’ Iphigenia plays, Artemis is a long-standing element of the mythological tradition, and Apollo is a natural counterpart.

The reverse of this phenomenon can be seen in at least one vase showing scenes from Eumenides: Apollo warding off a fury while Orestes clings to the omphalos at Delphi. The Pythia flees in panic – the vase conflates the opening scenes – but on the far right of the image stands Artemis, surveying the action. Naples, Mus. Arch. Naz. 82270, c. 360s.
To return to our example, other elements in this vase originate in a visual tradition, not a textual one. Although there is no fixed “code” for the symbolism of visual elements on painted vases, some suggestions can be made. The two boukrania hanging above the altar fill space that would otherwise be empty and may perhaps suggest the ritual context of the sacrifice. The ivy on the platter held by the young male assisting with the sacrifice is also difficult to explain, but vines are common decorative motifs on such vases, again filling empty space. The highlight of this vase is clearly the transforming Iphigenia, with the image of a deer “superimposed” upon that of the young girl. The double image is unusual but striking, and conveys clearly the idea of substitution or transformation.

This combination and disruption of iconography is present in other visual media as well. It is at this point worth mentioning the fifth- or fourth-century painting of Timanthes, of which a fresco in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii (figure 5.1) is said to be a copy. It is, however, “generally a futile exercise trying to recapture great Greek paintings from their Roman copies and adaptations,” and so I will not press the fresco into service here, but analyse it further in the next chapter.64 Ling notes the discrepancies which exist between the descriptions of Pliny and Quintilian and the Pompeian fresco: Pliny reports Iphigenia as standing beside the altar, rather than being carried, and Menelaus attends the sacrifice in grief.

The association of the Roman painting with the Greek exemplar is based on one significant feature of the earlier work, an apparent innovation by Timanthes, reported by our sources. Both Pliny and Quintilian record that Timanthes, unable to properly convey the appropriate level of emotion on the face of the grieving father, instead chose to veil Agamemnon’s face:

Nam Timanthis vel plurimum adfuit ingenii. eius enim est Iphigenia oratorum laudibus celebrata, qua stante ad aras peritura cum maestos pinxisset omnes praecipue patruum et tristitiae omnem imaginem consumpsisset, patris ipsius velavit, quem digna non poterat ostendere...atque in unius huius operibus intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur et, cum sit ars summa, ingenium tamen ultra artem est.
(Pliny NH 35.36.74).

64 Ling (1991) 134; see also Bergmann (1995) for the paradoxical tendency to study Roman “copies” as artefacts belonging simultaneously to two distinct cultures. This Pompeian fresco serves as a key example (84-85).
For Timanthes had an incredible genius. His Iphigenia is heaped with the praises of the orators. He had painted everyone, but her uncle above all, grieving for her standing by the altar by the altar, but as he had used up every depiction of sorrow, he covered up the father himself, whom he could not properly depict...And in his works alone, there is more to be found than what is painted and, while his skill may be supreme, nevertheless his genius goes beyond his skill.

Timanthes, then, demanded that the spectator’s imagination provide the full gravity of the situation, but we must be wary of interpreting the Pompeian image as the work of a Greek painter. This fresco will therefore be more thoroughly examined as a Roman artefact in the next chapter. The connection between the veiled Agamemnon in Timanthes’ painting and the behaviour of Agamemnon at the sacrifice in our received text, in which he holds his robe up to hide his tears (1547-50), is an ambiguous one, and at least one critic has suggested that the painting itself is actually the inspiration for the preserved ending of the play.

The iconocentric view that these two images are completely independent of any performance tradition is flawed. These images show scenes from Greek myth, and from the early fifth century tragedy became the primary vehicle for the dissemination of myth, displacing elegy, choral performance, and even epic. The ever-increasing number and size of performance venues makes the possibility of a visual artist working in ignorance of a performance tradition unlikely. Even if we cannot prove theatrical performance for all regions of provenance, Greek theatre still remains the most likely means of dissemination for any given myth, particularly one that received frequent treatment from the major playwrights of the fifth century.

The iconocentrists argue that these images are created according to a strict set of genre-specific artistic conventions. The painter uses a “traditional repertoire of iconographic forms and formulae” to govern the composition of the image: elements such as scenery, body poses and gesture, and clothing. It is indeed true that these artists are working in a different medium with different constraints and expectations. The painter’s image, for example, can depict anything his own abilities and the limited space on the vase will allow. Nor does the

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65 See also Quintilian *Inst.* 2.13.13.
67 Page (1934).
painter labour under the dramatists’ restriction of only three speaking actors in any given scene. But despite the difference between these media, the subject matter of many of these vases coincides with many popular Greek tragedies and the two traditions must encounter each other somewhere.

Can the philodramatic and iconocentric schools ever be reconciled? As Taplin notes, there are many variables involved on both sides of the equation.\(^69\) On the one hand we might consider the popularity of the myth (are there other versions?), the popularity of the play (was it likely to have any mythographic impact?), the subject matter (was it easy to portray?), the specifics of the original performance (were there important props, costumes, or settings that might be visually interesting?). On the other hand, we must consider the painter (was he given to “tragic” themes?), the size and type of the vase (would a tragic scene fit or be appropriate?), the intended use of the vase (symptic? funerary? display or practical use in the home?). Neither of these lists is exhaustive. Taplin wisely advises that each instance must be assessed on a case by case basis. By doing this, and avoiding the extreme positions, we can determine how far any given image, even if it can be understood or interpreted on its own, might be better appreciated through application of the dramatic or literary context.

Taplin’s studies, and indeed most studies on the subject, focus exclusively on painted vases of the fifth and fourth centuries. And rightly so: there is a rich body of evidence and examples from outside the medium are rare. The Timanthes painting is lost, and we must apply a different set of iconographic rules to it (see chapter 5). There is, however, another piece of visual evidence depicting the Iphigenia story, a close relative to vase painting. Although some of the rules change, the warnings of Giuliani and Taplin are still relevant, and we must be careful.

We have six terracotta bowls (or fragments thereof), all dating to the early 2nd century BCE. Three identical bowls preserve five early “scenes” from the play\(^70\) and the other three (also identical) preserve five more.\(^71\) Since these six bowls are made from two moulds, they


\(^{70}\) New York, MMA 31.11.2; Athens, Mus. Nat. 22633 = LIMC v (1990) 711 no. 6, 7 respectively, see also Sinn 1979 Pl. 22-3. There is also a fragment of a third bowl, Volos Museum DP 71-34, 86, which shows only Menelaus from scene 3, mentioned, but not shown, under LIMC v (1990) 712 no. 10.

can be conflated into two bowls to simplify discussion. These two bowls feature a combined sequence of ten scenes, which correspond to the text of *Iphigenia at Aulis* closely enough that we can assign narrow line ranges to each (in the case of the first scene, to a single line reference).

The first bowl (figure 4.2), proceeding in a slightly disrupted order, shows five scenes:

1. *IA* 111: Agamemnon giving a letter to an old man (labelled ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΟΦΟΡΟΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑΝ, “letter-bearer to Clytemnestra”);
2. 303-313: Menelaus and the same old man, engaged in a tug-o-war over the letter;
3. 320-326: a confrontation between Agamemnon and Menelaus, in which Menelaus holds the opened letter in his hand;
4. 414-441: a messenger announcing to Agamemnon the arrival of Iphigenia (ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΡΟΥΣΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ “messenger about the arrival of Iphigenia”);
5. 613-630: a chariot, with an attendant holding the horses, bearing Iphigenia and Orestes, accompanied not by Clytemnestra, but Electra.

Notice that scene 3 has become displaced in the series.

The second bowl (figure 4.3) identifies its source as “Euripides’ *Iphigenia*” (ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΟΥ ΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ). This bowl also has five scenes, again in a slightly skewed counter-clockwise order, picking up as it were where the first bowl leaves off:
Figure 4.3: Megarian Relief Bowl with five more scenes, early 2nd century BCE. Berlin, Staatl. Mus. 3161.

6. 623-80: a family reunion, with Agamemnon seated on a throne, Iphigenia reaching out in an almost supplicatory gesture, and Clytemnestra (looking away on the right) with Orestes;
7. 819-54: Achilles and Clytemnestra, with Achilles on the left, holding his arms up in a supplicatory or warding fashion;
8. 866-95: Clytemnestra, hand at her chin in shock or shame, with a Presbus (ΠΡΕΣΣΒΥΣ);
9. 1211-52: Iphigenia, with Orestes, supplicating Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra looking away;
10. 1338-44: Achilles with spear in hand, facing Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, facing away and looking ashamed.

Again, there is a disruption in order, with scenes 9 and 10 reversed in the series.

In addition to these narrative discrepancies, there are some minor variations from our text. There is no indication of Electra in the play (as depicted in scene 5) nor is she listed in
the *dramatis personae* found in the manuscript tradition. Orestes is represented as a toddler on the bowls (scenes 5, 6 and 9), when we might expect an infant. Nor is there any hint that Agamemnon sits when initially greeted by his daughter (scene 6), and this is in fact difficult to envision from the text and our knowledge of fifth-century staging technique. Finally the arrival in scene 5 appears to be in a wagon rather than a chariot.

If we had a bowl or set of bowls depicting a fragmentary tragedy, we would be tempted to reconstruct the narrative from those bowls, as has been the case with, for instance, Euripides’ lost satyr play *Autolycus*, apparently depicted on another relief bowl (Figure 4.4).\(^{72}\) The source is not identified on this bowl, but the text is badly damaged and worn away. Furthermore, Sisyphus and Dionysus, common characters in satyr play, also appear on the bowl. *Iphigenia at Aulis* is not fragmentary, but as discussed earlier, the text is problematic. Can these bowls address any of the serious textual concerns of the play?

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\(^{72}\) Berlin, Staatl. Museum 3161r.
These bowls, and others of the Megarian type, derive from a more textualized, Hellenistic world, and artists of this period now seem to be more attentive to specific scripts (read or performed) and less dependent on general notions of mythic tradition. One extreme example is found in a pair of Homeric relief bowls, the first of which shows three scenes from book 22 of the *Odyssey*, two showing the capture and restraint of Melanthios, the traitorous goatherd, and one of Athena spurring Odysseus and Telemachus to victory (figure 4.5). A second bowl shows three more scenes from the same book, with the death of Leiodes the seer, and the supplications of Phemius and Medon, bard and herald. Text from the poem was also included on this bowl, but the bowl is damaged, and much of the text is worn away. In any event, despite some discrepancies between text and image, these two bowls are clearly dependent on the text itself for their composition. Admittedly, these are

73 Berlin, Staatl. Museum 3161n.
75 Berlin, Staatl. Museum 3161r.
76 Of particular interest is the portrayal of Athena as her female self, rather than in the guise of Mentor as in the poem.
extreme examples, and most bowls of this type restrict their text to character names; we should not think of the average artist making his bowl-moulds with a copy of Homer propped up beside him. Nor should we take the text, whether it be direct quotation of a literary source or the naming of characters as evidence of a literate consumer: the text is likely a selling point as cultural artefact whether the buyer can read or not.\footnote{Even at this relatively late date, the book trade is still closely confined to a literate, upper class elite. See Harris (1989) 125, who posits a fluid relationship between the orality of the masses and the literacy of the elite. A largely illiterate consumer may still purchase a product heavy with text in a period when both literacy and theatre impart cultural credibility.}

Text is clearly an important part of the Iphigenia bowls. The inclusion of title and author on the second bowl is significant. The examples of titles are so few that “the extant examples may be reinventions of the concept by individual artists rather than part of a continuous tradition.”\footnote{Weitzmann (1959) 64-68.} Nowhere do we have another bowl or vase that names both author and title. All figures on the first bowl are either named or carefully labelled – the only exception is the letter-bearer in scene 2, who has already been identified in scene 1. The identification of the letter-bearer and the messenger is too specific to allow any question of source, and the use of title on the second bowl is explicit. The question then becomes, what exactly inspires the text on these bowls? As noted above, Weitzmann suggests that the bowls are reconceptions of an illustrated manuscript tradition, in which the sculptor of the bowls is recreating the images drawn on an illustrated papyrus.\footnote{The “Paris Romance”, a scrap of illustrated papyrus in the Bibliothèque Nationale, remains unpublished.} Weitzmann was not a classicist and his argument – supported at the time by only a single scrap of papyrus which was not available when he first formulated the theory in 1947\footnote{Weitzmann (1959) 66 goes so far as to provide a reconstructed example of a “papyrus” punctuated by scenes 7 and 8. He adds Achilles to scene 8 “because the text requires his presence.” On the dependency of images on text in papyri see Nisbet (forthcoming).} – is now hopelessly outdated, with no evidence to support it.\footnote{No such papyrus survives from that period. Also, if a bowl maker were copying from an illustrated papyrus, it is difficult to see how the disturbance in narrative sequence came about. It is far more likely that these bowls were inspired by an active performance tradition, which would require the bowl maker to work from memory (or from a second-hand account of the performance).}
Another major change from the painted vases of the fourth and fifth centuries is in the form of the bowls themselves, which actually dictates the composition of the images. These bowls are not large, so that only one register or layer of image is possible, a format that perhaps lends itself to sequential or syntagmatic images. Multiple scenes and images can still be conflated on these bowls, but in a different way than vases with multiple registers.

These bowls differ from painted vases even in what images they represent. One well-known example that will illustrate this difference is a vase that seems to be inspired by Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (figure 4.6). Here we see Hippolytus in his chariot encountering Poseidon’s bull from the sea. This event does not occur on stage, but is related in the diegetic narrative of the messenger’s speech. The Hippolytus vase has such a messenger figure to the left of Hippolytus and his chariot. He appears to be a combination of the *paidagogos* from the prologue (because he is old) and the attendant who reports the event. This vase therefore cannot be said to accurately represent a performance of *Hippolytus*, although it can perhaps be said to be informed by a performance. This is the case made by Taplin several times in the past decade and a half.

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83 Counter examples with syntagmatic images exist: Burgess (2004) 9-10. One, which shows various independent scenes from the *Iliou Persis* (the death of Priam, rape of Cassandra, Andromache(?)) and Trojan Women being taken by soldiers, is Naples, Mus. Naz. 2422 from the Kleophrades painter. These scenes, however, are highlights from the narrative rather than images in a specific sequence. Also, 21 vases from the fifth century feature the popular motif of Theseus and his labours, including the Minotaur and the bull of Marathon. LIMC vii (1994) 925-8 nos. 32-53 pls. 623-33 show vases which depict Theseus three or more times, performing a different labour in each image. The deeds portrayed, and their order, varies from vase to vase. On these, see Niels (1987) 134-48.
This Hippolytus vase makes an appropriate comparative example as a theatre-related vase for specific reasons. First is the messenger figure mentioned above. This aged character, wearing a cloak, lifting a hand in front of himself and bending on one leg in front, standing as witness to the events of the myth is so common to vases with tragic themes that Taplin suggests that we can think of him as “a signal of the theatrical perspective”. This figure’s kothornoi, the high, soft-soled boots of the tragic actor, are also commonly found on vases thought to share some relation to the performance tradition (the snake-adorned Erinys figure appears to wear them too). This figure bears striking resemblance to the figure of the ΠΡΕΣΣΣΒΥΣ in scene 1 from the bowls, in the same pose, and even holding a staff or spear. It is worthy of note that this pose, one leg forward and one back, both arms reaching forward with one higher than the other, is repeated throughout both bowls. In the first bowl, the Presbus (scene 1, where he appears to be wearing kothornoi), Menelaus (3), and the messenger (4) all adopt this pose, while on the second bowl, it is assumed again by the Presbus (8 with kothornoi again), Iphigenia (6 and 9), the baby Orestes (6 and 9), and Achilles (7). There are variations in some: Iphigenia does not stoop as low, nor does she sweep her foot back as far, and in scene 9 she faces left, instead of right as in all the other poses; Menelaus holds his hand up higher, in more of a warding gesture; as does Achilles, who has a foot turned away from Clytemnestra, as if trying to retreat from her as in the text. Two of the three images of the Presbus are the same pose, however, as is the image of the messenger announcing the arrival of Clytemnestra, a similar subservient role likely played by the same actor. What we have on these bowls may be more than just a generic character type: it may also provide evidence of acting style or mannerisms.

The performance behind the Megarian bowls is the likely motivation for the discrepancies between image and text noted above. The presence of Electra, for instance, could be accounted for as a mute character, perhaps identified in an added line of trimeter that did not find its way into our text, or perhaps she was so identified by the maker of the bowl. In either case, the character has been “added” to fill out the family roster, which would have been well known to paying audience members and potential buyers of these bowls.

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85 The quote is from Taplin (1997) 80-2; see also J. R. Green (1996).
86 For more on Greek acting styles, see Green (2002).
Agamemnon’s seat is also a minor deviation of performance. Although our script does not exclude the possibility of Agamemnon sitting at 623-80, we are on safer ground supposing the seat for the later performance, rather than the initial performance in Athens.\textsuperscript{87} Agamemnon’s seat in this scene may also be a device on the part of the artist to provide a visual distinction from scene 9 (see below).

To return to the sequential nature of the images, and to the scenes chosen for those images, we may note the contrast with the painted vases which do not include sequences. Furthermore, only one side of the vase is typically used for a theatre-inspired scene, while the back is usually occupied by a generic, non-theatrical scene. The only known counter-example is the Cleveland Medea,\textsuperscript{88} which features a Telephus scene on the back (this has implications for the vase’s function, a subject to which we will return). Unlike the images on the earlier vases, these images all closely reflect moments in the performance script. Given that the images on these bowls correspond so closely to the received text of \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis} and each of the scenes represented on these bowls is directly represented (not narrated or predicted or anticipated) in the transmitted text, we may conclude that a performance strongly resembling our text (if not identical) was the source for these bowls.

I have noted that repetition of pose may be an example of an iconocentric trope in the composition of the images. Another such trope of the artistic tradition is surely at work on the edges of these scenes, where the “borders” are broken and images overlap. These overlaps occur at the bottom of the panels (where the shape of the bowls allow less space), usually in the form of a leg sweeping back and into the adjacent panel. Small suggests that the artist has “missed the point” of the theatrical piece by not allowing distinct scenes of the drama to remain visually distinct on the bowl.\textsuperscript{89} But these overlaps, aside from being dictated by the form of the bowls, lend a visual continuity to the sequence, as one scene moves into the next, reinforcing the narrative flow of the images.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} Our scripts do not, of course, include stage directions. We must infer what we can from the text and must err on the side of caution by not supposing unsupported directions. See Taplin (1977, 1978).
\textsuperscript{88} Cleveland, Museum of Art 1991.1.
\textsuperscript{89} Small (2003) 82.
\textsuperscript{90} This phenomenon occurs frequently in modern day comics and sequential art, perhaps the best parallel to these sequential images. See especially the studies of Eisner (1990) and McCloud (1993).
To explore the further implications of the image sequence on these bowls, we must address two closely related issues. The first issue is of function, and the concerns here are summed up in the question, “What purpose does the bowl serve for the buyer?” The second issue is of marketability and its corresponding question is, “Given the parameters set by the intended function, how does the craftsman make his bowls more attractive to the buyer?” Both function and marketability affect what the maker will put on his bowls.

The painted vases of Southern Italy have been thought to serve two principal functions: the vase is designed for either a funerary or sympotic context. The funerary context has been, in recent years, thought to be the primary function, although that primacy is now being challenged as is the notion that the two functions are mutually exclusive. We do not know the provenance for all these vases, but for those we do know, the discoveries were made in tombs. They are generally too costly for everyday use and some even have an open bottom showing that they are for display only. Furthermore, the theatrical scene is typically on only one side of the vase. Again the exception is the Cleveland Medea, which has theatre-inspired scenes on both sides. For this reason, that particular crater was most likely used in a sympotic setting, placed in the centre of the room as a focus of activity and to be admired from all sides.

Tragedy is an appropriate source of imagery for vase-painting in both contexts, the funerary and the sympotic. At a funeral a display vase with a tragic theme may well have served a consolatory function, perhaps reminding mourners that death and misfortune come to all. In the symposium, “the theatrical theme fits naturally within the ideology of a gathering in honour of Dionysus.” In both cases we must also consider the performative aspect of the vase itself. In both a funeral and a symposium, these vases are chosen to make a significant impression: either as a showy tribute to the deceased or to demonstrate the wealth and status of the host. The use of tragedy, a widespread and respected art form, adds cultural capital to a display of financial wealth. The implication could be that the deceased

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92 Taplin (2007) 44.
93 Revermann (2005).
94 Taplin (2007) 45-6, though he perhaps waxes a little too eloquent on the comfort value of these vases.
96 Junker (2002).
was a connoisseur of tragedy, in much the same way a famous literary quote may be pressed into service as an epitaph today. And the cultured symposiast may feel he is “in the know” when he recognizes a Medea scene when he fills his cup, whether he has seen Medea or not.\(^7\)

If these are the two primary functions of the painted theatre-related vases of the fifth and fourth centuries, can the same functions be envisioned for the Megarian bowls? It seems unlikely, and certainly not in the grand mode of the Apulian funerary vases, as we can see from the form of the bowls themselves. They are much smaller, for one thing, lacking the impressive size of the vases. For another, the sequence of images goes around the bowls, which have no handles. This means that the bowls are covered for 360 degrees, and are meant to be seen from all sides or, since they are smaller, to be picked up and turned as they are admired. On a more speculative note, the fact that the bowls are made from moulds means that they are all the same and lack the touch of individuality of the painted vases, which might lower the asking price. The mould process also means cheaper production costs and less impact as a funerary display piece, at least for one bowl alone.

The cheaper cost of these bowls may make them more suitable for household use, whether for practical use or display. The bowls are not large, and therefore are easy to handle and might be suitable for the day-to-day tasks of food preparation. But they are still decorated bowls, and this may yet mean a display function: having the bowls sit on a mantle or shelf to be admired. Their size and the full coverage of the images suggests that they are designed to be picked up, turned, and admired, perhaps by visitors to the home. The use of a tragedy and text might be thought to make claims, legitimate or otherwise, to a certain amount of cultural prestige and refinement. In the symposium, there may be a single lavish krater from which to draw the wine, but this does not mean the rest of the room would be without adornment. Our six bowls are all made from the same workshop, and must have been marketed as a set, which suggests that they were meant to be displayed together as well. Though no two copies of our bowls are known to have the same provenance (i.e., no set has been found), there is a clear connection between them.

The first bowl is not labelled with a source, which would not be necessary if it were produced in tandem with the second bowl. Conversely, the Presbus of the second bowl is

\(^7\) Revermann (2005) 14.
simply labelled ΠΡΕΣΣΒΥΣ: he is more thoroughly identified in his first appearance on the other bowl. The Odyssey 22 bowls noted earlier seem to be a similar set, though perhaps this is less likely: given that the bowls each cover about 75 lines of Odyssey 22, a full Odyssey set would require about 200 bowls.

We can find a parallel for this function of household display in the sets of terracotta figurines that began to appear early in the fourth century. These figurines typically present small but realistic comic characters, often with the padding at the stomach and buttocks of the comic costume. A short chiton and exposed phallos are also common in earlier (pre-New Comedy) examples. Like our bowls, these figurines were made from moulds, suggesting a low-level mass production. The figurines were popular throughout antiquity, and later gave rise to the production of terracotta “masks” which also displayed a variety of comic character types and became popular especially after the floruit of Menander. Also like our bowls, many of these examples were found in tombs. This may not indicate an exclusively funerary function, however, but could simply show the dead being buried with some prized possessions in a display of both wealth and cultivation. Many of these figurines and masks are found outside of tombs, and were undoubtedly displayed in the home, to be recognized and appreciated by visitors. Whether or not the visitor – or even the home-owner – has seen the production in question (if indeed a specific performance or play is being referenced), or even attended the theatre on a regular basis, may be largely irrelevant. The fact that the figurines, masks, and bowls can be easily identified as being connected to the theatre may be enough to make them desirable to the buyer.

This now raises the question of the extent of the Iphigenia set: scene 10 in the sequence corresponds to Iphigenia at Aulis 1338-44, before Iphigenia’s volte-face. Based on the absence of any images that might present an exodos, Weitzmann proposed that the

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98 One famous example is the set now at the Metropolitan, New York Met. Mus. 13.225.13, 14, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27. This set shows three slave types and a Heracles figure. See Trendall & Webster (1971) 126-27, Csapo & Slater (1994) 70-71. Trendall & Webster tentatively identify Eubulus’ Auge, although this is highly speculative.

99 Csapo & Slater (1994) 55.

100 The “House of Menander” in Mytilene has mosaics showing scenes from eleven plays of Menander (as well as busts of Menander and Thalia, a comic mask and a scene from Plato’s Phaedo). The mosaics date to the third or fourth century CE, long past any secure performance tradition of Menander. The mosaics, then, exist as part of an ongoing fashion inspired by theatre, but no longer dependent on it, and visitors could not reasonably be expected to have seen a full performance of any of the plays depicted. See Csapo (1999).
Iphigenia set is not complete: “[the sacrifice of Iphigenia] hardly could have been omitted in a complete narration of the drama, and therefore it can be surmised that there must have existed still a third bowl with illustrations from the end of the drama.”\textsuperscript{101} He supplies this hypothetical third bowl with four scenes “recovered” from four very different and very late reliefs and caskets.\textsuperscript{102} These extra scenes include Iphigenia’s reversal speech in which she informs Achilles and Clytemnestra of her decision to sacrifice herself, and three scenes from the messenger’s final narrative, including Agamemnon hiding his head in shame, the preparation of Iphigenia for sacrifice and Artemis preparing to substitute the deer. These are all motifs known in the iconographic tradition as shown in the Pompeiian fresco (see next chapter). Unfortunately, Weitzmann is using for comparison some very late sources (one of his sources, a Veroli casket, is dated to approximately 1000 CE), which have become crowded with other imagery, leaving the iconography confused (Weitzmann identifies one character on the Veroli casket, for instance, as Asclepius), and so a direct line of influence is difficult to trace.

But there is a stronger argument against using these scenes to recreate a third bowl. Three of Weitzmann’s proposed new scenes are derived from the messenger’s epilogue – that is, they are not mimetically performed on stage (as all ten scenes of the two extant bowls are), but rather are reported in the diegetic narrative of the messenger. And of course the text is especially problematic for the exodos. Weitzmann attempts to circumvent the issue by imagining the problems of the exodos to be a matter of text, not of content (the messenger speech of the received text preserves the proper events in their Euripidean order).\textsuperscript{103} At any rate, Weitzmann is arguing that the source of the terracotta bowls is the text, not performance: “The depiction of content of such a messenger’s report...can therefore only mean that the illustrations were not made under the impression of theatrical performances, but conceived in a scriptorium.”\textsuperscript{104} This is a bold conclusion, given that it is based on purely hypothetical evidence: the argument feels circular (the bowls are inspired from a text, since

\textsuperscript{101} Weitzmann (1947) 21.
\textsuperscript{102} Weitzmann (1948) 186-7. These four sources are the two sides of the Termessos relief (extremely fragmentary and uncertain, about 120 BCE = LIMC v (1990) 711 no. 5), the so-called ara of Cleomenes (first century BCE = LIMC v (1990) 720-1 no. 42 pl. 474) and the Veroli casket (approximately 1000 CE = LIMC v (1990) 721 no. 47 p. 474).
\textsuperscript{103} Weitzmann (1948) 178-9.
\textsuperscript{104} Weitzmann (1959) 67.
the third bowl shows scenes from the text but not the performance; the third bowl shows specific scenes since they are in the text). Even the one scene that Weitzmann proposes for the third bowl that actually is performed in the received text, the change of mind of Iphigenia (1368-1432), is a problem, given that it includes only Achilles, Clytemnestra, and Iphigenia. The first two bowls carefully avoid duplicating character combinations: only one Agamemnon-Menelaus scene (the agon is shown, but no reconciliation) for instance. The two scenes that are in danger of visual repetition – scenes 6 and 9, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia first greeting and then supplicating Agamemnon – are carefully distinguished by placing Agamemnon in a chair the earlier scene. Weitzmann’s first suggested scene repeats the character combination of scene 10 and should therefore be thought unlikely. The existing scenes, when considered in terms of performance, are clearly to be associated with points of dramatic activity and pathos in the play (points of dramatic impact): Agamemnon handing over his letter, the tug-o-war between Menelaus and the Presbus, the confrontation between the two brothers, and so forth. It is for these reasons that I consider these bowls to be, contra Weitzmann, performance based rather than text based and a set of two, rather than three.

The establishment of a direct connection between the bowls and a specific moment in the performance tradition returns us to the issues of function and marketability. The original bowl-maker who carved the mould from which the bowls were made has designed a bowl affordable enough through low-level mass production for household use, yet ornamental enough for display and perhaps even funerary purposes. The use of tragedy as inspiration for the images on the bowls suggests that the bowl-maker is capitalizing on a popular cultural phenomenon that his buyer will seek out. The reason for choosing Iphigenia at Aulis, however, remains something of a mystery, but two broad possibilities exist. First, the play may have been popular in the late-third century and the bowl-maker selected this play knowing that many of his buyers would have seen or known of a local production. The second option is simply that the bowl-maker, at the time he made his moulds, had recently seen, or had described to him, a production of the play, making it the freshest performance in his memory.
If we read these bowls as one continuous iconographic narrative, there are at least two observations that I would remark upon as significant to our reconstruction of the structure of *Iphigenia at Aulis*:

1. Both the messenger scene and the arrival of Iphigenia by chariot are shown, just as in the transmitted text.
2. No exodos of any kind is shown.

In the first instance, we are seeing evidence of a performance of the received text, despite contradictions in its structure. This furnishes us with a terminus for the establishment and co-existence of two scenes whose status in the text is questionable. The messenger speech, with mid-line entrances and a very short scene, has the qualities of fourth-century dramaturgy (see chapter 3). The chariot entrance could be an extravagant addition by a fourth-century producer hoping to use *opsis* or spectacle to draw a crowd. But if either or both scenes come from a later stylus, they were written and assimilated into the text no later than the end of the third century.

In the second instance, the lack of a third bowl could imply that there was no *exodos*. This is admittedly arguing *ex silentio*, but the script as it now stands could have been performed without an exodos of any sort, ending at 1531 with the exit of Iphigenia. At this point the play has gone on long enough that no audience would feel deprived of a complete theatrical experience, and the final lines leading up to 1531, lines of farewell to Iphigenia delivered by the chorus, could conceivably close the play (*IA* 1524-31):

\[ \omega \; \tau\sigma\top\tau\nu\iota \; \langle \pi\tau\omicron\tau\nu\iota \rangle, \; \theta\upsilon\mu\mu\alpha\iota \; \beta\rho\omicron\tau\eta\xi\omicron\upsilon\omicron\varsigma \; \chi\alpha\rho\epsilon\iota\varsigma, \; \pi\epsilon\mu\mu\omicron\upsilon \; \epsilon\; \Phi\omicron\nu\gamma\omicron\omicron\upsilon \nu \; \gamma\alpha\iota\upsilon \; \epsilon\lambda\lambda\alpha\nu \epsilon\omicron \; \sigma\tau\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\nu \; \tau\varsigma \tau\omicron\tau\omicron\upsilon \nu \; \tau\kappa\alpha\iota \; \delta\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\epsilon\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma \; \ Tau\omicron\iota\varsigma \; \epsilon\delta \iota \; \alpha\gamma\alpha\iota\mu\epsilon\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\nu\alpha \; \tau\epsilon \; \lambda\omicron\gamma\chi\alpha\iota\varsigma \; \epsilon\lambda\lambda\delta \iota \; \kappa\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \; \kappa\lambda\epsilon\omicron \; \alpha\epsilon\omicron\iota\mu\omicron\omicron\upsilon\omicron\omicron \; \alpha\mu\phi\iota\iota\epsilon\iota\iota \iota. \]

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105 Page (1934) 166-68.
O mistress, mistress, taking delight
in mortal sacrifices, send into the Phrygian
land the army of the Greeks
and the treacherous place of Troy
and let Agamemnon with his spears
place a most glorious crown on Greece
and about his own head
everlasting fame.

If these were the concluding lines, the salvation of Iphigenia would be omitted completely
and Clytemnestra would have completed the transition from devoted wife and mother to the
creature of vengeance dramatized in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*.

In this section, I have looked at three specific moments in the visual tradition of the
Iphigenia legend. The first two betray a preoccupation with the moment of sacrifice or
salvation, one during the moment of sacrifice and salvation (the volute-crater), the other on
the moments immediately prior to and following the sacrifice itself (this is the painting of
Timanthes, concerning which we must exercise caution). This focus on the sacrifice is
understandable: it is the key element of Iphigenia’s story. The third apparently omits the
sacrifice itself, a phenomenon that can be linked to a closer relationship to text and
performance on the Megarian bowls. The use of the text on these bowls allow us to treat
them almost as part of the literary and performance tradition, and it is for this reason that we
are able to draw farther-reaching conclusions about them than for the vase or (lost) painting.
Even the omission of the sacrifice scene invites speculation, as it maintains the mystery of
the greatest crux of our received text. As with the text, we do not know what happens in the
conclusion (what was shown on the third bowl), or if there even was a conclusion (if there
was a third bowl at all). The resolution of the sacrifice plot in *Iphigenia at Aulis* will
continue to be a fundamental issue in the interpretation and reception of this play as we move
into the Roman material in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Roman Receptions

In this chapter, I move to a few moments of Roman reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The shift in context is a significant one, embodying all the intricacies of the complex relationship between Greek and Roman culture, art and literature. The response of a Roman viewer, spectator, or reader to the self-sacrifice of a young girl (or a father’s sacrifice of a daughter) to enable a national military campaign will be conditioned by any number of factors from Rome’s military history to its societal values. How does Ennius, active in Rome during the second Punic War and after, interpret Iphigenia’s sacrifice or Agamemnon’s political ambition? Not that the Roman perception of the sacrifice is consistent: Lucretius (1.84-100) describes it as *scelerosus* (“full of impiety”), while Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.116) includes Iphigenia in his list of historical and mythical patriots.

In this chapter, I focus on three specific authors, each of whom took a new approach to the Iphigenia story, and all of whom were likely to have known Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, though only the first, Ennius, is demonstrably using that play as an exemplar. All three exhibit a strong awareness of their literary predecessors, and are creatively appropriating the generic conventions of the Greek and Latin authors who came before them. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the Iphigenia fresco in the Pompeian House of the Tragic Poet.

Ennius

The early development of Republican tragedy is almost as obscure as that of its Greek predecessor. Greek drama infiltrated Roman culture throughout Rome’s early history through contact with Greek colonies in south Italy and Sicily. Both tragedy and comedy were embraced as literary modes and both were heavily influenced by native Italian (especially Etruscan) performance traditions.¹ As the prologue to Plautus’ *Amphitryon* shows, there was a certain amount of generic cross-fertilization as well.²

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² The play, through Mercury’s divine prologue, self-identifies as a tragicomedy (59-63). *Rudens* 86 also alludes to a storm described in Euripides’ *Alcmene*, suggesting that tragic language can be applied to comedy. Indeed, early Republican tragedy and comedy seemed not to have differed much in their linguistic registers: see Jocelyn (1967) 38.
Through the third century these new artistic forms found favour with Rome’s plebian population.\footnote{Erasmo (2004) 19, Boyle (2005) 11. Boyle suggests a contempt for poetry among the early landed aristocracy. This changed, obviously, as time went on. Jocelyn (1967) 11-12 connects this new popularity with an increased interest in genealogy among the aristocracy, as well as a shift in perception of the cultural value of Greek literary forms.} Greek tragedy is known for the Roman stage as early as 240 BCE through Livius Andronicus, attested at the \textit{ludi scaenici}.\footnote{Wright (1974) 15-32.} Almost nothing is known of the staging conditions for early Republican tragedy, but we must assume, as for comedy, temporary and improvisational venues,\footnote{Tacitus 14.20 attests to “hastily erected tiers of benches and a temporary stage” (\textit{subitariis gradibus et scaena in tempus structa}) for the \textit{ludi scaenici}. For a full exploration of the possible venues of Roman Comedy, see Marshall (2006) 31-48.} lacking a fixed (and ideologically charged) geographical location like the Dionysian precinct in Athens (although the Forum and the forecourts of various temples would have been common sites).

On a formal level, it seems that “Roman productions were more operatic than their Greek predecessors,”\footnote{Boyle (2005) 18.} with lyric and accompanied passages taking up a greater part in the surviving fragments. In both Greek and Roman tragedy the chorus sang most of their lines, while iambic discourse is assigned only to the characters of the play – and even then characters sang a great deal. Thus the increase in song is also taken up by the principal characters in longer passages with musical accompaniment. This increase in musical passages for actors seems to have come at the cost of the chorus, which may well have played a reduced role. This reduction perhaps follows the trend of Greek theatre – the papyrus fragments of Menander, with merely a notation of χοροῦ in place of full odes, suggest that by the late fourth century choral odes were dispensable or interchangeable or both.\footnote{Zagagi (1995) 72-76.} Another factor informing this increase in song may have been the reduction of acting space as Republican drama moved into the smaller, improvisational space of early Roman theatres:

\begin{quote}
The elaborate dancing of fifth-century Athens was impossible and without this the songs of the Attic poets would have had little theatrical value.\footnote{Jocelyn (1967) 31.}
\end{quote}

Fragments of Ennian choruses are few, and rarely can we make any positive statement concerning the identity or function of a chorus within a specific play. \textit{Iphigenia} is an
exception, however, for which one of the largest and most provocative fragments comes from the chorus (see below).

The play of Ennius is the earliest known Roman adaptation of the Iphigenia sacrifice story in any medium. We have no firm date for Ennius’ *Iphigenia*, and so the play could have been produced any time during his *floruit*, from 203-169 BCE, not long after the likely date of the Megarian Iphigenia bowls discussed in the previous chapter. Naevius (fl. c. 235-201) is also said to have written an Iphigenia play (so Nonnius 370.23), but our single testimony suggests a post-Taurian tale. Greek examples for such post-Taurian tales, however, such as Sophocles’ lost *Thoas*, can only be the subject of speculation (see chapter 2). Ennius’ play fares slightly better: Jocelyn identifies ten passages that explicitly present or allow reconstruction of lines from the play. Aretz increases this number to nineteen and reorders them.

No ancient source attests to Ennius’ Greek exemplar, if there is one. The tragedy was first identified as based on Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* by Scaliger in the sixteenth century, and modern scholarship has more or less held to this assessment. The attribution does seem secure. Surviving titles suggest that Ennius based many of his plays on Greek exemplars and had a preference for Euripides. Our closest parallel for this type of use of a Greek model is the early Roman comedy of Plautus and Terence. Terence identifies a Greek source play in the prologues to five of his six surviving plays. Terence’s comments take a defensive stance, claiming originality of composition while admitting to the use of a Greek plot, though these plots are often heavily modified or even combined from multiple source-plays.

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10 Jocelyn is the last consistent numbering system for all the tragic fragments of Ennius and is still in use, although his selective criteria leave several possible fragments unnumbered and unassigned. Rejected fragments are still discussed in the commentary section for each tragedy and the reasons for rejection given (usually no explicit identification in the testimonia). I will use Jocelyn’s numbering system and note omissions where applicable.
12 Twelve of nineteen known titles are shared with tragedies of Euripides: *Alexander, Andromacha, Andromeda, Ctesiphontes, Erectheus, Hecuba, Iphigenia, Medea, Melanippa, Phoenix, Telephus, Thyestes*. For few of these can Euripides be concretely identified as a source, but collectively these titles indicate a bias towards Euripidean exemplars.
13 The only play not to identify a Greek exemplar is *Hecyra*, for which two prologues exist, written for a second and third performance of the play. Both prologues are concerned with interruptions to previous stagings instead of defence of originality, as was Terence’s custom.
Passages could be translated faithfully by the Roman poet, while entire scenes could be omitted, re-written or imported from other plays completely. Cicero, in defence of the early Roman adaptors of Greek drama, writes *qui non verba sed vim Graecorum expresserunt poetarum* (“they articulate not the words but the force of the Greek poets”, Cic. *Ac.* 1.3.9). The separate categorization of language and plot suggest that “translation” was more akin to “adaptation”.

The plot structure of *Iphigenia* appears to be faithful to its Euripidean exemplar, at least through the first half; the resolution of the sacrifice plot, a special crux for the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, is unfortunately unknowable to us. Three fragments suggest a remarkable fidelity to the sentiments of the prologue. The (probable) opening lines are preserved:

```
procedere gradum proferre pedum
nitere cessas o fide
```

Step forward, hasten to forward the advance of your feet: you linger, O faithful one.

These lines correspond to the opening lines of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (1-2):

```
Ὦ πρέϲβυ, δόμων τῶνδε πάροιθεν
ϲτεῖχε.
```

Old man, come out before the house.

Despite minor differences, the sense of the lines is one of urgency, as both plays open on a similar dramatic note, while Agamemnon’s complaint that the old man lingers in Ennius echoes that of the next line in *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*ϲπεῦδε*). Two further fragments, which comment on the positions of the stars and the silence of the cock, confirm that this prologue also takes place at night, before dawn.

---

15 Varro 5.19 (= Jocelyn XCVI).

```
quid noctis uidetur in altisono
caeli clipeo temo superat
stellas sublimen agens etiam atque
etiam noctis iter
```

How does the night seem to progress? In the high-sounding shield of the sky, the Wagon ascends the stars driving high on and on the journey of night. The passage is often broken into two speaking parts after *Iphigenia at Aulis* 6-8, with the Old Man...
The argument between Agamemnon and Menelaus also takes place on stage. In particular a fragment from Rufianus shows us three lines of Agamemnon’s speech of rebuttal, after the accusations of Menelaus:

*ego projector quod tu peccas? tu delinquas, ego arguor?*
*pro malefactis Helena redeat, uirgo pereat innocens?*
*tua reconcilietur uxor, mea necetur filia?*

Am I thrown down because you err? You fail and I am accused?
Helen ought to return for her crimes and a guiltless maiden perish?
Your wife should be restored and my daughter slain?

As Brooks notes, the balanced rhetoric suggests a determined and consistent attack from Agamemnon at point where, in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, he moves swiftly into self-defence and *ad hominem* attacks against Menelaus, employing “emotional rather than logical transitions.”

Brooks sees IA 384 εἶτ' ἐγὼ δίκην δῶ ϲῶν κακῶν, ὁ μὴ ϲφαλείϲ; as the source of these lines, but Agamemnon does not return to this point again until 396, and so we may be seeing a glimpse of a more focussed and resolute character. These lines preserve a thematic element inaugurated by Hesiod: the inequality of the price paid by an innocent virgin for the transgressions of the unfaithful wife.

We do not know if the reconciliation takes place between the two brothers. One further fragment has bearing:

*Menelaus me obiurgat; id meis rebus regimen restitat.*

---

16 Jocelyn CI = Rufianus Rhet. 37.47.16. Others, including Aretz, attribute also Cicero Tusc. Disp. 4.36.77:

- Ag: *quis homo te exsuperauit usquam gentium impudentia?*
- Men: *quis autem malitia te?*

17 Brooks (1981) 218-19. See also Skutsch (1967) 133, who calls the lines “the most impressive example of [Ennius’] rhetorical polish and artifice.”

18 Jocelyn C = Rufianus Rhet. 11.41.28.
Menelaus chides me; this governance holds back my affairs.
The line clearly is not delivered to Menelaus himself.\textsuperscript{19} It could be delivered to a third party (the chorus?) during the course of the argument. Another possibility is that Agamemnon is holding Menelaus up to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia as one of the forces behind the sacrifice, as he does with Calchas and the rest of the Argive army in Euripides (\textit{IA} 1259-1272, where Agamemnon specifically says Menelaus is not to blame). The most likely place, however, for this fragment is in the iambic prologue, where Agamemnon explains his plight to the Presbus (\textit{IA} 97-98).

Following the quarrel of the Atridae, we can be less sure of the progression of the plot. Two fragments may come from a Clytemnestra-Agamemnon scene, though both are rejected by Jocelyn.\textsuperscript{20} One fragment each could be assigned to Achilles and Iphigenia respectively. The mode of arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, the revelation of the sacrifice plot, and the confrontation with Agamemnon are all a mystery. Worse still, we have no indication of whether Iphigenia herself is actually sacrificed, the single most significant aspect of reception of this myth. Iphigenia’s one surviving line may indicate a willing sacrifice or perhaps simply resignation to her death\textsuperscript{21}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Acherontem obibo ubi Mortis thesauri obiagent.}
\end{quote}

I will go to Acheron where lie the treasures of Death.\textsuperscript{22} If Iphigenia delivers this line after her \textit{volte-face}, there is no Euripidean counter-part: Iphigenia does not mention Pluto or the Underworld after her change of mind at 1368 – she belongs to Artemis, to whom she is being sacrificed.\textsuperscript{23}

Although we cannot be confident about the plot or its resolution, we may still draw some cautious conclusions concerning Ennius’ treatment of the myth and the choices he made in adapting Euripides’ play. There are, to begin with, several “Romanizations”, adaptations of specific ideas into modes more familiar to a Roman audience. Thus when

\textsuperscript{19} Aretz (1999) 256.
\textsuperscript{20} Cicero ad At. 13.47.1 \textit{postquam abs te, Agamemnon, ut uenirem tetigit aures nuntius, extemplo...} (“After news from you, Agamemnon, reached my ears that I should come, straightaway...”) and Varro L.L. 7.87 (= Jocelyn XCV incerta) \textit{Thelis illi mater} (“Thelis was his mother”). Neither can be securely assigned to this play.
\textsuperscript{21} For the former, see Brooks (1981) 228.
\textsuperscript{22} Jocelyn XCVII = Festus 5.
\textsuperscript{23} Jocelyn (1967) 331.
Agamemnon asks about the progress of the night (Jocelyn XCVI above), the response measures the progression not of the Pleiades but of Temo, the “Wagon”, better known to modern readers as the “Bear”.\(^{24}\) When Achilles mocks prophets, he refers to astrology (Jocelyn XCV), a practice not used by Calchas in Greek literature. Though not identified as such in Iphigenia at Aulis, he is elsewhere an augur.\(^{25}\) Finally, when Agamemnon reflects on the happier lives of the common man, compared to a king with great responsibilities, he uses distinctly Roman terminology:

\[
\text{plebes in hoc regi antistat loco: licet}
\]
\[
\text{lacrimare plebi, regi honeste non licet.}
\]

The plebs stand better off in this place than their king, the plebs may weep, the king may not do so with honour.\(^{26}\)

The passage is directly influenced by Iphigenia at Aulis 446-49:

\[
\text{ἡ δυϲγένεια δʹ ὡϲ ἔχει τι χρήϲιμον.}
\]
\[
\text{καὶ γὰρ δακρύϲαι ῥᾳδίωϲ αὐτοῖϲ ἔχει,}
\]
\[
\text{ἀπαντά τ´ εἰπεῖν. τῷ γενναίῳ φύϲιν}
\]
\[
\text{ἀνολβα πάντα:}
\]

Low birth – such a blessing it is!
And for them it is easy to wail
and say anything. To the nobly born,
al is misery.

Ennius transforms the contrast of \(\text{ἡ δυϲγένεια}\) and \(\text{τῷ γενναίῳ φύϲιν}\) into the sharper Roman polarity of \textit{plebs} and \textit{rex}.

The greatest detectable change, however, comes from the lines of the chorus cited by Gellius:

\[
\text{otio qui nescit uti, plus negoti habet quam, quom est negotium in negotio.}
\]
\[
\text{nam cui quod agat institutumst in illo negotium,}
\]
\[
\text{id agit, id studet, ibi mentem atque animum delectat suom;}
\]
\[
\text{otioso in otio animus nescit quid uelit.}
\]
\[
\text{hoc idem est; em neque domi nunc nos nec militiae sumus:}
\]
\[
\text{imus huc, hinc illuc, quom illuc uentum est, ire illuc lubet.}
\]
\[
\text{incerte errat animus, praeter propter uitam uiuitur.}\(^{27}\)

\(^{24}\) The Pleiades are also used to tell time at Rhes. 528-30 and Phaethon fr. 773.19-22. See Jocelyn (1967) 329.
\(^{25}\) Iliad 1.68-72, 13.70 and IT 662.
\(^{27}\) Gellius Attic Nights 19.10.4 (=Aretz XIII, Jocelyn XCIX). I am here using the emendations of Skutsch (1953). The opening lines of this passage are corrupt in both sense and metre, though see Baker (1989) 494.
He who does not know how to use leisure has more work than in work when there is work. For he to whom a task is assigned he does as work in itself, he does it, he strives at it, and there delights his mind and soul; A mind being leisurely in leisure does not know what it wants. So it is here; now we are neither at home nor on campaign: we go here, this way and that; when one is come from that place, it pleases to go back that way. The mind wanders uncertain, life is lived more or less.

The chorus’ complaint of being neither at home nor at battle indicates a chorus of male soldiers, a deviation from Euripides’ chorus of sight-seeing women. Several causes for this change have been suggested, including an imported chorus from Sophocles’ lost Iphigenia, based on a one-line fragment from that play (τίκτει γάρ οὐδὲν ἐϲθλὸν εἰκαία σχολή, “idle leisure bears nothing good”), or from Euripides’ lost Telephus, a play which shares several basic similarities with Iphigenia at Aulis (geographical setting, mythical context, characters on stage). Wilamowitz suggested an intervening play, whose male chorus became grafted onto Iphigenia at Aulis at 590-97 as a secondary chorus (similar to the secondary chorus of hunters in Hippolytus 58-71). Given the freedom of Roman translations, however, no such intervention is necessary. The Calchian women are probably the single greatest innovation in the Euripidean version, and certainly most prominent on stage, and perhaps we should not be surprised when Ennius reverses that innovation, installing a chorus of soldiers whose presence at Aulis might make more logical sense and perhaps serve a more Roman militaristic aesthetic. Unfortunately, we can say little about Ennian choruses or their identities, so we can make no comparison to other plays.

28 There is no need to suppose, after Jocelyn (1967) 335, that the impatient chorus must be made up of Myrmidons, appearing only once in the play. A chorus of general Greek soldiers is enough: the Myrmidons do express particular eagerness for war in IA (812-18, 1352-53), but the entire army is clamouring for war (1259-66,1352).
29 Skutsch (1967) 162-64, Brooks (1981) 220 suggest the line is possibly delivered by the chorus. The line, however, seems more fitting to a principal character.
31 Wilamowitz (1919) 52-53.
32 We have choral fragments from Andromacha (one line, and the attribution is far from secure, Macrobius Sat. 6.5.10 = Jocelyn XLIV), Medea Exul (with no clue to their identity, though they might be assumed to be female in keeping with Euripides, Probus, Verg. Ecl. 6.31-3 = Jocelyn CX, Nonius 297.16 = Jocelyn CXV) and perhaps Thyestes (Cicero Orat. 55.184, de Orat. 3.41.164, suggested by Warmington (1935) 352-55, though not so assigned by Jocelyn).
In its use of various literary tropes (polyptoton, alliteration), the chorus is specifically Ennian.\textsuperscript{33} In terms of interpretation of the chorus’ function in this play, the lines can be split into two parts. The first four lines show the chorus engaged in near-philosophical speculation on the nature of \textit{otium}, “leisure”. The text of the first two lines is problematic and contested, but the sense is clear: there are good and bad ways to use leisure and productive leisure leads to productive labour. An army with too much \textit{otium} can be a bad thing.\textsuperscript{34} The concept of \textit{otium} is one that will preoccupy later poetry, notably the neoterics,\textsuperscript{35} and politics.\textsuperscript{36}

The remaining three lines move the reflections on \textit{otium} to the reality of the situation: the soldiers are idle, neither at war nor at home. Their \textit{otium} cannot be productive because they are in a state of prolonged transition. The soldiers are eager either to go on to Troy or to return home, though they express no preference at this point. But because they are on stage, the chorus of male soldiers lacks the neutrality of Euripides’ Calchian women: whatever happens, they have a vested interest in the outcome and they are on stage to remind the principal characters (particularly Agamemnon) of this fact. It is unfortunate that we have no indication as to which way the chorus tends. The sympathies of the chorus could sway an audience’s opinion, particularly concerning Agamemnon’s position: if he is to be a sympathetic character, the army must be seen to be against him, demanding the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Either way, Brooks is correct to detect the presence of the chorus as an audience in some of the other fragments of the play, particularly Agamemnon’s rhetorical rebuttal of the accusations of Menelaus. The fraternal quarrel is no longer a private affair: “The selfish weakness of the Atridae unfolds before the very army which is waiting impatiently for their leadership.”\textsuperscript{37}

It is unfortunate that we do not possess the ending of Ennus’ play, or have any indication of the resolution of the sacrifice plot. Perhaps, however, we should not be surprised. Given the potential ambiguity of the archaic witnesses to the myth (particularly the Hesiodic \textit{Catalogue of Women}, see chapter 2), the state of our Euripidean manuscript as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Aretz (1999) 268.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Laidlaw (1968) 43, Baker (1989) 495.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} See for example Baker (1989) who sees a thematic link between this fragment and Catullus 51.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Laidlaw (1968) and André (1966) remain particularly important.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Brooks (1981) 217.
\end{itemize}
received, and the absence of a third Megarian bowl, lost or never made, we should be prepared for providence to disappoint us at precisely this point. The next chapter will explore the possibilities allowed by this ambiguous conclusion to the Iphigenia story. In this chapter, the final three literary examples, Lucretius, Cicero, and Ovid will each provide their own interpretation.

**Lucretius**

The earliest extant Roman treatment of the Iphigenia sacrifice comes from Lucretius, who tells the tale in an elevated and graphic epic register *(de Rerum Natura 1.84-101):*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aulide quo pacto Triviai virginis aram} \\
\text{Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede} \\
\text{ductores Danaum delecti, prima virorum.} \\
\text{cui simul infula virgineos circum data comptus} \\
\text{ex utraque pari malarum parte profusast,} \\
\text{et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem} \\
\text{sensit et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros} \\
\text{aspectuque suo lacrimas effundere civis,} \\
\text{muta metu terram genibus summissa petebat.} \\
\text{nec miserae prodesse in tali tempore quibat,} \\
\text{quod patrio princeps donarat nomine regem;} \\
\text{nam sublata virum manibus tremibundaque ad aras} \\
\text{deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum} \\
\text{perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo,} \\
\text{sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso} \\
\text{hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis,} \\
\text{exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.} \\
\text{tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.}
\end{align*}
\]
At Aulis, in agreement the chosen leaders of the Danaans, the first among men, polluted the altar of the maiden Diana with the foul blood of Iphianassa.

About her maiden head-dress the fillets were given and from both her cheeks alike they poured down, and at the same time she saw before the altar her gloomy father standing, and beside him priests hiding the steel and the citizens with tears pouring down their faces. With mute terror she sought the ground as she bent her knees. And it could be no help to the poor girl in such a time that she had first given the king the name of father; for lifted by the hands of men and trembling she was led to the altar, never to be accompanied by the solemn custom of sacred rites with the bright Hymeneal completed, but at the time she was to be married, she, chaste, would fall, like a grim sacrificial beast, by the slaying of a parent that he might give to the fleet a happy and blessed exit. Such are the horrors that religion can encourage.

Both Danaum and Iphianassai evoke the Ennian and Homeric epic traditions, and Lucretius follows this passage with homage and evocations of these two poets (117-26). Iphianassa is specifically Homeric, recalling Iliad 9.145 and 287,38 where Agamemnon’s offer to Achilles of a still-living daughter indicates either ignorance or suppression of the sacrifice story on the part of the poet. Furthermore, by placing Iphigenia early in book 1, Lucretius is making specific claims about his own project: the sacrifice of Iphigenia begins the grandest epic cycle of Greek myth, yet Lucretius immediately veers away from that cycle to pursue his own philosophical and didactic programme. His work is epic, but it is a new epic.

Lucretius’ motivation for this special treatment of the sacrifice story is the same as that of Homer: revulsion at the act and its implications. Lucretius is condemning foul acts committed in the guise of religious piety (1.83: religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta, “Religion begets wicked and impious deeds”). He is able to accept a specific version of the sacrifice myth – one that, like the parodos of Agamemnon, stresses the involvement (and guilt) of the father, and renders the daughter not an Euripidean agent, but a helpless and pathetic victim – that accommodates his philosophical agenda. Lucretius turns to the

38 Keith (2000) 111 n.40. The use of this name specifically evokes the Homeric passages (and whether or not Homer knew of the sacrifice is at this point irrelevant – Lucretius seeks a generic affiliation), and Ennius more generally in the archaic form.
language of tragedy as more readily attuned to his project of challenging the ritual act and the motivations behind it than is the language of epic (see chapter 2 and 3).

Lucretius stresses both the ritual elements of the sacrifice, the fillets, blood and altar, and the shocked reactions of those looking on, now citizens (civis), a term freighted with specifically Roman (political and Republican) meaning: the onlookers are now equal participants in the sacrificial act, neither soldiers demanding a casualty of war nor plebs subject to the whims of an aristocratic elite. Significantly, Lucretius opens the passage by clarifying that the sacrifice of Iphigenia was decided on by all the Greeks. In this passage, Lucretius underscores the confusion of the sacrifice and marriage rituals through the maiden’s appearance and the language describing her approach (particularly deducast and tremibunda). 39 This is the same confusion expressed in Greek tragedy, from which Lucretius derives his exemplum.

Spectacle is another important element in the tragic depictions of the sacrifice, and here again Lucretius follows his tragic exemplars. 40 The detailed description of Iphigenia’s appearance, with reference to her blood, hair, and cheeks, invites the reader to participate in the masculine gaze of the spectators, a configuration strongly reminiscent of (tragic) performance. The girl’s position before the altar, and before an audience (citizens, warriors, play-goers, readers) resonates strongly with the description of the sacrifice in the parodos of Agamemnon, as well as with the deaths of Polyxena and Iphigenia in Euripides, also described by witnesses (in messenger speeches). 41 In all of these tragic examples, the visual component plays an important role in generating pathos and eroticizing the moment of death. But in Lucretius, the daughter of Agamemnon is even more pathetic than her tragic predecessor(s). She is denied by the poet even the limited agency she possesses in Agamemnon: there at least she was able to protest her fate, while in this passage her fear renders her silent (92 muta metu); and while the Greek warriors look upon her death, she does not look back as she does in Agamemnon. The only speech she is capable of is in the past, when she was the first to call Agamemnon father (94), in a line which simultaneously

41 In the case of Iphigenia, the messenger speech describing her death may not have been by Euripides. But as I note in the previous chapter, it must surely be in place by the time Lucretius is composing his epic.
recalls *Agamemnon* (the only words she can manage before being gagged are to call out to her father, 228) and *Iphigenia at Aulis* (at 1220 Iphigenia specifically reminds Agamemnon that she was the first to call him father, πρώτη ς’ ἐκάλεϲα πατέρα καὶ ς’ ςὺ παῖδ’ ἐμέ).

Keith identifies an interpretative gap in the understanding of Iphigenia’s role as female, with conflicting interpretations focusing either on the generative power of the female body, or its specific links to corporeality and ultimately to death. But again, as in previous chapters, I would stress the potentiality of Iphigenia’s body: it is virginal, and has not yet achieved either the generative power nor the associations of pollution that attend the mature female in the Greek (and now Roman) paradigm of gender. In Lucretius, the sacrifice of the virgin is certainly a foul act, and the poet describes it gorily: the victim’s blood stains the altar. But I noted in chapter 3 that it is not until the point of sacrifice that the female can become a symbol (as in Euripides she becomes metonymic for her entire nation, Iphigenia for Greece, Polyxena for Troy). In this passage, I submit, it is the act of sacrifice, perpetrated by the male *civis*, that determines the associations of the female body: her blood is foul pollution on the altar, but not until it is spilled by male hands.

Lucretius’ is not the only understanding of the Iphigenia sacrifice, however, and more positive interpretations are still possible. When Cicero speaks of Iphigenia, he is able to enrol her as a patriotic hero who sacrifices herself on behalf of her nation (Cic. *Tusc*. 1.116):

> Clarae vero mortes pro patria oppetitae non solum gloriosae rhetoricis, sed etiam beatae videri solent...Iphigenia Aulide duci se immolandum iubet ut hostium eliciatur suo.

Indeed, famous deaths sought out for the sake of one’s country usually seem to the rhetoricians not only glorious, but even blessed...Iphigenia when at Aulis commanded that she be led to sacrifice so that [the blood] of the enemy might be drawn out by her.

For the sake of his argument, Cicero assigns to Iphigenia the greatest agency we have yet seen for her: her patriotism is such that she demands to be sacrificed. His list of patriots in this passage includes Harmodius and Aristogiton, Leonidas, and Epaminondas the Theban as well-known historical examples. As a mythical hero, Iphigenia is accompanied by the daughters of Erechtheus, Codrus, and Menoeceus. The first and third were well-known

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42 Particularly after Nugent (1994), but also Bronfen (1993), the title of which is also the title of Keith’s chapter here.
figures from Euripidean tragedies, and both *Erechtheus* and *Phoenician Women* bear many similarities to *Iphigenia at Aulis* (see chapter 3). The middle example, that of Codrus, a mythical Athenian king who infiltrated an enemy camp in order to be killed and fulfil a prophecy of victory for the Athenians, seems out of place in this company, but perhaps his presence can be explained by the fact that he is mentioned in Lycurgus’ speech *Against Leocrates* (84-87), whence comes our single largest fragment of *Erechtheus*, another of Cicero’s examples: Cicero, too, is appropriating from Greek tragic sources. Cicero, and Lycurgus, are both able to select the version of the myth that best suits their rhetorical context: Cicero’s victim is not only willing, but eager, and derives from Ennius’ *Iphigenia* while Lucretius looks to the Iphigenia of *Agamemnon*. Cicero’s reference to Iphigenia is casual, with no sustained treatment or innovation of the myth (it is interesting to note that Cicero does not include any reward for Iphigenia – no immortality – except for the glory of dying for her country), but it serves to show that Lucretius’ use of the sacrifice story as a negative model is not the only one available to the writers of the late Republic. Exactly who it is who considers Iphigenia to be *gloriosa* and *beata*, Cicero does not say, but it is tempting to consider Ennius here, who is also known to have written an *Erechtheus*.

**Ovid**

Substitution can be conceived of as a form of transformation – one body is taken away and another is left in its place. In the previous chapter, I discussed a fourth-century Apulian volute crater which depicted the image of a deer superimposed over Iphigenia, with an effect that looks as much like transformation as substitution. Given this close relationship between substitution and transformation, it should not be surprising that Ovid chose to include the event in his *Metamorphoses*. In fact, he did so twice. At *Metamorphoses* 12.24-38, Ovid included the sacrifice as the Greeks assemble at Aulis for the Trojan expedition. The sacrifice is again referred to at 13.182-195, this time in the words of Ulysses as he makes his lengthy speech during the contest with Ajax for the arms of Achilles. In the first instance, Ovid highlights the difficulty of Agamemnon’s position and the conflict between his roles as king and father, a conflict which resonates, if not explicitly, with *Iphigenia at Aulis*. In the second instance, Ulysses himself stresses the difficulty of convincing the father to sacrifice the daughter: it was his persuasive skills that convinced Agamemnon to consider the public
good and allow the Trojan expedition to proceed. Ajax would not have been successful in this endeavour.

Ovid’s Trojan narrative begins in book 12. In short order, the Greeks are trapped by the winds at Aulis, and the army observes the omen of the snake devouring the birds. The winds continue to blow:

*Permanet Aoniis Nereus violentus in undis*
*bellaque non transfert; et sunt qui parcer Troiae*
*Neptunum credant, quia moenia fecerat urbi.*
*At non Thistorides: nec enim nescitve tacetve*
*sanguine virgino placandam virginis iram*
*esse deae. Postquam pietatem publica causa*
*rexque patrem vicit castumque datura cruorem*
*flentibus ante aram stetit Iphigenia ministris,*
*victa dea est nubemque oculis obiecit et inter*
*officium turbamque sacri vocesque precantium*
*supposita fertur mutasse Mycena Nova.*

Boisterous Nereus remained among the Aonian waves and no ship put forth; and there are some who believe that Neptune was sparing Troy, since he had built the walls of the city. But not the son of Thestor, he was neither ignorant nor silent: the anger of the virgin goddess must be sated with virgin blood. When the public good overcame what was right and the king overcame the father, Iphigenia, about to give her pure blood, stood before the altar with weeping attendants, the goddess was overcome and placed a mist before their eyes and amid the rites and the turmoil of the service and the praying voices she is thought to have changed the Mycenean girl for a hind placed beneath. Thus then, as was fitting, Diana was calmed by the slaughter, and equally did the anger of the goddess, and the anger of the sea subside, and the thousand ships received the wind at their back and enduring much they gained the Phrygian shore.

Here Ovid is less concerned with the death of the victim, than he is with the possibility for exchange or transformation. He retains the emphasis on the blood of the virgin found in Lucretius, but no longer is the blood a source of pollution; rather it functions as an appropriate token of exchange to calm a virgin goddess. The substitution itself is
ambiguously described, and no mention is made of Iphigenia’s immortality. This description of the sacrifice (and indeed Ulysses’ account later on) lacks several of the key elements we have seen in previous tragic (and tragic-inspired) versions. In particular, the element of spectacle, so important to the parodos of Agamemnon and the death of Polyxena in Hecuba, and appropriated by Lucretius, is absent. In fact, the one detail we are given of the substitution is that it was hidden from the eyes of the spectators: the consequences of the sacrifice, both the death of the deer and the salvation of the girl, are obscured by the goddess. Later in book 13, Ovid will treat the death of Polyxena at great length, reproducing all the elements of spectacle present in the tragic predecessors, and so to treat the Iphigenia sacrifice in the same way would be needless duplication.

During the contest between Ajax and Ulysses in the following book, Ulysses actually boasts about his role in the sacrifice:

*Ut dolor unius Danaos peruenit ad omnes,*  
*Aulidaque Euboïcam complerunt mille carinae,*  
exspectata diu, nulla aut contraria classi  
*flamina erant, duraeque iubent Agamemnona sortes*  
immeritam saevae natam mactare Dianae.  
*Denegat hoc genitor divisque irascitur ipsis*  
atque in rege tamen pater est. *Ego mite parentis*  
ingeniun verbis ad publica commoda verti.  
*Nunc equidem (fateor, fasso ignoscat Atrides!)*  
difficilem tenui sub iniquo iudice causam.  
*Hunc tamen utilitas populi fraterque datique*  
summa movet sceptri, laudem ut cum sanguine penset.  
*Mittor et ad matrem, quae non hortanda, sed astu*  
deципienda fuit: quo si Telamonius isset,  
*orba suis essent etiamnum lintea ventis.*

As the grief of one overtook all the Greeks,  
a thousand ships filled Euboean Aulis,  
the long hoped for breezes either were naught or blew against the fleet, and the harsh lots bid  
Agamemnon slaughter his innocent child to savage Diana.  
The parent refused this and raged against the gods themselves  
and although in the role of king, he was a father. I with my words gently  
turned the mind of the parent to the public good.  
Now indeed (I admit, and may the son of Atreus excuse me confessing)  
I held a tough cause before a biased judge.  
Nevertheless the needs of the people and his brother and
the height of his given authority swayed him, so that praise outweighed blood. And I was sent to her mother, who was not to be persuaded, but deceived by cunning: had the son of Telamon gone to her, our sails even now would be bereft of their winds.

The two passages resonate strongly with each other, as well as with earlier accounts. Both passages stress the public obligation of the king overcoming the love of the father (12.30 rexque patrem vicit; 13.187 atque in rege tamen pater est) and in so doing both recall Lucretius (1.93 quod patrio princps donarat nomine regem). In both these passages, the final decision to sacrifice Iphigenia rests with Agamemnon, and Agamemnon alone. Likewise, Ulysses opens the passage by stressing that it is for the grief of a single individual (Menelaus) that the whole army suffers (Ulysses further underscores the singularity of Menelaus’ role by calling attention to the mille carinae in the next line). The singular influence of Agamemnon and Menelaus is a subtle part of Ulysses’ own strategy of argument: just as one man causes all the suffering for the army, and one man only can pay the price, so can only one man (Ulysses himself) ensure that the price is in fact paid. And Ulysses, in pointing out his persuasive skills even as he stands before his own peers, is confident of his ability to win this argument. This is a change from Lucretius, who uses this legend to underscore the horrible acts performed by groups of people – mobs and societies – in the name of religious belief.

Ovid and Ulysses each figure the sacrifice as a public need (12.29 publica causa; 13.188 publica commoda, 191 utilitas populi), though only Ovid (or the poem’s narrator) suggests that the public cause is not necessarily the right one (it outweighs pietatem). Neither passage is explicit, but both imply that it is Agamemnon himself who performs the sacrifice, as is consistent with Lucretius though this deviates from the exodus of Iphigenia at Aulis.

We cannot say with any certainty whether Ovid has read or seen Iphigenia at Aulis. As noted, the grief and conflict of Agamemnon is a theme consistent in both authors, but in adhering to the salvation of Iphigenia through metamorphosis, Ovid is simply following the programme of his own Metamorphoses. Ovid’s inclusion of this story, however, must have inspired future receptions of the sacrifice myth, for instance the short verse account by
Boethius (see next chapter) and Renaissance era paintings (e.g., Jan Steen’s 1671 painting *Het offer van Iphigenia*).

**The House of the Tragic Poet**

Although the majority of the evidence in this chapter is literary, one significant visual representation of the Iphigenia sacrifice remains to be discussed. The painted fresco in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii, as noted in the previous chapter, may have been influenced by a fifth- or fourth-century painting by Timanthes. The Greek artist certainly influenced the iconographic tradition and may have introduced the hooded Agamemnon to the scene, though several other details of the Timanthes painting are lacking here. Regardless of the influence of Timanthes, however, this fresco draws heavily on the conventions of Roman painting, and has much in common with many other images found with it, both within the House of the Tragic Poet and in Pompeii in general.

Discovered in 1824, the House was an immediate focus of attention, as scholars quickly saw it as an example of Vitruvius’ ideal Roman house as described in *De Architectura*.\(^{43}\) The house of Trimalchio in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, written at about the same time the fresco was produced, also provided a rich source of comparison.\(^{44}\) As such, the House quickly became part of the popular imagination and a frequent tourist destination, and was given a further boost by inspiring the house of Glaucus in Bulwer-Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii* in 1832, which itself influenced literature and film through the next century and a half.\(^ {45}\)

The house was not only a well-preserved example of Roman architecture but contained numerous painted frescoes, many of which were almost immediately removed to the museum at Naples. A well-preserved floor mosaic of actors and an aulos player preparing for a satyr play eventually gave the house the name by which it is now known, though it was also known as the “Homeric House” or the “Iliadic House”, due to the subject of many of the wall paintings. Epic subjects were common in several houses unearthed in Pompeii.\(^ {46}\) In this house, along with the Iphigenia fresco, were paintings of Zeus and Hera on Ida (as in book

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\(^{43}\) Vitruvius *De Arch.* 6.3.3; Bergmann (1995) 227.

\(^{44}\) Bergmann (1994) 229.

\(^{45}\) Brilliant (1978) 141-173.

\(^{46}\) Maiuri (1953) 71-72.
14 of the *Iliad*, Achilles and Briseis, Admetus and Alcestis, and Helen boarding a boat (Paris is presumably on the boat, but that half of the painting is lost).

The paintings in the House were grouped together in different rooms, and while certain thematic links could be made among pictures in given rooms, images were drawn from disparate sources. The atrium of the House, for instance, had six painted panels on three walls featuring Helen and Paris, Briseis and Achilles, Zeus and Hera, Aphrodite and (presumably) an unknown male, Poseidon and Amphitrite, and Achilles and Agamemnon (very little of this last panel is preserved). Numerous formal links would have been immediately evident to a visitor of this room: most of the pictures depict a dark male and a pale female, surrounded by observers, wearing similar colours, with the men often depicted in heroic nudity with a cloth or garment draped about the shoulders, arms, or legs. There were numerous thematic links, as well, with the cycle of the Trojan War a recurrent
inspiration for many images in this room and throughout the house. These formal and thematic links were never confined to a single room in the house, and it seems that visitors were required to wander around the house to understand them all, and variations were frequent (among the atrium images, for instance, Aphrodite was naked and Amphitrite almost surely was as well).  

The Admetus and Alcestis panel and the satyr play mosaic were located in the adjacent tablinium. Again, Admetus is naked while Alcestis is clothed; figures seated behind them (Apollo with a bow, an elderly couple likely Admetus’ parents) appear almost like a theatrical audience. The Iphigenia painting was located at the back of the house near the peristyle and beside the entrance to another, smaller room which contained images of Artemis and Callisto, Ariadne and Theseus, and Leda and Tyndareus. The Iphigenia image would have been visible to visitors while dining.

None of these paintings are labelled, yet the mythological moments or situations depicted in these images are all clear. Nor can any image be assigned to a specific “source” text, though some, such as the image of Zeus and Hera, or Alcestis and Admetus, must have called to mind certain texts. This is to say that whoever prepared or arranged these paintings must have demanded a certain amount of literary or mythographical competence of those who visited this house. Such competence assured that visitors (and designers) could count themselves among the (self-perceived) cultural elite, in much the same way that mythological scenes on sympotic vases created a sense of worthy community when everyone was “in the know.”

The central position of the theatrical mosaic also makes specific claims of cultural competence: the owner of this house was a mythographically informed theatre-goer.

The Iphigenia fresco combines elements from many of the other images. I have already noted the recurrence of the Trojan cycle, and in particular there are several images of the women involved: Helen, Iphigenia, Briseis. Abduction of a female features in the image of Poseidon and Amphitrite and perhaps that of Helen and Paris (though Helen willingly

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47 Bergmann (1994) 250 has a complete plan of the house, with the locations of each image, along with many excellent colour reproductions of the paintings throughout the article (she discusses the atrium on pages 240-46).
48 Bergmann (1994) 249.
49 Revermann (2005), see chapter 4.
boards the ship). Considering Iphigenia as bride leads to interesting connections as well: Briseis and Achilles, Helen and Paris, Hera and Zeus, and Admetus and Alcestis. Iphigenia’s nakedness in this painting, however, is in marked contrast to the clothing worn by the other figures, none of whom (with the possible exception of Helen) are shown at particularly traumatic moments in their legends.

The image is striking in its own right. A hooded figure, presumably Agamemnon stands on the left with one foot on an altar. Behind him on a short column stands an image of Diana, flanked by two deer. In the centre, two men, one bearded, one not, carry Iphigenia toward the altar. Iphigenia herself is draped in a yellow cloth (reminiscent of the κρόκου βαφὰϲ of Agamemnon 239? the krokotos of the arkteia?), is naked from the waist up, and she lifts her arms up toward the heavens. An older bearded man holds a knife in one hand, and touches his chin with the other; this is most likely Calchas, preparing to perform the sacrifice. In an upper register on the left is another image of Iphigenia, clinging to the back of a horned deer. She appears to be riding the deer, headed towards an image of Artemis, with crown and bow, on the right.

The two registers of the painting allow for competing versions of the legend to coexist: Iphigenia is both sacrificed and rescued.51 No text is necessary for the understanding of this image, and in fact the image contains all the elements to allude to the entire tale (or one version of it). Though it is not informed by any single text that we know of, this image recalls several simultaneously. The deer in the upper register recalls most specifically Iphigenia among the Taurians, though perhaps also the Cypria (even if the actions of the deer, running away from the sacrifice, contradict the canonical version of the salvation). The image of Diana behind Agamemnon which should, strictly speaking, be in Crimea at this point in the myth, might also call to mind the Taurian Iphigenia. Iphigenia’s bare figure, with draped yellow cloth, might make the viewer think of the parodos of Agamemnon, or the messenger speeches of Iphigenia at Aulis or even Hecuba.

When the chorus of Agamemon describe Iphigenia as πρέπουϲά θ’ ὡϲ ἐν γραφαῖϲ “conspicuous as in a picture” (243), this image might illustrate what they meant. Iphigenia’s

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51 Griffith (2002) 243-44 suggests the divide between the two registers could be any (or all) of spatial, temporal, or even generic.
flesh stands out in stark contrast to the dark flesh of the men behind her. There is no practical reason for Iphigenia to be naked at this moment, but her nakedness not only accommodates the desires of her audiences (the male warriors at Aulis, the male audience of the Greek theatre, the presumably male visitors to the House of the Tragic Painter) but also a number of iconographic traditions, including the concept of heroic nudity (which is established by many of the other images in this house). There are no male heroes in this picture, and in fact Agamemnon wears extra clothing to hide his shame and anguish; only the female can lay any claim to heroism here, as she does explicitly in *Iphigenia at Aulis* (and many of her self-sacrificing predecessors in Euripides do the same, see chapter 3).

While the sacrifice and mortal death of Iphigenia are the dominant aspect of the myth in this painting (the figures are larger and more prominent, while the upper figures are smaller and less distinct against the blue sky), the salvation of Iphigenia appears to have been the more popular version of the myth. Not only is the salvation included in this image, but at least three paintings found in other houses at Pompeii depict the Taurian image, with Orestes and Pylades standing together, Iphigenia in the centre (usually slightly raised), and Thoas with an attendant. All three appear to have been painted within twenty years of Pompeii’s destruction, and have in common several spatial and iconographic elements. Together they appear to represent a trend (fad?) in the tastes of the Pompeiian elite. Scenes depicting a post-salvation Iphigenia appear to have been popular in the Roman world, particularly in the east, where several cities attempted to appropriate the myth of Iphigenia’s return, and the possession of the Tauric image of Artemis that goes with it. To this we might add a painted fresco found in Petronell (Roman Carnuntum) in 1964, which appears to present Iphigenia as priestess. The iconographic tradition of this version of the myth falls outside the scope of

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52 Perhaps the most famous of these depicts the figures arranged before a grand palace with columned portico, inside which the image of Artemis (with arms out before her as in the House of the Tragic Painter fresco) can be seen. The visual effect is decidedly reminiscent of a theatrical performance. This image is Pompeii III 4.4 from the House of Pinarius Cerialis. The others are Pompeii I 4.5 (from the House of the Cithara Player) and Pompeii VI 15.1 (from the House of the Vetii).

53 See especially Linant de Bellefonds (1990), Burrell (2005) 232-35. A silver cup depicts Chryses protecting the refugees from Thoas (see chapter 2, note 100), a coin from Lydian Philadelphia suggests claims on the image made by the citizens of that city (the focus of Burrell’s article), and numerous sarcophogi and gems. Various observations in literary sources, particularly Pausanias, Pliny, Strabo, and Cassius Dio provide further evidence for such regional claims on the myth.

54 Only the figure of Iphigenia remains, wearing a wreath and wool bands in her hair. Klagenfurt Museum.
this study, but this brief discussion is enough to show that the salvation of Iphigenia was popular at the time, and may be the reason the painter is apparently depicting both traditions of the myth.
Chapter 6: Modern Appropriations

In the previous chapters, I took a diachronic approach to discussing the evidence of reception in antiquity. Given the fundamental divide of our discipline between the Greek and Roman worlds, this was a natural approach: the latest Greek artefact, the Megarian bowls, are roughly concurrent to the earliest Roman artefact, the fragments of Ennius. This chronological approach also coincidentally organized itself along considerations of medium, with visual and plastic arts largely in the Greek sphere and the Roman sphere concerned largely with literary evidence. In this chapter I will continue the chronological approach, moving through modern receptions from the invention of the printing press. While the previous two chapters were perforce concerned largely with fragments and excerpts – fragments of texts, static images, and moments excerpted from larger, unrelated texts – this chapter will more often be able to consider dramatic and literary adaptations in their entirety. The diachronic approach in this chapter will require moving between different genres and media, and the list of works covered is necessarily a selective one. While I cannot spend much time on, for example, the visual tradition, I will focus on direct literary and performative adaptations of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The continuity between these moments of reception is far from smooth, but the bumps and gaps are just as important as the moments of clear transition, and it is for this reason that the diachronic approach proves a useful one. Knowing how and why Gluck imitates Racine from a century before him is significant, but so is knowing why no one imitates Gluck. A chronological approach will highlight these gaps and provide an opportunity to question their causes.

The tradition of reception is not a strong one in the centuries following the Roman period. There is little evidence that *Iphigenia at Aulis* was read or known in Europe until the sixteenth century. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama lists no

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1. There is a visual tradition, starting in approximately 1511: Reid (1993) s.v. “Iphigenia” notes a fresco by Floriano Ferramola.
2. Wagner translates Gluck, but after the flurry of the eighteenth century, he is conspicuously alone (see below).
3. Boethius in his sixth-century *Consolatio Philosophiae* (4.m7.1-7) contrasts Agamemnon’s vengeance for Helen’s adultery (in the destruction of Troy) against his own crime of sacrificing his own daughter. Details are too sparse to detect a specific source behind Boethius’ account, but he was influential on later writers. His work was translated into Anglo-Saxon by Alfred the Great (c.900 CE) and into Middle English by Chaucer (1381-85 CE). See Marenbon (2003) esp. 179-82. Dante, who is known to have read Boethius and
performance or stage adaptation of *Iphigenia at Aulis* until at least 1555. It is not until the advent of the printing press, and the *editio princeps* of Aldus Manutius, published in Venice in 1503, that the plays of Euripides begin to see more widespread performance and adaptation. Even then, there is very little performance that seeks to recreate the conditions of ancient performance: “the response to ancient tragedy was to be both more creative and more complex,” as Greek exemplars were adapted to new contexts and new media (choral performances in the sixteenth century, prose tragedy in the seventeenth, opera in the eighteenth) with the 1585 performance of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* a notable exception, performed in the local vernacular in Vicenza to inaugurate the Teatro Olimpico and concerned with reproducing “authentic” performance conditions (as they were understood at the time). This production turned out to be something of a non-starter for the European performance tradition: immense effort went into selecting the play, producing a faithful translation, and re-creating the conditions of ancient performance. The performance was intended to be the inaugural performance of a grand, spectacular new theatre. And yet the theatre subsequently went unused for 33 years, and performances of Greek tragedy tended towards adaptations in other genres of performance, rather than “faithful” productions.

The key moments of reception of this play, and Greek tragedy in general, are usually linked to adaptations in new media and technology as they become available, or adaptations which have serious implications for our understanding of genre (either the genre of Greek tragedy or the genre into which the tragedy was adapted). The translation of Lady Jane Lumley, for instance, is important as the first translation into English. After the printing press, adaptations of *Iphigenia at Aulis* begin to appear in Continental Europe with increasing

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4 Cicero (Boethius appears in the *Divine Comedy* and frequent reference is made in Dante’s *Banquet*), also makes passing reference to Agamemnon’s foolish vow to sacrifice the most lovely creature born on his estate (*Paradise* 5.68-72). See Reid (1993) s.v. “Iphigenia”.

And this production is suspect. Apparently a play titled *Mordopfher der gottin Diane, mit der jungkfrau Ephigenie* by Hans Sachs. Its connection to the Iphigenia plays of Euripides is unknown. APGRD accessed Aug 17, 2009.

5 Burian (1997) 229-231. The quotation is from 231. Macintosh (2009) 70-73 also describes the performance, and discusses its influence on the nascent genre of Italian opera.

6 An example of the latter, now well-known thanks to the efforts of the network of scholars specializing in the reception of tragedy that has arisen in the U.K., is Richard Schechner’s *Dionysus in 69* (first performance June 6, 1968, Performing Garage, New York, NY), which adapted Euripides’ *Bacchae* and reinvested (rediscovered?) Greek tragedy with political and ideological relevance in the West. See Hall (2004) esp. 1-9 for justification of the perceived significance of this production.
frequency through the seventeenth century. These tragedies give way to operatic performances, through which the play will achieve a height in popularity unmatched throughout its history, until perhaps the last two or three decades. Following this resurgence, we find a surprising lull in the nineteenth century in the reception tradition during which Iphigenia only appears in a few lines of poetry and a handful of amateur university productions. It is not until late in the twentieth century that Iphigenia returns to the public’s attention in any wide-spread, meaningful way, through mass media and complex performance traditions not earlier possible. These traditions were facilitated not only by developments in technology (film, for example, but also the advent of mass media and widespread literacy), but also by the exposure of European and American artists to other cultures and traditions. The best known example of the latter is Ariane Mnouchkine’s *Les Atrides*, which combines costume elements and performance styles from the traditions of Indian Kathakali and Japanese Noh.

**Erasmus, Lady Jane, and St. Paul’s**

In 1506 Erasmus published two plays of Euripides, translated into Latin using the *editio princeps* of Aldus Manutius, published in Venice in 1503. The two plays selected were *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Erasmus’ choice of *Hecuba* is not surprising: as one of the so-called Byzantine triad, it had a strong manuscript tradition, and enjoyed a strong popularity in post-antiquity; in fact it seems to have been the most popular of Euripides’ plays in the Medieval period. Seneca’s *Troades* may well have contributed to the popularity of *Hecuba*: Erasmus himself read Seneca and, following the latter’s freer style of translation, was more lenient when he turned his eye to *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The efforts of Erasmus must also have gone a long way toward keeping *Hecuba* a popular text (and establishing *Iphigenia at Aulis* as one), given that he was a scholar of great renown even in his own time, and in contact with most of the major European thinkers of the period. His influence in England, where he lived for several years under Henry VII and VIII, was significant: Erasmus was
instrumental in bringing the humanist movement to England and even lectured at Cambridge from 1511 to 1514. It is not unlikely that his Latin translations of Euripides appeared on his reading lists.\(^\text{10}\)

Erasmus’ motivation at this early stage in his career was education and self-improvement: in the absence of a Greek instructor, he translated the play, somewhat meticulously, as practice.\(^\text{11}\) He was not only improving his understanding of the Greek language, but his compositional skills in Latin too. Erasmus’ ultimate goal was to translate ecclesiastical literature, but he felt he had to improve his own writing and translating before taking on such literature. Euripides was one of Erasmus’ favourite secular authors, and therefore a suitable practice piece.

Translated during a stay in England\(^\text{12}\), Erasmus’ edition of *Iphigenia at Aulis* was published with *Hecuba*, which garnered more critical attention: the *Iphigenia at Aulis* is treated as an afterthought to the translation of the more popular *Hecuba*. Erasmus himself encourages this subordination of Euripides’ last play, in particular calling the chorus *ineptissime*.

\[
\text{nusquam, enim mihi magis ineptissime videtur antiquitas, quam in huiusmodi choris}
\]

For there seems to me nowhere in antiquity anything more foolish than in choruses of this kind.

As a companion piece to *Hecuba*, however, *Iphigenia at Aulis* is a natural fit: both plays describe the sacrifice of an innocent female, one at the start of a military expedition, the other at its conclusion, and these two plays provide the most thorough descriptions in Greek tragedy of human sacrifice and its consequences. Although he does not say so explicitly, we can be fairly confident that the similar thematic elements of the two plays determined Erasmus’ choice.\(^\text{13}\) But as a result of Erasmus’ translations, *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* became the most translated of Euripides’ works in the sixteenth century.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{10}\) Garland (2004) 110-15 traces the influence of the humanist Erasmus in England and Continental Europe in parallel with the introduction of Greek to University curricula across England and Europe.

\(^{11}\) We know of Erasmus’ intentions with this script through letters that have been preserved between himself and Archbishop William Warham, to whom he presented a copy of the two plays.

\(^{12}\) Waszink (1969) 196.

\(^{13}\) Waszink (1969) 207.

\(^{14}\) Hall (2005a) 4.
Erasmus’ translation directly informs the first translation of a Greek tragedy into English: in perhaps the 1550s, Lady Jane Lumley produced *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe.*\(^\text{15}\) Not only is her translation of the play the first of its kind in English, it is also the first extant dramatic work by a woman in England.\(^\text{16}\) Lady Jane was the eldest child of Henry Fitzalan, twelfth earl of Arundel, “one of the great humanist families of the English Renaissance.”\(^\text{17}\) Both her father and her husband John Lumley, whom she married in or shortly before 1550,\(^\text{18}\) were men of learning, and both encouraged Jane in her own studies. Throughout her marriage to Lumley, she collected many books, which, combined with her father’s collection (inherited by her husband who survived them both) became known as the Lumley Library. Her situation is perhaps comparable to that of Virginia Woolf, whose love of Greek literature – tragedy in particular – was never hampered by her command of the language, which was, like Lady Jane’s (see below), not at all perfect.\(^\text{19}\) After Lumley’s death in 1609 (thirty-one years after Jane’s), the library came into royal ownership, and is now part of the British Library. In addition to the volumes collected, the Library contains her translation of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, along with several folios containing speeches of Isocrates translated into Latin by Lumley,\(^\text{20}\) bound together in what “appears to have served as a common-place book or a rough copy book.”\(^\text{21}\)

Lady Jane’s translation is hardly faithful, filled with lacunae (where Lady Jane apparently did not understand the text) and paraphrase. In the opening lines, she misinterprets the time of day:

\[^{15}\text{The manuscript, which is kept in the British Museum, was first published by the Malone Society in 1909. Reprinted in Purkiss (1998).}\]
\[^{16}\text{Hodgson-Wright (2004).}\]
\[^{17}\text{Garland (2004) 115.}\]
\[^{18}\text{Lumley presented, in 1550, a manuscript of his translation of Erasmus’ *Institution of a Christian Prince* to Arundel, referring to himself as Arundel’s son, suggesting engagement if not marriage to Jane. Hodgson-Wright (2004).}\]
\[^{20}\text{Five speeches are included in the following order: Isocrates 1 (To Demonicus), 2 (To Nicocles), 3 (Nicocles or the Cyprians), 9 (Evagorus to Nicocles) and 8 (On the Peace). Speeches 2 and 9 are each accompanied by a letter to Lady Jane’s father Lord Arundel and an argumentum is supplied for speech 8. Iphigenia follows these and is the only work in English.}\]
\[^{21}\text{Child (1909) vi.}\]
Ag  τίς ποτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἀστήρ ὅδε πορθμεύει;
Πρ  Σείριος ἐγγὺς τῆς ἑπταπόρου
Πλειάδος ἀσσών ἐτὶ μεσσήρης.
Ag  But what meanethe this, me thinkes I see a starre shoote?
Se  It maye be so in dede: for it is not yet midnighte, as it may be
judged by the course of the seven starres (Purkiss 8-1022)

Crane suggests that Lady Jane was misled by the edition of Erasmus, to which she seems to have had access.23 This argument holds up for some passages,24 but in this instance Purkiss suggests that Erasmus’ text is simply too close to the Greek.25 Erasmus’ translation of the lines is as follows:

Se:  Sirius ardens, qui Pleiadibus
     Septemgeminis vicinus adhuc
     Media rapidus fertur coelo.

Lady Jane drops the references to Sirius and the Pleiades, which Erasmus preserves. The change in line assignments between Lady Jane and Erasmus further suggests that she is not following Erasmus in this case, but rather following the original Greek text (or some other source). Lady Jane’s deviations from the Greek arise not only from error and paraphrases: she is prone to expanding her text as well. The door scene with the old servant stands out as simultaneously expansive in its language and periphrastic in its structure. The interrogation of the Presbus by Achilles (IA 855-63) is left out as is much of the Presbus’ initial pleading with Clytemnestra in which he establishes his loyalty to Clytemnestra. And yet, Lumley then apparently combines lines 866 and 868, in which Clytemnestra reassures the Presbus, and still manages to overdo it:

δεξιᾶϲ ἕκατι μὴ μέλλ’, εἴ τί μοι χρήζειϲ λέγειν...
oiδά c’ ὄντ’ ἐγώ παλαιόν δωμάτων ἐμῶν ἔμων λάτριν.

22 Line numbers for Lumley’s text are from Purkiss’ Penguin edition.
23 Crane (1944).
24 Crane’s example is Lady Jane’s translation of IA 1164, τίκτω δ’ ἐπὶ τριϲὶ παρθένοιϲι παῖδα ϲοι/ τόνδ’ ῥωρ μιᾶϲ εὗ τλημόνωϲ μ’ ἀποστερεῖϲ. “And then I happened to haue thre sones at one birthe, and afterwarde one daughter, and will you nowe sleye hir, knowinge no iuste cause whie?” Crane notes how this error can be derived from Erasmus’ Latin: porro puellis editis nixu tribus/ hunc insuper peperi tibi puellatum/ quo tu quidem me pignorum e numero necans/ unam pater, miserabile orbabis modo? Crane (1944) 227.
If you haue any thinge to saie to us come neare, and tell it quickelie without any circumstance, for you neade not doughte us, for I knowe you haue euer serued diligentlye bothe me and also diuers of myne awnciters. (Purkiss 523-26)

Lady Jane also omits almost all lyric passages (including Iphigenia’s monody). The only translated lyric is the chorus’ farewell to Iphigenia, and the translation is so loose at this point that it may only be a summary of the passage as Lady Jane understands it:

Beholde yonder goethe the virgine to be sacraficed withe a grete companye of souldiers after hir, whos bewtifull face and faire bodi anone shalbe defiled withe hir owne blode. Yet happie arte thou, O Iphigeneya, thou shalte purchase unto the grecians a quiet passage, whiche I pray god may not only happen fortunatelic unto them, but also that they may returne againe prosperously with a glorious victorie (Purkiss 908-14)

Only highlights of the original passage remain, which in its original is first a tribute to Iphigenia and then a short hymn to Artemis, as requested by Iphigenia (IA 1467).

Since only the iambics of the chorus are translated, the chorus has a rather mysterious air about it, and the dramaturgical flow of the piece is seriously disrupted. The presence of these women is never explained, nor is their entrance mentioned, since they deliver no parodos, and they appear suddenly at 133 (Purkiss) to introduce Menelaus. The second and third stasima are omitted completely, with the abrupt appearance and disappearance of Achilles and no signalled scene changes. Walton sees in the omission of choral lyrics the influence of Erasmus’ harsh judgements on Euripides. Purkiss, on the other hand, suggests the Renaissance trend of valuing ancient tragedies for their sententiae would suggest to Lady Jane that choral odes were of less interest and importance.

Line attributions too are often mistaken: Agamemnon, for example, promises to find new friends immediately before the entrance of the messenger (this line is typically given to Menelaus) and paraphrase fusing multiple lines into single speeches is common. The result is that the entire play in Lady Jane’s version is much shorter than her exemplar (970 lines in Purkiss’ edition). It is obviously the work of an amateur translator and relies heavily on (and is sometimes misguided by) the Latin translation of Erasmus (see above). There is some question whether Lady Jane herself had access to a Greek text or even how well she could

actually read it: we must be careful about taking the title at face value.\textsuperscript{29} That she had access to Erasmus is certain, as her husband, John Lumley, who had an extensive private library and seems to have encouraged his wife in her studies, produced a translation of Erasmus’ *Institution of a Christian Prince or Ruler* in 1550.\textsuperscript{30} Lumley also translated the *argumentum* provided by Erasmus, when no hypothesis is transmitted in the manuscripts, and the character names of *Senex* and *Nuncius* suggest a Latin influence as well. In 1524, Froben published an edition of Erasmus with the Latin and Greek on facing pages, and Lady Jane may have had access to this edition.\textsuperscript{31} The speeches of Isocrates translated into Latin and reports that she is studying in her *Epistola ad Patrem* make it clear that she did achieve some proficiency in the language.\textsuperscript{32} At what point she began to study Greek is unknown, as is the exact date of the Iphigenia translation. In any event, her translation skills are poor enough, and her tendency toward extreme paraphrase is enough to suggest that true linguistic accuracy is far from her agenda. Walton does try to rehabilitate the translation somewhat, considering Lady Jane’s dedication to narrative simplicity a virtue that at least partially offsets her other shortcomings.\textsuperscript{33} Such rehabilitation is not really necessary, however: this is the translation of a young girl never meant for publication or assessment beyond her immediate family.

Nevertheless, Lady Jane’s translation does have the virtue of being the first. If the evidence is correct, Lady Jane prepared her translation very early in her marriage to John Lumley,\textsuperscript{34} and as David Grene notes, “We are then faced with the unusual situation of attributing the first English translation of Greek tragedy to a thirteen-year-old girl.”\textsuperscript{35} But even more interesting is that we have a translation by a thirteen-year-old girl, newly married to an older man, *about* a thirteen-year-old girl who thinks she is about to be married. The manuscript that survives was presented to Lord Arundel, Lady Jane’s father, by her husband.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} Crane (1944) 228.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Coleman (1989) 427.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Grene (1941) 539; Coleman (1989) 427.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Lady Jane’s translations of Isocrates remain unpublished, and so it is impossible to assess her proficiency in these works or establish an order in which she translated them.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Walton (2006) 30-33.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Lady Jane married John Lumley in 1550, the same year he produced his translation of Erasmus’ *Institution of a Christian Prince*. The earliest dated Greek text in the Lumley Library has a publication date of 1553.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Grene (1941) 539.
\end{itemize}
Lord Lumley, and one wonders if the text was not presented with some sense of irony. Even if Lady Jane’s selection of text was influenced by other matters (and on this see below), she must have felt some sympathy for her character’s situation. Certainly, Lady Jane’s probable identification with the titular heroine has some of the results we might expect. Achilles, the romantic lead, is indeed more romantic. His lengthy speech in response to Clytemnestra’s supplication is much reduced, removing much of the cynicism of the speech. His anger that Agamemnon should have asked for his permission to use his name (and the implication that such a request would have met with agreement) is left out. Lady Jane’s sense of decorum interferes as well: the murder of Clytemnestra’s first child is omitted (though not her marriage to Tantalus).

We must, as Purkiss, reminds us, be careful not to read any gendered agenda into the text of Lumley’s *Iphigenia*. This text is not one of feminist rebellion in which the female protagonist is exalted for her challenge to patriarchal social norms. If Lady Jane was working from Erasmus’ edition (and Crane proved with sufficient certainty that she at least had access to that text), then there is a very real possibility that when she sat down to translate Euripides (an author regularly recommended to new students of the language as “pure” Attic Greek), she had the choice of only two plays. If this is the case, perhaps she simply chose the play in which the young female survived.

This is not to say that Lady Jane’s translation was void of political agenda or utility. Her father was politically ambitious, and an idle education for his daughter could be held up as evidence of his wealth and prestige:

He was buying a commodity, or, rather, he was following the standard practice of Renaissance nobles in turning his daughter into a sign of his own wealth, prestige, power, and fashionableness...the very fact that a girl could not use an elaborate humanist education enhanced its value as conspicuously useless, like buying a banquet in order to throw it away uneaten.\(^{36}\)

The presentation of the script to Lord Arundel might support this interpretation of Lady Jane’s education.\(^{37}\) The conception of a girl’s education as ornamental provides another interesting parallel between Lady Jane and Iphigenia herself who, as I have noted in previous

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\(^{37}\) One of Arundel’s political enemies was Lady Jane Grey, his own daughter’s cousin. That Lady Jane was also well educated, and it is easy to see Arundel encouraging his daughter’s education to maintain an equal social standing.
chapters (particularly chapters 2 and 3), is frequently understood as a commodity herself (agalma). Lady Jane’s translation is, of course, not nearly so public as Iphigenia’s sacrifice. It is not a performance script and was not even meant for public consumption. The play, after being bound with the speeches of Isocrates, was shelved in the family library. It was not published until 1909, and then as an academic curiosity, rather than as a script for performance.  

The first possibility of a public performance comes perhaps as early as 1571, though we have few details. During the 1570s in London, the boys’ companies – choruses of pupils from grammar and choir schools in London – became more popular as they shifted from an academic agenda to a financial one, even if pedagogy continued to be cited as the purpose of the performances. The rise of the boys’ companies are also an early stage in the transference of dramatic productions from the royal court to public playhouses. Throughout that decade and into the following, the various schools involved, both grammar schools and choir schools, maintained that recitation and performance were an important part of a boy’s education, and this was certainly true in part since “the ability to construct an eloquent argument and to deliver it in good oratory was the highest aim of the Tudor education system.” The companies, however, became ever more popular and the larger schools developed sizeable repertoires for frequent “recitation”.

One of the larger and more prominent groups was based at St. Paul’s. Their company, First Paul’s Children, had nearly two dozen plays in their repertoire. Most are lost, but titles survive and indicate a fondness, if not a preference, for classical stories, both mythological and historical. An Iphigenia was produced during this time, certainly before the death of

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38 The script was, however, apparently directed by Stephanie J. Wright in 1997 for the Brass Farthingale Company at the University of Sunderland. See Walton (2006) 28, though the performance is not listed in the APGRD (accessed Aug. 17, 2009).

39 There is confusion over the date. Some sources say 1575-82, while others refer to 1571. Collier (1831) 196 records a performance at the royal court for the Revels for December 27 or 28, 1571: “Effigenia, a tragedye, shoen on the Innocents daie at nighte, by the children of Powles”. The confusion likely stems from the fact that First Paul’s are frequently cited as “active” from 1575 to 1582. This likely refers to a period of public performance, in which the Boys played for a general, paying audience, rather than the Royal Court. The court performance in 1571 is the only one securely attested, though a public performance later in the 1570s seems quite possible.


41 Titles include an Agamemnon and Ulysses, Meleager, The Story of Pompey, Sapho and Phao, Scipio Africanus and an Alcmeon (curiously, since there was an Alcmeon performed with IA in 405). Gallathea, Midas, and Endymion, all written by John Lyly, also have many classical elements.
master and Almoner (distributor of alms and charity in the church) Sebastian Walcott in 1582 (Walcott’s own motivation in promoting the boys’ performances may not have been education – he ran his own playhouse). The St. Paul’s *Iphigenia* is lost, and there is little information on it, but “since the boys were choristers, songs were a major feature of the performance, often accompanied by dancing.” This suggests an adaptation of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, rather than a translation.

It would be curious to imagine an inversion of Lady Jane Lumley’s earlier text: her text featured only the iambics, while the St. Paul’s adaptation appears to have been centred on choral performance. The educational purpose of each adaptation moves in contrary directions: Lady Jane culled wisdom from the play’s *sententiae*, while the boys of St. Paul’s went through rigorous choral training, not unlike the ephebic youth of ancient Greece. There is also no guarantee that the St. Paul’s performance was concerned with the events at Aulis, though this is a more likely candidate than *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, which was relatively obscure at the time. Nevertheless, at least one scholar has suggested a connection between Lady Jane and the St. Paul’s choir, that she somehow was an influence for the choir, either affecting their choice of subject matter or even supplying a performance script. Given that she died in 1578, it is possible that she may have been in attendance at some productions (she was not quite within the royal circle, but close enough to the throne that invitations to court would have been frequent). If she did influence the St. Paul’s choir, however, it can only have been as a patron: her script was clearly not for choral performance. It is more likely that Lady Jane and the St. Paul’s choir were independently influenced by Erasmus’ choice for his Latin translations at the start of the century.

The three adaptations in this section, each a first of their kind, each developed under the declared impetus of education. Erasmus and Lady Jane were both working for self-improvement and developing their language skills, while the St. Paul’s Boys were receiving a quality education. But other concerns lurked: Erasmus received financial reimbursement for his efforts, and the St. Paul’s Boys were also financially motivated. Lady Jane’s translation, on the other hand, was a demonstration of wealth and idle education. Erasmus’ translation

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42 Gurr (1996) 220.
43 Gurr (1996) 222.
proved immensely influential: *Iphigenia at Aulis* was the most translated text of the sixteenth century. But given their pedagogical purposes, neither the script of Lady Jane nor St. Paul’s contributed to any ongoing performance tradition of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Rather they reflect a minor trend in the literary tastes of the day.

**Racine and his Legacy**

A more consistent tradition of reception in English begins with the next known production in England: *Achilles, or Iphigenia at Aulis*, an English adaptation by Abel Boyer of Jean Racine’s *Iphigénie en Aulide*, itself first performed in July 1674 at Versailles and later in Paris in January 1675. Racine’s adaptation was an immediate success, and was to influence later productions of the story throughout the 18th century. Racine, firmly embedded in French neo-classicism of the Grand Siècle, had already explored classical material, with *Le Thébaïd* (1664), *Alexandre le Grand* (1665), and *Andromaque* (1667) and would go on to write one more classical drama with *Phèdre* (1677). He also began work on an *Iphigénie en Tauride* in the 1670s but dropped the project, perhaps in favour of the Aulis story. Just as Erasmus found thematic continuity between *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia*, so does Racine’s *Iphigénie* resonate with *Andromaque*: the two plays display barbarity before and after the Trojan War.

Racine’s version of the play was not created without precedent, but rather continued a sparse tradition in continental Europe of Euripides-inspired tragedies since the translation of Erasmus. Lodovico Dolce first produced an Italian version, *Ifigenia*, in the mid-1540s. Dolce was influential (a translation of his *Phoenissae* was probably the first English production of a Greek tragedy, with *Jocasta* being produced by Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh in 1566), and shortly thereafter the first French version appeared in 1549. In 1617, Samuel Coster produced a Dutch political satire, *Iphigeneia*. Finally, Racine himself owed no small debt to the *Iphygénie* of Jean Rotrou in 1640. Yet it was Racine’s tragedy that would prove most influential with later writers.

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45 Our play did not have a lot of competition. The plays of Sophocles were not translated into Latin until 1548 (*Ajax, Antigone, and Electra*) and 1558 (the rest). “No translation of Aeschylus into any European vernacular was undertaken before the seventeenth century,” see Garland (2004) 112-13.

46 Reid (1993) 605. Pocock (1973) 234-236. Only a few notes outlining the first act survive. He is also known to have made notes for an *Alceste* about the same time. Both plays may have failed to generate the *gravitas* Racine was searching for; see Pocock (1973) 280, 306.
The adaptation of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, however, posed significant challenges for Racine. Lady Jane Lumley produced her translation as a personal exercise, perhaps as a gift to her husband, and in no way intended it for public consumption and criticism. The First Paul’s Children production was, or claimed to be, an academic curio presented in a pedagogical environment. Racine, on the other hand, had to shape his script according to the tastes of his contemporary audience. “In *Iphigénie* he faced two problems: how to reconcile civilised elegance with the barbaric motif of human sacrifice, and how to handle the essential premise that the gods will make the winds blow in exchange for sacrifice.”

Racine himself found these elements of the myth too distasteful for his theatre:

> Quelle apparence que j’eusse souillé la scène par le meurtre horrible d’une personne aussi vertueuse et aussi aimable qu’il fallait représenter Iphigénie? Et quelle apparence encore de dénouer ma tragédie par le secours d’une déesse et d’une machine, et par une métamorphose, qui pouvait bien trouver quelque créance du temps d’Euripide, mais qui serait trop absurde et trop incroyable parmi nous?

In his preface (from which the above quotation derives), Racine acknowledges three recensions of the myth: the sacrifice (he cites Aeschylus, Lucretius, and Horace), the salvation (Euripides) and the variant he eventually chooses, assimilation of a second Iphigenia, the lost daughter of Theseus and Helen.

The French neo-classical movement sought not only to adapt the values of classical theatre (as filtered through Aristotle and Horace), but to rehabilitate them to contemporary sensibilities. Thus the playwrights of the day had recourse to an increase in decorum (*les bienséances*) and naturalism (*la vraisemblance*). Consideration of the former meant that Racine could not – and would not – include the brutal sacrifice of a young girl on his stage. He is careful, therefore, to present sacrifice as a repellent act, “with emphasis always on the moral and not the physical horror of the killing.” Sacrifice is abhorrent to both *Iphigénie* and Achille, the two moral centres of the dramatic world of *Iphigénie*.

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47 Pocock (1973) 236.
48 Lapp (1955) 87-91.
49 This “naturalism” is entirely relative to preceding theatrical traditions, just as is the increased “naturalism” of Euripidean tragedy. The French playwrights, for instance, continued to compose in verse. Pocock (1973) 302.
50 Knight (1988) 75.
The Greek gods posed a significant problem as well. By the seventeenth century, they were seen as relics of a by-gone culture. They can perhaps, for Racine and his audience, be used allegorically or as thinly veiled substitutes for a Christian God. But in *Iphigénie*, they assimilate to neither representation easily, and while they clearly represent authority within the world of the drama, they inspire nothing of devotion or faith among the mortals. And even if the demands of a god must be honoured, the idea of a *deus ex machina* to resolve the action simply would not have found favour with the French audience of the day.

For Racine, the solution to both problems – the sacrifice and the role of the gods – is a true innovation of myth. He finds, apparently through Pausanias (2.22.6) who cites Stesichorus (fr. 191, see chapter 2), the variant tradition that Iphigenia was in fact the daughter of Helen and Theseus, given to Clytemnestra to raise as her own child. From this tradition, Racine creates a second Iphigénie, born of Theseus and Helen, but raised on Lesbos, where she is known as Eriphile. Eriphile initially has no knowledge of her parentage, but slowly discovers her identity in true tragic style over the course of the play. She is captured in a pre-war raid by Achille, and falls in love with him, but is subsequently assigned to Iphigénie as servant by the unwitting Achille. As a daughter of Helen, the cause of the Trojan war, she is a more appropriate sacrifice to the gods. Racine also takes pains to characterize the girl in a more odious fashion. She enviously schemes to sabotage the relationship between Iphigénie and Achille. This portrayal of Eriphile helps to alleviate the discomfort of the audience who would otherwise have to watch the naïve and trusting Iphigénie go to her death. And finally, the mode of Eriphile’s death is significant: in her last act to show her devotion to Achille, Eriphile takes the knife and plunges it into her own breast, committing suicide. Euripides’ Iphigenia could not do this, of course: as a female she cannot perform a sacrifice within the context of the Greek ritual frame (see chapter 3). Eriphile’s death not only rewrites cruel sacrifice as noble suicide, but allows a character to be redeemed for the sake of love.

And love is a major element in Racine’s version. This again stems from the neo-classical tradition, which often found the introduction of a love interest to be a suitable substitution for otherwise unmotivated movements and actions of a specific character.

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51 Turnell (1972) 218.
Achille and Iphigénie have known each other previous to the events of the play and have been engaged to each other for some time. Achille presents Eriphile to Iphigénie as something of a betrothal present. And it is her love of Achille that motivates Iphigénie to sacrifice herself. In the fourth act, Agamemnon declares that he will save Iphigénie, but in order to spite Achille, will find another husband for his daughter. Iphigénie is now faced with a choice: death, or life without her betrothed. It is in direct response to this threat that Iphigénie chooses death, and this renders her decision a personal one, rather than a political one, and not so very removed from that of Eriphile at the end of the play.\footnote{52}{Mueller (1980) 42.}

Racine’s remodelled myth marked the introduction of Iphigenia to the British public. This introduction, however, could not be affected by Racine’s tragedy alone. British theatregoers at the time were conflicted over French theatre and culture, caught “between artistic admiration for French cultural achievements and literary models... and a profound anti-French prejudice of a political and ideological nature.”\footnote{53}{Hall (2005b) 33.} It was Abel Boyer in 1699 who was able to adapt the play to accommodate the paradoxical attitudes of the playgoing public in Britain, but it was not Boyer’s writing skill that facilitated the audience’s positive reception of Iphigénie. Boyer, a lexicographer and political journalist, was an expatriated Huguenot now living in England. His French heritage gave him the credentials to translate a French tragedy, but his status as political refugee also accommodated British prejudice against all things French.\footnote{54}{Hall (2005b) 35. “Boyer retained to his end a sense of double identity; in the month before he died he described himself as ‘Gallo-Britannus’ (Political State, 37, 1729, 298),” Gibbs (2004).} Boyer’s first publication, \textit{The Compleat French Master for Ladies and Gentlemen: being a new method, to learn with ease and delight the French tongue}, published in 1694, demonstrates his own self-positioning between the French and English cultures. \textit{The Compleat French Master} remained popular throughout the eighteenth century and saw distribution in Britain and North America.\footnote{55}{Gibbs (2004).} He published biographies of William III and Queen Anne and was an outspoken opponent of the peace with France. While numerous British critics saw little more to Racine’s \textit{Iphigénie} than the displacement of French culture and sentiment to Aulis, Boyer’s translation rendered Racine’s verse into contemporary English idiom. Boyer further makes “considerable additions” that add to the
play’s sensationalism, including finishing the play by staging the final death scene of Eriphile, while Diana is seen traversing the heavens in the background (in Racine, this event is narrated by Ulysse). By depicting the death that Racine found so distasteful, Boyer “does a good job of taking the Versailles out of Aulis altogether.”

Boyer’s script, his only foray into the theatre, seems to have been critically successful, but saw a shortened run at Drury Lane. This lack of success is attributed, by Boyer himself in a second edition of the script, to a version of the play produced a short time before the production of Boyer’s adaptation. This version was, according to Boyer’s preface, plagiarised by a “Giant-Wit, and a Giant-Critick...and most people having been tir’d at Lincolns-Inn-Fields did not care to venture their patience at Drury-Lane.” The second edition’s Advertisement, not obviously written by Boyer, is not above blaming the actors: a Mrs. Wilkins, who played Eriphile, is said to have “sunk under the weight of so great a part.”

Boyer was ambitious, and frequently sought the patronage of the nobility and the politically powerful. Thus, since his Achilles “seems to naturally claim the patronage of a Lady,” Boyer dedicates the second edition to the Duchess of Marlborough, Sarah Churchill, herself a politically ambitious woman who met with varying success under the various monarchs of her lifetime. Churchill enjoyed significant political influence through Anne, whom she befriended early and advised on political matters before and during her reign as Queen. The relationship deteriorated, however, and officially ended in 1711, with Anne stripping Churchill of her offices at court. After the Queen’s death, the Duke and Duchess returned to London and royal favour in 1714 under George I. It is in this period that the dedication appears to have been made. Boyer’s dedication, while politically motivated, appears to have nothing to do with the subject of his tragedy. Boyer himself lived until 1729, long enough to see (if he chose to) a performance of Racine’s tragedy in the original French (at the Haymarket Theatre in January 1722).

56 Hall (2005b) 35.
57 The date of this second edition is not clear. The title page says 1700, but the edition is dedicated to the Duchess of Marlborough, a position that was not created until 1702. Furthermore, the advertisement suggests that the plagiarised production ran under the title of The Victim, which seems to have been produced in 1714.
58 The manuscript of the Henry E. Huntington Library is viewable, though image quality is sometimes to poor to read, through the on-line database Early English Books Online (http://eebo.chadwyck.com).
Gluck and Opera

The eighteenth century was something of a renaissance period for Iphigenia at Aulis, and indeed Greek myth and tragedy in general, through the two media of opera and painting. The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s has more entries for Iphigenia at Aulis in the eighteenth than for any other century, including the twentieth (though the Guide was published in 1993), by an impressive margin. While the visual representations of Iphigenia in paintings and frescoes in the eighteenth century have a past tradition on which to draw (a tradition reinvigorated by the new surge in opera), the operas do not. The first known opera on the subject is Reinhard Keiser’s Die wunderbar errettete Iphigenia in Hamburg in 1699, though the subject is ambiguous: errettete, “rescued”, could refer to the intervention of Artemis at Aulis or to the rescue mounted by Orestes and Pylades in Tauris.

I cannot here conduct a full survey of opera qua opera: that would be beyond the scope of this study and my qualifications as a critic. Nevertheless, there were at least thirty original operatic productions of the Iphigenia sacrifice in the eighteenth century, and this merits discussion. The comments of Martin Cooper are useful here: “Opera is constructed of three elements – the musical, the literary, and the spectacular.” Of the musical and the spectacle, there is little that need be said, except that both are functions of performance and surely contributed to the popularity and dissemination of the mythical variants these operas portray. This is to say that opera in the eighteenth century became the primary mode by which most people would know myth, in much the same way tragedy usurped epic and elegy in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The second element, the literary, is of greatest bearing to this project as it is in this sphere more than any other that the librettist most clearly engages with the mythical tradition. The composer then sets that adaptation to appropriate music. Gluck’s music is of vital importance, but the wrong story (i.e., choosing the wrong mythographic variant) would be detrimental to a long run.

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59 Reid (1993) s.v. “Iphigenia” has 84 entries for the eighteenth century and 48 for the twentieth.
60 One earlier opera, clearly set in Tauris, is known: Il tempio di Diana in Taurica, by Antonio Draghi in Vienna in 1678.
61 Libretto by Christian Heinrich Postel.
62 Cooper (1935) 4; an older source, to be sure, but the distinctions he articulates are nevertheless useful.
Of the thirty operatic productions, librettos are sometimes re-used, and almost all of those librettos used were based on Racine. Two Italian operas follow Euripides’ directly and a few reconfigure the ending to something different than either exemplar (it is to this group that Gluck ultimately belongs, even if Racine is the cue text). The upshot is that there is remarkably little actual modification being made to the myth itself in the eighteenth century, certainly not to the same degree that Racine’s single tragedy did in the previous century. Yet the repeated performances show a definite interest in the subject, so much so that Diderot identifies the subject as particularly ideal for opera in his Entretiens sur le Fils Naturel in 1757.

Few of the composers (mostly Italian) using the Iphigenia story are of note to any but serious opera buffs, but the opera composed by Christoph Willibald Gluck stands out. Gluck himself was known from his early days in Vienna for his reactions against opera buffa and opera seria, the dominant Italian forms which, in his opinion, had come to overvalue florid music at the expense of content. His Iphigénie en Aulide is therefore associated with his operatic reforms, along with the more popular Orfeo ed Euridice (produced first in 1762, though later revised for the French stage) and Iphigénie en Tauride (Paris 1779).

Greek myth and tragedy were of special interest to Gluck, and the more elemental characterizations and situations of Euripidean tragedy suited his reforms to the operatic art, in which he became known for forwarding drama over music, though of course the latter was still of great importance. By the time of his Iphigénie, Gluck had already staged an Orfeo ed Euridice and Alceste (1762 and 1767, both librettos by Ranieri de’ Calzabigi) and Paride et Elena (1770), and would follow with Iphigénie en Tauride (Paris 1779, thought by many to be his masterpiece) and Echo et Narcisse (a financial failure in Paris in 1779). The popularity of the Iphigenia story comes at the expense of the Oresteia, which is almost non-existent in opera of the time. Phillippo attributes this to the “much freer scope for the kind of ‘up-beat’ ending that was becoming the preferable option in eighteenth-century opera.”

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63 That of Apostolo Zeno seems to have been particularly popular, with at least eight known composers setting it to music by 1807.
64 Both use the same libretto by Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi. The productions are those of Ferdinando Berton in Turin 1762 and Carlo Franchi, Rome 1766.
65 Grout (1965) 243-44.
66 Grout (1965) 244.
67 Phillippo (2005) 79. She also cites the difficulty of reading Aeschylus, particularly when the Senecan
Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Aulide* stands as a significant moment in the reception tradition, and makes a suitable case study in our discussion of the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in the eighteenth century. *Iphigénie en Aulide* was first performed on April 19, 1774. It was revived the following year, with some revision, most notably the appearance of Diana at the close of the opera to announce that she is sparing Iphigenia from sacrifice and sending the Greek troops to Troy. In the original version, that announcement is made by Calchas after being threatened by Achilles, thus leaving the goddess’ intent somewhat more ambiguous, as is the case in Euripides. With the final revelation of Diana, the audience can more comfortably associate the scene with the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac – the intent to sacrifice is enough to satisfy a merciful God. The revision represents something of a compromise on the part of Gluck, fitting his ending to the tastes of popular French opera of the time.\(^{68}\)

Set in three acts, with a scene change from the military camp to a sea-side altar midway through the third act, the plot and structure of Gluck’s opera are very similar to Racine’s tragedy, on which F. L. G. le Blanc du Roullet based the libretto. The single greatest difference is the absence of the Lesbian slave Eriphile as rival to Iphigenia for the affections of Achilles. This means, as noted above, that Gluck’s ending must be different from that of Racine, since there is no substitute for the sacrifice. Instead, the demand for sacrifice is simply rescinded, either by Calchas or Diana. Traces of Eriphile remain: there is a small role for a slave girl from Lesbos, and Agamemnon still accuses Achilles of infidelity to Iphigenia, although in this instance, Agamemnon makes the accusation after the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia. The character of Ulysses is also removed from Gluck’s opera. His necessity as a character is partly removed by the staging, since the final scene at the altar, along with Diana’s (1775) revelation, are shown on stage, rather than described in a messenger speech as in Racine and Euripides.

As in Racine, however, Menelaus is absent, and Agamemnon remains indecisive much further into the action. At the end of the second act, he dispatches Arcas, the aged servant (now captain of the guard), to take Iphigenia and Clytemnestra back to Mycenae, a

\(^{68}\) Hayes (1992) 819.
rescue attempt that Iphigenia will refuse at the start of the third act. Gluck’s Agamemnon, however, is more nobly minded, motivated as he is by his paternal love: in Racine, he orders the rescue of Iphigenia so that he might marry her to another man and thereby humiliate Achilles.

Gluck’s opera did not see many revivals until the twentieth century, and even then it was routinely overshadowed by his *Iphigénie en Tauride*. The first production in England came in 1933 at Oxford. Nevertheless, the opera has contributed to later interpretations of the Iphigenia sacrifice story. Of particular interest is the adaptation of Gluck’s opera by Wagner in 1847. In addition to rescoring the opera itself, adding new pieces of his own composition, Wagner translated the libretto into German, and made several changes, most notably having Diana appear at the end and order Iphigenia to go to Tauris and serve as High Priestess there, developing a continuity between the two primary Iphigenia stories not intended by Gluck.\(^69\)

**The Academic Playhouses**

Despite Wagner’s interest, the nineteenth century saw something of a lull in reception, as no other new operas were being produced in this period. The last operatic version of the sacrifice story was produced in Naples in 1811.\(^70\) There was also a pair of Italian tragedies produced a few years later, but this trend also ceased early in the new century.\(^71\) Gluck continued to be performed, though his Aulis opera was overshadowed by the more popular Taurian story. In 1846, John Calcraft staged a production which he billed as a performance of the original tragedy, to follow his earlier successful *Antigone* in Dublin, but the project proved a box office disappointment. To the Irish audience early in the Victorian era, the appeal of Antigone was her resistance to patriarchal authority. “From about 1820 to 1960, Irish women had to contend with a patriarchal system that was deeply authoritarian,” and the tendency of Greek tragedy to invert social norms of this type therefore appealed.\(^72\) Iphigenia, however, was now the very model of submission, with all her quasi-nationalistic rhetoric justifying the sacrifice undermined by her equally misogynistic attitude:

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70 By Simon Mayr, libretto by G. Arici.
71 Casare Della Valle, 1818 in Naples and Giuseppe Marco Calvino, 1819 in Catania.
εἷϲ γʹ ἀνὴρ κρεῖϲϲων γυναικῶν μυρίων ὀρᾶν φάοϲ.
For one man to see the light of day is better than ten thousand women.

(I4 1394)
Iphigenia’s complete accession to her father’s will would take her out of favour with audiences until late in the twentieth century when, partly through the work of Cacoyannis, she would be recast as the innocent victim of war par excellence.73 Even the romance between Iphigenia and Achilles, popularized by Racine and Gluck but absent after Calcraf returned to Euripides, would not likely have been enough to redeem the play. Iphigenia’s death on behalf of a (virtual) husband and king would have resonated too strongly with the contemporary Irish women in the audience, largely confined to the household by custom and childbirth.

It is significant that Calcraf’s Iphigenia in Aulis failed where Antigone had succeeded. This contrast reflects a major shift in literary taste that was occurring in Europe at the time. As the popularity of Iphigenia was waning, that of Antigone was growing: the nineteenth century would prove to be the zenith of popularity for this play.74 Furthermore, German artists and (as I noted in the first chapter) scholars were proving more influential, as the French neo-classicism that had fuelled European performance traditions fell out of favour.75 Sophocles surpassed Euripides in the popular and academic imagination.

No intellectual movement or political trend of the time specifically suppressed Iphigenia at Aulis, but it nevertheless fell aside. The rise of nationalism in Europe might have been thought to provide a favourable intellectual environment for the continued popularity of Iphigenia at Aulis, given the titular heroine’s rhetoric of dying on behalf of the Greek cause. Yet as I have noted, Iphigenia can be seen as a figure of submission, rather than one of patriotism, and other plays – again notably Antigone, which is explicitly connected to the affairs of the polis – are often more easily reconciled to a multiplicity of specific (though often contradictory) political ideologies. After enjoying a heightened popularity in the previous centuries, it may be only natural that public attention will wander. And Iphigenia at

73 Hall (2005a) 6-7.
74 The APGRD lists 97 productions between 1800 and 1900.
75 An important production was Stawinsky’s Antigone, for which Mendelssohn famously wrote the incidental music. The performance inaugurated a new period of popularity for Greek tragedy in general, but also a public taste for “authenticity” in Classical performance; see Macintosh (1997) 285-88.
Aulis is, after all, but a single play—a short work by later standards of literature and theatre. Greek tragedy remained popular in the nineteenth century (indeed performances steadily increased), but popular opinion turned to other plays. Furthermore, the German scholars in this period, who not only preferred Sophocles as an author, became increasingly disturbed by the textual issues of our received script.

The Academy, however, provided for some measure of a continued performance tradition for the sacrifice of Iphigenia. In June 1866, the St. John’s College Amateurs at Oxford performed *Iphigenia; or Sail!! The Seer!!! And the Sacrifice!! A Classical Burlesque* in celebration of that year’s Commencement. This burlesque was directed by Edward Nolan, who directed a similar mythological burlesque the following year, with *Agamemnon at Home; or the Latest Particulars of that Little Affair at Mycenae*. The burlesques were irreverent mockeries of the myth and known especially for the use of drag, likely forming something akin to ancient satyr play (without, of course, the satyrs).\(^76\) In this instance, Calchas, intoxicated after participating in a picnic with Menelaus, Agamemnon and Iphigenia, approaches Iphigenia amorously, but after being rebuffed schemes toward her death. The sacrifice is averted when a tug boat arrives to tow the Greek fleet to Troy. The script is laden with puns, slapstick humour, and musical airs used to comical effect (for example, the traditional song “Paddle Your Own Canoe” is sung after Iphigenia is asked how she came to Aulis without Clytemnestra). Concerning *Iphigenia*, our curiosity can only be heightened by the fact that Edward Nolan cast himself as Iphigenia and a T. Nolan as Agamemnon: was there an in-joke operating here and would the audience have been in on it? The intimate performance of the amateur productions suggests that such a connection would indeed be known to the audience.\(^77\)

The production of the St. John’s Amateurs was an early harbinger of a new trend in the performance tradition. Throughout most of the twentieth century, *Iphigenia at Aulis* had little presence on the professional stage, but was largely relegated to college campuses where it proved to be quite popular. The *Archive for Performances of Greek and Roman Drama*

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\(^76\) A. Mackinnon (1910) 38 makes passing reference to the performance, but includes a number of plates of other performances by the Amateurs which convey a sense of the light treatment of the material.

\(^77\) T. Nolan is listed only for this production on the APGRD, which might lend support to the idea of a father or brother (who would not be involved otherwise) being pressed into dramatic service.
lists twenty-two American productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* from 1900-1950, twenty of which were performed on college campuses (the phenomenon is echoed on a smaller scale in the UK). One is a performance for the Oratorio Society of New York and must have been choral or operatic, if indeed such a production occurred. The one public, professional performance occurred in 1921 in New York where it received mixed reviews. The acting, with Margaret Anglin as Clytemnestra, was generally praised, but the play itself was deemed of less importance.\(^79\) Anglin herself was a product of the academy, having first appeared as Iphigenia in 1915 at Berkeley’s Greek theatre.

One might expect *Iphigenia at Aulis* to enjoy some measure of mainstream success throughout the twentieth century, considering the way it has, in recent times, been adapted to both feminist and pacifist agendas. But as an anti-war play, it was frequently overshadowed by *Trojan Women* and *Lysistrata* (perhaps less appropriately, given the title character’s crusade against war internal to Greece in favour of war with barbarian forces), both of which were produced often throughout the twentieth century.\(^80\) For the feminist agenda, moreover, the play is trumped by other, more effective female figures, such as Medea and Clytemnestra’s Aeschylean counterpart. The submissive Iphigenia and the helpless Clytemnestra can be used to articulate feminist concerns, but they are victims, rather than agents who might be held up as models of action.

But this is not to say that these themes could not be profitably explored. Adjustments are not uncommon in many recent productions of the play which do seek to explore these issues. In particular, line 1394, in which Iphigenia suggests that ten thousand women should die before a single male (quoted above) is frequently omitted.\(^81\) The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a spate of performances in Greece, and the play was staged by the National Theatre at Epidaurus several times beginning in 1957. In particular, Michael Cacoyannis staged a production in 1967 at the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York.\(^82\) Critical

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\(^{78}\) The evidence for this production is slight: a passing reference, with no date, in a review of Margaret Anglin’s *Iphigenia at Aulis* by “Mr. Hornblow” in *Theatre Magazine* in 1921. See Hartigan (1995) 91.

\(^{79}\) Hartigan (1995) 91 for a summary of reviews of the time.

\(^{80}\) Hartigan (1995) 92.

\(^{81}\) First noted in Bly (2001) 55-56, but see Gamel (1999) 476.

\(^{82}\) The Circle in the Square Theatre is now a Broadway Theatre, though it only moved to this location in 1972. Cacoyannis’ production would have been produced in the original theatre in Greenwich Village, slightly off Broadway.
reactions to the play, though mixed concerning the performance itself, showed that *Iphigenia at Aulis* could indeed be appropriate to the anti-war sentiment of the era, particularly in America.  Cacoyannis’ production served as a trial ground for his later, critically acclaimed film.

**Cacoyannis and his Films**

The use of film introduces many new interpretive issues to material previously presented on a live stage. The use of the camera to control the spectator’s “gaze”, the ability to change scenes swiftly, and the increased sense of realism that film typically brings to its subject are just some of the factors that need to be taken into account. Film and cinema studies have been serious undertakings for several decades now, and the literature is vast and well developed. Although the debate over the value of film to an academic discipline like Classics has been disputed for some time, over the course of the past two decades, Classicists have slowly turned their attention to film with increasing complexity and sophistication.

Film brings further considerations beyond the interpretative or artistic. The financial considerations, though not a new aspect – Gluck had to sell tickets too – are heightened in the film industry, given that a film, particularly a large Hollywood film, requires an outlay of cash unlike that faced by any previous performance medium. Over the past century, Roman history has been found to be a far more palatable – and profitable – subject for the screen, with Greek myth (and on rarer occasions history) largely relegated to the B-movie category and the few major attempts have not been successful enough to inspire new projects.

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83 Reviews are again summarized by Hartigan (1995) 92-3.
84 A thorough bibliography would be too great here, but K. Jenkins (1992), Hill & Gibson (2000) and Beaver (2007) provide a useful introduction to, respectively, the process of appropriation of text into film, the key areas of cinema studies, and the specific terminology of the film industry and criticism.
85 The debate began as early as 1915. See the introduction to Winkler (2001) esp. 5-6.
86 The recent phenomenon begins with McDonald (1983) and K. Mackinnon (1986), both of whom specifically consider tragedy and dedicate the lion’s share of their analysis to the works of Cacoyannis. More recently consider Winkler (1991, heavily revised for 2001), in which a number of the contributions take a largely comparative stance, limiting analysis to a single film and one or two Classical tropes or models. The volume is still useful, and has since been joined by other works, including Wyke (1997), Solomon (2001), Cyrino (2005) as well as the recent volumes edited by Winkler (2005, 2007a, 2007b), each focused on a specific Hollywood film. Almost all of these come from private, for-profit presses, as opposed to academic university presses, indicating the popularizing component of this branch of reception studies.
87 The film *Troy*, for instance, owes its existence to the success of *Gladiator* in 2000. Although *Troy* was eventually a financial success on world-wide release, its relative domestic failure and critical panning was
Nisbet traces this failure on the part of Hollywood to construct a dynamic image of ancient Greece all the way back to the propaganda of the Romans themselves. But there may be an even greater disconnect at work. Writing of Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy*, Winkler suggests that “The *Iliad* may be too alien in its historical, cultural, religious, and social aspects to be put on screen in a manner that is appropriate to its greatness and at the same time capable of reaching a large audience.” In other words, a faithful adaptation of the *Iliad* and the stories of the Trojan War could only be appreciated by a small, educated viewing audience already inured to the foreign morality of ancient Greece. This small, educated audience, it is implicitly understood in Hollywood, could never buy enough tickets to finance a major film.

And it is hard to imagine a subject that could be more morally foreign to a modern audience than human sacrifice. No film outside of Cacoyannis’ Greek production makes any reference to the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Even Petersen’s *Troy*, which works hard to establish Agamemnon as a power-hungry king with no scruples, considers this a line that cannot be crossed. Admittedly, the end of the Trojan War, with the iconic Trojan Horse, is far more popular and likely to draw an audience and any film would be expected to focus on that. Nevertheless, directors of large-budget films face the same problems as Racine and must yield to audience’s sensibilities if they are to be financially successful – Polyxena is just as conspicuously absent.

In 1976, Michael Cacoyannis produced his film *Iphigenia*, a close adaptation of Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Produced in modern, idiomatic Greek with English subtitles for Western release, the film completes Cacoyannis’ informal trilogy of tragedies, which began with *Electra*, produced in Greek in 1961, and *Trojan Women*, produced in English in

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88 Nisbet (2006) esp. 2-9. To this, Nisbet adds the movie-going public’s tendency to associate ancient Greek myth and culture with homosexuality.
89 Winkler (2007) 47.
90 This film is frequently hobbled by its refusal to accommodate the sensibilities of the ancient world. The gods are not simply absent, but openly mocked. Achilles’ heterosexuality is stressed repeatedly. Character motivations then become obscure and confusing for a modern audience: Priam’s decision to grant Helen sanctuary or Achilles’ grief over the death of his cousin, for example. The film is not without merit (a lavish budget and high-calibre performances from Peter O’Toole and Brian Cox) and not without defenders, notably the edited volume of Winkler (2007), though see Burgess (2008) for some of the shortcomings of that collection.
1971. *Trojan Women* was produced abroad (filmed in Spain) as Cacoyannis was then in exile from Greece during the military junta. The three films combine to produce a cycle of myth that can be read forwards or backwards: in the order they were filmed, they demonstrate Cacoyannis’ own evolving skill as a film-maker and understanding of Greek tragedy; viewed in reverse order, they follow the chronology of the myth.\(^91\)

These three films are among the very few in the history of cinema that aim to retain the feel of the source tragedy while still being sensitive to the needs and strengths of film as a medium. Thus all three films retain a “staged” feel, with the use of choruses, tableau scenes, and large swaths of dialogue directly adopted into the film versions; this is what Mackinnon would call the “theatrical mode” (as opposed to the “realistic” or “filmic”).\(^92\) Both *Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia* were produced on the stage before Cacoyannis attempted his film versions, at the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York.\(^93\) Nevertheless, Cacoyannis is prepared, especially in *Iphigenia*, to suppress or alter lines of dialogue and include new scenes or characters to facilitate the communication of his interpretation of the original play.\(^94\) Thus in the film’s opening, we see Agamemnon’s men slaughter the deer of Artemis (after “hunting” the domesticated animals of Artemis’ precinct), but even more drastically, we are shown a chase scene mid-way through the film, rife with hunting imagery, when Iphigenia flees from the news of her impending death. Later in the film, Odysseus and Calchas openly discuss the need to hurry the sacrifice as the wind is already beginning to rise: the motivations behind this sacrifice are firmly human.

This film in the theatrical mode is much preferable to a film of a staged production, since much quality tends to be lost in such a transition. To say nothing of the technical difficulties (sound and lighting never quite seem to work properly), filming a staged performance is very restrictive. The spectator, who is usually able to look around and focus

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\(^91\) McDonald (1983) 216.  
\(^92\) K. Mackinnon (1986) borrows the terms from Jorgens (1977) 7-11, and dedicates a chapter to each.  
\(^93\) *Trojan Women* first appeared in New York in July 1963, in the translation by Edith Hamilton later used in the film. Cacoyannis also directed a French adaptation in Paris in 1965, with an “intellectual” translation by Jean-Paul Sartre; see Hall (2004) 35. *Iphigenia* was first performed in New York November 21, 1967. Papas starred initially as Clytemnestra but was replaced by actress Jane White, who had played Helen in Cacoyannis’ earlier New York production of *Trojan Women* – the role Papas herself would play in Cacoyannis’ film version of that play.  
\(^94\) McDonald (1983) catalogues the differences, including lines added or dropped from the original plays in respective chapters on each play.
on different parts of the play (and theatre), is now forced to accept the fixed gaze of the camera. The social aspect of a staged performance is also lost: seeing a play (and a Greek tragedy especially) is a communal activity. The camera cannot convey that impression. Instead the medium of film itself is used fully in Cacoyannis’ adaptation, with close-ups on actors’ faces, frequent point-of-view shots, and rapid cuts from one scene or location to another. Again, Iphigenia goes further than the previous two films, including scenes showing Clytemnestra and Iphigenia at home in Mycenae, which reinforces our sense of their domestic world, and travelling to Aulis, allowing us to see Iphigenia’s rising anticipation of the coming marriage.

The result of Cacoyannis’ fusion of stage production and film is a unique mise en scène that comes somewhere between the realism of mainstream cinema and the austerity of ancient Greek tragedy, somewhere between the theatrical and realist modes. None of the films pretend toward an accurate reconstruction of ancient Greece in the way that other popular films might do. In Iphigenia, for instance, we are shown scenes shot at Mycenae, but no effort is made to disguise or reconstruct the ruins. Instead, Cacoyannis creates a world that is completely evocative of neither ancient Greece nor the modern day, achieving a timeless feel. His landscapes – dusty, gritty, harsh, and unyielding – create the perfect setting for the elemental forces of Greek tragedy, and his characters seem to be a part of that landscape.

These plays are of course open to interpretations other than Cacoyannis’. Nevertheless, when making these films, he shows a strong fidelity to the plays according to his own (entirely valid) understanding of them, which stems from careful study of Greek tragedy. His texts are not updated or made to suit the sensibilities of his audience. This fidelity, along with the often stage-like feel to the films, has garnered the films an almost iconic status within the discipline of Classical studies. A Classics professor who might baulk at screening films like Troy or 300 in a classroom setting would have no problem with Iphigenia or – more common because it is in English – Trojan Women. This credibility (in

95 Cacoyannis himself was opposed to what he called “film theatre”, by which he meant an unconstructive fidelity to the original text at the expense of quality, Winkler (2001) 76.
96 Electra possibly drifts farthest from its Euripidean original, and the influence of Sophocles can be felt. Electra and Orestes are far more confident in their actions, and there is no deus ex machina. McDonald (2002) 61.
the eyes of Classicists) has meant that Cacoyannis’ version of the sacrifice story has been consistently studied since its release over three decades ago.

Cacoyannis conceived of the films as a loose trilogy that commented on the consequences of war. All three plays are set against the mythical backdrop of the Trojan War, one before the war, one immediately after, and one during the aftermath of the war, although Cacoyannis produces his films in reverse order, probably in the same sequence as Euripides himself.\footnote{The date of Euripides’ \textit{Electra} is unknown. Any date between 422-413 is plausible, though scholarly consensus, backed by statistical analysis of resolutions, is for an earlier date in that range. See Cropp-Fick (1985) 60-1. For a recent summary of the debate over its primacy (and a sobering evaluation of its importance towards a valid interpretation of either play), see Finglass (2007b) 1-4.} Furthermore, all three tragedies are focus on (female) victims of war. \textit{Trojan Women} resonates with \textit{Iphigenia} in the same way Erasmus saw \textit{Hecuba} doing. As noted above, Cacoyannis was in exile from a military regime at the time of \textit{Trojan Women}. Although he claims no specific political agenda against the junta, for Cacoyannis, “Every major crisis or conflict, every tragic situation that happens in the world can be related to Greek tragedy.”\footnote{Cacoyannis in interview with McDonald and Winkler conducted in 1988. Winkler (2001) 80.}

Another unifying factor in the three films is the presence of Irene Papas, an actress with whom Cacoyannis has had a long and productive professional relationship. In each, she plays a different female role that has been affected by the war: the daughter clinging to her family honour in \textit{Electra}; the sexual predator and cause of the Trojan War as Helen in \textit{Trojan Women}; and the betrayed mother in \textit{Iphigenia}. It is fitting that a female actor unify three plays that rely so heavily on the female perspective of war. The impact of Papas on Cacoyannis’ films is significant enough that when Marianne McDonald and Martin Winkler interviewed Cacoyannis in the late 1980s, they interviewed Papas as well. The casting of Papas as Clytemnestra overshadows the role played by Iphigenia in the sacrifice. This is not to say the role of Iphigenia is less important (it is capably played by Tatiana Papamoschou) Papas simply dominates the action.

The film deviates from Euripides in a few significant ways. For one thing, it opens with the hunt for food in which the sacred deer is killed. This is a common motivation for the goddess’ demand that Iphigenia be sacrificed, but comes from Euripides’ \textit{Iphigenia among the Taurians} rather than the this play. Nevertheless, the scene depicts the hunting of
domesticated animals, a distortion of the animals’ function that echoes the confusion of the role of the deer and Iphigenia herself: Iphigenia’s association with a wild animal (established by the chase scene mid-film) should make her an unsuitable candidate for sacrifice. Calchas, for his part, takes offence at the killing and the apparent lack of respect for the goddess. The price is Agamemnon’s daughter, and Odysseus, as Calchas’ ally, makes sure that Agamemnon pays this price. That the sacrifice is a direct result of human intrigue, not divine demand, becomes clear when Calchas and Odysseus discuss the need to hurry the sacrifice as the wind is already rising naturally. Agamemnon is aware of the plot but is powerless (or unwilling) to stop it. In another deviation from Euripides, the army is frequently seen demanding food, action, and, eventually, sacrifice, vividly demonstrating the threat perceived by Agamemnon in Euripides. As noted above, we see Clytemnestra and Iphigenia first in Mycenae then en route to Aulis to give us a greater sense of their domestic world and the anticipation of the marriage to Achilles.

As always with adaptations of this play, the film’s close requires special attention. For Cacoyannis there is no question of salvation: Iphigenia dies for the Greek cause, though the director denies the audience the moment of her death. Rather, Calchas seizes Iphigenia while she is lost in a mist and we must read the final moments in the horrified face of Agamemnon, who pursues her into the mist. As soon as the sacrifice is complete, the Greek army heads for the ships, as the wind has risen. Sails snap taut in the wind. But the final shots of the film are on Irene Papas, first in a point-of-view shot with her hair obscuring our vision and then a close-up of her eyes in which we can see the vengeance awaiting Agamemnon upon his return.99 This conclusion is consistent with Cacoyannis’ understanding of Euripides as a playwright, whom he considered to be an atheist, bringing the gods on stage only as a convenient representations of Fate and the unknowable.100 The 1967 staged production at Circle in the Square is consistent with and indeed foreshadows the ending of the film: “[Cacoyannis] prefers to finish with Iphigenia’s being led to sacrifice and

99 Cacoyannis himself has a fascination with faces and eyes, and long close-ups are a staple of his cinematic style. Though he rejects the use of actual masks in theatre and cinema (he is more tolerant of the former), he believes the camera turns the face into “a kind of mask”; Winkler (2001) 82.

100 Winkler (2001) 79. The deus ex machina of Electra and the divine prologue of Trojan Women are also omitted.
Clytemnestra, caught in a spotlight that is tantamount to a cinematic close-up, in an ashen-blaze of grief.”

It would take almost a decade, but Papas got her close-up.

It is arguably the freedom offered Cacoyannis by the problem ending that enabled him to reconfigure the play into the model of female resistance to a patriarchal world that it has become: he would not have been willing to film an ending in which Iphigenia was saved. The tribulation of Clytemnestra is all-important to Cacoyannis’ understanding of the play. “From mater dolorosa, Clytemnestra is transformed into an avenging spirit, setting a pattern for the spectator’s emotional response to the film as a whole.”

The pattern was set not only for the spectator of the film, but for almost every production since then. Even critical interpretations of the play at the time have reflected what Cacoyannis produced on film: “It is not accidental that the film was conceived and gestated in the same climate as some of the most influential critical studies of IA such as Foley and Loraux.”

Contemporary Stagings

What is perhaps surprising, however, is the dearth of productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in the years that followed Cacoyannis’ highly successful film. For the next two decades, the play enjoyed little presence on professional stages. When it is seen, it is usually in combination with other plays, and especially as a prelude to the *Oresteia*. One of the

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101 Barnes (1967) 40.
102 Michelakis (2006b) 224.
104 I have recently learned of a 2007 film adaptation of the play, *Extranjera* (“Foreigner”), directed by Inés de Oliveira César. The director is Argentinian, though the project is truly international, with Polish and Greek financial backing. The film is a loose adaptation, in which a healer in an isolated Argentinian village with few traces of modern civilization, determines (of his own accord) to sacrifice his daughter in hopes of ending a terrible drought. The film focuses on the resolve of the young daughter in her final hours, and the inspiration toward freedom and resistance her actions inspire in her five-year-old brother, Orestes. The film has not been released in North America, but information can be found on the film’s website, www.extranjera-pelicula.com.ar/ (Spanish and English, accessed August 18, 2009). I am grateful to Konstantinos Nikoloutsos for the reference, who has made available to me the script of a paper delivered to a meeting of the Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Association in late February 2009. Professor Nikoloutsos suggests the film owes more to the Argentinian tradition of theatre and film, especially Griselda Gambaro’s *Antigona Furiosa* and Sergio de Cecco’s *El Renidero* (adapted from Sophocles’ *Electra*), than to Cacoyannis’ film. There is also a Polish film by Włodzimierz Staniewski, which made its U.K. debut in October 2009, under the auspice of the APGRD.

105 I will explore productions of the *Oresteia* below. But other productions worthy of note are: *The Iphigenia Cycle*, produced in Boston in 1992, in which the two Iphigenia plays of Euripides were produced in tandem; John Barton’s *The Greeks*, which fused no fewer then ten plays from the Trojan Cycle into one large theatrical production, first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1980; *The Clytemnestra Project*, produced at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in 1992, which saw IA produced with *Agamemnon* and
reasons for this may simply be a general consensus among critics and theatre practitioners that Cacoyannis got it right. In 1968, another Greek director, Dimitrios Rondris directed a production at the Felt Forum of Madison Square Garden in New York. This production was panned by critics, and at least one critic admitted that part of the negativity of his review was fuelled by comparison to Cacoyannis’ staging the year before. Another reason is that there were other plays that remained more popular: Trojan Women, for example, is still a popular play on commercial stages. In particular, the Oresteia has seen increased interest in the past two decades. One outcome of this increased popularity has been the subordination of Iphigenia at Aulis into a prologue position, often being produced in advance of the “more important” plays of Aeschylus.

In this final section, I wish to look at how modern playwrights and directors have situated Iphigenia at Aulis against its Aeschylean predecessor, the Oresteia. My first example is Ariane Mnouchkine’s Les Atrides, a tetralogy consisting of Iphigenia at Aulis and the three plays of the Oresteia performed in that order, first singly in the early 1990s and then collectively in 1994. Euripides’ play becomes relegated to the role of introduction for the loftier project of the Aeschylean trilogy, though of course it conditions the audience’s understanding of those later plays. My other example is Colin Teevan’s Iph..., first produced in 1999. Iph... is the first instalment in Teevan’s project of recreating the final trilogy of Euripides, followed by a translation of Bacchae and a (re)imagining of the fragmentary Alcmeon in Corinth. Rather than having Euripides introducing Aeschylus, Teevan tries to restore the play to its original position of recalling and reconfiguring Aeschylus, while still sensitive to the needs of an audience that may not have read the Oresteia.

Les Atrides has become an elusive theatrical experience. Anyone important in the field of Greek theatre in the early 1990s seems to have seen it, and many have since given eyewitness accounts. Still images indicate a multi-cultural blend of disparate theatre styles, including Indian Kathakali (particularly manifest in the garb and style of the chorus of

Sophocles’ Electra; Ellen McLaughlin’s Iphigenia and Other Daughters, which combined Euripides’ Iphigenia plays and his Electra and was first performed in 1995 in New York.


Agamemnon) and Japanese Noh, the sort of cultural cross-fertilization only possible in the modern world. These theatrical styles all accommodate Mnouchkine’s rejection of naturalism, a force she has seen as detrimental to the tradition of Western, European theatre. And yet no film of the production is publicly available, perhaps surprising for a production so widely touted and travelled. And for the current study, the accounts of, and scholarship on, the production are particularly frustrating for the way in which the Iphigenia at Aulis component is so consistently subordinated to the Oresteia: reviews pay little attention to the first play in the cycle. When de La Combe explores the French academic and theatrical trends that led to the production of Les Atrides, he focusses on preceding productions of the Oresteia. To be fair, this approach is in keeping with the programme of the volume to which he is contributing, Agamemnon in Performance. Nevertheless, the use of Euripides, de La Combe implies, was a necessary inclusion to make the main event of Aeschylus accessible to the modern audience: “the story had to be told from the beginning”. Yet when he goes on to say that the performance of Iphigenia at Aulis before Agamemnon “was then a practical choice and presupposes no interpretation of the plays,” he can only be speaking of directorial intent (de La Combe was frequently consulted over the entire production process). When Taplin complains that the production “has spurned scholarship” (and Taplin is by no means a purist, demanding an impossible fidelity to the original performance), this is the sort of disconnect he has in mind. Juxtaposition of two theatrical pieces, particularly with such a long intertextual relationship as these, can only result in modified perceptions of the original pieces.

Several of Mnouchkine’s productions are available on film, but not these plays, see Miller (2007) 150, for the complete list. Other significant productions have been filmed, such as Guthrie’s 1954 production of Oedipus Rex in Stratford Ontario or Hall’s 1981 Royal National Theatre Oresteia. Of course one could argue that these productions are “significant” because they have been filmed, but both demonstrate what can be done with these classics on stage.
The critics and scholars find greatest purchase in the reimagining of the chorus of Eumenides into a chorus of fearsome dogs (who are inexplicably absent for the judgement of Athena). Consensus, however, favours Choephoroi as the best production: “For contemporary sensibilities, “The Libation Bearers” may be the most action-packed drama of the lot,” Rich (1992).
Euripides of course composed *Iphigenia at Aulis* with the *Oresteia* in mind, to the point that, as I have argued elsewhere, one of the primary vectors of the play is the transformation of the betrayed mother Clytemnestra into Aeschylus’ vengeful hero(ine). But the idea of this play (or any of his plays for that matter) actually being produced in conjunction with the plays of another poet would have been utterly foreign to Euripides, even if we only consider the format of dramatic performances in the fifth century. Euripides must have understood his work as sitting at a great remove from that of Aeschylus. In chapter 4, I discussed the sense of caesura that the Athenians must have felt at the end of the fifth century, following the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides. Euripides must have sensed the approach of this caesura, and at the very least knew that he – and Sophocles – were very near the end of their careers and lives, given that he was in his seventies at the time he was composing *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and Sophocles even older. Just as Euripides would come to be seen as ending an era (by Aristophanes, by Aristotle, and by virtually all who followed them), so too was Aeschylus understood as having started it, many decades earlier. When Euripides is composing in the late fifth century, even as he is responding to Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, he is aware of all that has intervened: not just time, but matters of intellectual, historical, and cultural import.

This is not to say that artistic directors should avoid productions which juxtapose *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the *Oresteia*. Mnouchkine’s is an interesting project, and can highlight the different strengths of the two playwrights. But the danger lies in the failure to recognize the differences or – worse – attempt to remove them. “By opening the *Oresteia* via Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* – that is, from the perspective of a moral universe radically removed from, even based upon the ironization of, Aeschylus – our reception of Aeschylus’ theatre becomes so skewed that the complexity of his very different archaic vision must of necessity be correspondingly simplified.” Such is Golder’s reaction to Mnouchkine (and very nearly the full extent of his comment on the Iphigenia component of the tetralogy). Golder’s use of “must” is perhaps a bit strong, but he has certainly identified a major difficulty of this sequencing of the plays. His complaint that Clytemnestra then becomes the

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central figure of the *Oresteia* is a touch absurd, since many valid readings of the *Oresteia* do in fact take that position without Euripides being performed first. But as Rehm notes, producing *Iphigenia at Aulis* as a literary preface to the *Oresteia* (re)casts Clytemnestra as victim: “this tendency in production approaches the sentimental when it converts Clytemnestra – a complex and unsentimental dramatic figure, if ever there was one – into a single-minded mother out for vengeance for the murder of her [eldest] daughter.”\(^{116}\) Rehm identifies this shift as part of a trend, plotted by Hall in the same volume, to reduce the figure of Clytemnestra from a politically motivated active agent to a more passive character, influenced by her emotional bonds with others, Iphigenia, Aegisthus and Agamemnon.\(^{117}\) Although Clytemnestra does cite Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigenia as the cause for his death in *Agamemnon* (1525-29), her political motivations still show. The Clytemnestra of Euripides adds several other charges, including the murders of her former husband and son, a clear innovation (*IA* 1148-52).

Mnouchkine is not the first, or the last, to reconfigure our interpretation of Clytemnestra by over-emphasizing the role of Iphigenia. Gerhart Hauptmann did it in 1943, when he presented *Iphigenie in Aulis* as the first instalment of his *Atridentetralogie*. Hauptmann’s production was an adaptation, rather than a translation of the *Oresteia*, however, and concluded not with the *Eumenides* but with *Iphigenie in Delphi* (actually written and performed first, in Berlin in 1941), in which Orestes and Iphigenia have returned to Delphi from Crimea to encounter Electra dedicating to Apollo the axe with which Clytemnestra was killed.\(^{118}\) Since Mnouchkine, Katie Mitchell’s production of Ted Hughes’ translation of the *Oresteia* in 1999 featured the ghost of Iphigenia throughout the *Agamemnon* segment, watching most of the action from an elevated position and ultimately descending to join Agamemnon in the bath after his death.\(^{119}\) This action of course is meant to correspond with *Agamemnon* 1555-60:

\(^{116}\) Rehm (2005) 357. The original misprints “youngest” for “eldest”.
\(^{117}\) Hall (2005c).
\(^{118}\) The intervening plays are *Agamemmnon Tod* and *Elektra*.
\(^{119}\) Rehm (2005) 357.
ἀλλ’ Ἰφιγένεια νιν ἀϲπαϲίωϲ  
θυγάτηρ, ώϲ χρῆ,  
πατέρ’ ἀντιάϲαϲα πρόϲ ώκύπορον  
pόρθμευμ’ ἀχέων  
περὶ χεῖρε βαλοῦϲα φιλήϲει.

But Iphigenia his daughter gladly  
will meet her father, as is right,  
by the swift-flowing passage  
of troubles and throw her arms  
about him and embrace him.

The post-humous meeting of father and daughter is enacted on Mitchell’s stage. It is a  
powerful image, but one which Rehm convincingly argues overshadows other on-stage  
relationships.

In March 1999, David Grant directed Iph..., Colin Teevan’s recent re-imagining of the  
Iphigenia story. It was the first instalment in Teevan’s project to recreate the final trilogy of  
Euripides, with an adaptation of Bacchae in 2002 (first directed by Peter Hall) and Alcmeon  
in Corinth, freely re-imagined based on the few surviving fragments of that play (first  
performed as Cock of the North, directed by Martin Wylde in 2004). Teevan’s adaptations  
are free (particularly in the case of Alcmeon in Corinth, ironically longer than the other plays  
by over twenty pages), but they are classically informed. Edith Hall in particular has worked  
with Teevan in preparing his adaptations, and each of the plays has been published by  
Oberon with a foreword by Hall herself, presenting the major themes of the play.

Iph... demonstrates a strong awareness of its exemplar and its position in classical  
theatre. Like Mnouchkine’s Les Atrides, Iph... is deliberately connected to the Oresteia,  
although the connection is in a sense reversed. While in Les Atrides, the Iphigenia play is  
presented as an opening act, against which the following action of the Oresteia must be  
understood, Iph... opens with the old man of Iphigenia at Aulis sitting atop the walls of  
Mycenae (not Argos), listening to the death cries of Agamemnon as he is murdered. The old  
man is here assimilated to the watchman who opens the Oresteia. As Agamemnon dies, his  
cries for help are modified from their original so that he cries out for the old man, which is  
how the Iphigenia sequence will begin. The old man then recalls the events of ten years ago,  
and the Iphigenia play is told as if in flashback. The old man also closes the play as he sits  
on the walls, listening to the final death throes of Agamemnon. Thus, Teevan has his
audience view his Iphigenia play against the *Oresteia*, mimicking the sequence of the original spectators of Athens, who would be recalling the *Oresteia*. It also establishes the intertextual connection of the two plays for an audience that may not have seen or be familiar with the *Oresteia*.

Teevan is part of a small resurgence of Greek tragedy in Ireland, and this affects his scripting, as his characters speak in a base and vulgar vernacular (though compound words such as fameglory and throatcut seem designed to recall the complexity of the tragic vocabulary). This baser vocabulary gives great force to some of the sentiments of the play. When the chorus, a brassy group of young women from Chalkis more aggressive than their ancient counterparts, all shout out together “It’s Fucking Achilles!” (after four lines of alliteration: Achilles is “Fleet-foot”, “Freedom fighting”, “Formidable” and “Fabuloso”), one tends to get the point. The fawning nature of the chorus is established, and Achilles is set up as the handsome hero, an image to which Achilles adheres more closely in this play. Achilles’ response to Clytemnestra’s supplication is cut off by the intrusion of the chorus. When the old man near the play’s close notes that “Peace is danced through all the ruined ghetto streets,” the audience is invited to make the comparison between an ancient Greece that has lost much in war and the context of Troubled Ireland. This emphasis on the baseness of the army itself is reminiscent of Cacoyannis’ portrayal of filthy soldiers in his *Iphigenia*, another director who is aware of the troubled history of his land (with both internal and external strife).

But while the play is grounded in a base vernacular, it is clearly informed by the Classical tradition as well. In particular, Edith Hall’s presence is felt in the choices made over what passages to include in the adaptation and what should be left out. Both messenger speeches are omitted, two of the most textually problematic in the play. This means that the sacrifice of Iphigenia does indeed occur: we are given no hint of salvation for Iphigenia, though Teevan plays with this. When Agamemnon enters for the final time, he is pleased, and an informed audience member may now expect the story of the rescued Iphigenia. But Agamemnon’s pleasure stems not from the salvation of his daughter, but from the fact that

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120 McDonald & Walton (2002), Hall (2005b) 10.
121 At least one review noticed that the strongest reaction came from younger spectators, and in fact the short review mentions no other characterizations. Shuttleworth (1999).
the army is now ready to sail to Troy, and that Iphigenia is now blessed, dwelling in the company of the gods.

We, as readers and critics, do not yet have the critical distance required to judge the influence of Teevan’s productions. Even Mnouchkine’s tetralogy is too recent for us to properly assess critical impact. Already, however, *Les Atrides* appears to be making a “momentary” impact: this is to say that the influence of this tetralogy is being felt through living memory, rather than recorded instances of the performance. No film exists, and although musical recordings and performance scripts (in the original French) were made commercially available, these have already become very difficult to find. Even much of the secondary material, reviews and analyses, are frequently casual in tone. It will be interesting to see if the backing of Edith Hall, herself a prominent advocate of the study of reception of ancient theatre, will be enough to secure for *Iph*... a significant position in the history of reception of this play, either as a moment in performance or as a literary artefact.

**Conclusions**

If the tradition of reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* begins with the first performance of the play in the fifth century, then that point of departure foreshadows a remarkably varied and flexible history of adaptation and reconfiguration. Many of the basic conditions of performance which would have significant impact on an analysis of reception are unknown or subject to intense debate. The question of what proportion of the Athenian polis saw the production at the City Dionysia (as opposed to, say, hearing about it in the *agora* the following day) has generated a wide range of answers (see chapter 3). Even the question of how quiet audiences tended to be could affect the retention of a given performance in the popular memory of the Athenians. Our single best witness to the first performance is the text, which itself recreates none of the actual features of performance, lacking even in simple stage directions. The extremely problematic text of *Iphigenia at Aulis* further complicates the reliability of text as witness. This troubled textual tradition has in fact become a touchstone in analyses of the strengths and limitations of modern textual criticism.

Ironically, the very instability of the text has enabled the highly flexible tradition of reception discussed in this chapter. Many of the most enduring and popular tragedies of the fifth century inscribed themselves so completely in the mythographic tradition that they
constituted the definitive version of the myth for later generations. Oedipus, for instance, must blind himself\textsuperscript{122} and Medea must slay her children,\textsuperscript{123} despite clear evidence for conflicting traditions in antiquity (traditions that are, in fact, often older than the innovations of the poets whose versions become canonical). *Iphigenia at Aulis* both overwrites previous versions of its myth and allows a great deal of latitude of interpretation. In particular, the doubts surrounding the closure of this play make available to the adapting creator (poet, playwright, composer) a broad range of possibilities: the salvation of a noble virgin; the brutal killing of an innocent child; the transformation of a loving mother into a vengeful fury.

It is the malleability of the myth which stems from the textual tradition that is absolutely essential to the Nachleben of any work from antiquity. Each new genre, each new medium to which the myth is being introduced has its own set of specific and unique demands and limitations. Chronological context adds the further considerations of public taste and political climate. If a text fails to accommodate the needs and desires of a new generation – in other words if no creator is willing and able to adapt the text for their contemporary audience – then that text falls into obscurity. Such is the case at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Iphigenia’s rhetoric of panhellenism is not strong enough to obscure her total submission to a family patriarch. The result is that audiences in the context of a new and sweeping sense of European nationalism are not willing to support new adaptations of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, even as the poets, playwrights, and librettists are finding new heroes to stand as icons of nationalist sentiment.

But as this chapter has shown, the popularity of a specific text waxes and wanes, and so it is that *Iphigenia at Aulis* is beginning to see something of a minor renaissance in recent decades. Perhaps not on the scale of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but there is still

\textsuperscript{122} This in spite of alternate traditions contemporary to Sophocles including, most significantly, the version of Euripides. It is clear from a scholion at *PW* 61 that this play, likely produced after Sophocles’ (Cropp-Fick (1985) 85) had Oedipus blinded by the servants of Laius. See *SFP II* 107.

\textsuperscript{123} The death of the children at Medea’s hands may not be Euripidean innovation, but the impact of his tragedy on the mythographic tradition is undeniable. For discussion of the problem, along with the fragments of Neophron’s *Medea*, from which Euripides is occasionally said to have drawn his story, see Mastronarde (2002) 52-64. We also now have a fragment of Carcinus’ *Medea*, produced in the second quarter of the fourth century, in which Medea may not have actually killed her children but sent them from Corinth to protect them from her enemies. In this case, Carcinus must have been playing against the well-established Euripidean version, and he certainly was not able to overcome it. For discussion of the fragment, see West (2007).
a significant increase. This rise in popularity may come at the expense of other works. *Trojan Women*, for example, has been one of the most performed Greek tragedies of the twentieth century. Playhouses are seeking new plays for their repertoires. It may serve as one indicator that, within the past year, several papers have been given at the American Philological Association and the Classical Association of Canada on Cacoyannis’ *Iphigenia*, but none on *Trojan Women.*

Although many recent productions and adaptations of *Iphigenia at Aulis* have subordinated both the play and the title character to the *Oresteia*, – a move that also proportionally reconfigures our understanding of the *Oresteia* – numerous productions and adaptations are taking the play into new media on its own merits. In the nascent twenty-first century, Iphigenia has appeared in novels, comic books and films in several languages. These have demonstrated a remarkable variety of interpretations, though consistently returning to themes of marriage and self-sacrifice, presumably the same qualities that attracted Lady Jane in the sixteenth century. Modern artists and their audiences continue to find new ways in which to understand Euripides’ final heroine.

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124 These papers are also part of an increasing interest in reception at the major North American conferences. In this sense, *Iphigenia*, which has typically seen more favourable critical review, overshadows *Trojan Women.*

125 Some notable examples include *Age of Bronze*, in which issues 17-19 depict the sacrifice of Iphigenia, collected as Shanower (2004) and Unsworth’s *The Songs of the Kings* (2002). Both owe a clear debt to Euripides, though neither is slavishly bound to the Euripidean tradition. See above for *Extranjera* (“*Foreigner*”), directed by Inês de Oliveira César.

126 One very simple example is the use of weather in each adaptation. While *Iphigenia at Aulis* is somewhat ambiguous, some interpretations have no wind (Cacoyannis), while in others the wind is omnipresent (Unsworth, Shanower).
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