

## IPHIGENIA AND HUMAN SACRIFICE IN EURIPIDES' *IPHIGENIA TAURICA*

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**H**AD Iphigenia ever sacrificed a Greek before the arrival of Orestes and Pylades among the Taurians? Was she anxious by this means to avenge herself upon the Greek world in general for the wrong done to her at Aulis? Exercised by the first of these questions, many commentators have proceeded to condemn the manuscript tradition for obscuring in places Euripides' (positive) answer to it. More recently, however, it has become the fashion to lay the blame for any inconsistency on the subject squarely at the poet's door and to berate him for contradicting himself, at times it seems almost from line to line. Now this is a serious accusation and not one summarily to be dismissed when it is made, in effect at least, by Gilbert Murray in the apparatus criticus of his Oxford text, and elsewhere with notable emphasis by D. L. Page<sup>1</sup> and G. M. A. Grube.<sup>2</sup>

Following Page's analysis we find that, whereas lines 347 and 585 definitely presuppose previous sacrifices by Iphigenia, and 38–39 and 72 do not at any rate preclude them, 258–59, 588, and probably also 336–39 carry the opposite implication. Grube (very reasonably) says nothing of line 588 but otherwise shares the view that Euripides created these contradictions himself and that we should on no account attempt to save him from embarrassment by textual surgery or farfetched explanation. Fortunately neither recourse is necessary; for, properly understood, the MSS readings of the lines in question do not suggest Euripidean aberration, and those who have charged Euripides with this particular piece of carelessness have not found space to review some sane interpretations which earlier scholars have put forward in their editions. On a number of points C. S. Jerram,<sup>3</sup> to name only one, includes apparently unexceptionable suggestions which they would have done well to consider. Jerram, however, in his note on lines 258–59 highlights an impression (which is aggravated, though not in his edition, by a commonly approved emendation in line 336) that Iphigenia has been constantly on the lookout for Greek victims upon whom to wreak vengeance for her treatment at Aulis. Such bloodlust accords ill with the poet's overall view of her character. Perhaps Euripides has been inconsistent in the picture he presents of Iphigenia, if not in the matter of her previous sacrifices. It is in the hope of throwing light upon both these questions together that the following discussion is offered.

The subject of the priestess' sacrificial duties is first raised in the opening monologue; how explicitly and in what terms depends upon which, if any,

1. *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 77 f.

2. *The Drama of Euripides* (New York, 1941), p. 331.

3. C. S. Jerram, ed., *Euripides: "Iphigenia in Tauris"* (Oxford, 1885). Subsequent references are to Jerram's notes.

of the lines numbered 38–41 in our texts Euripides wrote. Grave doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of all of them. For reasons which will be discussed at length in an appendix,<sup>4</sup> it seems most likely that 38–39, which Murray<sup>5</sup> wanted to excise, are, in content at least, genuine, and that 40–41, which he accepts, are not. On this basis the initial statement seems explicit enough: “I sacrifice any Greek who may come to this land, as was the custom even before I arrived” (38–39). Viewed simply as a statement of a law’s text this does not, as Page says,<sup>6</sup> carry any strong implication that Iphigenia has already sacrificed Greeks; but no one, surely, hearing these words would immediately conclude that she had never performed the function by which she defines her priesthood. It is one thing to declare, as Murray does after a close scrutiny of the play, that she is never, in so many words, said to have sacrificed a Greek,<sup>7</sup> but quite another to suppose that this is what we are meant, at a given point, to gather. The plot demands that we should be aware that human sacrifice is practiced by the Taurians, and the dramatic effectiveness of the opening scenes is enhanced if we can regard Iphigenia as their proven instrument.

The priestess retires into the temple at line 66, and, on the entry of Orestes and Pylades, the reader comes to know what the spectator has seen from the beginning, that throughout her monologue Iphigenia has been surrounded by the gory reminders of her victims:<sup>8</sup>

Ορ. καὶ βωμός, “Ἑλλην οὐ κατασπάζει φόνος;  
 Πυ. ἐξ αἱμάτων γοῦν ξάνθ’ ἔχει τριχώματα.  
 Ορ. θριγκοῖς δ’ ὑπ’ αὐτοῖς σκῦλ’ ὀρᾷς ἡρτημένα;  
 Πυ. τῶν κατθανόντων γ’ ἀκροθίνια ξένων.

[72–75]

Though Herodotus<sup>9</sup> talks of heads nailed up by the Taurians, the words σκῦλα and ἀκροθίνια more naturally refer to spoils such as armor stripped from bodies and hung up as offerings according to the Greek custom. Orestes, though he no doubt had foreknowledge of the use to which the altar was put, would have had no need to guess, as Page<sup>10</sup> thought, that the blood was Greek. We may suppose that the “spoils” were recognizably of Greek origin. When Iphigenia depicts herself as “making bloody the discordant, gory fate of strangers” (225 f.),<sup>11</sup> we can be in little doubt that some of them were Greek—we are told specifically of no others—and that she herself has killed them.

By 258–59, however, the picture has apparently changed, if we are to

4. Pp. 138–40.

5. OCT, vol. 2<sup>3</sup> (Oxford, 1913). References are to his apparatus criticus, where also are to be found, unless otherwise indicated, the conjectures of other critics here cited.

6. *Actors' Interpolations*, p. 77.

7. *Ad v.* 258.

8. A. P. Burnett in *Catastrophe Survived* (Oxford, 1971), p. 63, rejects A. M. Dale's denial of the use of stage furniture (*WS* 69 [1956]: 101). Whichever view is taken, however, the words of the text make clear what the poet wanted us to see, either in our imagination or otherwise.

9. 4. 103.

10. *Actors' Interpolations*, p. 77.

11. In 226 (quoted on p. 140), Matthiae's rejection of βωμός as a gloss seems right. See M. Platnauer, ed., *Euripides: "Iphigenia in Tauris"* (Oxford, 1938), ad loc.

understand these lines in the way indicated by Page, Grube, and Platnauer.<sup>12</sup> Informed by a Taurian herdsman of the arrival of two Greeks, Iphigenia says:

ἐκέισε δὴ 'πάνελθε, πῶς νιν εἴλετε  
 τρόπῳ θ' ὁποίῳ· τοῦτο γὰρ μαθεῖν θέλω.  
 χρόνιοι γὰρ ἤκουσ'· οὐδέ πω βωμὸς θεᾶς  
 'Ἐλληνικαῖσιν ἐξεφοινίχθη ῥοαῖς.

[256–59]

Grube renders the last two verses, “They’ve taken a long time coming. The altar of the goddess has *never yet* been stained by the flow of Greek blood” [my italics]. He, like Page, virtuously rejects attempts to emend the text and accepts that Euripides has contradicted himself lamentably here and is shortly to compound his offense at 337–40. The sense of *χρόνιοι*, we must concede, excludes the possibility of any very recent sacrifice, but since Iphigenia has been among the Taurians for perhaps twenty years, this is no real difficulty. “Never yet” is quite another matter.

A certain E. S. Crooke, who published an early translation from Paley’s<sup>13</sup> text, rightly condemns in a footnote that editor’s effort to modify the sense of *οὐδέ πω* (by pretending that the meaning is, roughly, “not . . . for a long time”) and avers that the true solution seems to him “to lie in the right interpretation of *ἐκφοινίσσω*, *empurple thoroughly* (ἐκ-).”<sup>14</sup> Jerram and England,<sup>15</sup> though the latter makes nothing of it, remark similarly on the force of the prefix. Crooke renders, “They have been long a-coming, nor has the altar of the goddess been yet duly empurpled with Greek blood.” The modern reader will find that Philip Vellacott,<sup>16</sup> who also takes the point, translates, “They have been long in coming. The altar of Artemis is not yet stained too red with the flow of blood from Greece.” Vellacott’s version seems eminently satisfactory and leaves still less room for ambiguity.

Platnauer, however, regarded lines 258–59 as “scarcely translatable,” and Crooke’s solution, if he considered it, would not have been enough to satisfy him; for in addition to the contradiction of sense, which alone it can prevent, Platnauer lists two further complaints: *ἤκουσι* (258) has no subject, and *γάρ* is illogical. The conjecture of Erfurdt and Seidler, *οἷδ’ ἐπεὶ* for *οὐδέ πω*, favored also by England, he commends as not only removing the supposed contradiction, but providing the subject lacking to *ἤκουσι*, which must otherwise be supplied from *νιν* (256). Platnauer translates, “These men have come at a long interval of time since the altar was ⟨last⟩ stained,” etc. Though Paley’s objection that *οἷδε* cannot be used to refer to persons not present is without foundation,<sup>17</sup> it seems perverse to complain of having to supply a subject for *ἤκουσι* (258) from *νιν* (256) and yet be silent on the need to infer a subject for *καθεῖσαν* (333) from *νιν* (330), which looks like a

12. Euripides: “*Iphigenia in Tauris*,” p. 82.

13. Euripides, ed. F. A. Paley, vol. 3 (London, 1860).

14. The “*Iphigenia in Tauris*” of Euripides, . . . with notes critical and explanatory (Cambridge, 1867), p. 12, n. 1.

15. The “*Iphigenia among the Tauri*” of Euripides, ed. E. B. England (London, 1886), ad loc.

16. Euripides: “*Alcestis*” and Other Plays (Harmondsworth, 1953), p. 81.

17. See H. Hunger, *WS* 65 (1950): 19–24.

perfectly parallel instance.<sup>18</sup> There is no necessity to express a grammatical subject by a noun or pronoun in Greek if the context makes the subject clear.

We are still left with Platnauer's remaining difficulty, that the illogicality of γάρ in line 258 can only be removed by transposition or deletion of the lines. This may be so, but the question is really whether such illogicality can be tolerated by Greek usage. The proximity of another γάρ in the immediately preceding sentence is not in itself significant (cf. *Il.* 1. 55 and 56), nor is the elliptical use of the particle particularly uncommon: for example, *Medea* 1370, οἷδ' οὐκέρ' εἰσὶ τοῦτο γάρ σε δέχεται = "[I say this], for it will sting thee" (LSJ). The present instance is hardly more illogical if the thought is understood in some such way as "[I am particularly interested in how you caught the strangers], for it is a long time since any came." Monk's deletion of the lines rightly finds little support. Left as they are and understood as Crooke suggests, they neither involve grammatical impossibility nor commit Euripides to internal contradiction as to the sacrifice of Greeks.

Such difficulties as have been detected in lines 336–39 would not perhaps have obtruded themselves at all but for Mekler's emendation of one word. At the close of his account of the capture of Orestes and his companion, the Taurian herdsman addresses Iphigenia, in Murray's text, thus:

ἡῦχου δὲ τοιάδ', ὦ νεᾶνί, σοι ξένων  
σφάγια παρῆναι· κἂν ἀναλίσκης ξένους  
τοιούσδε, τὸν σὸν Ἑλλάς ἀποτείσει φόνον  
δίκας τίνουσα τῆς ἐν Αὐλίδι σφαγῆς.

[336–39].

The argument in support of the substitution of Mekler's *ἡῦχου* for *εὔχου* of the MSS seems to run as follows. The herdsman who has just brought news of the two captives would have no occasion to bid Iphigenia pray for victims. Unless he means, "Pray for [other] victims such as these," his words have no point. From lines 354 ff., however, we learn that she would have been happy to serve the interests of poetic justice by sacrificing Helen or Menelaus, whom she blames for her treatment at Aulis. On the assumption that this wish was common knowledge, we may guess that what the herdsman must have said was, "You were praying [*ἡῦχου*], maiden, for victims such as these." We can then go on, with Page,<sup>19</sup> to notice (given that she was praying for victims and that Greece has yet to pay the penalty for the slaughter at Aulis) that the lines have more point if no Greek has, until now, presented himself. It also follows that lines 336–39 are probably opposed in sense to 344–47, which once again convey clearly that this was not the case:

ὦ καρδία τάλαινα, πρὶν μὲν ἐς ξένους  
γαληνὸς ἦσθα καὶ φιλοικτίρων ἀεὶ,  
ἐς θοῦμόφυλον ἀναμετρομένη δάκρυ,  
Ἑλλήνας ἀνδρας ἡνίκ' ἐς χέρας λάβοις.

Some might balk at the suggestion that contradictory statements "were left by the poet in his own text" on this occasion less than ten lines apart,

18. To illustrate the use of *χορόνιοι* Platnauer cites Thuc. 1. 141. 7, where, as it happens, no noun or pronoun subject appears. Cf. Thuc. 1. 61. 5, 1. 62. 2.

19. *Actors' Interpolations*, p. 78.

and they would be right; for all we can reasonably infer from 336–39 is that the earlier offerings had not been *τοιάδε*, men of the quality of Orestes and Pylades. Perhaps we should be content with this explanation, were it not for the fact that 344–47 express strong compassion for former victims. Are we to suppose that, even as Iphigenia wept over one, she was praying for the chance to kill others, or that her sympathy was exclusively reserved for humbler souls? Her remark at 258–59 implies, in Jerram's words, "that Greek blood had not yet been completely or sufficiently shed to atone for her sacrifice at Aulis." In short, she is vindictive and out for blood, any blood, as long as it is Greek. Yet, unless she is either a hypocrite or schizophrenic, one cannot but feel that there is something wrong. Is this really the woman who complained (220 ff.) that, instead of weaving pictures to the soothing clack of the loom, she had been condemned to drench altars in the blood of strangers who uttered *piteous* cries and shed *piteous* tears? She used to weep for them, even if now her tears are all for Orestes: *καὶ νῦν κείνων μὲν μοι λάθα, / τὸν δ' Ἀργεὶ δμαθέντα κλαίω / σύγγονον . . .* (229–31). But for the belief, derived from her dream of the night before, that Orestes was dead, she would weep for them still. She says as much once more, as we have seen, at 344 ff., "O my poor heart, until now you were ever gentle and full of pity toward strangers, meting out a tear to fellow countrymen whenever Greek men fell into your hands. But now, believing from my dreams that Orestes no longer sees the sun, I have turned savage. Whoever you may be who have come, you will find me harsh." Here, as before, the contrast is between her hitherto compassionate attitude and one which is now, for the first time, unsympathetic. Euripides makes the point twice so that we shall not miss it. On the second occasion, this new departure is carefully accounted for (351 ff.) so as to avoid the forfeiture of our goodwill, while at the same time the dramatic tension is heightened. Iphigenia observes that it is indeed true that those who are themselves afflicted have no kind thoughts to spare for people worse off than they, and she continues, "But . . . no vessel . . . ever brought here Helen, my destroyer, or Menelaus, that I might have paid them out with a second Aulis here." Her thought is not, "I shall deal harshly with these strangers, undeserving of harshness though they are, for I cannot avenge myself on the real culprits," as Platnauer summarizes it, but "I shall deal harshly . . . , for my own grief has made me hard. But it is a pity I could not have avenged myself upon Helen and Menelaus." This last remark is part of a new train of thought; in her mind the notion of vengeance is connected only with the culprits who did not come, not with the strangers who have. Again, when the women of the chorus echo her feelings at 439, it is Helen who must come if her prayers for requital are to be answered. She thus implies nothing to favor the herdsman's suggestion that Greece can ever pay the penalty for what happened at Aulis. "Greece" was not responsible, Menelaus and Helen were. She can even to some extent forgive and pity Agamemnon,<sup>20</sup> though, deaf to her prayers, he had raised the knife that was to kill her; indeed she

20. Her comments at 549, 559, and 565 contrast well enough with her joy at the death of Calchas (533; cf. 16 ff.) and her curse upon Odysseus (535; cf. 24). Orestes says of her (663 f.), *τὸν ἄθλιον / Ἀγαμέμνον' ὥς ῥκτιρ'.*

must, or Orestes' position as Agamemnon's avenger would make reconciliation with her very difficult. The poet introduces mention of Aulis at this point, not to justify in Iphigenia an indiscriminate determination to exact vengeance, as it were by proxy, even upon the innocent, but for the sake of the pathetic description of her "death" (358 ff.) to which it naturally leads. His purpose is to redouble the irony of what she is about to do to the Orestes whom she would have embraced at parting, as she says (373), had she but known she was never to see him again.

We may well doubt that, especially before her dream, she ever prayed that any but the true malefactors should atone for what she suffered. In 336, at least, the imperative of the MSS, εὐχου, allows the whole idea to come from the Taurian herdsman, who, one might add, can know nothing of the dream which has so recently stifled her pity. The objection—that, since it is superfluous to exhort Iphigenia to wish for what she has already, the sense of 336 f. must be taken, awkwardly, as "Pray for [other] victims such as these"—will no longer apply if *παρεῖναι* is given the same present continuous force as the nearest verb in the next sentence, ἀναλίσκης. The translation of 336–39 will then run, "Pray for a *constant supply* of such victims; and if you go on sacrificing (ἀναλίσκης) men of such quality, Greece will pay the penalty for the slaughter at Aulis." The tense of ἀναλίσκης, though exactly what the sense requires, has nonetheless been suspected on the grounds that the present of the verb occurs in no other tragic passage, and Mekler's ἀναλώσης has been preferred, for example, by Weil<sup>21</sup> and Platnauer. Its very rarity, however, ought to confer upon ἀναλίσκης the virtual status of a *lectio difficilior*, even if there were no other reason for retaining it. Both of Mekler's conjectures betray a deep misunderstanding of the passage. In the light of Iphigenia's own observations upon the Taurian character and its relationship to the local rite of Artemis (τοὺς δ' ἐνθάδ', αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἀνθρωποκτόνους, / ἐς τὴν θεὸν τὸ φαῦλον ἀναφέρειν δοκῶ [389–90]), the notion that she will derive satisfaction from a bloodbath can only emanate from a Taurian.

The problem of 258–59 remains. It seems unlikely that Euripides would make Iphigenia claim, gratuitously, that "the altar of the goddess is not yet stained too red with the flow of blood from Greece." The time is not ripe for her to put on a public display of hostility to her homeland, as she will later on, to deceive the Taurian king in furtherance of her plans to escape (1187, 1205). We know the truth then, whereas early in the play remarks in this vein can only confuse us. There is little of the promised harshness in Iphigenia's opening words to the prisoners when at last they come face to face with her (474 ff.). Her natural sympathy has not deserted her after all, and we discern in her questions the same longing for Greece which the chorus expressed earlier (447 ff.): it has always been her dearest wish to return home, as it has been theirs. It was for this purpose that she long ago composed a letter to her brother in Argos. The presumed death of Orestes has deprived her of this last hope of ending her exile. She is understandably bitter, yet it is as much as anything frustrated love of Greece that makes her so.

21. H. Weil, ed., "*Iphigénie en Tauride*," 2nd ed. rev. (Paris, 1903).

Would she, even in adversity, willingly visit upon a blameless compatriot the fate from which she had herself been rescued by Artemis? Euripides, on the contrary, goes out of his way to emphasize her sense of the proprieties when he makes her bridle at the very idea of killing her Taurian host, Thoas, even to save her own skin (1120–23). At best, 258–59 may be considered a foretaste of the in the event unrealized cruelty at which she shortly hints, an untypical reaction brought on by the stress of the moment. Wecklein's transposition of the lines to extend the herdsman's speech after 245, though it is not required by the considerations which weighed with Platnauer, has the great merit of putting them into the mouth of a Taurian, where they are much more in character.

The last of the seeming contradictions which it is proposed to examine here concerns the writing of the letter to Orestes, and the reason why it could not be sent. Persuaded, no doubt too easily, that her dreams were false, the priestess makes a request of Orestes (as yet unrecognized):

θέλοις ἄν, εἰ σῶσαιμί σ', ἀγγεῖλαι τί μοι  
 πρὸς Ἄργος ἐλθὼν τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐκεῖ φίλοις,  
 δέλτον τ' ἐνεγκέιν, ἥν τις οἰκτίρας ἐμέ  
 ἔγραψεν αἰχμάλωτος, οὐχὶ τὴν ἐμὴν  
 585 φονέα νομίζων χεῖρα, τοῦ νόμου δ' ὕπο  
 θνήσκειν τὰ τῆς θεοῦ, τὰδε δίκαι' ἡγουμένης;  
 οὐδένα γὰρ εἶχον ὅστις ἀγγεῖλαι μολῶν  
 ἐς Ἄργος αὖθις, τὰς <τ'> ἐμὰς ἐπιστολὰς  
 590 πέμψειε σωθεῖς τῶν ἐμῶν φίλων τινί.

Page comments<sup>22</sup> that, if the prisoner wrote in Greek, he was presumably a Greek, and he seems to have been killed. Why then did Iphigenia have no one to send back to Greece? Monk deleted 588–90, but Murray explained, “ideo videtur neminem habuisse quem mitteret, quod primo lex id vetabat, deinde nemo Graecus advenerat (v. 258) cuius causa contra legem facere vellet.” This would be perfectly reasonable if what Murray meant was that she had never found a Greek who was sufficiently reliable to justify the risk of setting him free,<sup>23</sup> but he evidently took both 258 and 588–90 as signifying that no Greek had ever come. He merely explains one inconsistency by means of another, apparently as ready as Page to regard the poet as capable of contradicting himself in successive breaths—unless, of course, he thought that the prisoner was not a Greek, or, conceivably, agreed with Jerram, who half-believed that the prisoner was nothing but a “pious fiction,” invented, in effect, to soften any resistance Orestes might have had to the idea of helping murderous priestesses. Once again, however, we need only look at the text to see that Euripides does not in the least say that no Greek had ever come to Taurica, but rather that none had ever survived to return to Greece. The word *σωθεῖς* in line 590 makes this quite clear. We may suppose, if we like, that Iphigenia would have saved her unfortunate amanuensis if,

22. *Actors' Interpolations*, p. 77.

23. This seems to be the motive behind *αὖθις* (589). A man who has come from Argos (508) may be depended upon to return there. Cf. 591 ff., and the fear she still harbors (729–33) that her messenger may default.

as on the present occasion, there had been a second prisoner whose death might have been enough to satisfy the state (cf. 595 f.).

Of the two questions posed at the beginning of this discussion, the first may confidently be answered in the affirmative, without recourse to any modification of the established text. Iphigenia is consistently represented as having sacrificed Greeks, probably in some numbers. The answer to the second question is less clear-cut. The Taurian misapprehension<sup>24</sup> that Iphigenia enjoys her office and has no cause to love Greece has a certain importance for the plot in that it facilitates her escape, but Euripides goes to some little trouble to prevent our sharing it, by illustrating her humanity and sensitivity. In her moment of deepest gloom she voices a desire for vengeance upon only two of the several Greeks against whom she has an honest grievance. Imputations of a more general bloodthirstiness come from a Taurian source and have no basis in the character which the poet presents to us. Lines 258–59 alone conflict with this view, but the remedy of transposition lies to hand.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Appendix: Lines 38–41*

My concern in this discussion is with the content, rather than the form, of lines 38–41. There are signs, syntactical and linguistic, that their context is faulty, that additions to or subtractions from the text have taken place in ways which have largely defied the efforts of scholars to determine. In the light of the play as a whole, however, it is possible to pronounce with some certainty upon the validity of their content. Most commentators have restricted their consideration too narrowly to the immediate context of the lines and thus have missed indications which may well be decisive for the interpretation of the text, which in Murray's Oxford edition runs as follows:

<p>             ὄθεν νόμοισι τοῖσιν ἥδεται θεὰ              Ἄρτεμις, ἑορτῆς, τοῦνομ' ἥς καλὸν μόνον—              τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ, τὴν θεὸν φοβομένη—              [θύω γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ νόμου καὶ πρὶν πόλει,              ὅς ἂν κατέλθῃ τήνδε γῆν Ἑλλήν ἀνὴρ.]              κατάρχομαι μέν, σφάγια δ' ἄλλοισιν μέλει              ἄρρητ' ἔσωθεν τῶνδ' ἀνακτόρων θεῆς.           </p>	<p>35</p> <p>40</p>
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The first question to be answered is this: what relationship, if any, exists between line 37 and the lines which follow it? The assumption that τὰ δ' ἄλλα in fact refers to all or some of the content of lines 38–41 has led scholars to diametrically different conclusions.

Usener proposed to delete 40–41 as well as 38–39 as being two separate supplements of what is suppressed in line 37. Page<sup>26</sup> rejects either or both couplets as interpolated, on the same grounds. Platnauer, on balance, agrees, but is more tentative in the rejection of 40–41. If, however, Iphigenia states that she will say nothing whatever about the rite of Artemis and keeps her

24. Cf. 1418–19; see also A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived*, esp. p. 59, n. 12

25. The lines must have slipped, if they did, early in the tradition, since the papyrus fragment of 245–55 (mid-third cent. B.C.) does not include them.

26. *Actors' Interpolations*, p. 76.



word, then Euripides did not write any of lines 38–41. On the other hand, if she does not keep her word, it seems arbitrary to delete one couplet or the other merely on the grounds that the less she says the better. Platnauer's observation that "if 38 and 39 are genuine we can only suppose that Iphigenia finds the *silence* she has announced impossible" must apply equally to 40 and 41; it also takes no account of the view of a number of commentators who have in fact supposed that she never had the slightest intention of keeping silent, arguing that Greek usage permits the interpretation of *σιγῶ* in line 37 in a purely figurative sense. "To profess that one will say nothing of a subject and then to say or imply something, or a great deal, is a stock rhetorical trick (*paraleipsis*)," comments J. D. Denniston<sup>27</sup> on *Electra* 1245, citing the present passage as an exact parallel. Paley<sup>28</sup> and England<sup>29</sup> had likewise set the two passages side by side and said much the same. If we compare *Electra* 1245 f., Φοῖβός τε Φοῖβος, ἀλλ' ἄναξ γὰρ ἐστ' ἐμός, / σιγῶ· σοφὸς δ' ὦν οὐκ ἔχρησέ σοι σοφά, with *IT* 37, it appears that the phrase ἀλλ' ἄναξ γὰρ ἐστ' ἐμός has much the same force as τὴν θεὸν φοβούμενη. In each case respect for a deity counsels silence, but after this the similarity breaks down; for, whereas the Dioscuri go on to criticize Apollo, Iphigenia does no more than describe her job. Why should she fear Artemis in this? Can it be because she says that the *σάγια* are ἄρρητα (41), either (a) "unspeakable" (blasphemy) or (b) "not to be divulged" (sacrilege)? There seems to be no other word which might offer a clue to the goddess' presumed displeasure. As to (a), to call something "unspeakable" is not literally to call it nasty, but rather to refrain from doing so, and in any case Iphigenia could have told us the facts without passing judgment on them. As to (b), the existence of the rite is no mystery. The altar is quite public, and what goes on, insofar as we learn of it here, is freely referred to elsewhere, even by a Taurian herdsman (243, 336 ff.); indeed, if Orestes has heard of it before he arrives (72), it must be internationally notorious.

Both schools of opinion, the one tending to delete, the other to retain, something of lines 38–41, involve an identical assumption, namely that something of what Iphigenia claims to suppress is contained in these lines; but there is a further possibility. What she is afraid to say is not what we find in 38–41, but something else, namely that the festival in which Artemis apparently delights is disgusting. As Weil saw, "elle n'ose pas ajouter ἐστὶν αἰσχροά."<sup>30</sup> The sense of 36 f. is this: "The name (perhaps simply ἐορτή) alone is fair—as to the rest, I pass no comment for fear of offending the goddess."<sup>31</sup> What follows may then be allowed to speak for itself. The

27. Euripides: "*Electra*" (Oxford, 1939).

28. Euripides, vol. 3, ad loc.

29. "*Iphigenia among the Tauri*," ad loc.

30. "*Iphigénie en Tauride*," ad loc. He repeats, in effect, the point which Wecklein made in his school edition (Leipzig, 1876): "sie meint: ἐορτῆς ἥς τὸ ὄνομα μὲν καλόν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα αἰσχροά ἐστὶ. vgl. v. 380 ff."

31. Iphigenia does indeed censure the rite in lines 380–91, but explicitly dissociates Artemis from blame by means of a fairly elaborate reductive argument (certainly not to be anticipated so early in the play) in which she accuses the homicidal Taurians of excessive anthropomorphism. J. Meunier, *Didaskalikón* 25 (1968): 12 f., makes out a good case for treating the genitive in line 380, τὰ τῆς θεοῦ δὲ μέφομαι σοφίσματα, as objective. It is not the goddess who is two-faced, but men who make her seem so.

presence of at least lines 38–39 in the original text is perhaps confirmed by Iphigenia's reference shortly afterward to *τέχνην τήνδ' ἣν ἔχω ξενοκτόνον* (53), which might otherwise seem less than sufficiently pointed to be the first clear allusion to the subject of such recent reticence. We shall, on the other hand, have no difficulty in understanding it if we have already been told that she sacrifices Greeks. It is worth noticing, against Murray's deletion of 38–39, that 40–41, which he retains, do not by themselves provide this information. They do not even tell us that the victims are human.

The awkward asyndeton after the end of 39, which Platnauer notes as necessitating at least emendation of 38, points to the possibility that 40–41 may be spurious; but they cannot be dismissed merely as redundant, since they supply the important new fact that Iphigenia is technically innocent of shedding Greek blood, in that her duties are confined to the preliminary sprinklings. If she had wielded the knife herself, it would not have been enough to save her from pollution in fifth-century eyes that she was not an autonomous agent in the killing: she must not get blood on her hands at all.<sup>32</sup> It is true that Iphigenia is not polluted; but there is a dramatic advantage in avoiding a premature revelation of this which may well not have escaped Euripides. As long as we are left believing that Iphigenia will inflict the deathblow herself, we can anticipate, not simply a catastrophe in which Orestes will die, but one in which his own sister will kill him and thus, unknown to herself, maintain the parricidal tradition of her family and incur bloodguilt of just the kind that Orestes' mission to Taurica had sought to purge. There are strong signs that this was indeed what Euripides intended. *αἰμόρραντον δυσφόρμιγγα / ξείνων αἰμάσσουσ'* ἄταν (225 f.), *καὶ ἀναλίσκης ξένους / τοιούσδε, τὸν σὸν Ἑλλάς ἀποτείσει φόνον, κτλ.* (337 ff.), and *αἰχμάλωτος, οὐχὶ τὴν ἐμὴν / φονέα νομίζων χεῖρα τοῦ νόμοῦ δ' ὑπο / θνήσκειν τὰ τῆς θεοῦ* (585 ff.) all allow and even encourage the impression that the priestess was herself the executioner. An interpolator who saw the same implication in lines 38–39 might have written 40–41 to put matters straight from the beginning, fabricating them, as is widely suggested,<sup>33</sup> from lines 621–24 and the end of line 66 (perhaps also with the help of *κατηρξάμην* from line 56). It seems at least possible that Euripides preferred to wait until he could cash in this particular piece of irony for another before revealing, in line 622, that Iphigenia's function stopped short of actual slaughter. He could then respectably introduce her offer to supply the place of the sister who would not be there to prepare Orestes' body for the grave. By this stage the recognition is not far off and the theme of sacrifice soon to give place to that of escape.

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32. The prisoner who absolved Iphigenia from personal responsibility for his death (585 ff.) seems to have been able to make a moral distinction between act and intention (cf. *Hipp.* 317, *Or.* 1602–4), but in fifth-century practice, guilt or innocence depended entirely on the deed: A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960), chap. 5.

33. E.g., by England ("*Iphigenia among the Tauri*," Excursus B, p. 117), who follows Stedelfelt and Weil; the latter later printed Kvičala's *θβεῖν* for *θύω* in line 38, which entails keeping 40 f., but avoids the asyndeton after 39.