

A PROBLEM IN EURIPIDES' IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

The question has been raised¹⁾ whether or not Euripides, in his tragedy *Iphigenia in Tauris*, represents Iphigeneia as having sacrificed, or having presided over the sacrifice of, Greeks in the period of time before the action of the play begins. As the text of that play presents itself in the manuscripts, the evidence is ambiguous, not to say contradictory. In the prologue Iphigeneia explains her situation to the audience, relating how Artemis established her as priestess in the land of the Taurians to participate in a barbaric ritual of human sacrifice²⁾: "I sacrifice whatever Greek man arrives in this land (the custom having existed even before). I perform the preliminary rites; others concern themselves with the actual sacrifice ..." Later (lines 221-28) Iphigeneia laments her once-happy days in Argos when she would sit by the loom and sing while she embroidered, but now, she says, "I bloody the altars with the fate of strangers, who cry out piteously and shed piteous tears". Later still (344-47) she addresses her own heart: "Previously you were gentle toward strangers and ever compassionate, whenever Greek men came into your hands." And finally, referring to the letter which she asks Orestes to convey for her to Argos: "A prisoner wrote it for me out of pity. He did not consider *my* hand to be guilty of murder, but he recognized that the victims of the goddess die in accordance with custom" (584-87). Without a doubt these passages indicate that, since the time when Iphigeneia was installed as priestess, sacrifices of strangers (indeed of Greeks) had taken place and that Iphigeneia had officiated, at least to the extent of preparing the victims for sacrifice. Directly opposed to this evidence, however, are lines 258-59, where Iphigeneia says to the Taurian herdsman, "The altar of the goddess has not yet

1) For the two points of view see, e.g., the note in Murray's apparatus on *IT* 258-59 and Platnauer's notes on lines 258-59 and 346 (M. Platnauer (ed.) *Euripides. Iphigenia in Tauris* [Oxford 1938]); also G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London 1941) p. 331.

2) 38-41. I give the lines as they appear in the MSS. The texts of these and the other lines quoted here will be dealt with in greater detail below.

been reddened by streams of Greek blood”³). In addition, the herdsman ends his lengthy narrative to Iphigeneia as follows (336–39): “You prayed⁴) to have such strangers as these for your victims. And if you kill strangers such as these, Greece will pay the penalty for your sacrifice at Aulis.” This last seems to imply that Iphigeneia has *not* presided over the sacrifice of Greeks for, if she had, why has that sacrifice not served to “pay Greece back” for the sacrifice at Aulis?

Very clearly, according to the MS text which has survived to us, Euripides says one thing in one place and its direct opposite elsewhere. Attempts have been made to resolve this contradiction in the past, usually by means of emendation of the text. Attention has tended to center on lines 258–59, with some scholars altering the reading of the text to bring it into line with what Euripides seems to say on other occasions and some scholars resorting to that most radical form of emendation, the removal of the lines from the text entirely. This last is a particularly unsatisfying solution. There will always be those who will wonder, “Who in the world inserted into this text a statement which directly contradicts another statement in the same text?” and, more important, “What in the world was his motive?” But in order to evaluate this problem properly we must first examine in detail all of the passages which deal with the question of whether or not Iphigeneia has sacrificed Greeks.

We begin with lines 34–41:

ναῖσι δ' ἐν τοῖσδ' ἱερέαν τίθησι με· [*sc.* Ἄρτεμις⁵].
 35 ὄθεν νόμοισι τοῖσιν ἦδεταί θεά
 Ἄρτεμις ἑορτῆς, τοῦνομ' ἦς καλὸν μόνον·
 τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ τήν θεὸν φοβουμένη.

3) These lines also contradict line 72, in which Orestes refers to the notorious “altar down which Greek blood drips”.

4) The MSS *εὔχων* (imperative) cannot be accepted. We must follow Mekler in emending to *ἠῶχων*. Murray compares 354 ff. He could also have added the chorus' lines 438–46 which seem to indicate that Iph. has voiced this wish so often that it has become the wish of the chorus as well. (It should be noted that the MSS of Euripides regularly – but not always; see *IT* 629 – omit the temporal augment in verbs with initial *εὔ-*. In this play: 269, 708, 777, 1398. Elsewhere, e.g., *Held.* 534. See R. Kannicht, *Euripides. Helena* (Heidelberg 1969) I. 108.

5) Some scholars, however, have supposed that the subject of *τίθησι* is Thoas, who is referred to in the preceding verses. See, e.g., J. Madvig, *Adversaria Critica* (Hauniae 1871) I. 259, H. van Herwerden, *Verslagen en Mededeelingen d. k. Akad. v. Wet. afd. Let.* n.s. 4 (1874) 103. Apparently J. J. Scalliger emended 35 ὄθεν to *Θόας* (in his personal copy of Canter's edition);

θύω γάρ, ὄντος τοῦ νόμου καὶ πρὶν πόλει,
 δς ἂν κατέλθῃ τήνδε γῆν Ἕλλησιν ἀνήρ.
 40 κατάρχομαι μὲν, σφάγια δ' ἄλλοισιν μέλει
 ἄρογτ' ἔσωθεν τῶνδ' ἀνακτόρων θεᾶς.

This passage represents one of the most notorious cruxes in the text of the *IT*, and every line from 35 to 41 has been suspected at one time or another by someone. Let us deal first with the question of the genuineness of the lines before we examine the textual difficulties which the lines present. To begin in inverse order, lines 40–41 have been suspected, and ejected, by Wecklein, among others. But line 40 is essential⁶). We need to be told that it is Iphigenia's function to perform the preliminaries to the sacrifice, otherwise we will not understand the interpretation of her dream in lines 55–58. Particularly, *κατηρξάμην* (56) demands that we read in our text line 40 with its *κατάρχομαι μὲν*⁷).

There has also been recent approval of the practice of removing lines 38–39 from the text. Murray brackets these lines in his Oxford text and J. Diggle⁸) advocates doing the same, with *ἔορτῆς* (36) depending on *κατάρχομαι* and *τοῦνομ'* ἦς ... *φοβουμένη* as a parenthesis. Diggle objects to the usage of *κατέλθῃ* and to the "unnatural asyndeton" of *κατάρχομαι μὲν*⁹). But (as Diggle duly notes) *κατέρχομαι* occurs in the meaning "to go to" also at *Od.* 24. 115, nor is there any *a priori* reason to suppose that unusual usages are necessarily the work of interpolators, whether Homeric or Euripidean. Almost certainly Euripides regarded Homer as the author of *Od.* 24. 115¹⁰) and, by virtue of Homeric precedent, *κατέρχομαι* = "to go to" is acceptable as tragic usage.

see C. Collard, *CQ* n.s. 24 (1974) 247. But Weil is right to note, on 34 *τίθησι*, "Le sujet de ce verbe est le même que celui de la dernière phrase principale, Ἄρτεμης, vers 29" (H. Weil, *Sept tragédies d'Euripide*³ [Paris 1905]).

6) I do not here concern myself with line 41. I see no good reason to remove it, but its presence or absence is immaterial to the present inquiry.

7) Or, if we prefer, von Arnim's *κατάρχμασιν μὲν*. See J. von Arnim, *De prologorum Euripideorum arte et interpolatione* (Diss. Gryphiswaldiae 1882) 75, where also is to be found a very intelligent and sensitive defense of line 40.

8) *PCPhS* 15 (1969) 56–59. But see *Maia* 22 (1970) 15–16.

9) The latter had already been remarked by von Arnim (above, note 7) and by E. Bussler, *De sententiarum asyndeti usu Euripideo* (Diss. Halis Saxonum 1887) 85.

10) It is true Aristarchus thought *Od.* 24. 1–204 spurious, but before him Plato had cited lines 6–9 as Homeric (*Republic* 3. 387a) and there is no reason to assume that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, essentially as we have them today, were not in the fifth century considered to be the work of "Homer".

At any rate, there is probably intended some suggestion that “to go to the land of the Taurians” is tantamount to going “to the house of Hades”. Such in fact had been the experience of Iphigeneia herself who, in lieu of dying, had been condemned to the living death of exile on the shores of the Black Sea. As to the asyndeton of line 40, it is surely mitigated by the particle μέν¹¹). And if we accept Diggle’s reading of the passage we will be left with a – for this play, at least – unique meaning of κατάρχομαι, whereas what we need is the technical signification (“perform the rites preliminary to sacrifice”) to prepare us for line 56. In addition, we require the reference, which line 39 provides, to the fact that *Greeks* are sacrificed, otherwise line 72 will appear to be unusually abrupt. Also, we want to be told, as we are in line 38, that the practice of human sacrifice is of long standing among the Taurians, so that Iphigeneia’s indictment at 389–90 will be convincing¹²).

Lines 38–41, then, are genuine. So, too, are 35–37, since they can only be deleted if we remove 38–41 as well. But 35, at least, is quite corrupt and many efforts have been made to set things in order. The manuscript L has in 35 τοῖσδ’ (*sic*) changed to τοῖσιν. Obviously the original reading of L represents the intrusion of τοῖσδ’ from the previous line¹³). Also θθεν is almost certainly corrupt (unless, with Kirchhoff, we suppose that some verses have fallen out before 35) and I would suggest reading something along the lines of

οὐδ’ ἐννόμοις τιμαῖσιν ἤδεται θεὰ
 Ἄρτεμις ἑορτῆς, τοῦνομ’ ἦς καλὸν μόνον.

Forms of the adjective ἐννομος had already been proposed by,

11) See J.D.Denniston, *Greek Prose Style* (Oxford 1952) 111 for such “quasi-asyndeton”. Very likely we can detect some adversative force in the particle as well, in addition to its normal preparatory use (Denniston, *The Greek Particles*² [Oxford 1954] 368, also 377f.): “Actually, for my part, I perform the preliminary rites; others have the task...”

12) Nor should we feel the need to remove any or all the lines from 38 to 41 on the grounds of Iph.’s τὰ δ’ ἄλλα σιγῶ (37). Again, see the fine discussion by von Arnim (above, note 7) 73–74.

13) So Mähly, *Neues Schweiz. Museum* 6 (1866) 212–13, who proposes οὐδὲ νόμοις ὠμοῖσιν. (ὠμοῖσιν had already been suggested by van Herwerden, *Exercitationes Criticae* [Hagae Comitum 1862] 139.) See also Wecklein, *Neue Jahrb. f. Phil. und Paed.* 113 (1876) 82–83, “es ist aber öfters in den Eurip. hss. τοῖσδ’ ... in τοῖσιν ... übergegangen, niemals umgekehrt τοῖσιν in τοῖσδ’”. (Similarly Barrett on *Hipp.* 400.) In any case, Euripides would have written νόμοισιν ὄσιν, and the corruption will be all the more difficult to explain.

e. g., Canter and Burges, but we need a noun for it to agree with and we need a negative, for it is ridiculous to imagine that Iphigenia would characterize as "fair in name alone" anything which she regards as "lawful" or "proper"¹⁴). The phrase *τιμαῖσιν ἥδεται* is nicely paralleled at *Alc.* 53 and X. *Cyrop.* 3. 3. 2 and, for the genitive in *τιμαῖσιν* ... *έορτῆς*, see Plato *Phil.* 61c: *ὅστις θεῶν ταύτην τὴν τιμὴν εἴληχε τῆς συγκράσεως*.

This passage, then, in the prologue of the play sets the scene and gives the audience the information it needs. We learn that Iphigenia is the priestess of Artemis and that she sacrifices all Greeks (or perhaps all strangers, but that is not essential) who come to the land of the Taurians. Or rather, she does not herself sacrifice them: she prepares them to be sacrificed by others. Nor need we be disturbed by the verb *θύω* (38). For, when Orestes asks Iphigenia later in the play (617) *θύσει δὲ τίς με*; the latter immediately responds *έγώ*, although she presently (622) qualifies it by saying that she will merely pour the lustral water over his head¹⁵).

The next passage to be examined tells the same story. In the anapaestic parodos Iphigenia laments her present circumstances and we read, as the text is preserved in the manuscripts (224–28):

... ἀλλ'

*αἰμορράντων δυσφόρμιγγα
ξείνων αἰμάσσουσ' ἅταν βωμούς,
οἰκτρὸν τ' αἰαζόντων αὐδᾶν
οἰκτρὸν τ' ἐκβαλλόντων δάκρυον*¹⁶).

To begin with, there is no need to change the case of *αἰμορράντων*, as Madvig, among others, would do: "*neque recte ξένοι, quorum sanguis effusus alias res spargit, αἰμόρραντοι ipsi appellantur*"¹⁷). On the evidence of *Alc.* 134 *αἰμόρραντοι θυσίαι*, however, it is the

14) See especially O. Goram, *RhM* n.s. 20 (1865) 465, who would read *ὄθ' ἐννόμῳ σὺν τοῖσιν ἥδεται θεὰ / Ἄρτεμις έορτῆ*. Goram's proposal is nonsense, as his translation shows: *legitimo festo, cuius solum nomen pulchrum est*.

15) So O. Ribbeck, *RhM* 30 (1875) 317. The verb refers to "Opferung im Allgemeinen".

16) I accept as certain Tyrwhitt's *αὐδᾶν οἰκτρὸν τ'* for the MSS *οὐδ' ἄνοικτρὸν τ'*, in fact merely a change of omicron to alpha.

17) *Adversaria Critica* I. 260. But see F. Heimsöeth, *De Madvigii Hauniensis Adversariis Criticis commentatio altera* (Bonn 1872) xii. Madvig changed to dat. sg. to agree with his proposed *ἅτα*, in which he followed Mähly (who in fact proposed *αἰμορρῶντα*, reported incorrectly in Wecklein's apparatus). Most editors have agreed with Bothe in reading acc. sg. *αἰμόρραντων*.

mot juste in this context. The problem lies in the following line, which is at least one syllable too long. The simplest solution is, as Platnauer says, to follow Matthiae (actually Bothe) in deleting *βωμούς* as a gloss¹⁸). This is on the whole satisfactory and I would accept it with two reservations. In the first place, one would have expected the glossator to have written the singular, *βωμόν*, rather than the slightly “poetic” plural. In the second place, the expression *αἰάζοντων αὐδᾶν* (227) is somewhat strange (although *H. F.* 1054 is similar). The first objection is perhaps not too strong, but the second I would remove by means of a slight rearrangement, as follows:

*αἰμορράντων δυσφόρμιγγα
ξείνων αἰάζουσ' ἄταν, [βωμούς]
οἰκτρᾶν θ' αἰμασσόντων αὐδᾶν
οἰκτρὸν τ' ἐκβαλλόντων δάκρυον.*

I suggest that, at one point, the scribe wrote both *αἰάζουσ'* and, a line later, *αἰάζοντων*, after which a corrective *αἰμασσ-* was added and inserted in the wrong place. It would have been after this that a need was felt for an explanatory gloss on *ἄταν*. Now we have a more explicit contrast with her happy days at Argos: she used to *sing* to the accompaniment of the “sweet-voiced loom” (*ἱστοῖς ἐν καλλιφθόγγοις*) and now she *cries* to the accompaniment of the disharmonious fate of strangers. That Iphigeneia lamented the fate of strangers is clear from 344–46, wherefore Bergk had already conjectured *αἰάζουσ'*¹⁹). The striking phrase *αἰμασσόντων αὐδᾶν*, which may have caused the difficulties in the first place, is exactly paralleled at *Ion* 168–69: *αἰμάξεις . . . τὰς καλλιφθόγγους ᾠδάς*.

Whatever reading of these lines we accept, however, they tell us precisely what we knew already from 34–41: that Iphigeneia in some capacity participates in the sacrifice of strangers (Greeks are not here mentioned specifically), that she does not find this occupation pleasant, and that she feels sorry for the unfortunate victims. Exactly the same appears at 344–47, with the additional information that some of the strangers have been

18) Murray's suggestion, *πάσσουσ'* for *αἰμάσσουσ'*, might be attractive but I can find no instance of this verb taking the construction of two accusatives (as Platnauer claims it does) nor can I find this verb elsewhere in tragedy.

19) *RbM* 17 (1862) 603–4. Similarly *οἰμώζουσ'* Markland.

Greek²⁰). And that there have been Greeks among those whom Iphigeneia has prepared for sacrifice seems to be confirmed at 584–87. There Iphigeneia asks Orestes if he will deliver to Argos a letter “which a prisoner wrote”. We cannot doubt that this prisoner was Greek, nor can we doubt that lines 585–87 clearly indicate that he was sacrificed to Artemis. And when we are told by Iphigeneia that the prisoner “did not consider *my* hand to be his murderer”, we are surely led to believe that at least on one occasion Iphigeneia was capable of being construed as a murderer. All this evidence points unambiguously to the conclusion that Iphigeneia has in the past presided over the sacrifice of Greeks. Unfortunately, it is not all the evidence we have.

As mentioned earlier, there are two passages which appear to contradict this evidence. The most striking is 258–59, which says quite clearly, “the altar of the goddess has not yet been stained with Greek blood”:

χρόνιοι γὰρ ἤκουσ'· οὐδέ πω βωμὸς θεᾶς
Ἑλληνικαῖσιν ἐξεφοινίχθη ῥοαῖς.

(It should be noted that these lines contradict not only those passages, examined above, which refer to Iphigeneia's involvement in the sacrifice of Greeks, but also line 72.) The usual reason for wanting to emend these lines has been this patent contradiction, but Platnauer adds two more: “χρόνιοι . . . ἤκουσιν lacks a subject and we have to understand one out of *τιν* (l. 256)” and “γὰρ is illogical”. But neither of these objections stands up. If we look, for instance, at *Medea* 1132–35 we find a similar four-line passage just before a messenger speech. Medea says, “Tell me. How did they die? For (γὰρ) your report will be doubly pleasing if they died most foully.” Here the unexpressed subject of ὄλοντο and τεθνᾶσι must be supplied from lines 1125–26 (or perhaps from *τυράνων* 1130), but there is certainly no difficulty, since the only subjects of interest to Medea and the messenger in this exchange are Creon and his daughter. Just so in *Iphigenia*: the only people Iphigeneia and the herdsman have been discussing for 15 lines are the two strangers. As for the illogicality of γὰρ, these lines from *Medea*, as well as *Helen* 1523 and *Ion* 1120, serve to dispose of the objection. Iphigeneia is anxious to hear every detail of the capture of the strangers *because* she has waited so

20) Murray's proposal (app. crit. on 258–59) that “ἠνίκ' *idem est atque εἰ ποτ'*” is impossible.

long for victims to arrive, and all the more anxious seeing that they are Greeks for (as she says here, at any rate) Greeks have not yet been sacrificed²¹).

To the real difficulty of the inconsistency which these lines represent two approaches have been taken. Monk proposed deleting the lines entirely. Dobree, Erfurdt, Heath and others (see Wecklein's apparatus) have altered *οὐδέ πω* so that the line will read, "these men have come after a long interval since the last time the altar of the goddess was stained . . .", or the like²²). Some of these conjectures are rather attractive and at least one, Erfurdt's *οἷδ' ἐπει*, is even palaeographically quite possible. But whether we emend or eject, we will be removing from the text a statement which, in my opinion, agrees quite closely with what the herdsman says less than one hundred lines later.

Let us look, then, at 336–39. The herdsman ends his narrative with:

*ἠΰχου δὲ τοιάδ' ὄν νεᾶνί σοι ξένων
σφάγια παρεῖναι· κἄν ἀναλίσκης ξένους
τοιούσδε, τὸν σὸν Ἑλλάς ἀποτείσει φόνον
δίκας τίνουσα τῆς ἐν Αὐλίδι σφαγῆς.*

For once we are confronted with a passage with relatively few textual difficulties. Accepting Mekler's *ἠΰχου*, we are told (what we know from elsewhere: 354ff.) that Iphigeneia has in the past wished for Greeks to arrive, so that she can pay Greece back for her sacrifice at Aulis. I hasten to add that this is entirely reasonable. We know that Iphigeneia would have been only too happy to have an opportunity of presiding over the sacrifice of Helen, Menelaus or Calchas. It is also reasonable that the herdsman should believe that Iphigeneia felt this way about all Greeks.

21) Platnauer claims that the problem posed by *γάρα* "can be solved if, with Wecklein, we put the lines after 245, giving them to the *βουκόλος*". But this transposition creates difficulties where before there were none. It is absurd to imagine that the herdsman should say, "it has been a long time since the altar was stained with Greek blood" and that Iph. should ask, in the next line, "What is the nationality of these strangers?", only to be told "Greek". It is surprising that no one has conjectured *ἤξουσ'*: "Tell me how they were captured; (I have time) for they will be a while in coming." But neither is this necessary.

22) Paley thought that the text as it stands in the MSS could be translated thus! Slightly more reasonable is Bruhn's suggestion that a line has been lost after 259, in which the statement was somehow qualified.

Indeed when Iphigenia says precisely this (1187 "I hate everything about Greece") to Thoas, the barbarian king is entirely convinced. Thus, what the herdsman says here is, "you have prayed for a chance to sacrifice Greeks. Greeks have now arrived. By sacrificing them you will repay Greece for what happened at Aulis." Only the herdsman does not say "Greeks" but rather *τοιιάδε ξένων σφάγια* and *ξένους τοιούσδε*. But I cannot imagine what these phrases might mean if not "Greeks". Sacrificing Armenians will not relieve Iphigenia's bitterness about Aulis. Nor is there any reason to believe that the sacrifice of young, noble Greeks (as opposed to elderly runaway Greek slaves?) will alone satisfy Iphigenia's desire for revenge. In any case, the herdsman has given no indication that these strangers were particularly noteworthy specimens of Greek nobility. The difficulty the herdsman had in subduing them is attributed to the fact that they are armed (296, 323), that they are young and well-fed (304) and that they are protected by the goddess as her intended sacrificial victims (328-29). Indeed one of the strangers is by no means pictured as the ideal representative of Greek manhood, since he is quite badly afflicted by hallucinations and is even given to fainting-spells and foaming at the mouth (307-8). And when the two are brought on stage Iphigenia seems quite taken aback by their fine appearance (472-75).

We have, then, a rather obvious contradiction in the text of this play, and we are forced to accept it. But we cannot accept it unless we ask ourselves why Euripides himself was willing to admit it, indeed why he did not take the rather simple steps necessary to remove the contradiction entirely. The only possible answer is that Euripides was prompted by dramatic considerations. The playwright risked the possibility that the inconsistency might be noticed in performance in the hopes of attaining some greater dramatic advantage which we have yet to identify. In fact Euripides was attempting both to have his cake and eat it. He recognized that there were dramatic possibilities inherent in both situations, Iphigenia's experience of having sacrificed previously and her not having sacrificed at all, and he tried to take advantage of both.

In the first place, the audience must be made to feel that the possibility that Orestes will be sacrificed (and specifically by his own sister) is a very real one. This Euripides has accomplished in several ways. Orestes and Iphigenia are members of a family in which the slaughter of close kin is rather the rule than the

exception²³). Also, we are given to believe that the Taurian custom of sacrificing strangers is hallowed both by time and the goddess. That the *nomos* is of long standing is stated by Iphigeneia (38) and implied by the herdsman, who assumes (276-78) that the *nomos* is sufficiently well-known that strangers avoid being seen by the Taurians for fear of being sacrificed. (And his assumption is borne out by line 72.) In addition, we are told quite explicitly (34-41) that Artemis established Iphigeneia as her priestess, whose specific duty it is to preside over these sacrifices. We feel acutely the danger to Orestes when we are led to believe that the sacrifice of strangers is rather a normal occurrence. Nor does Euripides want to be bothered with having to present a (potentially fascinating but dramatically quite inessential) psychological portrait of Iphigeneia about to officiate at her first sacrifice. And so she must be (and is at 38-41, 224-28, 344-47) represented as having participated on some unspecified number of occasions in the sacrifice of strangers (including Greeks). When the bound Orestes and Pylades are brought on stage at line 456, we feel that Iphigeneia is trusted by the Taurians to do on her own what is proper and necessary to prepare the human victims for sacrifice. And she is trusted, presumably, precisely because she has shown herself trustworthy in the past²⁴).

But this apparently was not sufficient for Euripides. He sought to make even more vivid in the mind of the audience the threat of danger to Orestes, and it was precisely this which involved him in the inconsistency which we have been dealing with (and which he himself doubtless recognized). One means of intensifying the threat to Orestes suggested itself to Euripides from the very circumstances of Iphigeneia's installation as priestess. The fact that she was herself sacrificed by Greeks and her bitter hatred of Helen, Menelaus, Odysseus and Calchas (9, 16, 24, 356-57, 523, 525, 531-35) have made her desirous of avenging herself on the Greeks by re-enacting Aulis (336-39, 358). But this motive itself loses force if we imagine Iphigeneia sacrificing Greeks on a regular basis. Much better that Euripides should portray her as nursing this bitterness, waiting impatiently

²³) For this see my paper, "The Sacrifice-Motif in Euripides' *IT*", *TAPhA* 105 (1975).

²⁴) A similar confidence in Iph. is manifested by Thoas in the deception-scene, 1153 ff.

for Greeks to arrive to be used as instruments of her vengeance. If she *has* been sacrificing Greeks all along and *still* she wishes to re-enact Aulis in the land of the Taurians, she will appear to be nothing but a bloodthirsty fiend. And so we have lines 258-59 and 336-39, at the beginning and end of the herdsman's speech, which indicate that there have *not* been Greeks since Iphigeneia's tenure as priestess began and that she has been looking forward to this opportunity. (By the same token, if Iphigeneia has been waiting some years to inflict her vengeance on Greeks, we might expect her to be reduced to the kind of psychotic monomania which we find in her sister Electra. And so we have lines 225-28 and 344-47, which indicate that Iphigeneia is sensible and compassionate toward the Greeks and other strangers it is her duty to sacrifice.) A second way of intensifying the threat to Orestes was hit upon by Euripides in a stroke of dramatic genius. In the prologue Iphigeneia relates a dream of hers which she interprets to mean that her brother Orestes has died. Now she is even more bitter about her fate: her entire family is destroyed, her brother is dead and there is no one to perform the customary rites at his grave. And now she has no sympathy whatever for any strangers who happen to be captured for sacrifice. This motive, by contrast, loses force if we imagine Iphigeneia never to have participated in the sacrifice before. For what we require is precisely what we find at 344-50, a contrast between Iphigeneia's previous gentleness toward Greeks and her present hostility²⁵).

Euripides has reaped one other dramatic benefit from this inconsistency. And it was this, I think, which in Euripides' mind outweighed the disadvantage of being inconsistent. By the time the captured Orestes and Pylades are brought on stage, the audience must be uncertain as to Iphigeneia's frame of mind. Euripides' sole aim in that part of the play up to and including the first stasimon, apart from setting forth the facts and starting the action moving, is to present the conflicting attitudes toward human sacrifice on the part of Iphigeneia. And this presentation builds to a climax in two directions at once. At the same time Iphigeneia's desire for revenge is reaching an emotional peak her abhorrence of the barbaric ritual is intensifying. The prologue

25) It should be added that an Iph. who has sacrificed Greeks previously is consistent with, indeed is necessary for, the reference to the unfortunate (Greek) stranger who was kind enough to write Iph.'s letter for her but who could not be allowed to live to deliver it (584-87).

begins with a speech by Iphigeneia characterized by its striking absence of emotion, especially considering its content. We are told that she regards Helen, Menelaus, Odysseus and Calchas as responsible for her miserable fate. We are told in quite neutral terms of her rôle as priestess, although we are given a slight hint²⁶) that Iphigeneia does not approve of the rite she is required to perform. Then we learn of Iphigeneia's dream and her interpretation thereof, again in emotionally colorless language. The tone of the parodos, sung by Iphigeneia and the chorus, is quite different. There we have a lament for the (supposedly) dead Orestes, concluding with a passage in which Iphigeneia laments her own situation. Here we learn (225–28) that she feels sorry for the strangers she sacrifices, whose cries she characterizes as "piteous". With the arrival of the herdsman Iphigeneia is presented with an opportunity to sacrifice two Greeks. She is extremely anxious to learn everything the herdsman has to report (246, 252, 256), the apparent reason being (258–59) that this is her first such opportunity. We have the impression that Iphigeneia is hanging on the herdsman's every word because she is in fact *not* accustomed to the appearance of fellow Greeks. And this impression is strengthened by the herdsman's closing remarks (336–39). The ambivalence of Iphigeneia's state of mind at the prospect of confronting the two strangers is most clearly reflected in her speech which closes the first episode. On the one hand her desire for revenge is at its strongest: ever since her own sacrifice she has wanted to re-enact Aulis in the land of the Taurians (358) but, although she has previously been well-disposed toward the Greeks she has had to sacrifice, now she feels an even greater hostility because she supposes her brother, her one hope of salvation, to be dead (344–50). On the other hand her thoughts about Aulis remind her how grotesque and barbaric human sacrifice is, and she ends the episode by denouncing the goddess who demands such offerings. In fact, she says, she cannot believe that Artemis does require human sacrifice (385–91). Thus has Euripides prepared his audience for what is to follow. We understand why Iphigeneia is prepared to sacrifice Greeks, but at the same time she is neither vicious nor blameworthy. At the same time Iphigeneia is the experienced sacrificer of Greeks

26) In line 36, which we saw (above) to be essential on other grounds. That hint is made more explicit if we accept the reading *οὐδ' ἐνόμοις τιμαῖσιν* in line 35.

who has only now (perhaps) hardened her heart against the ugly deed because of the death of her brother and the innocent maiden whose hands are pure of slaughter and who will turn out to be the appropriate purifier of the house of Atreus²⁷).

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27) Since this was written, another treatment of this question has appeared: J. C. G. Strachan, "Iphigenia and Human Sacrifice in Euripides' *Iphigenia Taurica*", *CPh* 71 (1976) 131-40. No one, I think, will be convinced by Strachan's rendering of 336-7, "Pray for a *constant supply* of such victims; and if you go on sacrificing men of such quality ...". Equally unconvincing is the emphasis which he forces on the proverb in 259: "The altar of Artemis is not yet stained too red ...". If Euripides had intended such emphasis to be felt he would have been more explicit; see, for instance, *Hel.* 1419.