Iphigenia in Taurus Study Guide

Iphigenia in Taurus by Euripides

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Contents

Introduction

To a modern audience, there is very little dramatic intensity in *Iphigenia in Taurus.* Those who hunger for action, deep emotion, or sharp irony may find this straightforward play "boring." *Iphigenia in Taurus* seems a strange combination of tragedy and romance because although tragic conditions precede the events of the play and tragic events *nearly* happen, no one dies or ends in misfortune in this play. The misfortunes plaguing both Orestes and Iphigenia already exist before the play begins and by the end they are freed of their problems with little effort. The characters talk about past or potential traumas, then neatly dismiss or avoid them. All of the dangerous action occurs offstage or outside of the events of the play itself Thus, in addition to its traditional classification as a tragedy, *Iphigenia in Taurus* has been called a "romantic melodrama."

But the play does meet Artistotle's definition of a work that releases pity and fear through exciting and then resolving these emotions (as a tragedy should). The prolonged scene wherein Orestes and Pylades refuse to reveal their identities to Iphigenia and she fails to reveal her own, allows a build up of pity and fear that are released when Iphigenia pronounces her brother's name. This moment of recognition constitutes one element that Aristotle considered key to tragedy: a reversal of situation and recognition.

Iphigenia in Taurus lacks the heightened sense of drama often associated with tragedies, yet it is not unworthy of study, for it opens up a window to the ancient Hellenic mind, which enjoyed the quiet contemplation of the ironies of expectation versus fulfillment. It is a play that explores the mirror image of what is commonly called tragedy: not the descent of a tragic figure but the rise from tragic fate by characters who sidestep human sacrifice and still achieve ritual purification. In that respect, *Iphigenia in Taurus* is a kind of ancient Greek "escape" literature.

Author Biography

As far as historians can tell, Euripides was born in the Greek city-state of Athens around 484 B.C. to parents affluent enough to provide their son a good education and a library of philosophical works. He received training in athletics and won prizes in athletic competitions. Euripides also served briefly in the army, an obligation of Athenian youths. He then became a scholar and moved among the rich intellectual environment of the Sophist thinkers, although he always maintained his independence from them. Euripides knew the philosopher Anaxagoras, who speculated that energy from tiny "atoms" of matter drove the universe, not the gods; he socialized with the Sophist Protagoras, who ostensibly read his radical treatise, *Concerning the Gods* in Euripides's home; and he was a friend and contemporary of the great playwright Socrates *(Electra),* who frequently attended his plays.

While such a life seems rich and fulfilling, Euripides's halcyon pleasures did not last: during his life the philosophical mood of Athens swung from free-thinking optimism to a kind of fascist conservatism, wherein Anaxagoras barely escaped with his life, Protagoras died trying to escape, and Socrates was executed a few years after Euripides's death. Politically, Athens underwent a number of major changes as well. When Euripides was in his early twenties, the democrats, led by Pericles, seized power in a bloody coup. Pericles's rule would usher in the Golden Age of Athens, but this period would meet its cataclysmic demise at the end of the Peloponnesian Wars, which coincided with the final years of Euripides's life.

These extremes of political and philosophical moods contributed to the pessimism and uncertainty of Euripides's dramatic tragedies. In his lifetime Euripides won few prizes for his work (only four wins at the Dionysia play festival compared to Sophocles's twenty-four). Perhaps this lack of recognition led the aging Euripides to withdraw from the world to live in a cave on Salamis. At the advanced age of seventy, he left his beloved Athens, which was collapsing in the final throes of the Peloponnesian Wars, for Macedonia, to help the Macedonian king establish a cultural center there to rival Athens. He died there in 406 B. C.

There are historical references to ninety plays by Euripides; of these, only nineteen have survived to the modern era, although eighty of the titles are known. The best-known of Euripides's work include *Medea* (431 B.C.), *Iphigenia in Taurus* (c. 414 B.C.), *Orestes* (408 B.C.), and *Bacchae* (produced posthumously, c. 406 B.C.). After Euripides's death, his plays were carried from Athens to Alexandria, then to Rome, and finally to the Byzantine Empire. One measure of his renown is that Aristophanes dedicated three plays to burlesquing him. The extant versions of Euripides's plays probably stem from Byzantine texts. Over the ages, the original plays were most likely corrupted as they were copied and recopied and as various performers embellished the scripts, yet the unique essence of Euripides's style has survived.

The playwright's characters have more psychological depth than those of his dramatic predecessors, Aeschylus and Sophocles. Euripides broke with traditional Greek theater

in his examinations of realistic humans and *their* motivations—as opposed to characters manipulated by the will of the gods. He also challenged preconceptions regarding plot, heroes and heroines, and use of stock characters, yet he mostly confined himself to the form and structure of traditional tragedies. He explored the plight of women in seven plays and he challenged religious thought through his radical ideas about the gods and society. Some called Euripides an atheist, but he did not reject religion—he merely had the courage to challenge and denounce its shortcomings.

Plot Summary

Iphigenia in Taurus takes place in a temple to the goddess Artemis along the shore of Taurus. It opens with a prologue spoken by one of the main characters, Iphigenia. In Euripidean prologues, the events preceding the story are recounted and the upcoming action foretold. Iphigenia explains why she was yet alive after ostensibly being sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, who offered his child in order to dispel storms preventing his fleet from departing for an important battle.

Artemis, the virgin goddess of childbirth, had once extracted from Agamemnon the promise to sacrifice the loveliest creature born in a twelvemonth period. His wife Clytemnestra had borne Iphigenia, and Artemis demanded her blood. Agamemnon contrived a false pretext for stealing his daughter, asking Clytemestra to prepare the child to wed Achilles. But once on the altar of sacrifice, Artemis snatched the young maiden away, placing a deer in her place to fool the humans. Artemis magically transported Iphigenia to Taurus, a "barbarian" land and made her a priestess in her temple. Ironically, Iphigenia often prepares her fellow Hellenes for sacrifice upon the shrine.

Iphigenia further relates a strange dream she had the previous night, in which an earthquake crumbled her father's house and left only one column standing. This column wore brown hair and Iphigenia weeped over it and prepared it for the deadly ritual of Artemis's temple. Iphigenia interprets her dream to mean that her brother, Orestes, has died and that she cannot properly bury him. She retreats into the temple to pour libations for him.

As she departs, Orestes and his friend Pylades enter from the ocean shore. He and Pylades have been sent by the oracle of Phoebus in retribution for avenging his father's death by killing his mother, Clytemestra (who killed Agamemnon because he sacrificed Iphigenia). Phoebus, the sister of Artemis, has ordered Orestes to steal her statue from Artemis's temple and give it to Athens. Only by this act of courage will Orestes be freed from the furies who have pursued him since he killed his mother. The two friends discuss how they can accomplish their mission and decide to hide in the caves of the sea cliffs until nightfall.

The chorus enters and sings of Artemis's temple and rituals. These are the girls who assist Iphigenia in her ritual preparations, and she shares with them her interpretation of her dream. They echo her mourning chant and then draw her attention to some herdsmen approaching the temple. The herdsmen explain to Iphigenia that while driving their cattle to the seashore to wash them, they saw two young Hellene men in one of the sea caves. They decided to capture the two to sacrifice to Artemis, according to their local custom. Then one of the strangers began to babble like a madman about"fiends from Hades" attacking him (this is the work of the furies that torment Orestes). Orestes slays some of the cattle, thinking they are the furies, and the herdsmen respond by stoning the two and taking them as prisoners to the king. The king ordered the prisoners sent to Iphigenia for purification and then sacrifice. Iphigenia commands the men

brought before her; the "loss" of her brother makes her eager to sacrifice these two strangers.

Iphigenia once again recalls the horror of her aborted sacrifice, this time mentioning poignant details that create empathy with the audience, as she addresses the chorus. She ends by saying she believes the gods could not have caused her pain— that men blame the gods for their own evil actions. The chorus support her prayer to return to her home in Athens. In appraising the two approaching Hellenes, the chorus indirectly reminds the audience that human sacrifice is not allowed by Hellenic law.

Iphigenia has the prisoners unbound while she interrogates them about their identity and the events back in Athens. Out of pride, Orestes refuses to tell his name. He even recounts the story of murdering Clytemestra as though another committed the act and speaks of himself in third person. There are moments when the audience understands the dramatic irony of comments such as Iphigema's wish that her own brother might be as noble as the man standing before her and Orestes' s wish that his sister might be the one to purify him before his sacrifice.

The pair earn Iphigenia's respect, so she devises a plan to let one of them go, as long as he carries a message back to her brother. When she leaves to get the letter, Orestes and Pylades remark on her knowledge of their city. It seems as though they might recognize who she is, but instead Pylades expresses concern that he will be accused of killing Orestes. Iphigenia returns and she and Pylades trade oaths that they will accomplish what they promise. Pylades will go free and deliver the letter.

To assure that Pylades cannot fail by losing the letter, she has him memorize it. It is during the recitation of the letter that the two men recognize Orestes's sister. Orestes turns in joy to Iphigenia, but the chorus accuses him of desecrating her holy robes. Iphigenia demands proof that he truly is his brother and is not merely trying to trick her so that he may go free. When he proves himself, Iphgenia bemoans the crimes she nearly committed.

After Iphigenia explains how it is that she is still alive, the three strategize an escape plan. They cannot kill the king because that would violate the "law of guest and host." Iphigenia devises a plan to pretend that they have desecrated the statue Orestes must steal. She will tell Thoas that she must cleanse it and the two prisoners in the sea. That will allow them to make a run for Orestes's ship. Iphigenia prays to Artemis for help, and the chorus sings encouragement.

King Thoas enters with his guards asking the whereabouts of Iphigenia. She enters with the statue and silences him with the news that"impurity" has violated it. He agrees to honor her desire to purify it, after hearing her say the prisoners are guilty of horrific deeds at home. Her demand for solitude during the purification does not make him suspicious because she asks him to purify the temple with fire while she is busy at the sea. Keeping onlookers away from the unholy statue, she makes her way to the sea with her two "prisoners " The chorus sings the story of Artemis and Phoebus, ending with a story about the unreliability of dream interpretation.

A messenger rushes up to tell King Thoas that the two prisoners have fled in their ship, along with Iphigenia. Despite the trio's successful getaway, the ship is in danger of grounding near shore. Thoas orders horsemen to capture them, but he is stopped by Athena, goddess of reason, who informs the king that Apollo wants Orestes to convey the holy image to Athens. Athena orders the end of human sacrifice and decrees that all accused will be given the benefit of a fair trial in which a majority vote will decide their fate—treatment that Orestes received when he was judged for Clytemnestra's murder Thoas agrees, and Athena applauds his decision, saying that even the gods must end to Necessity.

Part 1

Part 1 Summary

This classical Greek play continues the mythic, archetypal story told in several other Greek plays - *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus and the *Electra's* of Sophocles and Euripides, among others. Two long-lost children of the slaughtered king Agamemnon are reunited under surprising circumstances and plot to escape both their earthly imprisonment and servitude to the will of the gods. The play makes thematic statements, revolutionary in the world of pre-Christian religion, about the nature of, and relationship between, destiny and free will.

The play is set in the courtyard of a temple sacred to the goddess Artemis. Iphigenia comes out, and, in a long speech, explains who she is, how she came to Tauris, the way that she became a priestess, and her role in the rituals of the temple. She reveals that she is the daughter of the Greek king Agamemnon, and that she was betrothed to the legendary warrior Achilles. She also reveals that Agamemnon was commanded by the gods to sacrifice her to Artemis so he and his army could sail to another country to rescue a kidnapped woman, the legendary Helen of Troy. Iphigenia goes on to say that, at the moment she was to be killed, Artemis replaced her with a deer, brought her to Tauris, and set her up as the high priestess of the temple there. Finally, she reveals that as a continuation of an ancient tradition, she prepares any Greek that comes to the island of Tauris for ritual sacrifice.

Iphigenia then recounts a dream she had the night before in which she saw the destruction of a temple. She interprets the dream to mean that her brother Orestes, who was still a baby when Artemis took her, is dead and that she is the only living member of her family. She then goes into the temple to make ritual offerings to Artemis in memory of her brother.

Orestes and Pylades appear, and after making sure they aren't being pursued, they agree that this must be the place to which they have been sent by a decree from the god Phoebus Apollo. As they comment on the blood and bones of sacrificed Greeks visible beneath the altar, Orestes then speaks a long prayer to Phoebus. He reveals his role in his family's troubled history, and that he killed his mother, Clytemnestra, in revenge for her murder of his father Agamemnon and that avenging goddesses called Furies have driven him close to madness and pursued him relentlessly all over Greece. He also reveals that when he prayed to Phoebus for freedom from their pursuit, the god commanded him to journey to Tauris, steal the statue of Artemis from her temple and bring it back to Greece, all of which would end his suffering.

At the conclusion of the prayer, Orestes and Pylades discuss how to go about stealing the statue. Orestes worries about being executed if they're caught and suggests they run away, but Pylades tells him that that would be foolish and cowardly. He suggests

they hide until dark and steal the statue then. Orestes agrees, and they go back out in the direction from which they came.

Part 1 Analysis

The complicated story of Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Orestes and the other members of their family is, as mentioned, the subject matter of several classical Greek plays. It's a tale of betrayal, murder, and revenge, played out over several generations and exploring epic themes relating to the nature of justice, the importance of family, and the tension between humanity's free will and its predetermined destiny. The elements of the story that are relevant to *Iphigenia in Tauris* are outlined in Iphigenia's opening speech, and by Orestes in his prayer to Phoebus Apollo. As such, both speeches function primarily as exposition, defining the circumstances and background of the drama about to unfold. Other details of the family's history relevant to the current story will be discussed as they relate to the unfolding action.

In terms of this play's story, its principal dramatic element is irony - specifically, that for most of the play both Iphigenia and Orestes think the other is dead. The narrative value of this irony is defined immediately in this scene, as it becomes clear within minutes of the play's beginning that they're both wrong in their assumptions. Just as immediately, there is a powerful sense of suspense and narrative tension as questions arise about when and how they will discover the truth. This tension is heightened as Pylades' plan to steal the statue is revealed, setting a secondary or sub-plot in motion and generating the question of how the two plots will intersect or affect each other.

The tension is heightened further when it's remembered that the wishes of two gods are about to come in direct conflict - Phoebus Apollo wants Orestes to steal the statue of Artemis from her sacred temple, something the goddess would presumably not be happy about. Here is a clear example of the traditional Greek belief that human beings are little more than playthings for the gods, toys to be manipulated and maneuvered without any real regard for their own will or perspective. For example, Phoebus wants Orestes to steal the statue for no good reason other than giving him something difficult to do. Later in the play, Iphigenia and Orestes use their situation to make thematically relevant statements about how human beings should live according to their own free will and not live solely according to what the gods want. What's interesting to note is that they fight to do so and don't just complain, something different from many other Greek tragedies with characters in similar, manipulated situations.

An interesting aspect to this conflict and to the play is that the gods in question, Artemis and Phoebus Apollo, are sister and brother in the same way as Iphigenia and Orestes. This parallel relationship makes the thematically relevant point that relationships between siblings are much more rewarding if they function in harmony, as the two human siblings do, rather than in conflict with each other, as is the case with the two immortals. Phoebus' command to Orestes to steal the statue is clear evidence of that conflict.

Iphigenia's reference to her dream foreshadows two later moments in the play. The first is Iphigenia's comment in Part Two when she discovers that her dream about Orestes' death was wrong. The second is a comment made by the Chorus at the beginning of Part 6, referring to the way the king of the gods took the power of foresight away from the god of dreams and gave it to Phoebus Apollo. There are several layers of significance here. The first has to do with the fact that Phoebus is also the god of the sun and light, which in symbolic terms represents truth. This means that in transferring the power of foresight from the god of dreams, Zeus moved the power from the realm of darkness and sleep, which in symbolic terms is a version of death, into the realm of light and life. In other words, seeing the future becomes a glimpse of a truth to be celebrated, rather than a destiny to be feared. The second, and related, layer of significance is that because Phoebus is the god who sends Orestes on his mission, that mission is inherently Orestes' truth. In other words, because Phoebus symbolizes truth, his plans for Orestes are also the truth. The irony, of course, is that the play's theme centers on the question of whether the truth of the gods is the only truth, or even a valid truth. As is revealed later, the tension between these two points results in some interesting contradictions within the play's characters.

Part 2

Part 2 Summary

A chorus of Greek maidens appears, speaking with one voice as they pray to Artemis for an answer to the question of why they have been brought to Tauris. Iphigenia appears and offers a poetic, formal lamentation for the deaths of her brother and her family. The Chorus responds with equally poetic comments on how the tragic, murderous ways of the past haunt the present. Iphigenia cries out that she has been destined to live a life of misery, referring to her childhood, to being torn from her homeland and her fiancy, and was brought against her will to a land of savages. She concludes by saying the miseries of her current existence are drowned by her grief at the loss of her brother.

The Chorus announces the arrival of a Herdsman, who runs on and tells Iphigenia to prepare for ritual sacrifices. He brings news of a fight between several Taurians and two strangers, one of whom he heard called Pylades and another whose name he didn't hear. Iphigenia comments that it has been a long time since the last sacrifice. The Herdsman then describes, at length, the way he and other cowherds discovered the strangers hiding, argued over who they might be and why they might be there, and finally resolved to capture them and bring them to the temple for sacrifice. He says that one stranger, Orestes, suddenly began speaking as though he were mad and referred to hideous spirits of women he seemed to see flying towards him.

The Herdsman comments that "the stranger" must have mistaken the mooing of the cows for the cries "men say the [Furies] utter," and then says that "the stranger" pulled out his sword and began swinging wildly at the cattle. He says he and the other cowherds pulled out their own weapons, called for reinforcements, and would have soon overwhelmed "the stranger" if Pylades hadn't jumped forward and protected him. He goes on to say that the madness of "the stranger" quickly passed, that he realized what he had done and seemed to grieve, that he told Pylades that they must die "like men" and fought for escape. They were eventually overcome, captured, brought before the king for judgment, and sentenced to be sacrificed. He suggests that Iphigenia should pray that from now on all of her sacrifices should be Greeks like these, saying that if enough are killed, it will atone for the monstrous acts of her father. Iphigenia tells him to bring the prisoners and give her time to think. The Herdsman leaves.

Iphigenia begins a long monologue with a reference that she once might have been inclined to be merciful to strangers like these Greeks, but since her dream of her brother's death, she can feel no mercy. She comments on the fact that none of the Greeks whose actions caused her father to sacrifice her have been brought to Tauris so they could themselves be sacrificed, recalling the horror of the day she was taken from her home, in the middle of preparations for her wedding, to be killed. She then refers to her regret that she never got to be present at any of the important moments of her siblings' lives, speaking specifically of the way that Orestes' ignoble death took him so

far from the noble life to which he was born. Finally, she comments on the hypocrisy of the goddess Artemis, who, on the one hand, bars men from her worship for the slightest transgression and at the same time "delights in human sacrifice." She suggests that humanity uses the gods and their whims and will as an excuse, or justification, for their own monstrous behavior.

Iphigenia goes into the temple as the Chorus begins a lengthy poetic questioning of who these strangers might be and how and why they came to Tauris. They list the dangers the strangers had to pass through to get there, echo Iphigenia's wish that the selfish Helen had come so that she could be sacrificed, and express hope that someday someone will release them from their captivity and return them home. They then comment that the strangers have been brought in, and speak a brief prayer to the goddess that she finds this sacrifice, which would have disgusted the Greeks, acceptable.

Part 2 Analysis

There are three noteworthy elements in this section, two of which are traditionally narrative, and one of which is thematically revolutionary.

The first of the traditional elements is the appearance of the Chorus, a group of individuals speaking with the single voice of one character. In this case, the character is that of a Greek maiden in a similar situation to Iphigenia, kidnapped from her homeland and forced into the service of Artemis. The Chorus in classical Greek plays generally commented on the action, offered philosophical or thematic insights, and interacted with the principal characters so that they might have a chance to express feelings or thoughts they would otherwise keep to themselves. The particular chorus in this play functions on all three of those levels, and because of its unique character also functions on a fourth level.

The fourth level of significance of the chorus comes about because the Chorus is in the same situation as Iphigenia. Like her, they were kidnapped and are being held in a kind of servitude, so it is possible to see their comments, attitudes and perspectives as those of Iphigenia herself. In other words, instead of simply giving her a chance to express her thoughts, the Chorus is actually expressing her thoughts for her. This is, in many ways, an innovation, since most choruses in classical Greek plays did not identify so closely with the main characters.

The Herdsman performs the traditional function of the Messenger, reporting on events and situations happening offstage. Almost without exception, classical Greek plays employ this device under a variety of circumstances. Messengers bring news of suicides, murders, wars, dramatic returns and rescues and escapes - they are essentially plot movers, offering important information so the story can advance quickly. They exist as the result of a set of unwritten rules about what could not be presented on the Greek stage, such as bloody violence, and because the staging of incidents like the

one reported by the Herdsman would have been prohibitively expensive and complicated.

A few particulars of the Herdsman's message are worth mentioning, particularly his narrative of Orestes' apparent insanity. The description of Orestes' behavior is rare, if not unique, among the plays exploring the story of this family because it offers details. Other plays refer to Orestes as having been driven crazy by the pursuit of the Furies, goddesses of revenge, but specifics of how his instability manifests are unclear. Also worth mentioning is the contrast between these descriptions and Orestes' evident determination, when sanity returns, to die like a man. This juxtaposition foreshadows a conflict that returns in the following section - Orestes' royal nobility versus his all too human vulnerability to his conscience, essentially the role of the Furies, an externalization of his own guilt and remorse.

The revolutionary element of this scene, and the core of the play's thematic statement, is Iphigenia's comment that humanity uses the gods as an excuse for their own barbarism. It is a revolutionary statement because in most Greek plays, particularly the tragedies, the will and commands of the gods are seen as absolute, and obedience to them is a given. There are circumstances in which characters question why the gods want what they want and demand what they demand, but almost without exception, the demands of the gods are met. Iphigenia's questioning of whether human beings use the gods as scapegoats for their own inhuman acts is a radical and almost mutinous perspective on the relationship between deities and human beings. Ironically, later in the play she does something similar to what she suggests other, more barbaric humans do.

In the same way that men use the gods as a means to justify their actions, Iphigenia uses Phoebus Apollo's command to Orestes as a means of enabling her own escape. In other words, she is as guilty of using the gods for her own ends as the people she decries in her speech. It must also be remembered that in trying to get away from Tauris, Iphigenia is defying the will of another god, Artemis. This means that ultimately, she is a rebel, having grown tired of being manipulated, and of seeing her family manipulated and destroyed by the gods. With that in mind, it is not hard to imagine that at the end of the play, following their escape, she and Orestes find a new life together away from the gods and the belief systems that have tortured them for their entire lives. This sense of the characters' future is another aspect of the play's thematic statement, a suggestion of the value of freedom from outside will and control.

Part 3

Part 3 Summary

The Herdsman and other Taurians bring in Orestes and Pylades, who have had their wrists bound. Iphigenia comes out of the temple, and after commenting on what a good pair of brothers the sisters of the two prisoners would be losing, asks Orestes and Pylades about the place from where they have journeyed. Iphigenia comments that they are about to take an even longer journey - into the underworld. Orestes defiantly tells her to stop worrying about them and just get on with the sacrifice, which he says they both are prepared to undergo. Iphigenia asks which of them is Pylades, and after Orestes points him out, she asks Orestes what HIS name is. He refuses to tell her, and calls himself "The Unfortunate." She tries several times to get him to reveal his name, but he refuses, saying his name is the only part of his life about which he is still proud. Under further questioning, he admits that he is from Mycenae, leading Iphigenia to comment that it is her homeland. She then asks after Helen, several Greek soldiers who fought in the Trojan War, and Achilles, her betrothed. Orestes tells her Achilles was killed in Troy, and then asks why she is asking so many specific questions.

Iphigenia asks what happened to Agamemnon. Orestes evades the question, and Iphigenia asks again. Orestes finally tells her that Agamemnon was killed by Clytemnestra and admits that Orestes in turn, killed the killer. Here, Orestes refers to himself in the third person, thereby concealing his identity. Iphigenia says Orestes was justified, but Orestes says the gods didn't see it that way. Iphigenia asks whether there were any children left at home, Orestes tells her of his sister Electra, and then Iphigenia asks whether Orestes still lives. Orestes, again without revealing his identity, says yes. Iphigenia, without revealing her own identity, shouts happily that her dream was wrong, and Orestes comments that the gods are no more right than dreams, saying that the worlds of both gods and men are completely confused and random in their existence.

Iphigenia suggests that she will let Orestes go free if he will carry a letter from her back to Mycenae. When she says Pylades will still have to be sacrificed, Orestes says that the responsibility for their situation is his, and that he cannot allow his friend to be executed so he can go free. He suggests that Pylades be freed to take the letter to Mycenae. Iphigenia praises him for his nobility, comments that she believes Orestes would be just as noble, and says that he will indeed be sacrificed, saying that he seems to actually be eager for death. Orestes says it seems strange a woman would perform sacrifices and executions. Iphigenia explains that her role is only to ritually purify the sacrificial victims and that there are men in the temple who do the actual killing. Orestes utters the wish that it be a sister who closes his eyes when he is laid in the tomb, but Iphigenia says his wish is hopeless, being so far away from his homeland. She then tells him that because of his nobility, she will perform the burial rituals herself as formally and as thoroughly as if she were his sister. She goes into the temple to write her letter, telling the guards to watch the prisoners but to let them remain unbound.

Part 3 Analysis

The play's previously discussed central irony, that both Orestes and Iphigenia believe each other to be dead, is never more evident than it is in this section as it becomes clear how strongly each believes themselves to be the last living members of their family. On one level, the characters' efforts at concealing their identities come close to seeming contrived - if Orestes is truly as proud of his name as he says he is, and if he's as intent on dying "like a man" as he says he is, wouldn't it make sense for him to proudly identify himself? That being said, it must be remembered that at the same time he says he is proud of who he is, Orestes is still profoundly ashamed of having killed his mother. His secrecy can be explained as being motivated by a desire keep the secret that he has done such a monstrous thing. His crime is his own, his responsibility for himself and for his journeys is his own, and therefore his name remains his own.

Iphigenia's secrecy is a little less confusing, in that priestesses in general had no identity other than that defined for them by the gods they served. Iphigenia goes a little further in identifying herself than Orestes; so keeping her identity secret makes a little more sense. On the other hand, it is difficult to ignore the verbal games being played by both Iphigenia and Orestes as having some degree of contrivance about them, a situation playwright-driven as opposed to character-driven. In other words, the scene comes dangerously close to feeling that it was shaped in this way for effect, rather than for a more genuine reason motivated organically by the characters.

Also in this section, there is a reiteration of Iphigenia's thematically revolutionary statement about the relationship between gods and men, appearing in Orestes' comments about how the gods are no more right than dreams. Again, the reason the statement is revolutionary is that in the society and theatre of the time, the Greek gods were seen as infallible. Orestes' question is more of a "what right do the gods have?" kind of question, as opposed to a "why do the gods do this to me?" kind of question, which is more often asked by other characters in other plays. He is essentially questioning the philosophical basis of an entire society, not just the whys and wherefores of his own troubled life. As a result of his questions, it becomes clear that he and Iphigenia have more in common than being simply blood kin - they are intellectual and spiritual kin as well.

Part 4

Part 4 Summary

While Iphigenia is gone, the members of the Chorus debate amongst themselves who they should feel more pity for - Orestes for being executed or Pylades for losing his friend. Meanwhile, Orestes wonders who Iphigenia is, marveling at how many questions she asked about Agamemnon and his family. Pylades expresses the belief that when he gets back to Greece, he will be called a coward for escaping while Orestes was executed. He then announces his resolve to stay behind and meet the same, noble fate as his friend. Orestes says he would be shamed if he allowed Pylades to sacrifice himself, and that Pylades should go back to Greece and have a long, happy, productive married life with Electra. He then bids Pylades farewell, commenting on the way that he, himself, has been betrayed and condemned to an ignoble death by the whims of the gods. Pylades promises to make sure Orestes does in fact have a noble burial.

Iphigenia returns and tells the men guarding Orestes and Pylades to go into the temple and prepare for the sacrifice. After they've gone, she hands Pylades her letter, asking him to swear that the letter will reach its destination. Orestes makes her promise to ensure that Pylades gets safe passage out of the kingdom. Iphigenia and Pylades swear by the gods that they will do as they promise, with Iphigenia saying that she will tell Pylades the contents of the letter so that if the ship is destroyed, he will be able to convey her message verbally. Pylades asks to whom he should take the letter, and Iphigenia tells him to go to Orestes, explaining that she is his sister. Orestes reacts with amazement, but when Iphigenia asks why, he tells us in an aside that he chooses not to explain immediately in the hopes that Iphigenia will reveal more of her story. Iphigenia then explains that Artemis saved her life. Orestes confesses his identity, Iphigenia asks for proof, and he tells her several things about their home and childhoods that convince her that he's telling the truth. They embrace each other, weeping for joy at the same time as they bemoan the fates that kept them so far apart for so long.

Iphigenia wonders how she can escape her servitude to Artemis, and enable Orestes' escape so they can both return to Greece. Orestes says he believes destiny is on their side, and Iphigenia says she will not go anywhere until she finds out about Electra. When Orestes says she's married to Pylades, Iphigenia embraces him happily. She asks how Orestes came to kill their mother, and he refuses to discuss it. She then asks why their mother killed their father, and again Orestes refuses to talk further. She asks whether Orestes is king, and Orestes tells her that Helen's husband, Menelaus, rules their kingdom. Finally, Iphigenia asks how Orestes came to Tauris. In a long speech, he explains that the gods put him on trial for killing his mother, and while most of them, including some of the Furies, agreed that he was justified in doing what he did, the rest of the Furies decreed that he should be punished, and have been pursuing him and driving him to madness ever since. He adds that he came to Tauris on orders of Phoebus Apollo, saying the god told him that if he stole the statue of Artemis from the

temple, he'd be freed from the pursuit of the Furies. He asks for Iphigenia's help in stealing the statue, promising to help her return to Greece if she helps him.

Iphigenia wonders how she can defy both Artemis and the king without being killed. Orestes promises that either he'll take her home or will die with her in Tauris. He then suggests they kill the king, but Iphigenia says that killing a host is a terrible crime and she won't be party to it. Orestes then suggests they simply hide and do what they have to do when it's dark, but Iphigenia says there are too many guards. Finally, she says she'll tell the king Orestes killed his mother and is therefore too impure to be a fitting sacrifice to Artemis. She also says that she will tell the king that Orestes touched the statue of the goddess, so both Orestes and the statue must be purified by ritually washing them in the sea. She also plans to tell the king that because Pylades assisted in the killing, he is as impure as Orestes and, therefore, must also be cleansed in the sea. She tells Orestes that it is his responsibility to make sure his ship is ready to sail. In return, Orestes tells her she must tell the members of the Chorus to keep their plans secret. Iphigenia pleads with the Chorus to remain quiet, and the Chorus agrees to do so. She then directs Orestes and Pylades to go into the temple and wait, saying the King will soon arrive and demand to know whether the ritual sacrifice of the strangers has been completed.

After Orestes and Pylades have gone in, Iphigenia prays that Artemis preserves her life and integrity in the same way now as she did when Iphigenia was about to be sacrificed. She also prays that Artemis change her dwelling place from the barbaric Tauris to the more civilized Athens. As she goes into the temple, the members of the Chorus sing a lament for their Grecian homeland, recalling that they were kidnapped, how miserable their lives in Tauris are and referring enviously to how happy Iphigenia will be when she returns home. They conclude their lament with a wish that they could go home again, be young and beautiful and marriageable again, and be far away from Tauris.

Part 4 Analysis

The key dramatic element of this scene is the mutual recognition that arises between Iphigenia and Orestes. Orestes again plays games with his sister, when he conceals his identity in the hopes of learning more about what happened to her, and there is once again the sense that what's really going on is the playwright arbitrarily increasing the level of suspense rather than allowing his characters to act and interact in a more realistic way. On the other hand, it becomes possible to see that once the games are over, Iphigenia and Orestes are overjoyed at their reunion. Iphigenia's happiness is particularly well defined, with the structure and content of her dialogue for example, her many quick questions, indicate how breathlessly happy she is. It is also possible to see, just as clearly, how clever and practical she is, as she creates the plan for their escape. Also, she tells Orestes that at least part of the responsibility for their freedom is his because he will have to get the ship ready). In the Chorus's longing for Greece, it is apparent again how their thoughts and words illuminate those of Iphigenia.

This section's primary character-related element is the way Orestes is again portrayed as having noble ideals and deserving a more noble life than the one he's now living. There are hints of this in the way Pylades vows to give Orestes a noble burial, but it is apparent more overtly in the way that Orestes refuses to allow Pylades to die and then encourages him to return to Greece and counter the humiliation he fears with the joy of life with Electra. The essential purpose of defining this aspect of Orestes' character in his insistence that he and Pylades "die like men" is to support the idea that that his punishment by the Furies is unjust. In other words, the play's perspective, like Iphigenia's, is that his act of revenge on Clytemnestra was fair and right. This is another manifestation of the play's revolutionary thematic point that the will of the gods is not infallible. This point is reiterated early in this section when Orestes comments to Pylades on how unjust his punishment has been. As such, it's an example of the way can story dramatize theme.

It's possible to see how Greeks of the period in which the play was first produced might have become engaged in passionate debate after seeing this play. One side might have espoused the traditional view that no matter what the cause, a man who kills his mother must be severely punished. The other side, perhaps a more radical side, might have argued that such punishments are both unreasonable and uncompassionate. It seems evident which side the play comes down on, given its clear perspective that the fates of Orestes and Iphigenia are unreasonably harsh.

At one point, Orestes speaks an aside. This common device allows characters to reveal their inner thoughts, motivations and reactions to an audience. The difference between an aside and a soliloquy, which performs the same function, is that an aside is spoken when there are other characters on the stage. The convention is that the characters don't hear what is being said in the aside. In a soliloquy, a character is alone onstage and addresses the audience.

Part 5

Part 5 Summary

The Taurian, King Thoas, appears, demanding to know where Iphigenia is and whether she has begun the ritual sacrifices. The Chorus tells him she's just coming, and then Iphigenia comes out of the temple, and holding the sacred statue. Then begins a rapidly- paced dialogue in which Thoas asks quick, pointed questions and Iphigenia gives him equally quick, equally pointed answers. During the course of the dialogue, Iphigenia tells Thoas everything she said she was going to tell him - that Orestes and Pylades are impure, that they touched the statue, and that all three must be purified in the sea before they can be sacrificed. She embellishes her story by saying they attempted to bribe her into giving them freedom with news that her family is alive and well, that there are additional rituals she has to perform because the victims are so impure, and that she needs to perform them alone. She uses her authority as priestess to command Thoas that the people of the town must remain indoors so that they not become tainted by the impurity of the victims.

It's clear that she's ensuring that there's no interference when she, Orestes and Pylades escape. When Thoas compliments her on how careful she is of the community's well being, she tells him he must stay at the temple and purify it before she returns, and that if she's gone a long time he's to neither pursue her nor worry, adding that some of the rituals take a long time to complete. She then says she sees her assistants bringing the tools she needs to complete the sacrifice, and prays to Artemis that the rituals purify the victims, the statue and the temple sufficiently that the goddess will be content. She then leads the procession of guards, Orestes and Pylades out to the sea. Thoas goes into the temple, and the Chorus is left alone.

Part 5 Analysis

This brief section introduces what some might call a comic character, King Thoas. There's no doubt that he comes across as remarkably trusting of Iphigenia, but whether he's gullible to the point of stupidity or just has intense faith in Iphigenia's authority as a representative of the goddess is debatable. Given the thematic intent of the play, to question the wisdom of absolute faith in the gods and their justice, it seems reasonable to interpret Thoas as faithful, but foolish. If this is the case, he functions a contrasting character to Iphigenia and Orestes, defining their perspective by embodying its opposite.

Once again, the play creates an effective sense of suspense as Iphigenia leads the procession away. It's almost impossible to not wonder, on some level, what's going to happen next, how it's going to play out, and whether the gods will, as has apparently been the case throughout the play, make life even more miserable for the characters.

Part 6

Part 6 Summary

The Chorus sings a hymn to Phoebus Apollo. They refer to his origins as a son of Zeus, the king of the gods, and also to the way he slays mighty monsters, dispenses great wisdom through his Oracle, and was given the gift of foresight by Zeus after he took it away from the god of dreams where foresight had originally dwelled.

A Messenger runs on, crying out for Thoas and saying that Orestes, Pylades and Iphigenia have all escaped, taking with them the statue of Artemis. The Chorus says Thoas is no longer at the temple, but the Messenger accuses them of lying and of being involved in plotting the escape. Thoas appears, demanding to know what all the noise is about. The Messenger accuses the Chorus of deceit, tells Thoas to begin planning the pursuit of the escapees, and then relates how Iphigenia's strange actions in walking alone with the prisoners aroused suspicion, but the watchers decided to trust her. He tells how Iphigenia and the prisoners disappeared from sight and says that the watchers became nervous but calmed again when they heard Iphigenia chanting what they thought were her ritual prayers. He says that when it became clear that she had been gone too long, they followed her path and discovered the prisoners and the statue were all on a large ship and that the sailors were making ready for departure. He then tells how he and the other watchers tried to grab Iphigenia and prevent the ship from leaving, but were beaten back by one of the prisoners, who revealed himself to be Orestes.

The Messenger then says that he and other watchers tried to board the ship, but were prevented from doing so by soldiers and archers as Orestes carried Iphigenia onto the ship and prepared to leave. Finally, he says that in spite of the prayers of Iphigenia and the sailors the wind and waves blew the ship close to the rocks, where it remains and can be overcome by Thoas and his army if they act quickly. The Chorus bemoans Iphigenia's fate, and after issuing orders to his men to ride down to the shore and take all the Greeks prisoner, Thoas turns to the Chorus and warns them that they will be punished.

As Thoas is preparing to leave, the goddess Athena appears and tells him to abandon his pursuit, saying that even now the god of the sea, Poseidon, is calming the waves and allowing the ship free sailing and good weather. She also speaks to Orestes, saying that even though he's far away her voice can still be heard by him and commanding him to take the statue to Athens and build a temple for it. She then speaks to Iphigenia, commanding that she become the priestess of that temple, and then returns her attention to Thoas, commanding that the Chorus be returned to their homes in Greece. Thoas comments that anyone who hears the voice of the gods and doesn't obey must be insane, adding that he's not angry with either Iphigenia or Orestes and that he promises to send the Chorus home. Athena tells him he's done well and departs, saying she will travel with Orestes and Iphigenia in order to watch over the image of her sister Artemis. As Thoas and his men leave, the Chorus cries out to Orestes and Iphigenia to

celebrate their blessings, celebrate their own impending freedom, and thank the goddess of justice for acting in their behalf.

Part 6 Analysis

The hymn to Phoebus Apollo has a certain degree of irony to it, in that while the hymn sings of the god's virtues the thematic point of the play as a whole is to question faith in those virtues. There is the sense here that the playwright is making a comment about the fickleness of human faith - when the will of the gods is our will, or when the commands of the gods bring about the results we want, it's fine to praise them, but when humanity suffers because of the gods' commands, it's necessary to question them. This is a reiteration of the points made by the questions of both Orestes and Iphigenia, and the development of an element discussed in relation to Part One, the tension between faith in the gods and doubt in their wisdom.

Once again, the device of the messenger is employed, this time to reveal what happens as Iphigenia and Orestes make their escape attempt. As was the case with the story of the Herdsman in Part 2, a key event in the plot is spoken about rather than actually dramatized. As was the case with the Herdsman, there is an interesting variation on the traditional use of the device. In both cases, the Messengers actually participated in the events that they are recounting. In many other uses of the device, messengers are simply reporters, rushing in to comment on what they've seen. The fact that the messengers in this play actually participated gives an additional layer of excitement and/or emotional depth to their stories.

The appearance of the goddess Athena is an example of yet another traditional device in classical Greek theatre, the "deus ex machina." The term translates as "god in the machine," and refers to the mechanism by which the gods appeared in the sky above the action. Details of what the machine was and how it actually worked vary, but the point is this - the term has come to mean a sudden, unlikely event that changes the course of a dramatic story, a reversal of fortune or a change of fate of the sort triggered by Athena. It must be noted that in this play the resolution isn't defined by the appearance of the god as completely as it is in other plays. Iphigenia and Orestes have determined their own fates, a fact that reinforces the play's thematic point about the advisability of not trusting completely in the gods. This perspective is defined even further by the contrasting perspective of Thoas, who in his complete abandonment of his own ideals in deference to Athena's will, shows himself to have exactly the kind of foolish, blind faith in the gods the play warns against. Meanwhile, Athena's appearance in support of Iphigenia and Orestes reinforces the value and importance of their choice, suggesting that the gods support more freedom of will. At least one of them does, and the fact that Athena is the goddess of wisdom is significant.

Finally, again in this section the Chorus gives voice to Iphigenia's inner life through its attempts to distract the Messenger, which can be interpreted as part of Iphigenia's plan, and also in its final celebratory comments at the end of the play. The Chorus's happiness is Iphigenia's happiness, its freedom is her freedom, and its gratitude to the

gods is her gratitude. Does this gratitude undermine the play's thematic point? Not really, because the positive resolution of the play's plot, as previously indicated, suggests that both individual action and faith in the gods is necessary for a successful life. To paraphrase an old saying "Athena helps those who help themselves."

Bibliography

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Characters

Athena

The goddess Athena appears at the end of the play to order King Thoas not to pursue the fleeing Hellenes. She represents wisdom and the disciplined aspects (rather than the aggressive aspects) of war, and she announces that human sacrifice will no longer be practiced. She also announces that it will henceforth take a majority of votes to condemn a man for a crime. Finally she blesses the safe return of Orestes, Iphigenia, and Pylades. The goddess supports the interests of the Hellenes, nottheTaurians.

Chorus

The chorus consists of female attendants to Iphigenia. These are captured Greek women who occupy a lower social status than Iphigenia Their choral strophes comment upon and generalize the events of the play, transforming tragic events to moments of lyric beauty.

Herdsman

The herdsman is a messenger who supplies the part of the story concerning the capture of Orestes and Pylades by the Taunans. He is one of the men who discovers and surrounds the two strangers, and his own account of the fight shows the Hellenes better warriors than the barbarians, who fought with stones.

Iphigenia

Euripides was known for his striking portrayals of female characters, and Iphigenia is no exception, although she lacks the dramatic depth of his Medea and Electra. Iphigenia, haughty and proud, has for twenty years grimly led her countrymen to Artemis' s sacrificial altar whenever the barbarian Taurians captured them in their land. Although she longs for her culture, she vehemently hates her countrymen for what they did to her. She loves only her siblings and laments that she cannot pour libations on Ores-tes's grave after misinterpreting a dream as an omen that he is dead. Discovering from the stranger Hellenes that he is alive brings her some respite from her misery, which quickly turns to elation when the stranger turns out to be Orestes. Her quick thinking and formidable bearing facilitate their escape. Iphigenia is daring, cool, and passionate.

Messenger

In a long descriptive monologue, this messenger informs Thoas that Iphigenia is not purifying her prisoners but escaping with them. The messenger threatens the chorus of captive Greek temple attendant that they will pay for having protected their mistress.

Orestes

Orestes lives under the curse of the Furies, who torment those who spill the blood of relatives. He has avenged his father's death by murdering his mother and has been acquitted of this crime by an Athenian jury; but he can find no peace until he satisfies the command of Apollo to retrieve the altar statue at the temple of Artemis in Taurus. Orestes is plagued with bouts of madness, caused, perhaps, by the Furies, perhaps by his own sense of guilt. Orestes shares a close friendship with Pylades, his sister Electra's husband. When Iphigenia offers to spare one of them, Orestes insists on sacrificing himself rather than to live at the expense of Pylade's life. Orestes ultimately accomplishes the task as signed him by Apollo and receives Athena's blessing, thus presumably ending his curse.

Pylades

Pylades epitomizes friendship, having accompanied Orestes on his dangerous mission, simply to keep his friend company. Pylades is married to Electra, Orestes's sister. When Iphigenia strikes a bargain to set free one of her prisoners, Pylades at first refuses, wanting to die with his friend. But he submits to Orestes's reasoning: that it is Orestes whom Apollo sent on this mission and that Pylades must not desert his wife.

Thoas

Thoas is king of Taurus. He is a barbarian (barbarian then meaning stranger, not savage) king, in the eyes of the Hellenes. He proves a rather unthreatening enemy to the Hellenes. Although he questions Iphigenia about her disposition of the prisoners, she easily deludes him. He submits to her order to purify the temple with fire while she goes to the ocean to purify the statue and prisoners. When he learns of Iphigema's trickery, he commands his soldiers to follow the escapees but once again submits to the voice of reason, this time in the form of Athena

Themes

Sacrifice

The theme of sacrifice dominates the play *Iphigenia in Taurus.* Sacnfice holds a double bind over Iphigenia, in that she was to be sacrificed by her father as homage to Artemis, and was then "rescued" by that goddess, who made Iphigenia serve in her temple, preparing the ritual sacrifice of other Hellenes.

Although human sacrifice was not practiced during the fifth century B.C. in Greece, its symbolic stand-in, animal sacrifice, was integral to Greek religious culture. Animals to be slaughtered were reared with care, promenaded to the altar with dignity, and the sacrifice itself was an occasion of silent solemnity. Only young, beautiful animals were chosen for sacrifice. Their innocence made the offering more valuable and served to intensify the religious experience. Iphigenia was an innocent maiden who thought she was being prepared for a marriage when her father Agamemnon took her to the sacrificial altar. Her innocence would have been a poignant matter to a culture that regularly experienced the sacrifice of innocent creatures. Artemis snatches the young maiden away before she is destroyed.

A reversal of this event nearly happens to Orestes. He thinks he is about to be sacrificed but does not know that his blood relation, Iphigenia, would have led him to the altar, just as their father led Iphigenia. Iphigenia's duty is to prepare victims for sacrifice in the temple of Artemis, and the usual victims are her fellow Hellenes, whom she now passionately hates because of their cold-blooded intent to use her as a means to placate the gods. Thus she holds an office similar to her father's when he set out to sacrifice her. Her position as temple priestess is a tragic irony: she avoided sacrifice only to facilitate sacrificing others.

Interestingly enough, it is her office that enables her to escape her bondage to the Taurians. She has an aura of mystical power because of her priestess station, so she is able to tell Thoas to stay away from her and the defiled prisoners, allowing them space enough to escape. The reason behind both sacrificial necessities is war. Agamemnon chose to sacrifice his young daughter to appease Artemis, who held his ships in bay with a strong wind. The Taurians sacrifice Hellenes because of a current war between the two groups. The theme of sacrifice is further foretold in the dramatic irony that Iphigenia might actually sacrifice her own brother, whose death she thinks her dream has foretold.

Finally, it is under the ruse of preparing for the ritual sacrifice of Orestes and Pylades that Iphigenia and her cohorts escape. The Taurian king, Thoas, trusts this foreign temple priestess who has already killed so many Hellenes on Artemis's altar. Although human sacrifice looms large in this play, it never is actually committed. In each case, though, the question is raised whether this particular person should be sacrificed by the one preparing to do so. The Greeks, who were inclined to generahze from particulars,

would see the larger question as whether or not human sacrifice should be committed at all. Athena cleary answers no, when she comes in at the end to explain that sacrificial offerings will henceforth require only a drop of human blood, not a whole human life.

Mistaken Identity

The theme of mistaken identity, as it occurs in many of William Shakespeare's plays such *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* in which two characters are mistaken for each other or purposely dress up to elude identification, is not common in Greek drama. The ancient Greeks were more familiar with human transformations to and from inanimate objects, as evidenced in the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphosis.* The mistaken identity of both Iphigenia and her brother, Orestes, constitutes ,the dramatic irony of *Iphigenia in Taurus,*

Characters mistake blood relatives for strangers. Iphigenia assumes that the man she will prepare for sacrifice could not possibly be her brother— because her dream has already told her that he has died. The irony consists in the possibility that she herself may kill him. At the same time, Orestes assumes that his sister died on the Athenian altar to Artemis, never expecting her to perform a like service upon him.

In any play of mistaken identity, the crisis resolves in a recognition scene. The artful recognition scene is painfully drawn out, as the characters approach and retreat without recognizing what the audience sees with agonizing clarity. To Athenian audiences, being in exile in a foreign land, suffering long absences, and nearly killing a blood relative resonated with the plight of citizens of a city at war with a sister Hellenic city. The irony and double-meanings within the lines would intensify their response to the play.

Style

Prologue

The prologue precedes the action of the play with a description of what will happen in the subsequent narrative. This may seem odd to modern theater-goers, who expect to experience surprise in watching a play. But the purpose of theater and therefore the purpose of the prologue was different in ancient Greek times. Fifth century Greek theater was closely aligned with solemn religious ceremony. The audience was attending a ritual performance that was a form of serious entertainment. The topic of the performance would be intimately familiar to all present. The prologue served not to introduce a novel situation but to hint at the subtle variations to a common theme this particular performance would explore. Both Euripides and Sophocles (in his *Electro.)* explored the same material, yet each author brought his own subtleties to then-respective dramas.

Before Euripides's time, the prologue was spoken, chanted, or sung by a chorus, but it had by now evolved into a speech presented by one of the players. Euripides's plays often begin with a single actor addressing the audience directly, recounting the story leading to the events about to be portrayed. *Iphigenia in Taurus* opens with a monologue by Iphigenia, saying simply, "I am Iphigenia" and then summarizing the pivotal event of her past, when her father tried to sacrifice her. (This event is the focus of another Euripides play, *Iphigenia atAulis.)*

Chorus

Euripides made less use of the chorus than did his elder Sophocles, who demoted the chorus from a protagonist role to that of speaking spectator. Euripides reduced its role even further and employed it in a slightly different way. For Sophocles the chorus still served as a major character in the play; Euripides removed it from the action almost completely.

The chorus in Euripides's plays transforms the intense, personal emotions of the central characters into poignant statements about the situation in general. For example, after Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades depart from the temple on their way to the sea and freedom, the chorus sings of another brother and sister, Apollo and Artemis, in a moment when Apollo demands restitution of the gods for a wrong committed against him. Zeus applauds his pluck and restores reason to the earth. The story of Apollo foreshadows Athena's intervention on behalf of Orestes and Iphigenia. Euripides also demoted the chorus by giving it fewer songs and lines than did other poets; thereafter it disappeared completely from ancient Greek theater.

Deus ex Machina

The "deus ex machina," literally "god from a machine," was a common closing device in ancient Greek theater. Normally, a god would descend from the heavens to bring the action to a close. On the ancient Greek stage, the descent would have been accomplished by means of a large crane hoisting the actor playing the god. In Euripides's final scene, the goddess Athena appears from above the temple porch and prevents Thoas from pursuing the fleeing Hellenes. Athena informs Thoas that the gods ordered Orestes to steal the statue. She projects her voice to the fleeing Orestes as well, and she tells Mm to build a special temple to contain the statue, and to name the new temple after Taurus.

Furthermore, Athena hands down other laws, including the forbiddance of further human sacrifice. Instead a mere drop of human blood will now signify reverence to Artemis. Her closing words reinforce the rituals being celebrated by the Athenian audience.

Historical Context

The Peloponnesian Wars

The Peloponnesian War waged off and on for twenty seven years (431-404 B.C.), finally ending with the near total destruction of Athens by its economic rival Sparta. Pericles, for twenty years the military general—the Greek equivalent of a president—of Athens, had engineered Athens rise to greatness through his superior oratory skill and his determination to build a true democracy through the education of Greek peoples. But he aggravated the rivalry between Athens and Sparta, sparking the Peloponnesian War, thus named because Sparta led the league of southern Greece called the Peloponnese.

The war waxed and waned between years of intense fighting, siege warfare, and periods of stalemate. Athens held the advantage at sea, while the Spartan army dominated land conflicts. Eventually, Sparta allied with Persia, obtaining needed funds to develop a naval force, and Athens, already weakened at sea, was undone. The political basis for the

conflict lay in Sparta's adherence to oligarchy, which was threatened by the presence of Athen's democratic ideology. The psychological effect on Athenians of the decimation of its population and finances. The final, crushing blow came in admitting defeat to an enemy whose political philosophy was abhorrent to Athenians.

Greek Oracles and Omens

The importance of accurately interpreting dreams, omens, the ambiguous messages of oracles and the intentions of others certainly intensified during the long years of the Peloponnesian War. It was a time of deep superstitious belief. All humans experience the desire to foresee the future; during this time of crisis in Athenian life and culture, this desire became paramount.

The fifth-century historian Herodatus notes the profusion of oracles that flourished before and during the war. Archeologists have found leaden tablets listing questions as mundane as whether purchasing a piece of land would lead to prosperity as well as indications that some generals made no moves without the encouragement of an oracle or omen. Knowing this, political factions could and did manipulate the omens to sway decision-makers.

Iphigenia plays upon Thoas's superstitions in *Iphigenia in Taurus;* she convinces him that the two Hellenes are too impure to sacrifice, having committed the crime of matricide. Under the guise of purifying the statue and the intended sacrificial victims, she is able to lead them freely to the sea, first assuring that Thoas averts his eyes to avoid contamination. She also busies him with purifying the temple with fire. Even prisoners could gain a measure of control through the skillful manipulation of their conqueror's superstitions.

Greek Theater

Plays in fifth-century Athens were performed annually in honor of the Great Dionysia, a religious festival that took place on the *agora,* or marketplace. There was a wooden platform for the chorus and performers at the center of a bowl-shaped site that provided excellent natural acoustics for the audience. An altar to Dionysus lay at the center of the stage, a remnant of the fertility ritual that was the predecessor of the Dionysian festival. Players wore masks and chanted their lines, with little body movement. The festival also included a dramatic contest, where playwrights submitted and directed tetralogies consisting of tragedies and a satyr play, the latter a comic fertility rite.

Critical Overview

Euripides wrote *Iphigenia in Taurus* before he wrote *Iphigenia in Aulis,* making *Aulis* a kind of "prequel" to *Taurus.* Euripides is one of a trio of great tragedians in fifth-century Greece: Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus. Euripides was renowned during his lifetime, but he was not nearly as popular as either Sophocles or Aeschylus. Sophocles admired Euripides as a master playwright and honored the latter's death by having the participants in the subsequent Dionysian festival dress in mourning rather than in their usual festive costumes.

Philip Vellacott, a twentieth-century translator, explained in *Ironic Drama* that "as a poet he was revered; in his function as a 'teacher of citizens' he was misunderstood." A century later, Euripides gained more notoriety, if not appreciation. During the fourth century B.C., his plays were more commonly produced and adapted than those of his fifth-century rivals. Aristophanes (448-380 B.C.) dedicated three whole plays to burlesquing—ridiculing—his style. This simple historical fact implies that Athenian audiences must have been familiar enough with Euripides's plays to make Aristophanes's jibes recognizable—Euripides's plays were an institution of drama during this period. While his theater was legendary, it was for his poetry and dramatic artistry for which Euripides was appreciated, not his ideas Euripides was considered a fine poet with a misguided message. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) used four of Euripides's works to illustrate various concepts of tragedy in his *Poetics,* wherein Aristotle defined the standards for drama. In that work he referred to Euripides as "the most tragic of the poets" who nevertheless had many "faults "

Euripides' s skepticism was not condoned in the rather conservative fourth century. Greek culture was in decline, and as it declined even further, Euripides's plays were earned to Alexandria, and then to Rome, and the Byzantine culture. Plutarch (46-c. 120 A.D.) related three historical anecdotes of Hellenes who were allowed to escape their enemies by showing proficiency in reciting Euripidean poetry; this evidence corroborates Euripides's reputation, at least as a poet, in ancient Greece.

During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the very aspect of Euripides's ideas that alarmed his contemporaries, his criticism of the pan-Hellenic gods, fueled an interest in his work by scholars, especially humanists such as Erasmus. Dante mentioned Euripides in his *Divine Comedy* and Ben Jonson used one of his plays as a model. Euripides's plays (along with those of Aeschylus and Sophocles) were required reading for the classical education valued during the Renaissance. In the seventeenth century Jean Racine adapted many of his plays and considered Euripides his master. John Milton *{Paradise Lost)* also expressed his admiration.

The eighteenth century lost interest in Euripides because his work was too innovative for the classical revival then in progress. Then Johann Wolfgang von Goethe *(Faust)* paid him the ultimate Romantic penod compliment by calling his work "sublime." Goethe created a new version of *Iphigenia in Taurus* that follows the original closely. It was of

Euripides that Goethe wrote his oft-adapted expression: "Have all the nations of the world since his time produced one dramatist who was worthy to hand him his slippers?"

In the nineteenth century, Robert Browning made conspicuous allusions to certain plays by Euripides, and the Greek playwright was once more instated as a cornerstone of a good, classical education. Gilbert Murray's accessible translations in the early twentieth century made Euripides's work available to the larger public.

Twentieth-century literary criticism holds a reserved judgment regarding Euripides. Modern critics appreciate his championing of the underdog—slaves, women, the elderly, and children— and his lampooning of religious and secular hypocrisy. But he remains a shadowy figure whose actual political and religious beliefs are difficult to discern. Twentieth-century critics are more wary than earlier critics of associating ideas in an artist's works with his personal philosophy. The move toward New Criticism, with its emphasis on the text itself, has had a negative impact on Euripides's reputation in this century.

Under such assessments, Euripides, once again, does not measure up to Sophocles or Aeschylus. Furthermore, twentieth-century readers are accustomed to works of more dramatic intensity than *Iphigenia in Taurus,* which is considered a "romantic melodrama " Contemporary classical scholars find it interesting for its complex replication and reversal of certain paradigms found in the *Oresteia,* such as the near sacrifice of a blood relative. It seems unlikely that *Iphigenia in Taurus* will ever regain the popularity it enjoyed in its day, since its specificity to the status of the Hellenic state in the middle of the Peloponnesian Wars lies at the heart of the play.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Hamilton is an English teacher at Cary Academy, an innovative private school in Cary, North Carolina, In this essay she explores the multi-layered ironies o/Iphigenia in Taurus *and suggests that to probe these layers sharpens the drama student's critical thinking skills.*

Because *Iphigenia in Taurus* is not as tragic or as compelling a story as such works as Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* or *Antigone,* (or even Euripides's own *Medea),* it is not produced as often on the modern stage or studied in the classroom as frequently. This play, written by a septuagenarian Euripides, pales in comparison to the violent action films of today's cinema, a genre of entertainment familiar to most students. *Iphigenia in Taurus* does not carry the legitimizing title of tragedy; it is often more accurately labeled a melodrama or romance. It has also frequently been dismissed as ancient Greek "escape" literature.

In a 1974 article for *Classical Journal,* R. Caldwell compared the play to a "pleasant daydream" because "the danger is quite unreal, the escape is quite fantastic, the gods are clearly literary inventions. We are invited to indulge our fantasies, to subject repression to a process of catharsis, precisely because the work of art assures us, by its tone, that the dangers of such a task are not to be taken seriously " Yet despite these judgements, this play has much to offer contemporary viewers. The world of television and cinema is filled with sensationalism—violence, profanity, exaggerated special effects. Subtle works such as *Iphigenia in Taurus* can be a thought-provoking antidote to such mind-numbing sensationalism, offering an invitation to the art of active thinking while viewing.

Iphigenia in Taurus is filled with subtle ironies. It has been said that the ability to detect irony is a sign of mental aptitude, but this aptitude requires practice if it is to be developed to its full potential. To perceive irony the viewer must follow closely the unraveling of the plot, yet also remain aloof enough from the action to compare what is seen with his or her own experience and to make judgements accordingly. This means that the viewer cannot subsume critical thinking to emotional involvement or passively submit to the ideas presented in the play. Euripides knew this, and he portrayed the foolishness of accepting things at face value. Both Iphigenia and Orestes model the negative consequences of submitting passively to one's anticipated fate: they each assume the other is dead and only begin to use their own thinking capacities fully when they find each other alive and begin to work out a plan of escape.

Irony is a reversal of expectations, a difference between appearances or perception and reality. One can express irony through tone of voice, saying one thing and meaning another, such as when Shakespeare's Antony repeatedly states that"Brutus is an honorable man" in *Julius Caesar* when it is clear from his inflection and body language that he thinks the exact opposite. Dramatic irony consists of situations that the characters themselves accept at face value but which the audience understands in a different, usually opposite, way. *Iphigenia in Taurus* abounds in moments of dramatic

irony where the audiences perceives a truth to which the characters are blinded, for various reasons,

Euripides's characters misread situations, such as when Iphigenia misinterprets her dream of one column still standing in the House of Atreus as an indication of Orestes's death, rather than considering the possibility that the standing column may mean her brother is alive. Orestes, in a moment of madness, stabs wildly at cattle which he misper-ceives as the Furies. At these times as well as in numerous verbal or situational oxymorons, the audience easily recognizes the true meaning that the characters themselves do not fathom or guess.

Iphigenia's oxymoron, a "just evil" aptly describes both the necessity and the criminality of Orestes's murder of his own mother. The phrase takes on added dimension for the audience who know that she is speaking of a crime designed to avenge her own sacrifice at the hands of her father, Agamemnon. When Iphigenia wishes that her brother might resemble the young man before her who chooses to die in place of his friend, the audience recognizes the irony that her wish is only too true, and that she will destroy her brother. When Orestes wishes that his sister, meaning Iphigenia, could pour his libations, the audience knows that this wish might also, tragically, be fulfilled.

In each case, it is important for the audience to infer the reasons that the character fails to perceive the reality behind appearances. At the first level, Iphigenia fails to recognize her brother simply because he has not yet told her his name; but at another level of perception, she has a disinclination to feel empathy for any Hellene, because her father's betrayal has embittered her heart. Orestes is likewise blinded by his overwhelming sense of guilt, which has driven him partly mad. Thus he is unwilling to reveal his true nature to the one person who would accept him.

In places, the irony is not so obvious, making it more difficult for the audience to infer the deeper meaning of the characters' actions. This deeper irony demands a perceptive viewer, reader, or listener to detectit. The irony resides in the "gap" that Euripides's translator Philip Vellacott, in his introduction to the play, explained "must exist in the work of every profound and creative dramatist between what he knows he has put into a scene and what he knows most of his audience will receive from it." Most of Euripides's Athenian audience would have noted the irony that when Iphigenia tells Thoas she must purify the altar statue, she deceives him with the very means that landed her in Taurus to begin with—the desire for purification through sacrifice. She manipulates the appearance of her actions, to make Thoas think that she intends to purify the altar and sacrifice another Hellene, instead she intends the opposite: to set free and purify the Hellene, not the Taurians, and to purge the temple of its altar, not purify it

Likewise, an ironic reversal occurs when Orestes, asks Iphigema to save him (by procuring the statue), whereas just moments before she was desperately attempting to contact him to come and save her: the tables have now turned. Recognizing an event in which the "tables are tamed" is the province of the sophisticated audience. Athenian audiences were better prepared to notice these subtleties, having plenty of tame to contemplate the play and being unused to the onslaught of violent and extravagant

performances that daily hombard the modern audience. The twentieth-century student of Euripides will benefit greatly from slowing down to appreciate and contemplate this profound and quiet masterpiece. Insights always reward the careful study of a work of great literature, but with Euripides' s *Iphigenia in Taurus,* such analysis is critical to understanding the play as Athenian audiences understood it.

A deeper level of irony detection lies in the correspondence between the events of the play and the social or political context of the audience. Here the modern viewer may feel hamstrung by the distance of almost fifteen hundred years and the paucity of information about Euripides's opinions regarding the issues of his day. However, human nature has changed very little over the centuries; much of what Euripides has to say is perfectly comprehensible to contemporary human thought.

Orestes, we recognize, has fallen under the cloud of fatalistic thinking: he assumes the herdsmen will defeat them on the shore and only raises his arm to avoid dying a coward. The towering walls of the Taunan temple so intimidate him that Pylades has to convince him not to run away Both of these instances pit appearances against reality, and Orestes remains stuck on appearance. Orestes has succumbed to the belief that his fate lies in the hands of Apollo, that he cannot change it, and he blames the gods rather than taking responsibility for his own decisions.

Iphigenia is similarly afflicted: years of enforced service in the temple have clouded her thinking, causing her to misinterpret her dream as an omen that Orestes is dead. In her case, appearances do not make the same impression on her as they would on another Hellene. The audience would identify with the siblings' difficulties. An attitude of embittered fatalism had become the norm to the Athenians, who had suffered catastrophic losses during eighteen years of strife with Sparta (and were further decimated by a plague). The Athenians were beginning to realize that despite their philosophical superiority, they could lose the Pelloponnesian War. The parallels between the doomed House of Atreus and the besieged city of Athens would have been painfully apparent. As the chorus chants "blow after blow staggers the cursed city," the substitution of Athens for Argos would have been automatic.

Another of Euripides's ironic comments involves the efficacy of human sacrifice for purification purpose. Cedric Whitman in his 1974 book,EH~ *ripides and the Full Circle of Myth,* explained that the goal of purification lies at the heart of this play. "All must be purified, Orestes of his madness, Iphigenia of her involvement in human sacrifice, and Artemis of a cult unworthy of a Hellenic deity." Iphigenia says that "The rites I celebrate are unfit for song." The happy ending restores three Hellenes to their land and exorcises the Furies from further tormenting Orestes, whom the Athenian court has acquitted of a justified homicide. Thus besides resolving the individual characters' misperceptions and terminating the curse upon the House of Atreus, the ending also confirms the Athenian urge to trust in themselves rather than succumb to the fatalism and despondency of interpreting the omens of the gods The ending is an exhortation communicated through the medium of irony to use the "double" vision of irony to see through appearances to the reality underneath.

Source: Carole Hamilton for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1998

Critical Essay #2

In this essay, Walcot provides an overview of Euripides'splay.

The *Iphigenia in Tauris* is the type of romantic melodrama with a happy ending characteristic of the later work of Euripides. Its setting is appropriately exotic: the forecourt of a temple of Artemis on the Taurian coast in the modern Crimea. The play tells how Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, is serving as a priestess of the Taurians, having been rescued when on the point of being sacrificed at Aulis by her father, who was leading the Greeks to Troy. Her brother Orestes and his friend Pylades come to the Crimea in search of a statue of Artemis which will release Orestes from his sufferings. A report that a pair of men has been captured is brought to Iphigenia whose responsibility it is to sacrifice arrivals from Greece on the altar of Artemis. When they meet, brother and sister fail to recognise one other, but a desire on the part of Iphigenia to have a letter smuggled back to Greece leads to a realisation that the two men are Iphigenia's own brother and his companion. Now reunited, they plot an escape to Greece together with the statue, but their plan is threatened by the arrival of King Thoas who, however, is persuaded that the statue must be cleansed in the sea. Once they reach the shore, escape is achieved, but only after a fight and a most opportune intervention by the goddess Athene. Throughout the play intense excitement is sustained by the seemingly endless twists and turns of a far from simple plot

Iphigenia delivers a lengthy prologue of a type common in Euripides' plays. This does more than just impart basic information; it also reveals the pathos inherent in the woman's present plight Furthermore, we learn of a dream which, ironically, is both optimistic (in depicting Iphigenia's restoration at home) and pessimistic (in seeming to anticipate the sacrifice of Orestes). It appears almost inevitable that as Iphigenia vanishes into the temple, Orestes and Pylades should take her place, busying themselves in careful examination of the bloodstained altar of Artemis. A reference to the goddess's statue and the instruction from Apollo to present it to Athens completes all we need to know in the way of information; Orestes' hesitation but Pylades' stern determination to fulfil their mission similarly complete our picture of the play's major characters.

The herdsman's account of the capture of Orestes and Pylades is certainly long, but any danger of tedium is eliminated by vivid description of an Orestes stricken by madness as he imagines himself pursued by a Fury and falls upon cattle in a belief that these too are Furies. The actual capture is almost hilarious as the herdsmen are scattered and then regroup and stone the young men into submission. The chorus finds a story so rich in detail astounding. And Iphigenia herself has another long speech in which, yet again, a heavy vein of irony is exploited: believing her brother dead Iphigenia declares her heart now to be hardened while, at the same time, delivering a pathetic account of how she came to Aulis ostensibly to be married, and then indulging in typical Eunpidean philosophizing when she claims that it is men and not the gods who are evil.

The scene between Iphigenia and Orestes, who both talk vigorously but at cross-purposes, is a masterpiece of misunderstanding although it does reveal that Orestes is still alive. At every point it is expected that the full truth will come out, but it never does and our expectations are constantly frustrated. Euripides has a fondness for simple stage-props and one is then introduced: Iphigenia offers not to Ml Orestes if he will carry a letter back to Argos for her, but Orestes proposes that Pylades performs the mission and proceeds to persuade his friend to do this in an exchange of an especial appeal to a Greek audience (deeply appreciative as it was of the art of rhetoric). But a complication is raised: what if Pylades' ship sinks and the letter lost but Pylades saved? The obvious solution to this dilemma is to tell Pylades the contents of the letter and this information, thus conveyed in such a way as not to strain credulity, identifies Iphigenia to the captives.

It is also quite natural that Iphigenia should delay the planning of their escape by seeking all the family news from Orestes If Euripides drags out this episode at what initially appears inordinate length, it is done deliberately to heighten suspense. Less realistic, but again characteristic of Euripides, is the request for secrecy made to the chorus. But Thoas has still to be deceived, and Iphigenia's claim that the intended victims were unclean and so unfit for sacrifice and that Artemis's image must be purified illustrates, again surely to a Greek audience's considerable delight, its proponent's cleverness and superiority over a "barbarian." There remains one more drawn-out exposition: the messenger's description of the actual escape. In spite of their suspicions, the guards entrust the prisoners to Iphigenia; eventually they decide to investigate and find a Greek ship ready to depart and the two heroes climbing on board; both groups fight with fists in an attempt to secure Iphigenia and the Taunans are forced to fall back and use stones; the Greeks retaliate with arrows as Orestes carries his sister and statue safely ahoard the ship which sails away but is then driven to the shore again by the wind. Thoas and his men make off to the shore, and it is at this point that Euripides plays his last card—the goddess Athene appears and orders Thoas to desist. The playwright has wrung an audience's every emotion and brought the most devious of plots to a happy conclusion. But Euripides adds a last detail with the obvious intention of pleasing his Athenian audience: Athene also orders the building of a sanctuary on the borders of Attica to house the statue of Artemis. The,establishment of a local cult centre gives the play a special relevance to the original spectators and stresses the Athenian context of the drama.

Source: Peter Walcot,' *'Iphigenia in Taurus"* in *The International Dictionary of Theatre I: Plays,* edited by Mark Hawkins-Dady, St. James Press, 1992, pp 372-73.

Critical Essay #3

In this essay, O'Brien examines the plot of Euripides's play and compares its plot points to prevalent legends during the playwright's time. He argues that Euripides had a specific agenda in building his drama upon the history and legends of ancient Greece, although there are significant points at which the play differs from history.

The plot *of Iphigenia in Tauns* is usually thought to be Euripides' own invention. Its basic assumption can be found in Proclus' summary of the *Cypria,* viz. that a deer was substituted for Iphigenia during the sacrifice at Aulis and that she herself was removed to the land of the Taun. Her later rescue by Orestes and Pylades, however, cannot be traced with probability to any work of art or literature earlier than Euripides' play. In this play, in which Orestes recognizes and then saves the sister whom he had long thought dead, it is assumed that her replacement by a deer went unseen by those present at the sacrifice. The sequel which this assumption allowed Euripides to invent (if it was he who invented it) is original only in a limited sense, since it bears the imprint of several familiar story types. These types include the following: (1) the murder of a kinsman is narrowly averted by a recognition; (2) a reunion is followed by an intrigue; and (3) a maiden is rescued. Each is used elsewhere by Euripides. The first two, for example, are found in *Cresphontes,* the second in *Electro,* and the third in *Andromeda.* Correspondences of this sort, based on plot patterns, will naturally gain in interest if it can be shown that they throw light on a play's meaning or on the process that led to its creation. The student of dramatic plots, however, soon discovers that analogies between them are easy to draw and can be quickly multiplied. It is much harder to decide which analogies are genuinely enlightening. This study addresses that question as it applies to *I.T. (Iphigenia in Taurus)* and suggests certain criteria which may help to answer it for other plays as well.

The recurrence of patterns in tragic plots has been extensively discussed in recent decades, and it is now well understood how readily plots and their components can be classified and parallels drawn between them. Richmond Lattimore deals with this subject in a broad but enlightening way in a book which takes all of tragedy (and much else) for its subject. He shows that, since stories tend to crystallize in certain forms, these forms are encountered again and again in drama. T. B. L. Webster, in reviewing the evidence for Euripides' lost plays, also calls attention to recurrent plot elements but speaks as if these repetitions were the result of rapid composition and the pressure of time. Anne Burnett, in contrast, tabulates patterns in order to dwell on their variations, since she is convinced that Euripides' art lay partly in manipulating the educated expectations of an audience familiar with all the standard plot forms. She illustrates this theory by analysing seven Euripidean plays, one of which is *I.T.,* as combinatory adaptations of a limited set of six matrix plots. These three scholars write in English, but important work on plot forms had appeared earlier in German in such publications as Strohm's book on Euripides. It is sometimes alleged against such studies that they tend to confuse the tabulated results of scholarly analysis and generalization with the creative thoughts of poets and, at their worst, reduce the art of tragedy to the management of abstractions; furthermore, that these classifications too readily generate

dubious norms of critical judgement. There is some truth in these charges. For all that, the practice of speaking of the tragic art in this way is well established; it is at least as old as Aristotle, who divides plots into the simple and the complex (which are said to be better), and whose other listings of typical plots and plot elements include a catalogue of recognition types in which these too are ranked by merit. Even he has not escaped the charge that his exercises in classification were 'slightly artificial.

Whatever criticisms may be made against their excesses, these studies have undeniably advanced our understanding or traditional plot forms and shown to what degree tragic poets in the act of creation were constrained by precedent. But the kind and degree of attention that an audience was expected to pay to these recurrent forms is another matter. On this point Burnett at least has probably gone too far. She assumes that the typical spectator of a new tragedy was a man enthralled by its interplay of structural commonplace and constantly mindful of the formal precedents being followed or broken in the development of its plot. In questioning this view I do not mean to deny that audiences were often aware of broad similarities between stones and poets ready to turn this fact to account Tragedy may sometimes appeal to this awareness by its use of generalizations.... Such generalization as occur, however, tend to carry an ethical or religions point, and the sum of them would not match very well the lists of plot types developed by modern scholars. This is to be expected: not every plot follows the lines of a maxim. Aside from examples like these, we should be wary of assuming that poets and audiences were preoccupied with general patterns or 'norms' of tragic action or that an awareness of deviations from these norms could have been a central element governing anyone's reaction to a play. The Greeks understood well enough that almost nothing in myth is unprecedented, but the most striking evidence for this in the plays is neither commonplace patterns nor general statements but the large number of passages where the legend being dramatized is compared with some other specific legend. In these passages what occupies the foreground and engages the attention is the concrete detail of the counterpart legend itself. These mythological paradigms or *exempla* may fill an entire stasimon or a mere single line of dialogue and may refer to the whole action of a play or a passing moment. Their use in tragedy is an inheritance from earlier poetry, where meaning is often clarified or emotion heightened through the well-known names and incidents of some legend not itself the main subject of a poem. Beyond these familiar facts, two less obvious points about *exempla* deserve particular notice. (1) Although in tragedy they are often linked to their contexts by some expression of comparison, at times there is no such link and their function as paradigms must be inferred. The latter is also true of some Pindaric myths used as *exempla,* if common interpretations of these are valid. (2) Although any analogy between a dramatized story and another legend will be based on similarity of form and will to that extent appeal to an awareness of pattern, the other legend may be chosen for its particular associations as much as for the general features which the two happen to share with many others. Whenever this is true, the relation of greatest interest will be one that joins specific legends, and the shared story pattern will be no more than one aspect of it.

This paper is meant to illustrate these last two points. It is a study of *IT.* which finds analogies between its story and two other legends mentioned prominently in the play,

the courtship of Pelops and Hippodameia and the sacrifice at Aulis. It will argue that the poet perceived a special relation between these legends and the action of his play and found means to convey this to the audience. In each case the relation is made perceptible through a shared pattern of action, but its affective power derives primarily from the blood tie which unites the principal agents of all three legends. Pattern repetition in this case is therefore the formal aspect of family history repeating itself, a subject of undeniable interest to fifth-century tragic poets. Since Euripides may actually have invented the story of Iphigenia's rescue, these related legends may also be the story' s models. If that is so, his new sequel to Atreid history is fully organic. That assumption, however, will not be essential to the argument. It will be enough to show that these legends are present in /. *T.* as paradigms of the action, helping to colour and define it and foreshadowing its outcome. As I have argued elsewhere, Euripides made a similar use of the Tantalus myth in *Orestes;* therefore the technique displayed in / *T.* is no isolated example.

Pelops' marriage contest is expressly referred to twice *in I.T.,* at the start of Iphigenia's first speech and at the climactic moment when she recognizes Orestes....

For some reason, out of the long and complicated legend of the house of Atreus, Euripides has chosen to put at the beginmng of his play an allusion to Pelops' successful contest with Oenomaus and his marriage to Hippodameia. The career of Tantalus is left out; he is mentioned only as Pelops' father. The gap in generations between Pelops and Iphigenia herself is bridged in steps as economical as the iambic metre allows. The family history is therefore effectively compressed into two events, the victory of Pelops and the sacrifice at Aulis. The latter will be narrated at length in the passage immediately following. Its great prominence in Iphigenia's opening speech requires no explanation, but it is not immediately apparent why she begins her speech, and the play, with Pelops.

At the beginmng of the second episode. Orestes is brought into Iphigenia's presence, and after a long dialogue he realizes her identity. His identity, in turn, is revealed by Pylades, who addresses him by name in her presence at line 792; but 35 lines will pass before she accepts the fact that this is her brother. He first calls her 'dearest sister' (795) and attempts to embrace her. When the chorus (or Iphigenia herself, according to Monk's reattribution) rebukes him and she turns away, he invokes the name of Agamemnon (801). Another expression of disbelief follows. But by line 806 her interest seems aroused...,

His way of affirming his identity, as Pelops' descendant, is worth noting, though it cannot carry much weight by itself. Iphigenia now asks for evidence to support this claim. His reply, given in dialogue, is measured and orderly and designed to lead to a climax. First, what he has heard from Electra: that Atreus and Thyestes quarrelled over the golden lamb, and Iphigenia once wove this story on a tapestry; that the sun changed course, and she wove this too; that her mother gave her bathing water in preparation for what was supposed to be her marriage at Aulis; that before she was to be sacrificed she gave her mother locks of her hair as a relic. So much Orestes had from hearsay....

[The] mention of the spear of Pelops, which Orestes saw hidden in Iphigenia's chamber, accomplishes the recognition and breaks down her reserve. [823 6]

These lines mark the end of an unusually prolonged and suspenseful recognition-scene and receive much emphasis from their position. Once again, as at the beginning of the play, what is said in 811-26 constitutes a selective review of family history: the quarrel of the brothers and the consequent reversal of the sun's course, the sacrifice at Aulis, and Pelops' victory. All three involve memories personal to Iphigenia, but in the first case and the last this connection is established by contrivance (the tapestry, the hidden spear). Why did Euripides choose these three episodes? It is the beginmng of an answer to observe that only the third is a happy memory. The recognition, itself a triumphant moment in the stage action, is achieved through the memory of an ancestral victory. The other memories, all bitter, serve as preamble and contrast. They end with a line and a word designed to stand in the sharpest emotional opposition to what follows. .. (821).

Even this partial explanation of 811-26, which speaks only of the emotional development of the lines, involves difficulties. In most accounts, the outcome of Pelops' contest with Oenomaus was not an unreserved triumph. At *Orestes* 988ff. and 1548 a version is assumed in which Pelops won with the help of Myrtilus, Oenomaus' charioteer; his help is explained in other sources as the removal of the linch-pins of his master's chariot, which caused it to crash. Pelops later killed Myrtilus, and his dying curse became the source of endless troubles in the house. For this reason, at Sophocles' *Electra* 505 Pelops' ride is called 'a source of many sorrows'. But at least one notable literary version of the legend before Euripides, that of Pindar's *Olympian I,* left out Myrtilus and allowed Pelops to win with the help of winged horses provided by Poseidon. The presence of different versions in the tradition means that care is needed in deciding whether Myrtilus' trick and his later curse are meant to be assumed in *I.T.* The matter cannot be decided by saying that in the late fifth century they had become part of the standard version of the legend and could be presumed even when not explicitly mentioned. In a recent article, T. C. W. Stinton has discussed several tragedies in each of which important features or some legend in its standard version are purposefully ignored. He shows that suppression of such detail is one aspect of an author's freedom to adapt myth. Moreover, it hardly needs argument to say of the author of *Helen* that he was not bound to treat his myths consistently from play to play. We cannot simply fill in *I.T.* 823-6 with details drawn from *Orestes* 988ff. In Murray's Oxford text of *I.T* the evidence on this point was blurred by a conjecture printed *exempli causa* in a corrupt choral passage at 192-3, one which introduced the killing of Myrtilus to the text. But Myrtilus is not otherwise to be found in the play; nor can any claim be made that he is required in order to explain how Oenomaus died. In accounts in which Oenomaus is killed in the crash of his chariot, Myrtilus is the agent of his death and to that extent indispensable. But at / *T.* 825, as at Pindar, *O.* 1.88, Pelops is named as the one who kills him; in neither version is Myrtilus mentioned, and in neither can his presence be assumed. If he is absent from /. *T,* then so is his curse, and the contest for the hand of Hippodameia need not be judged.The troubles in the house may be thought of as beginning later, with the quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes, mentioned in the corrupt passage at 193-7 and again at 812ff. The career of Pelops himself will figure only as an

example of good fortune. To say that much helps to justify an allusion to it in the very limited context of this moment of recognition, where good fortune again prevails.

Its appearance at the beginning of the play, however, as the point of departure for family history, may mean that it has a less limited relevance. To begin with what is most obvious, this play, like Euripides' summary version of the Pelops legend, ends happily A review of the basic details of the legend reveals further analogies. The conditions imposed by Oenomaus upon anyone wishing to marry Hippodameia were that the suitor and his intended bride should ride off in a chariot, while Oenomaus, armed with a spear, rode in pursuit. Pelops won where others had lost and paid with their lives. Even in its barest outline, the legend implies a cruel Oenomaus. By the fifth century, he was being portrayed as a savage who cut off and exhibited the heads of unsuccessful suitors. This practice was attributed to him in Sophocles' *Oenomaus,* thought by some to have been an early production. One of the few fragments from that play is a reference to scalping 'in the Scythian fashion'. This is probably to be explained, in accordance with Herodotus 4.64, as an indignity like that practised by the Scythians upon the severed heads of slam enemies In Sophocles' play, the impaled heads may have been part of the stage setting. Less is known about Euripides' *Oenomaus,* the fragments of which throw little light on how the legend was handled. Hyginus 84.3 appears to summarize a tragic scene in which Pelops is so fnghtened by the heads of Oenomaus' victims that he regrets having come to challenge him; his source is sometimes taken to be Euripides' play. Though individual authors certainly embellished the picture, the legend readily lent itself to the portrayal of Oenomaus as an ogre to be classed with several other mythical figures famous for outrages against strangers. Seen in this light, Pelops' successful courtship of Hippodameia was also her rescue from cruel and savage surroundings.

Calder and Sutton, in writing about Sophocles' *Oenomaus,* have noticed that in extant tragedy the closest parallels to the vanquished ogre-king of Oenomaus' type are Thoas of *I.T* and Theoclymenus of *Helen.* They do not connect this fact with the references to Pelops and Oenomaus in *I.T,;* but Calder, in speaking of the probable display of skulls in the prologue of Sophocles' play, calls the similar spectacle *at I.T.* 74—5 an 'imitation' of it. This is a reference to Orestes' and Pylades' first sight of the temple of the Taunan Artemis and the altar stained with human blood; here Orestes immediately points out the 'spoils' attached under the cornice (74) and Pylades answers, 'Yes, first fruits of the foreigners who perished'. It seems almost certain that these words refer to a display or severed heads. This would tally with Herodotus 4.103, where the Taunans are said to sacrifice victims of shipwreck and fugitives from "storms, then cut off and exhibit then-heads. In other ways too, Euripides represents the king of the Taurians as the ruler of a barbarous country and a man personally willing to enforce its customary abuse of strangers. The parallel with Oenomaus, including the specific detail of line 74 with its probable reminiscence of Sophoclean staging, is clear. It is significant, however, only as part of a larger analogy that includes three of the play's characters. Iphigenia, like her ancestress Hippodameia, is held captive by a savage but finds a deliverer.

The name of her captor is Thoas....

Wilamowitz, in *Analecta Euripidea,* cited this etymology as a mere display or sophistic erudition. If that is true, the charge is graver than it may seem, because Euripides, in attaching this name to Iphigenia's captor, has probably gone out of his way to create an opportunity for the etymology. If one sets aside the doubtful possibility that Sophocles' *Chryses* was both a sequel to the rescue of Iphigenia and an earlier play than *IT,* there is no evidence that Thoas was the name of a Taurian king in legend or fact before the date of/. *T.* Thoas the Lemnian, the son of Dionysus, who is known to Herodotus (6.138), is another man, even though he is identified with the Taurian by two late authors in defiance of mythical chronology. Euripides' character is 'a mere name', in Immisch's phrase, endowed with definable traits but with no place in any genealogy. Why this name should have been chosen for Orestes' adversary is not immediately clear, as Wilamowitz himself later pointed out. Significant names in Euripides, however, often make an important dramatic point. To take two other examples from prologues, Theonoe's 'godlike knowledge' gives her the power to ruin Helen and Menelaus, and the name of Dionysus declares the paternity that is the point at issue in *Bacchae.* Why is the long of the Taurians swift? Learned irrelevance is not the only possible answer. This is an. escape play, and the threat which Thoas represents is that of a swift pursuer: at 1325-6 and 1422-34 he threatens to overtake the fugitives, and at 1435 he must be stopped by Athena. To that extent, his name fits: like Theonoe's name, it marks his function in the story. But even if it is strictly beyond proof that this is so by design, there should be little doubt about the nature of Thoas' role. As the pursuer, no less than as the warder of Iphigenia, he is the counterpart of Oenomaus, whose speed as a charioteer enabled him to run down and kill thirteen suitors with his spear. In both contests, the maiden flees with the young hero. Iphigenia rides in the ship with her brother; and, though the flight of Pelops is commonly described as a race with Oenomaus, it takes the form of a bride-theft. Hippodameia rides on Pelops' chariot; she does not wait at home for the outcome.

Analogies can be carried only so far, and there are important and obvious differences between the two stories: ra *I.T.,* the maiden rescued is a sister, not a bride; the flight is by ship, not by chariot; and Iphigenia's captor is stopped by divine intervention, not killed. The first two arise from the intractable data of the Iphigenia legend. The killing of Thoas, on the other hand, is considered at 1020-3 and is expressly rejected by Iphigenia on moral grounds.... Here the desire to make a pointed ethical distinction between Iphigenia and Thoas, ... has caused a departure from the pattern of the older story. In other respects the correspondences are striking; they constitute the main reason for thinking that the references to one story foreshadow the outcome of the other The emphatic position of these references, at the beginning of the play and at its emotional climax, also argues for their significance; standing where they do, they claim attention. It is fair to ask why Euripides, who had other choices in each passage, chose them. The answer proposed here is that they are suitable in a play that dramatizes an escape from danger and from barbarism. Mythical allusion, elsewhere common in the form of paradigms of misforture, here foreshadows deliverance. *I.T.,* therefore, in adding an epilogue to Atreid history, has also reshaped that history into one circumscribed by two episodes of good fortune.

The pattern so far discussed accounts for only a part of the plot, viz. the arrival of Orestes and his escape with Iphigenia. It omits the near-sacrifice of Orestes. As Burnett has explained it, this is not a simple rescue story but one which has embedded in it a misdirected and interrupted vengeance plot. This is true, provided one accepts a broad definition of 'vengeance plot'; but the terms used, being general, may not be the most useful ones. They are appropriate if we think of the poet as manipulating 'structural commonplaces' and arousing in the audience its 'combined memories' of all other rescue plots and vengeance plots. But here again particular memories are the ones most obviously being aroused, and the structural analogy insisted upon in passage after passage links two stories, not many: the sacrifice of Orestes and the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

They are first associated in Iphigenia's opening monologue. This speech encompasses the allusion to Pelops (1-2), three transitional lines consisting largely of proper names (3-5), the sacrifice at Aulis (6-30), her life as priestess of Artemis (31^41), her recent dream (42-60), and her present intentions (61-6). The bulk of the speech is occupied by the sacrifice and the dream. The latter turns out to have taken the form of preparations for another sacrifice, that of Orestes, in which she plays the role of priestess. Her interpretation of it is wrong (that Orestes is already dead), but the dream itself is a true augury of her preparations to sacrifice him later in the play. Her speech, therefore, is largely occupied with her own apparent death, about which only she knows the truth (see line 8), and Orestes' apparent death, about which only she is deceived. Both deaths are cast in the form of sacrifices. Some parallelism of treatment is already discernible in all this.

It continues to be discernible in the parodos and kommos at 123ff. Here the two subjects recur, and there is more formal symmetry in the way they are balanced than in the earlier speech If one omits the introductory lines before 143, the passage falls into three distinct parts, of which the first and last belong to Iphigenia (143-77,203-35). The first is a lament for Orestes, with a brief reference to her own illusory sacrifice and death in the closing lines. The last is devoted to the same two subjects, but with their order and proportions reversed. The shorter chant of the chorus (179-202) which separates these is about the woes of the house, now reaching their final stage. As far as the corrupt text allows one to say, these begin with the quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes.

Up to this point, the correspondence between the two imagined deaths is merely something implicit in the poetic form. At 337-9 it becomes explicit, and it takes the special form of a claim that sacrifices of victims such as those now in hand can serve as retribution for the sacrifice at Aulis. The speaker is the herdsman who brings news of the capture of Orestes and Pylades. Iphigema responds to this report in a speech (342-91) full of bitter reminiscence about her two sources of grief, the supposed death of Orestes and her own slaying, here spoken of without mention of her final rescue. The two captives, she says, will find her unsympathetic and fierce, as she never was before with Greeks (344-53). Her preferred victims would be Helen and Menelaus, whom she would gladly pay back by a re-enactment of Aulis.. .

She does not speak of the sacrifice of two innocents now in prospect as a new Aulis; that would erase the moral distinction between her and the sanguinary Taurians, and this distinction will be consistently maintained in the play. But she does say that she has turned savage and that her victims will find her hostile. Euripides allows her no further comment in that vein, but her words seem designed to place her for a moment in the attitude of a vengeful killer about to balance her own sacrifice with the one to come. This attitude will not be maintained when the victims appear, but while it lasts it keeps alive the herdsman's notion of retributory correspondence.

The intended sacrifice is forestalled by the revelation of Orestes' identity. In the *amoibaion* which follows this recognition, it becomes clear that what happened at Aulis and what has just now happened here are linked both in Iphigenia's thoughts and in the design of the poet; this fact is reflected in the structure of the central section (850-72). Orestes begins this by stating a theme [at 850-1].

Of the many misfortunes that might have illustrated this statement, only two are mentioned, and the language used of these is chosen to reflect their essential similarity. Aulis comes first: the knife at the throat, the ruse of the betrothal to Achilles, the holy water. Then there is a transition to the attempted sacrifice of Orestes, which is linked with Aulis by a simple responsion of the idea 'reckless action committed against one's own kin'.... When she goes on to say that Orestes has barely escaped an unholy death ... her language is not easily reconciled with her statement at 622-4 that she sprinkles holy water on the victims but others do the killing (cf. 40,54). A possible explanation is that what she says here is meant to make her more clearly the counterpart of her father in the role he plays earlier in this same passage A specific reminiscence may also be intended, since the verb she uses ... is unparalleled in Euripides but is used by Aeschylus at *Ag.* 208 of the sacrifice of Iphigema. At all events, this lyric exchange is so managed as to concentrate attention equally upon these two averted misfortunes while charting a pattern into which both will fit. It becomes clear that, in a sense she did not foresee, Iphigenia has performed the reenactment she envisaged at line 358..

The re-enactment is closer than the imagined sacrifice of Menelaus and Helen because it too ends with the victim's escape from the knife. For Iphigenia this was a swift flight through the air; for Orestes the escape has just begun and will be less simple. Its completion will require the intrigue, the deception of Thoas, the flight to the snip, and Athena's intervention. In the development of this part of the tragedy, where a young man and woman flee before a savage pursuer, the paramount analogy is the flight of Pelops. But both of these myths in the background of the story, the sacrifice at Aulis and the flight of Pelops, end with an escape from death; to that extent both are mirrored in the conclusion of *LT.* The connection with Aulis is made explicit at lines 1082-4, here Iphigenia asks Artemis to play once more the role she played at Aulis so that the present story will end as that one did....

She asks Artemis to save them once again at 1398-1402, when the wave threatens to bring them back to shore. The active agents in her rescue, however, turn out to be three other gods: Athena, who stops the pursuit by Thoas; Poseidon, who stills the sea; and

Apollo, by whose command Orestes is acting (1435-45) Iphigenia's repeated pleas do not cause any direct intervention by Artemis, though Artemis' acquiescence in the outcome can be assumed. Their principal effect, in reminding us of the goddess's more active role in the rescue at Aulis, is to keep alive the parallel between that former rescue and the more complicated present one, which began with the recognition and is now about to be completed.

Of the two legends reflected in the plot of *I.T.* the sacrifice at Aulis comes to the surface more often in the utterances of the characters. This is natural, since it is part of Iphigenia's own past, whereas the story of Pelops is a distant part of family tradition. Aulis means several things to Iphigenia- a betrayal of her hopes for marriage, a threat of death, an escape, and the beginning of exile. In the prologue of the play, the meaning she reads into her dream seems to put beyond remedy her separation from her family. In spite of her rescue at Aulis, the end result for her has not been happy, and it has left the need for another deliverance. In allowing his story to develop partly along the lines of that earlier averted sacrifice, Euripides has done more than fall into the familiar general pattern of kin-slaying averted by recognition; he has found a way to interweave two particular stories, in each of which Iphigenia has a role. While one story is acted out, the other emerges by reminiscence. Both arouse powerful emotions, and the lyric that follows the recognition is in equal measure about both. That dramatic moment is strengthened by the coincidence of theme which this interweaving allows: a brother has almost been killed by a sister as she once was by her father; brother and sister have until now each thought the other dead. Since each now knows the other's identity, their present emotions, like their past experiences, are matched and complementary. Earlier, while they were both still in ignorance, the recollection of Aulis was used to give the present story an ironic cast. For example, at 344ff., Iphigenia speaks of her harsh feelings towards the present victims; though these arise from the recent dream, her speech turns mainly on Aulis and the unfeeling treatment she suffered there from her father. We cannot fail to be made aware that at this moment her own actions are unwittingly moving in a pattern similar to his.

Unlike the sacrifice at Auks, the courtship of Pelops and Hippodameia is no part of Iphigenia's personal experience and seems at first sight an unlikely cause of strong emotion in her or in Orestes. What sets it apart from the other legends of the house and gives it a claim to special relevance is the correspondence of form between its story and the plot of *I.T.:* both are escapes from a barbarous pursuer, and both end happily. Euripides, however, has also contrived a place for it in Iphigenia's Me, in the form of the spear hidden in her chambers. Moreover, he has so placed the recollection of this token that it brings about the recognition and releases the strongest outburst of emotion in the play (822ff.). As far as anyone knows, the hidden spear is his own invention; as a means of recognition it stands well apart from the usual repertoire of necklaces, rings, scars, and articles of clothing. But if Euripides' purpose was to remind the audience of Pelops' victory over Oenomaus, nothing could have served better. The degree of artifice in all this should not be underestimated. A similar artifice, found at the start of the play, is that of beginning the family's history with the same victory, rather than earlier or later. In spite of their prominent positions, the two passages are short, and they are given little attention by modern scholars. Here the ancient spectator of *I.T.* undoubtedly had the

advantage, since the legend of the contest with Oenomaus is known to have been a theme of sculpture, painting, and lyric in the fifth century and, it is likely, of at least one tragedy before *I.T.* In stating what that spectator was likely to be alert to we must therefore include the readily visible coincidences of plot line between one story and the other and at least one striking reminiscence of the Oenomaus legend in the staging of *I.T.* (72-5). Admittedly, the capacities of the ancient spectator to grasp and interpret such references are not well understood. The direct testimony about his knowledge of myths is inconclusive. It is clear, however, from tragic parodies in comedy and from the often fleeting allusions to myth in tragedy itself that poets habitually wrote as if for a knowing audience; and the relevant issue is the practice of poets rather than the culture of spectators. The long tradition of the *exemplum* in epic, lyric, and drama had, in any case, familiarized both poet and audience with the use of mythological paradigms. By convention, any legend can become part of the presentation of any other legend if it resembles it in some way and if mythical chronology allows its use.... But poetic logic is not always explicit, and not every paradigm will have its function announced so clearly. Euripides does not have Iphigenia or Orestes say after /. *T.* 826 that their fates have been similar, though by that point the similarity should be clear to us, as it was to Polyidus the sophist; and Pelops' contest is mentioned only before the pattern it foreshadows is complete.

My argument has been about a single Euripidean tragedy but may point the way to more general conclusions about recurrent plot patterns in Euripides. Among the many echoes of previous stories which these patterns bring into a play, some may be more important than others.... Some plots, admittedly, may lend themselves to nothing more than formal analysis, couched in general terms. Even here, we might keep in mind that our ability to interpret allusions and recognize particular analogies is limited by the loss to us of most of the literature known to Euripides. In deciding whether any of the many possible prototypes of an action has special significance, we should take into account Euripides' interest in the continuity of family history, a topic now given much less than its due. Eunpidean characters and choruses, like those of Aeschylus and Sophocles, often mention family history and sometimes do so as an explanation or a model for the events being dramatized. These references are frequently dismissed as mere undigested relics of the tradition, since Euripides, unlike Aeschylus, is thought to be more interested in the inner life of his characters than in the actions of then-ancestors. He is, of course, but there is no need to think of these interests as mutually exclusive or to judge Euripides incapable of combining them. It is clear, for example, that many of his characters retain a strong sense of their origins. Whenever they present their own experiences as the latest episodes of family history they call attention to family continuity and solidarity. One effect of this is to give added significance to any present crisis or success. Iphigenia's dream is threatening because it seems to mark the end of the house as well as the death of her brother. When she sees that she has misread it, both the house and her brother are in sight of rescue. The recurrence within that rescue of old patterns of action is a reminder of the continuity of the house and of the involvement of its fortunes in the outcome of the play. As a tragedy with a happy ending, *I.T.* contains more than it might seem to at first sight: not only a cheering sequel to the Orestes and Iphigenia legends, but also an alternative history of the Pelopids, one that begins and ends with a tale of success.

Source: Michael J. O'Brien, "Pelopid History and the Plot of *Iphigenia, in Taurus,"* in *Classical Quarterly,* Volume 38, no. i,1988, pp. 98-115.

Adaptations

In 1779, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe created a prose version of *Iphigenia in Tauris* in five acts that closely follows Euripides's plot line.

In 1779, Chnstoph Willibald Gluck produced an opera version of the play, called *Iphigenie en Tauride* that is still produced. A recording of the opera is available on compact disk from Phillips.

Topics for Further Study

What political and social issues would have made the topic of human sacrifice pertinent to the fifth-century Athenian audience?

Does this play corroborate a commonly held belief that the house of Atreus (Agamemnon's family) was unavoidably doomed? Explain your answer.

What is the effect or role of Orestes's temporary madness upon the rest of the play Why is this detail included?

Does this play, in your opinion, effectively meet Artistotle's criteria for a tragedy, meaning that it purges the emotions of pity and fear through raising them? Does it effectively portray a change of fortune that is resolved in a recognition scene?

Compare and Contrast

5th century B.C.: Greek tragic theater is produced in March for the ritual celebration of Dionysus, the god of wine. Everyone in the city attends the festival and the overall mood is festive though respectful and senous. Theater lies at the heart of Greek culture, integrated with religious ceremony and serving as a bond for the community.

Today: Theater no longer has no ties to religion, although dramas for religious rituals are produced in some organized religions for important holidays. In the public theater, the sense of solemn ritual as experienced by the Athenians has no counterpart today. Theater is a form of entertainment that holds a rather peripheral status in modern society.

5th century B.C.: The conflict between Sparta and Athens, the "super powers" of ancient Greece, has raged for ten years and a seven-year truce has just ended as *Iphigenia in Taurus* is first produced. The wars, which will ultimately last twenty-seven years, are devastating to Athens; Sparta plunders the city, destroys hundreds of valuable warships, and decimates Athenian population.

Today: The United States has enjoyed over one hundred years of peace on its North American territory. Although its armed forces have engaged in wars in other countries, Americans and their way of life have enjoyed little threat from outsiders. The threat comes rather from within, from urban violence and from a slow erosion in moral values.

5th century B.C.: Athenians value their democratic political and social system. Words have more power than weapons. Any citizen accused of a crime can defend *himself* (women did not share Athenian men's rights) before a jury While slavery and other unsavory civil practices are common, the society is primarily democratic and free.

Today: Democratic privileges extend to all citizens of the United States. Although inequalities still exist in practice, the American legal system guarantees citizens its rights and provides professional legal representation to those accused of crimes.

What Do I Read Next?

The myth of the family of Atreus was portrayed by each of the three great dramatists of the Golden Age of Athens: Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus. Euripides's play *Iphigenia in Aulis* recounts the moving story of Agamemnon's attempt to sacrifice his daughter. Euripides's other extant plays on the House of Atreus are *Orestes* and *Electra.*

Sophocles also wrote an *Electra* (c. 409 B.C.), although this play assumes Iphigema's death and focuses on the plight of her sister, Electra, and brother, Orestes, exacting revenge against Clytemnestra.

Aeschylus wrote a trilogy on the myth called the *Oresteia.* In the first of the trilogy, *Agamemnon,* Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon in vengeance for sacrificing their daughter. In the second play, *The Libation Bearers,* Orestes kills Clytemnestra to avenge his father, and in the final play, *The Eumenides,* Orestes is tried and acquitted in an Athenian court.

Further Study

Bieber, Margaret *The Greek and Roman Theatre,* 1961. A thorough description of the function and form of theatrical performances in ancient Greece and Rome

Kitto, H. D. F. *The Greeks* Penguin Books, 1991

This work describes the daily life, religion, philosophy, and political world of the Greeks, written in a conversational style with excerpts of famous speeches woven into the narrative to give a better sense of the Greek mind

Lucas, F L *Euripides and His Influence,* MarshallJones, 1923 Lucas describes some of the innovations of Eunpi-des' s plays and how his work influenced later generations of writers.

Murray, Gilbert *Euripides and His Age,* Oxford University Press, 1955.

A landmark work descnbing the historical context of Euripides's Athens, including the Peloponnesian War and the rise of the Sophists. Murray describes the function of such dramatic elements as the prologue, chorus, and messenger, and explains Euripides's unique use of them.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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