ADVENTURES WITH IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS
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Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides’ Black Sea Tragedy
   Edith Hall
Thoas
König der Taureer
in dem Schauspiel "Phrygia auf Tauros"
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF EURIPIDES’ BLACK SEA TRAGEDY

Edith Hall
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Timeline

540–528 BCE Athenian tyrant Peisistratus purifies the island of Delos
430s BCE Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia built on the Athenian Acropolis
426 BCE Athenians expiate the island of Delos and revive Delia festival
421 BCE Traditional date of the foundation of Tauric Chersonesos

C. 425–412 BCE First production of Euripides’ Iphigenia in Tauris
416 BCE Transfer of treasures from Brauron to Athenian Acropolis

405 BCE First production of Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis
400–325 BCE Scenes from Iphigenia in Tauris painted on Attic and South Italian funeral vases

349–335 BCE List of dedications to Artemis at Brauron set up on Athenian Acropolis
C. 330 BCE Texts of the Greek tragedies collated at Athens
C. 300 BCE Rhinthon’s burlesque Iphigenia in Tauris
C. 150 BCE Pacuvius’ Latin tragedy Orestes
C. 44 BCE Cicero’s de Amicitia
C. 10 CE Ovid’s Tristia
13 CE Ovid’s Epistulae ex Ponto books 1–3

Late 1st c. CE Martial’s Epigrams book 6
Early to mid-2nd c. CE Charition mime burlesques plot of Iphigenia in Tauris

Mid-2nd c. CE Lucian’s Toxaris and Erotes
Timeline

Mid to late 2nd c. CE
Achilles Tatius’ novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*

C. 170 CE
Pausanias’ *Description of Greece*

249–51 CE
Iphigenia, Pylades, and Orestes on coinage of Lydian Philadelphia

Mid-3rd c. CE
Lines from Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* copied in Hibeh papyrus 24

C. 397 CE
Augustine of Hippo’s *Confessions*

C. 450 CE
End of the cult of Ephesian Artemis

Late 5th c. CE
Dracontius’ *Orestis Tragoedia*

988
Saint Vladimir baptized at Tauric Chersonesos

Early 14th c.
Discovery of Greek text of *Iphigenia in Tauris* in Thessaloniki

By 1457
Manuscript containing *Iphigenia in Tauris* arrived in Florence

1475
Establishment of the Muslim Khanate in the Crimea

1503
*Iphigenia in Tauris* first printed, in Venice

1506
Publication of Erasmus’ Latin translation of Lucian’s *Toxaris*

C. 1520
Giovanni Rucellai writes tragedy *Oreste*

1548
Francesco Robertelli’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics* printed

1571
William Canter’s Latin translation of *Iphigenia in Tauris* published

1587
Christopher Marlowe’s play *Tamberlane* Part I

1614
Pieter Lastman’s oil-painting ‘Iphigenia, Orestes and Pylades in Tauris’

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John Milton’s poem ‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’

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Pieter de Cracht’s tapestry sequence illustrating *Iphigenia in Tauris*

1666
Joost van den Vondel’s Dutch translation *Ifigenie in Tauren*

1667
Charles Davenant’s dramatic opera *Circe*

1668
Antonio Draghi and Minato’s opera *Il Tempio di Diana in Taurica*

1713
Alain-René Lesage’s harlequinade *Arlequin roi de Serendib* (1713)

1731
Lewis Theobald’s musical drama *Orestes* first performed in London
Timeline

1734
Handel’s opera *Oreste* premieres in London

1737
J.E. Scheget writes play *Die Geschwister in Taurien*

1757
Claude Guymond de la Touche’s tragedy *Iphigénie en Tauride*

1757
Jean-Baptiste-Claude Vaubertrand’s tragedy *Iphigénie en Tauride*

1757
Charles Simon Favart’s parody *La Petite Iphigénie*

1758
Francesco Araja’s opera *Iphigenia in Tauride* staged in Moscow

1763
Tomasso Traetta’s opera *Ifigenia in Tauride* (1763)

1768
Baldassare Galuppi’s opera *Ifigenia in Tauride* first performed, at St. Petersburg, and translated into Russian

1779
First performance of Goethe’s prose version of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*

1779
C.W. Gluck’s opera *Iphigénie en Tauride*

1779
Charles Simon Favart’s parody *Les Rêveries Renouvelées des Grecs*

1781
Nicolo Piccinni’s opera *Iphigénie en Tauride*

1782
First production of Mozart’s opera *Escape from the Seraglio*

1783
Russian annexation of the Crimea

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Creation of the Russian province of Taurida

1787
‘Goethe in the Campagna, 1786–87’, oil-painting by J.H.W. Tischbein

1824
Alexander Pushkin’s narrative poem ‘The Bakhisarian Fountain’ published

1853–6
Crimean War

1858
John Acton Adams’ statue group ‘Orestes and Pylades’ (London)

1884
Statue group of Orestes and Pylades by Carol Johann Steinhauser erected in Philadelphia

1887
*Iphigenia in Tauris* performed, in Greek, by women students of Bedford College, London

1889
Richard Strauss’s adaptation of Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride*

1890
James Frazer publishes *The Golden Bough*

1895
*Iphigenia in Tauris* performed in Greek at Cambridge University
Timeline

1903      Lesya Ukrainka begins her dramatic poem ‘Iphigenia at Tauris’
1903      Ezra Pound performs in Euripides’ Iphigenia in Tauris, in Greek, at UPenn.
1903–16   Isadora Duncan works on her choreography to the music of Gluck’s Iphigénie operas
1908      L.L. Zamenhof’s Esperanto translation of Goethe’s Iphigenie performed at Dresden
1910      Publication of Gilbert Murray’s translation of Iphigenia in Tauris
1912      First production, in London, of Gilbert Murray’s translation of Iphigenia in Tauris, directed by Harley Granville-Barker
1915      Granville-Barker’s production of Iphigenia in Tauris tours ‘Ivy League’ campuses in the U.S.A.
1916      H.D.’s poetry collection Sea Garden
1924      Alfonso Reyes’ Spanish-language drama Ifi genia Cruel
1927      Publication of Ethelreda Lewis’s ‘biography’ Trader Horn: A Young Man’s Astounding Adventures in 19th-Century Equatorial Africa
1931      Naomi Mitchison’s novel The Corn King and the Spring Queen
1931      MGM movie Trader Horn, directed by Woody S. Van Dyke
1940      Gerhart Hauptmann’s play Iphigenie in Delphi
1944      Jean Bellette’s oil painting ‘Iphigenia in Tauris’
1948      Randall Jarrell’s poem ‘Orestes at Tauris’
1953      George Baker’s novel The Last Shore (1953)
1954      Theatre at Tauric Chersonesos excavated by Oleg I. Dombrovsky
1967      Theodor Adorno’s lecture, ‘The Classicism of Goethe’s Iphigenie’
1968      R.W. Fassbinder’s Iphigenie auf Tauris von Johann Wolfgang Goethe
1971–2    ‘The Return of Iphigenia,’ dramatic monologue by Yannis Ritsos
1973      State Theatre of Constanta, Romania, stages Iphigenia in Tauris
Timeline

1973  First performance of Pina Bausch's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* to Gluck's music by Tanztheater Wuppertal
1985  First production of Louis Nowra's play *The Golden Age* (Sydney)
1995  Ellen McLaughlin's *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* (New York)
1997  JoAnne Akalaitis' *The Iphigenia Cycle* (Chicago)
2010  Michi Barall's *Rescue Me (A Postmodern Classic with Snacks)* (New York)
2010  Public premiere of opera *Exile* by Helen Gifford (Melbourne)
2011  Włodzimierz Staniewski directs the first performance of *Ifigenia w Taurydzie* by Theatrical Practices Gardzienice near Lublin, Poland
This book excavates the history of a text that has influenced the formation of the western mind. It is the play which first enacted the escape of Iphigenia from the Black Sea. Her journeys will take us from ‘Tauris’ in the southern Crimea not just to Greece, but to Berlin and Moscow, Philadelphia and California, Australia and South Africa, Sri Lanka and India, Mexico and Peru. In the course of this heroine’s journeys through time we will meet her many admirers, who have included Aristotle, Ovid, Vera (high priestess of Artemis on the island of Patmos), John Milton, Marie Antoinette, Catherine the Great, Hector Berlioz, Isadora Duncan, Reiner Schlösser (the Third Reich’s head of theatrical policy) and the Greek communist poet Yannis Ritsos.

Euripides’ IT is the archetype of all adventure narratives featuring the entertaining escapades of ‘two guys and a girl’ in remote locations, where the ‘girl’ has often been abducted by the local inhabitants, and held captive, or has somehow ‘gone native.’ Today this type of plot is most familiar in cinema—IT is the ultimate source of the story pattern underlying the seven Road to . . . movies featuring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour, beginning with Road to Singapore in (1940).¹ In these films, Anthony Quinn often took the ‘Thoas’ role, which Bob Hope called ‘the heavy’—the barbarian thug impeding the escape.² Hope himself called this plot-type

¹ Road to Singapore (1940), Road to Zanzibar (1941), Road to Morocco (1942), Road to Utopia (1946), Road to Rio (1947), Road to Bali (1952), Road to Hong Kong (1961). The writers of Road to Singapore, Frank Butler and Don Hartman, were frustrated at the degree to which Hope and Crosby altered their scripts by ad-libbing, See Hope and Thomas (1977).
² Hope and Thomas (1977) 46–7.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

‘a formula that was simple yet sure-fire.’ In different registers, the same fundamental plot features in John Ford’s *The Searchers* (1956), the original *Star Wars* movie (1977), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983), where Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker finally discover they are twin siblings.

The plotline first developed by Euripides also informs, in a subterranean way, countless crypto-colonial ‘action adventure’ films featuring two white or western buddies and a heroine who needs rescuing from some outlandish captor. Often there is a talisman—a lost ark, a magic goblet, a Pharaoh’s seal—that needs to be stolen away from the exotic location. These precious objects are equivalents of the Taurians’ statue of Artemis in *IT*. The statue is stolen by Iphigenia, her brother Orestes and his friend Pylades, and taken to Greece. ‘I think the play is very American,’ says one of the most recent adaptors of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. ‘It’s the story of a guy and a gal with some magical object fleeing barbarians. You’ve seen that movie. It’s *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.’

In the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries, when the ancient drama was incessantly adapted as a stage play, opera, or ballet, its influence was often equally subterranean. The same basic plot-type informed a whole subgenre of ‘abduction and rescue’ operas, in which European women are rescued from Muslim captors, the most famous of which are Mozart’s *Escape from the Seraglio* (1782) and Rossini’s *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813).

But the reception of ancient Greek drama did not begin after the European Renaissance. It has been an ongoing process which began in antiquity the minute each play was first performed. In the cases of exceptionally popular plays, such as *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the impact of the canonical text can be seen exerting itself for at least 900 years of pagan antiquity, on theatre, ritual, aesthetics, art, and literary genres from love elegy to the ancient novel. The play’s ancient adventures alone, which form the subject matter of chapters II to VII, will take us to the north coast of the Black Sea, deep into what is now south-eastern Turkey, to Burgundy in Gaul, Roman Carthage, and Oxyrhynchus in Egypt.

Besides proving the cultural importance of my favourite play, the other major aim of this book is to demonstrate in practice, using the particular case-study of a Euripidean drama, that the ancient and more recent ‘reception’ of classical literature is a semi-continuous but fluctuating process, consisting of a series of crucial readings or cultural moments in which each ancient text has come into psychological prominence. *Iphigenia in Tauris* crops up in important ways in antiquity, in

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1 Hope and Thomas (1977) 139.
2 Michi Barall, quoted in Blankenship (2010).
3 See the elegant study by Questa (1979). ‘Rescue Opera,’ of which *Iphigenia in Tauris* is surely the most important and earliest ancient archetype, became an acknowledged category, initially in German as *Rettungsstück*, early in the twentieth century: see Charlton (1992) 169–70.
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Aristotle's *Poetics* and on Italian vases of the fourth century BCE (see chapter IV), in Ovid’s exile poetry (see chapter V), in the ancient novel and mime theatre (see chapter VI), and on Roman imperial sarcophagi (see chapter VII). Its most influential receptions since the Renaissance, to be discussed in the second half of the book, have been in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera and theatre, especially Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* (chapter IX) and Goethe’s *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (chapter X), at the ‘Modernist moment’ in the early twentieth century (chapter XI), and in feminist and anticolonial theatre since the mid-1980s (chapters XII and XIII).

The reception of a classical play is not something to be confined to a single chapter appended to a book on the play in its original context; equally, studies that focus primarily on the post-Renaissance reception of an individual Greek tragedy too often ignore the variant readings and intertexts that emanated from antiquity. When Renaissance authors adapted *IT*, for example, they were also influenced by Cicero’s *On Friendship*, Ovid’s exile poems, Lucian’s *Toxaris*, and certain ancient marble sarcophagus reliefs on display in Roman collections. It is also too easy to ignore the period between late antiquity and the Renaissance. In the course of the time travels of the Black Sea Iphigenia we shall several times find her haunting the Christian imaginations of Tertullian, St. Augustine, the Christian communities of Cappadocia in the sixth century CE and Byzantine admirers of Thekla, the animal-taming virgin saint.

One of the key moments when *IT* became a familiar and much-performed play was at the dawn of Modernism in the first two decades of the twentieth century, discussed in chapter XI. The word ‘adventure’ in my title was inspired by a sentence in Gilbert Murray’s preface to his famous translation of the play, published in 1910. Murray defended the morality of the scene in which Iphigenia coolly tells a series of brazen lies to King Thoas of the Taurians:

> I suspect that the good people who lament over ‘the low standard of truthfulness shown by even the most enlightened pagans’ have either forgotten the days when they read stories of adventure, or else have not, in reading this scene, realised properly the strain of hairbreadth peril that lies behind the comedy of it. A single slip in Iphigenia’s tissue of desperate improvisations would mean death, and not to herself alone.⁶

The ‘hairbreadth’ escape of Iphigenia, the Greek youths, and the sacred statue of Artemis from the barbarous Taurians, is, as Murray saw, an *adventure* story taking the form of an exciting play. It is one of a distinct category of ancient adventure

⁶ Murray (1910) ix.
tragedies, all by Euripides. In these, the escape of Greeks from dangers faced overseas—the premise, in fact, of the wanderings of the epic Odyssey—is the engine which propels the plot. Into this category there also fall Helen and the satyr play Cyclops, based on one sequence in the Odyssey. Another play on a similar theme, now lost, was Euripides’ Andromeda. IT is generally accepted to have been a more serious and weighty drama than any of these, and it bears heavier cargo in the primal etiology of an important Olympian divinity. It has certainly played a more significant role in constituting our collective psyche. But these days it has fallen on hard times.

Between the mid-1920s and the very recent past, Euripides’ IT was one of the least familiar of ancient plays. It was occasionally staged as a pedagogical exercise in schools and universities, but otherwise it was hardly ever performed, little read, and received only slight and sporadic scholarly attention. This needs explaining because Iphigenia, in her lonely northern exile from the sunny lands of the south, has often been seen as emblematic of tragic theatre: her image as mediated through Goethe’s Iphigenie auf Tauris and nineteenth-century painters is reproduced on the covers of two important books on Greek tragedy which, when their pages are turned, are found never actually to discuss her play. One is the collection of essays edited by Michael Silk, Tragedy and the Tragic (1997), which is adorned with one of Anselm Feuerbach’s two famous ‘Iphigenia’ paintings of 1862. The other is Judith Mossman’s Oxford Readings in Euripides (2003), with its reproduction of Valentin Serov’s stunning Iphigenia at Tauris of 1893 (see Fig I.1). But even Goethe’s adaptation, the main inspiration behind the fashion for Black Sea Iphigenias in nineteenth-century art, had by the 1960s lost its central role in the performance repertoire.

The revival of ancient Greek drama in the professional theatres of the world, which began in the late 1960s and brought back into the repertoire Euripides’ Bacchae, Medea, and Trojan Women, bypassed Euripides’ Tauric heroine, whose portrayal as a heroine is the central topic of the next chapter of this book (chapter II). Responsibility for this must partly be taken by the Classics academy. Until the late 1990s, the canonical commentary remained the one published in 1938 by Maurice Platnauer, an Oxford don who was incapable of creating any sense of excitement about an ancient theatre script that might attract the attention of translators, adapters, or theatre directors. All his comments on the play were those one would expect from a scholar praised circumspectly in his Times obituary for being ‘careful and meticulous. A keen student of language and especially of grammar and syntax, he was one of those rare men who enjoy reading voluminous grammars from beginning to end.’ The situation was little better in terms of commentaries available in other

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7 Hall (2004).
languages. Nor was the lack of interest in *IT* helped by the poor standard of the version reproduced in the otherwise excellent *The Complete Greek Tragedies* edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, an initiative of the 1950s. This fine series had brought Greek tragedy to huge numbers of readers, especially in the United States and Canada. It remains a significant cultural presence both on and off the curriculum, having sold nearly four million copies. It is legendary in publishing history. But in the case of *IT*, the editors dropped the ball. The elderly Witter Bynner was asked to update his lacklustre translation, already four decades old. To be fair, he was certainly aware that this had compromised its quality.  

We shall see in chapters XII and XIII that, since the mid-1980s, Euripides’ atmospheric play has begun to strike new chords in contemporary theatre. A drama that has become central to the Australian performance repertoire, Louis Nowra’s *The Golden Age* (1985), incorporated two scenes from *IT* as a “play within a play,” thus attracting attention to *IT* in the Antipodean world. In the 1990s, two productions instigated by prominent North American theatre professionals, JoAnne Akalaitis and Ellen McLaughlin, showed that the Black Sea Iphigenia intrigued the feminist stage, at least when performed in conjunction with the other Euripidean play about the same heroine, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, which had never descended into such obscurity. In 1998, Bernhard Zimmermann put the play back onto the cultural map in

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9 See the letters he wrote to Ansel Adams and Richmond Lattimore on July 18th 1953 and January 16th 1954 in Bynner (1981) 219 and 222. The translation of *IT* is about to be replaced in the new, revised Chicago series by a new one commissioned from Anne Carson, a fine stage writer, poet, and Hellenist.
German-speaking countries when he published a volume containing Georg Finsler’s fine German translation of *IT*, with an appraisal of its importance, along with three important essays by specialists on the play’s chorus, presence in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and reception in the ancient visual arts. And in 2000, Martin Cropp’s fine edition of *IT* in the ‘Aris and Phillips’ series suddenly made the play inviting to a whole new generation of directors, translators, and students; Pouliheria Kyriakou’s more substantial commentary appeared just six years later, in 2006.

As a result, *IT* is now being appreciated more than for a very long time. I have written this book in the conviction that the time is right for a cultural history of a tragedy that in its own way has exerted an influence equivalent in scale to either that of *Medea* or Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, albeit different in nature because there is no Senecan version of *IT.*\(^\text{10}\) The low cultural profile held by Euripides’ exquisite Black Sea tragedy for the last few decades is no longer any excuse for neglecting its true historic significance. But before we can begin tracing the Tauric Iphigenia’s adventures diachronically, we need to understand just how consistently important in her play’s reception have been two specific elements: the geographical setting and the totemic statue of Artemis which is the object of the Greek heroes’ quest. The remainder of this chapter offers some essential insights into the relationship between Euripides’ dramatic text and the views of its setting and its totem which have evolved historically.

One of the most important moments in the cultural history of the play was the Crimean War (1853–6). In 1858 John Acton Adams (who subsequently became known as John Adams-Acton) was awarded a prize by the Royal Academy of Arts for a statue group depicting Orestes and Pylades, heroically naked (see Fig. I.2). They are carrying the near life-size statue of the goddess Artemis away from Tauris, high on their muscular shoulders. The engraving of the statue was published in the *Illustrated London News.*\(^\text{11}\) Adams enjoyed eminence, being a friend of William Gladstone, of whom he carved many busts during the course of their careers.\(^\text{12}\) He executed numerous famous commissions, including the Wesley memorial in Westminster Abbey. Adams had studied in Rome and visited Pompeii.\(^\text{13}\) His sculpture was inspired by the story first told in Euripides’ *IT*, yet the scene it depicts never occurs in the play, in which the only person permitted by sacred law to touch the statue of Artemis is the priestess Iphigenia. He had either not read the play, or perhaps felt, as a Victorian

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\(^{10}\) Most of the Greek tragedies whose individual receptions have so far been the subject of dedicated books, whether monographs or collections of essays, inspired imperial Latin versions attributed to Seneca: for *Medea* see Hall, Macintosh, and Taplin (2000); for *Agamemnon*, Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall, and Taplin (2005); for *Oedipus*, Macintosh (2009); for *Heracles*, Riley (2008). *Antigone* is an exception: see Steiner (1984) and Mee and Foley (2011).

\(^{11}\) Anon. (1858).

\(^{12}\) Stirling (1954) 125.

\(^{13}\) Stirling (1954) 181.
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**Figure I.2** John Acton Adams’ statue group ‘Orestes and Pylades’ (1858).

gentleman, that ladies should not be depicted lifting heavy masonry. Yet the choice of subject matter and the date are instructive. In 1858 the story of the Black Sea barbarians being taught a lesson must have felt topical. The unlikely alliance of the military forces of the British, French, and Ottoman Empires and the Kingdom of
Sardinia had between them just lost a quarter of a million lives in the Crimean War. The Greek scholar and hymn-writer Henry Alford’s poem, ‘A Crimean Thought,’ in which he reflects on the fatalities suffered by Britain, associates the allies’ Russian enemy with the cruelties of ancient Tauris:

Again those heavy tidings. On the breeze
Laden with death, they come. A thousand more
Stiff on the sod of Tauris: yon fair fleet,
Bearer of hope and comfort, charged with strength
For the great conflict, scattered on the rocks
Of that inhospitable sea. And those
Who lit our homes with joy, whose manly forms
Big with their manlier souls, we saw depart,
Whose names were borne with all our prayers to heaven,
Each, worthy to be chief,—each chief, a king,—
They, to be pierced, all helpless as they fell,
By the barbarian recreants, as men turn
To crush a reptile maimed! Farewell! Farewell! 14

But the allies had killed more than twice that number of their Russian foes, and eventually extracted major concessions from Tsar Alexander II under the Treaty of Paris (1856). There is no grimmer account of the carnage, from the Russian perspective, than Tolstoy’s three stories in *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855), which reek with the gore of festering amputation wounds, unburied cadavers, cannon fire, and horse dung.

The post-Renaissance fortunes of *IT* have been tied to the history of its setting more than those of any other ancient play, which is why I have devoted a whole chapter (chapter III) of this book to the centrality of the theme of travel in the tragedy.

One reason why this drama attracted little interest in the west during much of the twentieth century was that the Crimea had ‘disappeared’ behind the Iron Curtain. The city which the ancient Greeks knew as ‘Tauric Chersonese’ is part of modern Sevastopol, a city founded by Catherine the Great, on the south-western coast of the Crimean peninsula. The superb natural harbour and strategically crucial position of Sevastopol made it the obvious home for the Imperial Russian Black Sea Fleet and subsequently the Soviet Black Sea naval operations. Until 1989, the military importance of the area, where nuclear activities and top-secret research were conducted, meant that a special permit was required even to visit the city. It was carefully protected from prying western eyes.

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14 Alford (1868) 153–4.
The ancient theatre of Tauric Chersonesos, the northernmost Black Sea Greek theatre so far excavated, was brought to light in 1954 by the archaeologist Oleg I. Dombrovsky. The appearance of the theatre might have been expected to prompt scholars to ask whether it had anything to do with the play, so famous in antiquity, which is actually set in the area. But nobody in the west seems to have noticed. The response was more excited in the Soviet Union. On one extraordinary occasion in the early 1970s, a group of St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) archaeology students, taken by their teacher Alexander Gavrilov to join Dombrovsky’s dig, performed an adaptation of IT in the ruined theatre. Since we have no proof that the play was ever performed there in antiquity, it may actually have been the Tauric Iphigenia’s premiere in Tauris. Professor Gavrilov, an eminent figure in Russian archaeology, who in 1993 founded the important St. Petersburg independent Classics research institute Biblioteca Classica Petropolitana, has kindly supplied a description of the performance. It began with an introduction in Russian, delivered by an undergraduate named Nikolai Kazansky (who is now the head of Comparative Linguistics at the Institute for Linguistic Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences), before he assumed the role of Pylades. Gavrilov himself, as the teacher, took the role of Iphigenia; his female students donned white sheets to recite choral verses. The text was compressed to a few hundred lines. The only surviving record of the production seems to be the mask which Gavrilov wore, made of white cardboard, with Iphigenia’s lines written out on the inside surface as an aide-memoire. It is still in his possession.

At around the same date, the Black Sea setting of IT attracted the attention of a professional theatre company in Romania. Romanians have always been aware that Ovid, who was exiled to Tomi (now Constanta), had reworked the story of IT in his exile poetry (see below, pp. 000); the Jewish-Romanian writer Florin Mugur, for example, used the same story to explore political repression in his poem ‘Iphigenia.’ In 1973 the State Theatre of Constanta staged an outdoor masked performance of IT in the city port itself, encouraged by the previous year’s success with a production of Euripides’ other tragedy with relevance to the Black Sea—Medea. The Taurian temple setting was designed to look as though it was

15 There was a theatre at Olbia, which has not been excavated, and rumours now circulate in Russian and Ukrainian archaeological circles that aerial photographs taken in 2007 have revealed a second, larger theatre in the vicinity of ancient Tauric Chersonese.
16 Personal email from A. Gavrilov to Edith Hall, November 16th 2009.
17 A Romanian film of an adaptation by Paul Everac of Euripides’ play was also made for Romanian TV in 1967. The director was Peter Sava Baleanu.
18 Published in Mugur (1979).
19 The premiere was on the evening of July 31st 1973 The director was George Jora and the designer Michael Tofan. See the remarks of Octavian (1973): Jora excised several passages, refocusing the action into five intense episodes, using a translation by Dulfu Peter. The overall tone was intensely tragic and disturbing. Ifigenia was played by Agatha Constanta Nicolau and Orestes by Dan Herdan. Emil Birladeanu was narrator.
anchored to the cliffs by the harbour, and the chorus entered with candles to illuminate the night sky in performances throughout the summer season.

During the Cold War, however, the western imagination’s vision of the Crimea was not much concerned with the ancient Greek or Roman presence in the Black Sea. One the one hand, the region was associated with images from World War II—the terrifying newsreels of the Nazi invasion of Sevastopol and the famous photographs of Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin, carving up the world at the Yalta Conference in April 1945. On the other hand, the west had never forgotten the Crimean war of 1853–6. In the popular imagination, at least in Britain, the Crimea meant the legend of Florence Nightingale, which had become the foundation myth of the nursing profession. The text with which the Crimea was most associated was Alfred Lord Tennyson’s 1854 poem ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’; the film which made it famous was Tony Richardson’s satirical 1968 film of the same title, with Trevor Howard in a dazzling performance as the high-handed Lord Cardigan. Today, the ancient Greeks therefore enjoy little obvious presence in the ‘Crimean’ file in the archive of the western memory, and apparently the western amnesia about the reality of the place which the ancient Greeks associated with Euripides’ IT is long-standing.

In 1906, the redoubtable anthropologist Annette Meakin observed in her book about Russia, there is no doubt that Euripides’ description of the coast is that of the Crimea, though written twenty-four centuries ago. The land-locked inlet he describes is that of Balaclava. What English schoolboy, I wonder, labouring over his Euripides, ever dreams that the scene of ‘Iphigenia’ is laid in Russia, and that the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ took place within a mile of the spot where Orestes found his sister? Had Lord Raglan but known that the very inlet so well described by the Greek poet was really in existence in 1854, we may surely surmise that he would have landed there in the first place, that the battle of the Alma would never have been fought, and that our men would have been spared that weary march from one side of Sebastopol to the other—a march which wasted their time and strength, and gave the enemy time to prepare for an eleven months’ siege. 20

Yet in 1858, when Adams’ statue won that prize, matters were different. The watching world had been exposed to a barrage of information, over five successive years, about the ancient history of the Crimea, from Herodotus to Mithridates VI. Not long after the beginning of the Crimean War, an article appeared in Gentleman’s

20 Meakin (1906) 291.
Rediscovering Tauris

*Magazine* applauding the educational benefits the expedition was conferring on the British populace. Reading about the war was ‘infusing into minds little addicted to such pursuits’ a huge amount of information.

Now even young gentlemen in Government offices hear, though with awe and reluctance, of a man named Mithridates, and their better-informed sisters find new pleasures in that somewhat chilling drama, the *Iphigenia* of Goethe, from being able, within a few hundred miles or so, to fix its locale... and human sacrifices to the Tauric Diana, more properly but still not quite properly termed Artemis.¹¹

The shores of the Crimea, the peninsula extending from what is now the south of Ukraine into the Black Sea, had for centuries been to western Europeans a remote land in the ‘Ottoman Lake’ run by the Muslim Khanate, or latterly the holiday venue of the Tsarinas and Tsars of Russia. It had suddenly become a specific, tangible area where young men from Britain and France were fighting—and dying—by the score. As the first theatre of war in which photography played a prominent role in journalism, it seemed more immediate and real to western readers than any foreign field of combat before. It was enacted, moreover, on a global stage, creating as much interest in America and the Antipodes as in Europe.

An article published in the Boston literary journal *North American Review* in 1855 attempted to make the history of the Crimea relevant to the North American readership, from classical Greece through to the period when it had been ruled by the Genoese. In a breathtaking move, the journalist reminds his readership that the Crimea had been visited by two of the chief architects of the ‘New World,’ the explorer Christopher Columbus and the Virginian settler (and husband of Pocohontas) Captain John Smith. Columbus travelled there as a teenager travelling on the Genoese trade routes; Smith had been taken prisoner when fighting the Turks, sold as a slave in 1602, and found himself in the Crimea, where he killed his master and escaped:

And so John Smith made the voyage which Iphigenia and Orestes, which Greeks and Persians, Romans and Byzantines, Ovid, Constantine, Justinian, Dori¹² and Columbus, had made before him, and which, alas! so many brave men make every day now. Smith, too, touched at Varna, crossed over and coasted along by the heights of Balaklava.¹³

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¹¹ ‘Urban’ (1855) 11.
¹² The fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Genoese admiral, Andrea Doria.
¹³ Anon. (1855) 474.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

The story of Iphigenia and Orestes has here nearly morphed into a charter tale for the ‘discovery’ and colonization of North America. The sorrows of Euripides’ Greeks in Tauris have come to symbolize the hardships being endured by the western armies while the author writes. The journalist quotes the ode in IT where the chorus long to return to Greece and especially to the cult of Artemis on Delos (1089–1123, see below pp. 000), and compares the sentiments of the western soldiers to those of Euripides’ stranded Greek women:

And all this winter long, when those brave men must have so yearned for home in their Balaklavan confinement, the words which Euripides put into the mouths of some Greek slaves detained there have seemed as appropriate as they ever were.  

The experience of the British in the Crimea was indeed ‘haunted’ by the classical past, as Edmund Richardson has demonstrated in an excellent study. The connections were fostered by the British practice of naming ships after mythological figures, for example the Agamemnon, a large warship under Sir Edmund Lyons, the Admiral of the English fleet, in the first year of the war stationed permanently on the Crimean coast, the Pylades, and the Golden Fleece, a Peninsular and Oriental (P&O) iron screw steamer which operated between Constantinople and the Crimea. Britons’ memoirs are crammed with information about the Pontic activities of ancient Greeks, Romans, and barbarians, including Mithridates Eupator, Homer’s Odysseus, Laestrygonians and Cimmerians, the Scythian Anacharsis, the Amazons, the Argonauts, Jason and Medea. In tandem with the feisty Greek heroine Iphigenia, popular books and journals unearthed Gycia, the patriotic heroine of Tauric Chersonesos who chose her city over her husband. Her Byzantine romance was rediscovered in the tenth-century text On the Administration of the Empire by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

A book about the Crimea published by a German traveller named Charles Koch in 1855 insisted that the Tartars of the Crimean mountain ranges bore ‘a strong resemblance to the Greeks, and there can be no doubt that Grecian blood flows in the veins of at least some among the Tartars on the southern coast.’  

14 Anon. (1855) 462–3.
15 Richardson (2008) 122–45, a Cambridge Ph.D. thesis. I have learned much from sharing my interest in Classics and the Crimean war with this scholar during our correspondence both before and after I co-examined his thesis with Dr. Paul Millett. Some of it is shortly appearing as Richardson’s first book, published by Cambridge University Press under the title Classical Antiquity and the Victorians: A Fragile Relationship.
16 Simpson (1902 [1855]) 23; Macormick (1855) 75, 129–31.
17 See, e.g., Simpson (1902 [1855]) 208–9.
18 Koch (1855) 101.
few ruins of ancient Chersonesos visible to the naked eye even in 1844, when Koch visited Sevastopol, he was shown new houses which had been built with slabs taken from the ancient remains. Some of the men who fought in the Crimea were persuaded that they were near to Circe’s island or the kingdom of the Laestrygonians. Typical journalism of the time assumes that the Laestrygonians were virtually identical with Euripides’ Taurians, since both Greek stories showed ‘how inhospitable was the reputations of the early Balclavians abroad.’ The heights of the Convent of St. George on the ‘Parthenit’ or ‘Parthenizza’ promontory, where some of the English marines camped in the winter of 1854–5, were accepted almost universally as the location of the temple of Artemis in Euripides’ play; one eyewitness wrote: The cape derived its ancient name from the cruel Virgin divinity of the Tauri… The Tauric goddess had her Parthenon in Khersonesus, and her chapel on Cape Partheniké. The road is still visible by which the worshippers passed from the city to the promontory, crossing a ridge of rocks, on which the traces of the ancient chariot wheels are distinctly visible.

Older archaeological reports were scrutinized, since rumours spread that one of the churches in the area ‘was remarkable as being evidently a beautiful Greek temple, metamorphosed into a Christian church, into whose walls the bases and capitals of Ionic columns and other parts of Greek architecture had been built’; and the whole of the ruined ancient Chersonese was ‘filled with the remains of the villas and gardens belonging to the inhabitants of the town.’ These words were written by William Simpson in association with this scene which he drew in 1855 for inclusion in his book The Seat of War in the East (see Fig. I.3).

Some soldiers were prompted to excavate these archaeological remains. During the winter of 1855–6, the Illustrated London News wrote enthusiastically about the activities of one Colonel Monroe, who ‘being himself an antiquary… received permission from head-quarters to employ every day fifty men of his regiment in excavating.’ The objects uncovered by Monroe’s men created ‘no small degree of attention and interest’ (see Fig. I.4). As Richardson has eloquently argued, picturing the rediscovery of the ancient Greek cityscape beneath Sevastopol encouraged the British readers of

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29 Koch (1855) 125.
31 Anon. (1855) 461.
32 See, e.g., Oliphant (1853) 252; Koch (1855) 130–1; Anon. (1855) 461.
33 Quoted in John Murray (1888) 376.
34 Simpson (1902 [1855]) with fig. 72.
35 Illustrated London News, January 19th 1856, 80. Despite the different spelling of the name, this is likely to be the Colonel (a famous botanist) who became General William Munro, C.B., of the 39th Regiment.
36 Anon. (1855).
Archaeology and colonial fantasy oft en go hand-in-hand. It was the Crimean War which—although temporarily—created in western Europeans and Americans a fascination with the precise ‘historical’ setting of Euripides’ IT. But the Crimean War was not the first cultural moment at which

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**Figure I.3** ‘Sebastopol from Old Chersonese,’ by William Simpson (1855).

**Figure I.4** Finds from the British camp outside Sevastopol (1856).

the *Illustrated London News* to take imaginative possession of this part of the world. Archaeology and colonial fantasy often go hand-in-hand.

...
Rediscovering Tauris

the play had become prominent in the post-Renaissance period. In Russia the crucial identification of Iphigenia’s place of exile with the ancient Taurians had taken place earlier, during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–96). In 1769, Gottfried Herder predicted in his travel journals that ‘the Ukraine will become a new Greece,’ because Tsarina Catherine dreamed of re-establishing the glories of the Byzantine Greek Empire under the Russian flag. The geographical setting of the Euripidean play had become a contested territory on the international stage.

Nine years later, in May 1778, Catherine approved the proposal put to her by her favourite, Grigory Potemkin, to build a new Black Sea port of Kherson, well north of the Crimea, but imitating the name of the ancient city. An Abyssinian prince named Ivan Abramovich Hannibal was installed as its governor. Catherine and Potemkin had embarked on their ‘Greek Project,’ which was ‘a cultural programme, a geopolitical system and a propaganda campaign all in one.’ Having annexed the Crimea and the Caucasus for Russia in 1783, Potemkin trumpeted in a letter to Catherine:

Has any other Sovereign so illuminated an epoch as you have? But it is not just brilliance. You have attached the territories, which Alexander and Pompey just glanced at, to the baton of Russia, and Cherson of Taurida—the source of our Christianity and thus of our humanity—is now in the hands of its daughter.

The authentic Tauric Chersonesos was the ‘source’ of Christianity because it was the place where Christianity had officially arrived in Russia when Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev, was baptized. The site thus symbolically fused the twin aspects of the Empress’s desired identity for the new southern lands of the Empire—both classically Greek and Christian Slav.

In 1784 Catherine announced that she had created the new province of Taurida, to be added to Potemkin’s vast viceroyalty. She encouraged him to found the maritime ports of Taurida, the new Russian south, in letters to him figuring herself as Pylades (not Iphigenia) and Potemkin as Orestes. He happily obliged, planning to carve out an independent principality for himself. He was an enthusiastic

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38 Herder (1976 [1769]) 78.
40 Quoted from the translation in Montefiore (2000) 256.
41 See Kozelsky (2004).
classicist who read Greek himself and made his henchmen recite classical historians to him.\(^{45}\) He gave the new cities ancient Greek or Byzantine names—Odessa, Sevastopol, Sympheropol, Theodosia. Once he had been dissuaded from populating these areas with English convicts,\(^{46}\) he and Catherine encouraged Greeks to settle in them.\(^{47}\) Many thousands accepted the invitation, including almost the entire population of the town of Balaclava. Their descendants still remain in the Black Sea, especially in Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, despite Nazi and Soviet persecution.\(^{48}\)

Catherine’s desire to make the Crimea Greek again encouraged Matthew Guthrie, a military physician employed at her St. Petersburg court, to conduct researches into the affinities between Russian and ancient Greek culture. He dedicated the volume in which his results were published to Her Imperial Majesty, saying that he had long remarked the similarity of the customs and costumes of the ancient Greeks and the Russians. He reproduced this ancient Greek epigrammatic poem, which had been written in honour of Guthrie’s labours by Orthodox Archbishop Eugenios:

Plutarch once gave us the parallel lives of the Greek and Roman heroes. Today Guthrie gives us a new work,
on the resemblance of the Greeks and Russians, in terms of their origin, customs, costumes, and other things.
But one difference remains between the two peoples:
the latter are in the ascendant, while the former, alas, have declined.\(^{49}\)

As well as being Catherine’s Archbishop, Eugenios Voulgaris had been made the first bishop of the recently created diocese of Slaviansk and Kherson, since it was deemed appropriate that the Christian and partly Greek communities of the new territories should have a Greek-speaking bishop.\(^{50}\) Potemkin had also hoped that the Archbishop would pen a new history of the region, to prove the links between its ancient inhabitants and the Greco-Slavs,\(^{51}\) but it was Guthrie, rather than Voulgaris, who obliged.

In his study of the ‘parallel cultures’ of Russia and Greece, Guthrie states that he wants to do for the Russians what the Indo-Europeanist William James had recently

\(^{45}\) Montefiore \((2000)\) 219.
\(^{46}\) Soloveytchik \((1949)\) 122.
\(^{47}\) Koromila \((1991)\) 250–2.
\(^{48}\) See Fotiadis \((1990)\).
\(^{49}\) Eugenius’ ancient Greek poem was composed on December 7th 1794. He had previously translated Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid} and \textit{Georgics} into ancient Greek, to the ‘honour of Russia and his own name,’ according to Guthrie \((1795)\), ‘Dedication,’ 3.
\(^{50}\) On Eugenios Voulgaris in Russia see further Batalden \((1982)\).
\(^{51}\) Montefiore \((2000)\) 220.
Rediscovering Tauris

been doing for the Indians—he wants to show that they are part of the same linguistic and cultural family as the ancient Greeks. His work focused on musical instruments, folk music, rituals, costumes, bathing habits, food, wine, and entertainments. He found parallels between Pindar’s first *Pythian* and the lyrics of a Russian folk song; he even compared the honorary name *Tavritcheskoy*, or ‘conqueror of Tauride,’ which Catherine had bestowed on Potemkin, with the ancient Roman custom of the cognomen (see Fig. I.5). In Chersonesos itself, by 1786 a Russian military engineer named Alexander Strokov had made a plan of the ancient land divisions within the Chersonese peninsula, the hinterland of the City of Chersonesos Taurike. The following year, 1787, Potemkin took Catherine on a tour of her newly acquired southern territories. It was during this tour that Tauris was essentially rediscovered and reinvented for the modern era. The cavalcade, with its large diplomatic entourage of guests from overseas and stars of the Russian court, made a stir in the Russian and international press. The story of *IT* was carefully reconstructed as the party proposed rival locations for Artemis’ temple and the beach where Orestes’ ship had moored. Descriptions of the ruins were soon published by several individuals, including Frédéric Dubois de Montpéreux, who was the first to identify the port of Sevastopol with the land of the Laestrygonians. One of the most interesting collectors of ancient artefacts was His Excellency Admiral Alexis Greig, Knight of St. George, St. Anne, and St. Vladimir. His father, who had also been Admiral-in-Chief of the Black Sea fleet, was from Inverkeithing in Scotland, and had sent his son to be educated in Edinburgh. Alexis served in the British navy for a while, but returned to Russia ‘and was rapidly promoted, the Empress-mother being much attached to him.’ An etching of his most prized antiquities survives (see Fig. I.6) in a book written by James Alexander, a young soldier in the 16th Lancers who visited him at his admiralty base in Nicolaev in 1829. The headless statue in the top left-hand corner, with attendant fawn or kid, was apparently found in Kerch. Alexander imagines that ‘it may be intended to represent either the Tauric Diana, or her priestess Iphigenia’ since Mithridates’ influence extended all the way to the famous temple of the goddess on the other side of the peninsula. He decides that the long dress and lack of the hunter’s buskins means that it most likely represents Iphigenia herself. Alexander, who visited Tauric Chersonese on this tour, reports that he was given Greek coins with the owl of Athens on them and shown

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52 Guthrie (1795) 7–8.
53 Guthrie (1795) 175, 159.
54 Saprykin (1994) 3.
55 Saunders (1985) 130; see the fascinating study by Schönle (2001).
57 Alexander (1830) vol. 1, 295.
58 Alexander (1830) vol. 1, 296.
the remains of two Greek temples. One was visible in the foundations of a church; the other consisted of ‘broken marble columns and friezes.’ He laments the amount of destruction which had already occurred in order for the new city of Sevastopol to be erected. In fact, despite Catherine’s enthusiasm for signs of ancient Greek culture in the Crimea, neither she nor Potemkin made any great personal effort to preserve the archaeological findings there, although an important collection was accumulated in the Kerch archaeological museum. Unfortunately, substantial parts of the collection were destroyed at the end of the Crimean war and during the Nazi occupation.

Yet, before this, for many Renaissance and Early Modern readers and spectators of the play and its numerous adaptations, the historical site of ‘Tauris’ would have been only vaguely grasped, lost somewhere inside the Ottoman sphere of influence. Indeed, it was sometimes confused or conflated with the Taurus mountain range in southern Turkey, and the perspective on Thoas and his Taurians was affected

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59 Alexander (1830) vol. 1, 266–7.
60 Schönle (2001) 10–11. With David Braund, Professor of Black Sea Archaeology at the University of Exeter, I am planning to write another book which addresses the history of Russian, Ukrainian, and international archaeological activities in the Crimea directly.
by this perception. ‘Tauris’ is often little more than a fantastic location equivalent to Prospero’s island in *The Tempest*. Indeed, that Shakespearean play was sometimes paired and even combined with *IT* during the course of its reception, for example in Lewis Theobald’s English-language ‘dramatic opera’ *Orestes*, a huge hit.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

in London in 1731.\textsuperscript{61} We shall discover in subsequent chapters that the other important Renaissance text which often interfered with responses to \textit{IT} was the Latin translation, by no less a figure than Erasmus of Rotterdam, of Lucian’s ‘Scythian’ dialogue \textit{Toxaris} (1506).

The Victorian statue by Adams, showing Greek cultural ancestors of British ‘victors’ removing a valuable object from their vanquished foes, can with hindsight be read as a symbol of the specific looting of artefacts from the soil of Tauric Chersonese. It can also be felt to stand for the colonial enterprise everywhere, whether by ancient Greeks or Enlightenment Europeans, as we shall see in chapter X on Goethe’s adaptation. Euripides himself allows some articulation of this symbolism when he makes one of the Taurians demand to know why the Greeks are stealing ‘statue and priestess’ from their rightful residence (1358–60). But the myth of the transported artwork also holds intrinsic aesthetic interest which resurfaces time and again in the play’s reception. Adams’ Victorian statue group can be seen not just as a statue of two men carrying a statue of a goddess, but also as a statue of a goddess which just happens to be supported by two men serving as a kind of animate pedestal. There has always been interest in visual recreations of the statue which Iphigenia ceremonially carries forth from the temple at the climax of the play, seen in Fig. I.7 as a distinctly Modernist idol in the only internationally significant modern production of Euripides’ play before the late twentieth century. It used the Gilbert Murray translation I have already mentioned, was directed by Harley Granville-Barker, and premiered in 1912 (see further below, pp. 000).

The cult image has over time been imagined in manifold ways. She has been assimilated to Roman Catholic images of the Virgin Mary; she has been presented as a near-obscene fertility symbol with a fat round belly;\textsuperscript{62} she has taken on almost Satanic associations and with her lunar crescent has implied Islamic symbolism;\textsuperscript{63} she has been a girlish huntress in the sculptural style of Canova; she has been a blank-faced and virginal archaic korē of the Acropolis. On the other hand, a production of Gluck’s \textit{Iphigénie en Tauride} by the Seattle Opera in 2007 used advertising in which she was closely modelled on the many-breasted Ephesian Artemis, who survived in

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hall and Macintosh (2005) 31–2.
  \item See the last in the series of tapestries which illustrate passages from \textit{IT} in the ‘Story of Iphigenia and Orestes’ sequence, made between 1648 and 1662 by Pieter de Cracht in Gouda, from designs by Salomon de Bray (Hartkamp-Jonxis and Smit (2004) cat. no. 62 e). Two of these are reproduced below as figs. III.5 and VIII.5. The total number of tapestries belonging to this suite (which originally contained a total of eight) held by the Rijksmuseum is six. Archival evidence shows that two documented suites of this kind, sold to the elector of Brandenburg and to the Swedish crown respectively, each comprised eight tapestries. The six Rijksmuseum tapestries most likely belonged to one of these two editions.
  \item In, e.g., Pieter Lastman’s ‘Iphigenia and Orestes and Pylades in Tauris’ (1614), on which see below p. 000.
\end{itemize}
so many replicas from antiquity that her post-Renaissance reception took on a life all of its own.  

What would have been ancient expectations of the appearance of the totemic statue? In one Roman mosaic (below Fig. V.6) she can be held in the palm of just one of Iphigenia’s hands. Numerous vase-paintings of the fourth century CE, expressing the fascination and challenge of painting an artwork within an artwork, emphasize her portability: she needs to be carried by Iphigenia alone in the procession scene, and in none of the vases does her size exceed about half Iphigenia’s height. On this vase in Basel (see Fig. I.8), she is positioned high on a columnar pedestal. But even a statue of this size, if made of solid stone, would have been too heavy to be carried any distance, and Iphigenia proceeds with the statue of Artemis all the way from the temple to the concealed Greek ship. The statue was almost certainly imagined to have been made of wood. It is mentioned in the play twenty-seven times. On fourteen occasions the term is the most common Greek word for a statue of any description, *agalma*; and twelve as a *bretas*, which may or may not imply that the

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64 See Nielsen (2009).
66 87, 112, 978, 1000, 1014, 1038, 1158, 1176, 1316, 1385, 1441, 1448, 1480.
image is made of wood. But on one occasion Euripides uses for it the term *xoanon* (1359). This word is connected with the Greek verb meaning ‘to scrape,’ and by Pausanias’ time, at any rate, designated a statue or a part of a statue specifically made of wood. Pausanias believed that originally all statues were carved out of wood, and early stone architecture and statuary both bear vestigial traces of techniques developed for woodwork. *Xoana* were and are often thought to be statues which looked primitive, and were evidence of the extreme antiquity of a cult, often of Artemis.

Ancient artists enjoyed depicting statues within framing artworks, and in some of them the numinous power of the cult image—its status as a material surrogate of a mighty god—is evoked with intensity and skill. A powerful example is a fragmentary vase-painting depicting Artemis’ brother the god Apollo, animate and playing his lyre, outside the temple on the left of the image, from which his sculpted cult image is mysteriously advancing, bow in hand (see Fig. I.9). This is why on several of the *IT* vases, discussed in chapter IV, Artemis can be portrayed in addition to her cult statue. The historical inhabitants of the Greek city

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67 986, 1040, 1165, 1179, 1199, 1291, 1444, 1453, 1477, 1481, 1489; see Donohue (1988) 25 and n. 62.
70 See the excellent close-up photographs discussed in Oenbrink (1997).
Rediscovering Tauris

of Tauric Chersonesos certainly believed that an intense aura pervaded their maiden goddess’s sanctuary, even if they agreed with Euripides that her original statue had been stolen. In the third century BCE, a man named Syriskos delivered his own oration on ‘the epiphanies of Parthenos,’ thereby pleasing the people of Chersonese so much that they set up in the temple of the goddess an inscription recording the honours with which they rewarded him. On another occasion, in the late second or early first century BCE, they were saved by the Parthenos when she alerted them to an imminent Scythian attack. She made herself felt to a general named Diophantos, sent to assist the Chersonesites by King Mithridates, and warning him to pre-empt an invasion:

The Parthenos, patron of the Chersonesites on all occasions, being then present (sumparousa) to Diophantos, predicted the action which was about to be taken through signs which happened in her sanctuary, instilling courage and daring into all the troops.

Unfortunately this wonderful inscription, inscribed to honour Diophantos, does not specify the signs used by the goddess; in IT Iphigenia says that the statue, when displeased, turned backwards of her own accord and closed her eyes (1165–7). One of the reasons the early Christians loathed cult images was the electrifying sense of divinity

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71 IOSPE F 344.
72 IOSPE F 352.
which pagans felt emanated from them.\textsuperscript{73} There is more than a hint of triumphalism in the inscription set up several centuries later by the Christian who had finally taken down a statue of Artemis outside her renowned temple at Ephesus (see below pp. 000).

The most famous statue of Artemis of Ephesus, inside the temple, had an important feature in common with the Tauric xoanon. Both were believed to have been ‘sky-fallen,’ diopetes, to have dropped out of the sky to the ground at the location where the temple was built.\textsuperscript{74} So, for that matter, had the Trojan Palladion, the statue of Pallas Athena which the Greeks stole from Troy (Clement, \textit{Exhortation to the Heathen}, ch. 4). The idea of primeval sky-fallen totems of gods was something the Greeks associated with non-Greek peoples, for example the sacred gold of the Scythians which Herodotus says fell from the sky at the moment of creation, before the first man to pick it up became king (4.5). Scholars who like to rationalize myth have suggested that these stories may have derived from observation of falling meteorites.\textsuperscript{75}

At the end of \textit{IT}, the goddess Athena appears. She tells Thoas to allow the Greeks to depart, and gives Orestes and Iphigenia, in turn, detailed instructions for establishing one Attic cult of Artemis and tending another (1446–67):

\begin{quote}
  Orestes, hear your instructions from me.
  You may be far off but you can hear my voice.
  Leave here, taking the statue and your sister.
  When you arrive at the god-built city of Athens,
  there is a place near Attica’s most distant boundary,
  beside the crags of Carystos.
  It is sacred. My people call it Halai.
  Build a temple there and install the statue,
  naming it after the Taurians’ land and your ordeal,
  the one you laboured through, scurrying across Greece,
  goaded on by the Erinyes. People will perpetually
  sing hymns to her as Artemis Tauropolos.
  And draw up this rule: when the people hold her festival,
  a sword is to be held at a man’s neck, and his blood let,
  for reasons of sanctity, so that the goddess may retain her privileges.
  You, Iphigenia: you are to serve this goddess
  in her Brauronian meadows as keeper of her priestly key.
  It is there that you will be buried when you die,
  and people will pay you the honour of dedicating to you
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{73} See the excellent words of Faraone (1992) 4.
\textsuperscript{74} Acts 19.35, IT 88, 134; see also 977 and 986; Suda d 1187 (= s.v. diopetes). See Faraone (1992) 5.
\textsuperscript{75} Oakley (1971) 210.
Rediscovering Tauris

the fine-meshed fabric gowns left behind in households by women who die in childbirth.

At Halai, just a few miles north of Brauron in Attica, where Iphigenia will officiate as priestess and be buried, Orestes is to build a temple of Artemis and install the statue within it. Near the seashore, a few hours’ walk down from the marshy hill where the older Brauronian sanctuary can be visited, the foundations of the Halai temple still survive, along with some recently discovered ancient ruins on the beach even nearer the sea; so does a fascinating fourth-century inscription recording the ceremonial award of honours to a generous demesman of Halai named Philoxenos. The ceremony is to take place at the festival contests of the Tauropolia, and the inscription is to be set up on a stone stele inside the temple,76 that is, where the Tauric statue was believed to be housed. It was not only men who celebrated the Tauropolia, either; according to Habrotonon in Menander’s Epitrepontes (476–7), women could hire female musicians to play for them at the all-night Tauropolia.

Ancient mythology was interested in statues of gods—the Palladion stolen from Troy, Pygmalion’s beautiful Galatea—but the only surviving Greek tragedy in which a statue actually ‘stars’ is Euripides’ IT.77 To think about it another way, insofar as the myth it stages is a ‘quest’ legend, the object retrieved by the quest heroes is a small wooden statue of Artemis. In antiquity there were many wooden statues of the gods, alongside ones made of marble or ivory, including an elaborate wooden Artemis at Delphi, of which only tiny fragments and one elegant hand have survived the intervening centuries. There was once a xoanon of Artemis at Brauron, which the Persians carried off to Susa in 480 BCE (Pausanias 3.16.7–8).78 But there does in fact exist a small wooden image of Artemis, of nearly appropriate date, which we can hold in our minds as we read the play. For in a corner of the Brauron Archaeological Museum sits a display cabinet containing a few votive objects, long ago dedicated to Artemis, and made of wood. Their survival is remarkable, and to be explained by favourably wet conditions near the temple (the surrounding land is marshy, an environment typically suited to the cult of Artemis).79 Most of them are plaques, but

77 It is possible that there were statues of similar importance in other fifth-century plays: see Hall (2006) 130–1 n. 106.
79 The statuette was found, along with several other wooden votive objects, immediately beneath the rocky spur on which the temple stands. See Vanderpool (1963) 280. I am extremely grateful to Yana Sistovari, Christina Papageorgiou, David Braund, and Tony Harrison for all their help with the discoveries underlying this chapter. Just as the book was completed, news broke of fresh finds at Brauron, including a new wooden figurine with traces of red paint of the early fifth century BCE, wearing a long gown and a headscarf over ornately curled hair. Other new finds include the wooden soles of a woman’s sandals. See http://www.athensnews.gr/issue/11465/49194.
there is just one statue in the form of a female bust, her shoulders swathed in a tunic and her hair in a prominent bun on the back of her head typical of the hundreds of representations of Artemis found in the area (see Fig. I.10).

It is tiny—perhaps six inches high—and eminently portable; the eyeless holes stare out blankly at the viewer from the black, scarred wood. It is very old; the museum estimates that it dates from at least as early as 500 BCE. In this diminutive statue, if we believe that truth lies beneath some of the ancient myths, we may actually be looking at a miniature votive version of one of the most famous cult images in all of Greek and Roman antiquity—the wooden statue, *xoanon*, which Iphigenia carried away from the Taurians’ temple of Artemis on the Crimean coast, and her brother Orestes installed at Halai Araphenides in Attica.
II

Iphigenia, Quest Heroine

In Euripides’ *IT* Iphigenia was once rescued by Artemis from death, and now rescues her brother and his friend. They and the Greek chorus are all rescued from Tauris by a mysterious alliance of divine interests. This alliance is given voice at the end of the play by Athena, who gains the enhancement of religion in her own city-state. The theme of rescue is expressed in the peculiar density of terms—no fewer than thirty-four—which from the play’s second episode flood from the mouths of the Greek characters and are related to the word *sōtēr*, ‘rescuer.’ It can hardly be coincidental that one of Artemis’ cult titles was *Sōteira*; she was worshipped under this name in Megara, in memory of the assistance she had given to the Megarian army against a Persian detachment during the second Persian invasion of Greece (Pausanias 1.40.2). In Troezen in the Peloponnese, Artemis was called *Sōteira* because Theseus had offered thanks to her there after defeating the Minotaur (Paus. 2.31.1). At Boiai in Lacedaemonia, Artemis had saved Boios the Heraclid by showing him and his followers—homeless men who had been exiled or expelled from their cities—where to found their new settlement (Paus. 3.22.12). Elsewhere, for example at Heraclea in Lucania, Italy, Artemis *Sōteira* was connected with the healing of both physical and psychological maladies. So Artemis the Rescuer was associated with being saved from barbarians, from sacrificial death, from exile and from madness respectively—exactly the nexus of dangers facing the Greeks in Euripides’ *IT*.

1 Burnett (1971) 47.
2 On Artemis at Lucanian Heraclea see below, pp. 000. Artemis’ connections with medicine are well brought out in Morizot (1994).
Artemis the Rescuer works with and through her favourite and priestess Iphigenia, with whom, in some places, she was either identified or partially conflated. Iphigenia is the only priestly figure to be a protagonist in any extant Greek tragedy. For reasons connected with the general neglect of the play, her remarkable qualities as religious authority figure and intelligent heroine with psychological stature did not attract the attention they deserved during the feminist revision of Greek tragic criticism which began in the late 1970s. Even today, despite some excellent work on the ritual elements in the play, sensitive to the gender dynamics of both ancient religion and ancient theatre, and on Greek heroine cults in general, the Black Sea Iphigenia’s true standing as a dramatic figure, the priestess who both tends and detests the Taurians’ cult, the mistress who controls all exits and entrances through the doors of the Taurians’ cliff-top temple of Artemis (see Fig. II.1), has still not been appreciated.

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4 Hartigan (1991) 94.

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Figure II.1 Iphigenia emerges from her skull-festooned temple, Teatro Greco, Syracuse, Sicily (1933).
It is difficult to reconstruct the precise status of female figures (other than the major Olympians) who received cult attention in Greek antiquity, especially as early as the fifth century BCE. Much of the evidence derives from Pausanias, an author writing centuries after Euripides and influenced by him. The model of ritual antagonism between god and hero which often works for male heroes—Odysseus and Poseidon, Oedipus and Apollo—does not much illuminate the more analogical relationship between Artemis and Iphigenia, who can be a substitute for Artemis (see Strabo 7.4.2) and whose name can be one of the goddess’s titles. Artemis and Iphigenia, both called potnia (‘mistress’ or ‘Lady’, IT 436, 1123, 533, 1082), share several features, notably their arrival in Tauris by supernatural means and their cunning intelligence (380, 1031). At the end of IT, the audience learns that the clothes in the possession of women who die in childbirth are to be dedicated to Iphigenia at Brauron (1465–7). Death of women in childbirth was of course a trauma frequently suffered by ancient Greek families, and there must have been rituals designed to address it. While no epigraphic evidence has turned up to support Athena’s precise prescription, both childbirth and women’s clothing are indeed connected by archaeological and epigraphic evidence with the Brauron cult. The dedication of clothing seems to have featured in Artemis cults elsewhere in Greece, for example at Thebes, Tanagra, and Delos. But we have wonderfully detailed lists of garments dedicated to Artemis at Brauron in the fourth century BCE, on fragments of duplicate inscriptions detailing treasures set up both there and on the Athenian Acropolis. The thirteen fragments seem to come from six separate steles, representing six separate parts of a catalogue registering dedications made in 349–35 BCE, but the practice of dedicating and also registering votive offerings for Artemis had probably existed much earlier. The inscriptions commemorate and celebrate ‘the names, the possessions, and by implication the skills and status, of the female dedicants.’ Although some scholars have argued that the display of these inventories on the

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4 On childbirth in the ancient Greek theatre, see Hall (2006) ch. 3. For the suggestion that in IT Orestes’ killing of his mother is a narrative displacement of death caused to women by their babies at the moment of birth, see Tzanetou (1999–2000).
7 Linders (1972) 6; Cleland (2005) xii.
8 Linders (1972) 68–9 and n. 18.
9 Cleland (2005) xii.
Acropolis shows the degree to which women’s religion had been taken over by the male political machine, they may have been duplicates of the inventories recording the women’s dedications at Brauron, which was of course much frequented by girls and women.¹⁴ In any case, the inventories applaud women’s contribution to the city-state in the production both of children and textiles, in the performance of motherhood and of ritual.¹⁵

The details of the clothes still have a concentrated sensory power: they are tunics, veils, scarves, and belts; they are sleeved, or patterned and decorated with coloured borders and variegated threads; they are purple, white, frog-green, and saffron-yellow; they were dedicated alongside combs and hair-nets, bobbins and spindle whorls, by women named Archippe, Kalippe, Chaireippe, Pheidylla, Kleo, or Teisikrateia.¹⁶ These are some of the most important evidence in existence for ancient Greek clothing. There are no fewer than 271 items, 32 types of garment and 81 descriptive items.¹⁷

It is difficult fully to appreciate the importance of Artemis in the life of the ancient Athenians, especially Athenian women. Artemis was in charge of many aspects of life. These included hunting, the fertility of animals and all the damp marshlands which provided so much sustenance, in the form of small game hunting, to the ancient peasant economy, as they did, until recently, round Brauron itself (see Fig. II.2). Brauron was the scene of the Brauronian festival, celebrated every four years and much enjoyed by men as well as women (Aristophanes, Peace 874); girls

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¹⁴ Linders (1972) 70–3.
Iphigenia, Quest Heroine

underwent initiation ceremonies called the *arkteia* which involved saffron-coloured dresses and imitation of bears, a rite specified by the Delphic oracle (*Aristophanes, Lysistrata* 645 with the scholia). The girls’ initiation rituals at Brauron in Euripides’ day have been much discussed since the excavations which began in 1948, led by I. Papadimitriou. They revealed to an excited world a sanctuary that was easily ‘one of the most important in Attica,’ bringing to light the base of a sixth-century temple (see Fig. II.3) and substantial remains of buildings which seem to have functioned as dining rooms.

Scholarly debate about the precise nature of the rituals and especially the age of the girls involved has been heated since an influential study was published in 1971 by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. The discovery at Brauron of hundreds of small fifth-century black-figured dishes known as *krateriskoi*, some of which show girls running or dancing, has enhanced our picture of the ritual activities there. Similar dishes have also been found near the Artemis sanctuaries at Halai, Mounichia, and on the Athenian Acropolis. The connection with bears is particularly interesting. At Ephesus, anyway, bears were certainly sacrificed to Artemis, along with other

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20 Kahil (1965) and (1977); Perlman (1989) 119–2.

large wild animals such as elks.22 The bear persona is also of interest to anthropologists, since bears feature in other cultures, especially Native American tribes, in connection with menstruation. The Ojibwa, for example, imagine that women turn into bears while menstruating, and when a girl approaches menarche say that she ‘is going to be a bear.’23 But Brauron was crammed with numerous marble heads, statues, and statuettes of children, most of them girls, as well as relief sculptures dedicated by women who had led a family sacrifice, showing them with their children and sometimes holding small babies up to the goddess in a gesture of pride and gratitude. These create an overwhelming sense of a cult which was much loved by women and a site that was much frequented. Iphigenia was believed to have acted as priestess for such women in Brauron, before dying there, and being buried in a rock-cave on the hill beside the temple.

She played an important psychological role in the lives of women experiencing the terrors as well as the joys of puberty, sex, pregnancy, and bringing new life into the world. This is what makes the Black Sea Iphigenia so remarkable. No other woman in a surviving Greek tragedy formally receives a cult within Attic territory. Iphigenia must live and die on Athenian soil in order to confer the full blessings which her physical presence guarantees, just as Heracles is brought to Athens to receive sacrifices and stone memorials after his death in Euripides’ *Heracles*, and Oedipus is to receive a hero cult at the site of his mysterious death in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Colonus*.24 Her sufferings are to be connected at a deep level with the psychological experience of Athenian citizens. The play is therefore a significant contribution to Athenian theology and ritual,25 and the heroine needed to possess qualities of character concomitant with her status as religious authority figure and recipient of ritual dedications. Euripides has gone out of his way to create a heroine worthy of this destiny.

Indeed, in the Tauric Iphigenia he has created the nearest thing the ancient Greeks had to a quest heroine. They did not know the term *quester* of course, and therefore did not use it even of Jason or Odysseus. The word is probably first documented as the *questeur* of Middle French, which had a specific (although suitably Artemisian) connection to hunting with dogs. The word *quest* was however associated with legendary heroes searching for a sacred object by as early as Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*: the Winchester College manuscript of around 1470 speaks of ‘the knyghtes of the Rounde Table that was in the queste of the Sankegreall’ (966). For most of recorded human culture before Lara Croft, who first appeared in 1996,

23 Baqnouw (1977) 248.
25 See the study of Ekroth (2003).
female quest heroes, or quest heroines, were rather thin on the ground. Modern feminist writers and literary theorists have tried hard to correct the imbalance, by identifying or creating quest heroines, like the titular heroine of Doris Lessing’s novel *Martha Quest* (1952) and its four sequels, or the teenage father-avenger Mattie Ross in Charles Portis’ novel *True Grit* (1968), which has been adapted into famous movies.

A Renaissance example of a quest heroine may be Palladine, the she-knight dedicated to chastity in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590), of whom it is said, ‘Her well beseemes’ her ‘Quest’ (3.viii.53). A rare exception in western storytelling is the heroine of *The Seven Ravens*, a German fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm, where a sister goes on a quest to rescue her seven brothers who have been turned into ravens. But the heroine of L. Frank Baum’s novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) is now generally identified as the first significant female ‘quest’ hero, a girl from Kansas who could search for something other than a man to marry. Seeing the importance of Dorothy, moreover, led to a new interest in Baum’s support of Women’s Suffrage, and the suspicion that in his gutsy heroine he was channelling the energy he derived from his suffragist wife and his mother-in-law Matilda Joslyn Gage, a prominent feminist.

The issue of the missing quest heroines came to a head with Carolyn Heilbrun’s essay on the *Odyssey*, ‘What was Penelope unweaving?’ She argued that the absence of female quest heroes prevents women from escaping the single narrative line in which they have been configured. For women even in the 1980s, Heilbrun suggested, few narratives helped prepare them for entry into public life rather than the marriage market, kitchen, or nursery. So what does a hero or heroine need to do in order to qualify for quester status? There seem to me to be six fundamental requirements. She needs to star in a plot not teleologically directed at romance, sex, marriage, or parenthood. She must travel through large spaces (preferably over water), purposefully, with an end in mind. She should enjoy a special relationship with a divinity. She needs to exert moral, intellectual and/or spiritual agency and possess psychological stature. She must display courage in the face of extreme danger and leadership skills. Finally, she should provide an exemplary figure for people of the same sex.

Iphigenia’s psychological stature is not in doubt. Her exceptionally moving prologue reviews her history and explores her dream, which includes the intensely memorable
visualization of the speaking pillar from which grew living hair, symbolizing, as she interprets it, her brother (44–55):

The earth’s surface seemed shaken by a tremor;
I escaped and stood outside, and saw the cornices collapse
and the whole roof, shaken by the earthquake,
fall in ruins from the top of its pillars to the ground.
Just one column of my ancestral home was left,
as it seemed to me, and from its head
 grew auburn hair, and it took a human voice.
Then I, observing the ritual of stranger-sacrifice
I tend to here, sprinkled it, as if it was about to die,
with drops of water, while I wept.10

In her own mind, she pictures herself performing death rituals, her tears and the drops of lustral water almost merging into a stream. This glimpse into the interior of Iphigenia’s consciousness offers an incomparably direct and vivid route into the world of pain and isolation she inhabits, and which she imagines is now worsened by the death of Orestes far away.

Iphigenia is dignified, magnanimous, and articulate in the difficult situation with the two captive Greeks who are supposed to be about to die. She is like Odysseus, the hero of one Homeric epic, in her cunning resourcefulness and her ability to hold her nerve through the whole deception plot. As Howard Jacobson has recently shown, she is also like Achilles in the Iliad at the climactic moment when he returns to the battlefield, when she says that bereavement has hardened her heart to savagery of which she did not feel capable before. Achilles tells Lycaon, an unfortunate Trojan who begs him for mercy, that although he used to be discriminate in his treatment of his victims on the battlefield, now that Patroclus has died he will never show mercy again. In the temporary absence of Hector, he is prepared to take his revenge on any substitute Trojan (21.99–113; see also 21.95).11 Iphigenia echoes the sentiments of the superhero, with whose destiny her own was intertwined at Aulis, when she comments that her brother’s death has changed her character; she used to feel sorry for the Greeks whom she sacrificed, but now that Orestes is dead, she will show them no mercy (344–50). The herdsman has said that she can take revenge on the Greeks who tried to kill her (336–9), and

10 On the role played by her dream in the play see the excellent studies of Valakas (1993), Zeitlin (2006), and Trieschnigg (2008). On the issue of dream divination later in the play, see below pp. 000.
she acknowledges the possibility of taking revenge on surrogates in the absence of those truly responsible (357–8).

What of other ancient women questers? The best candidate by far is Demeter and her quest for Persephone in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter; the issue is whether her divinity disqualifies her or not. There are goddesses in other ancient mythologies who fulfil impressive tasks, for example the Near Eastern Anat who kills Death to save her brother, or the Egyptian Isis who spends many years searching the desert for the parts of the body of her brother/husband Osiris which Horus had hidden from her. Amongst mortals there are of course the warrior types such as Amazons—Pentesilea, Hippolyta, Camilla, and Harpalyce—but they do not work as exemplars for their sex, and usually end up killed, raped, seduced, or subdued by men anyway. Medea in the Argonautica fulfils several of the criteria, but is motivated by eros and scarcely an exemplar for other women. Dido in the Aeneid, at least when she founds Carthage, is a strong candidate, but eros wrecks her candidacy as well. The same goes for Psyche in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses. The heroines of the ancient novel often undergo journeys and ordeals not dissimilar to Iphigenia’s, and can demonstrate pluck and resourcefulness, but their travels are invariably focused on finding their lover or husband.\[32]\ The best candidates are actually the Aristophanic heroines Lysistrata and Praxagora. It is true that they do not travel far, unlike their male counterparts Trygaeus in Peace and Peisthetaerus in Birds. But Lysistrata, since she seems to be in part a reflection of the Athenians’ experience of Lysimache, their real-life priestess of Athena Polias,\[33]\ has something at least in common with Euripides’ Tauric Iphigenia, who is to be the Athenians’ priestess of Brauronian Artemis.

As the protagonist in a tragedy who is also a priestess, Iphigenia in IT is unique: the Pythias of Aeschylus’ Eumenides and Euripides’ Ion, and Theonoe in Helen, are not principal parts.\[34]\ Iphigenia, moreover, ticks other boxes on the application form for ‘quest heroine’ status. Her plot does not involve sex, marriage, a male partner, or becoming a mother. Besides ending the play on-board ship, about to sail back to Greece with a definite purpose—to take the statue of Artemis there—she has earlier travelled through large spaces over water. Indeed, she was whisked away from the sacrificial altar in Aulis by Artemis (28–34):

Artemis stole me away, giving the Achaeans
a deer in my place. She conveyed me through
the shining air to a home in this Taurian territory,

\[55\] On these heroines see below pp. 000 and 000.

\[56\] Hall (2010a) 31–6.

\[54\] See Goff (1999) 111.
where the country's king, a barbarian ruling over barbarians, is Thoas, so called because he runs with feet swift as wings. She installed me as priestess in this temple here.

Iphigenia is carefully depicted in her role as priestess (see Fig. II.4). She holds the temple key (at 131 the chorus call themselves the 'slave of the key-holder'). When she swears to see that Pylades escapes safely, she swears by Artemis, in whose temple she holds office (748). At 798–9 the chorus have to warn the as yet unrecognized Orestes, who is apparently trying to embrace his long-lost sister, that her robes, since she is the attendant of the goddess, must not be touched. Thoas says that the whole city admires her (1214). Iphigenia is certainly presented as a ritual agent. She takes the initiative in numerous ritual actions, from delivery of prayers, leading choral hymns, and telling her dream to the fresh air 'in case it brings any healing' (43), to the libation she pours out for Hades in honour of the brother she thinks is dead—carefully described as containing milk, wine, and honey (158–66). She is in charge of the organization of the sacrificial rituals, for which reason she leaves the stage for the second time, and of course orchestrates the whole procession with the statue of Artemis which moves out of the temple and sanctuary down to the seashore (see Fig. II.5).

**Figure II.4** Iphigenia, holding the key to the temple in her left hand, passes the letter to Pylades. Drawing of a design on an Apulian vase of the mid-4th century.
Iphigenia is also, however, an independent and critical thinker. She is prepared to make innovations in the cultic practices; her willingness to remove the statue of Artemis seems to be connected with her strongly expressed refusal to believe that the goddess herself desires human sacrifices (389–90). In the absence of any unambiguous guidance from the goddess herself, Iphigenia also displays remarkable moral agency and leadership. Her first reaction after recognizing her brother at 829 is expressed in a most unusual ‘deliberative monody,’ in which it is made clear that she is the first of the Greeks to start thinking—albeit in song—about what to do next. This is not simply a section of a standard reunion duet, with formulaic musings on the vicissitudes of fortune and worry about the future: an intensely introspective Iphigenia deliberates about alternative courses of action (868–99):

What a terrible resolution I made!
I brought myself to do dreadful, dreadful things,
alas, my brother. How narrowly you escaped a sacrilegious death, slain at my hands. What is to be the outcome? What stroke of fortune will help me? What way out can I find for you, to get you away from this town, this

55 The ambiguity surrounding Artemis’ own ‘views’ on human sacrifice is well brought out by Papadopoulou (2005) 110.
death, to your Argive fatherland, before the sword meets your blood? [To
herself] It is your obligation—yours, unhappy one—to figure this out.

Should it be by dry land rather than a ship? But if you go on foot you will
be in danger of death from barbarian tribes and impassable routes, whereas
flight by ship through the dark rocks of the narrow passage
is a lengthy journey. How miserable, miserable, I am. Is there anyone—a
god or a human—
or any unexpected happening that could achieve the impossible escape
route and reveal to the two remaining Atridae
a solution to their plight?

Iphigenia here makes a general request to anyone who might be listening, divine or
human, who can show her a way out of the predicament.

During the ensuing dialogue, Orestes relates to his sister all that happened to him
at Delphi and Athens, effectively compressing the plot of Eumenides, but adding the
essential new detail that Apollo has ordered him to travel to the Taurians’ land. He
is to remove the statue of Artemis and take it to Athens. Although Orestes himself
possesses some features of the quest hero, and some critics have compared his voyage
to Tauris with the katabasis to the underworld undergone by the epic Odysseus,36 he
scarcely cuts a heroic or masterful figure in this part of the play. He concludes with a
pitiful plea to his sister to save him and thereby their whole household (977–86):

Then Phoebus’ voice cried out from the golden tripod, sending me here to
get the statue, which Zeus threw down, and set it up in Athenian land.
But in the means of rescue he laid down for me, you must assist. For if we
obtain the goddess’ image,
I will be released from madness and convey you
on my oared ship to Mycenae, and settle you there. So, beloved, so, dear sister,
save your ancestral home, and save me! For both I and all the family of
Pelops are ruined
unless we can get hold of the goddess’ heavenly image.

Iphigenia responds to this with a fascinating speech in which she deliberates again,
identifying her motives and fears and weighing up alternative courses of pos-
sible action. She states that she is, like Orestes, concerned to see her household

re-established, for she does not hold a grudge against her father even though he authorized her killing. She is however afraid that it will be difficult to get the statue of Artemis away without offending either Artemis, or the king of the Taurians, to the point that her own death is certain. She is quite clear that the only possibility of a fully successful outcome is if she, the statue, and Orestes can all be got onto his ship at the same time. But she is also clear that she is prepared to risk her own life to save his, a position she explains to herself with the sort of misogynist thinking by which selfless tragic heroines tend to justify their actions (989–1006).

Before you arrived here, I was keen to be in Argos and see you again, brother. I want what you want—to release you, and our father’s afflicted household from suffering—

I’m not angry with my killer. This is my wish. I would like to deliver my hand from having to kill you and save our house. But I am scared about the stone base of the statue empty.

My death would be certain; there is no argument in defence. Yet if—this is the one possibility—these things could happen simultaneously—that you get the statue and me away on your fine ship, the venture would be successful. Without this, I am lost, but you might have a good result for yourself and return safely. Actually, I don’t shrink from this, even if I have to die to save you. No, for when a man dies and is lost to a house he is missed. But women are powerless.

Orestes, in a (most unfortunately) textually corrupt response, tries to persuade her that the removal of Artemis’ statue must be Artemis’ will, because otherwise her brother Apollo would never have commanded it (1012–14). He also has two suggestions. They could kill Thoas—Iphigenia dismisses this on the ground that it would be sacrilegious. Or they could steal the statue from the temple at night—this, as she points out, would be impractical since there are temple guards. Neither murder nor armed robbery will do.

Orestes is not being any help. But only thirty lines after his sister made a generic request to gods and mortals for inspiration at 899, for a ‘solution to problems’ (kakōn eklusis) for her and her brother, the inspiration for a novel (and indeed bloodless) stratagem actually strikes her: ‘I think I have just had a new idea’ (1029). We are witness here to something very unusual happening in Greek tragedy: a woman deliberates on stage, and comes up with a brilliant tactic in a situation of lethal danger. Since she asked for supernatural help a short time earlier, one way of interpreting this at least, is as an answered prayer—something not particularly common in the genre, and something which is left ambiguous here. What is incredibly impressive is how fully formed her plan already is, and how she anticipates all contingencies. In a brisk
line-by-line exchange, Iphigenia explains that she will use the excuse that she can’t sacrifice Orestes because he is polluted as a matricide (1033–7), that she will need to purify him in the sea, that the image will need purifying as well (1041), that she will do so where Orestes’ boat is moored (1043), after carrying it out herself as the only one allowed to touch it (1045), and saying that Pylades is also polluted and needs to be included in the ritual (1047). She will persuade the king that the ritual needs performing, since it would be impossible for her to hide it from him (1049). Orestes does contribute two items to this process of strategic thinking—he assures her that his boat will be ready for the escape (1050), and also suggests that Iphigenia secure the complicity of the chorus, ‘since,’ as he says, ‘women are very capable when it comes to eliciting pity’ (1052–4). But this particular woman has shown how very capable she is at deliberating about action, making decisions and elaborate plans under pressure, and anticipating problems and obstacles. Of course she is not the only woman in Greek tragedy shown in the process of laying plans. But she is one of a miniscule group who lays plans that are fundamentally characteristic of a glorious heroic escapade.

Having secured a promise of silence from the chorus, Iphigenia goes into overdrive. She orders her little brother and his friend into the temple (1079–80). She directs her last words before turning into the stage manager and chief actress in her performance of a ritual procession (and dramatic escape plot) to whom else but Artemis? She makes a formal prayer to the goddess to save her, along with Orestes and Pylades; here Iphigenia uses a standard formula for prayer known as daquia dedisti—‘help now because you helped before.’ But she also shows in the prayer that she is aware that Artemis must consent to being removed from the Taurian land to the city of Athens (1082–8):

Lady Artemis, who saved me from my father’s awful, slaughtering hand in the folds of Aulis, save me now as well from this predicament, or humans will no longer believe Apollo’s voice because of you. So leave this barbarian land with good will, for it is not fitting for you to live here, when you could have such a fortunate city.

Iphigenia returns into the temple for the fourth and last time, leaving the audience wondering what amazing spectacle she is about to orchestrate, and her last words before she departs (her actor probably to return to the stage as Athena at the end of the play) are, fittingly, another prayer to Artemis. She refers, with a double

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entendre (which can be understood by the chorus and audience but not by Thoas) to Artemis’ new home in Attica (1230–3):

Maiden Queen, daughter of Zeus and Leto,
if I wash away these men’s murderous stain and make sacrifice in the proper venue,
You will inhabit a pure home, and we will enjoy
good fortune. As for the rest, I say nothing,
but make indications to those who know more,
the gods and you, goddess.

Iphigenia moreover prays to the goddess in this play one more time, expertly varying the formula. She needs to make this additional prayer because the adverse wind suggests that the goddess is not working to help her, as she has already requested twice. Her prayer is reported, or rather impersonated in direct speech, by the messenger who recounts the Greeks’ escape bid (1391–405):

While the ship was inside the harbour it proceeded towards the mouth, but once it had passed through it collided with a rough wave and was pressed hard.
For a terrible wind, arising suddenly, thrust it astern.
They struggled to beat the waves powerfully,
but the surge flowed back, driving the ship toward land. Agamemnon’s daughter stood to pray: ‘O daughter of Leto, get me, your priestess, safely to Greece, away from this barbarian land, and forgive my theft.
You, too, love your brother, goddess;
understand that I also love my blood-kin.’
The sailors called out the paian in response to her prayer, and strained their naked shoulders at the oar on the command.

There are two new elements in the prayer to Artemis this time. Iphigenia uses a new ground on which Artemis might want to help her—they both have brothers whom they love. Artemis should help not because she helped Iphigenia before but because

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she knows how Iphigenia feels. But Iphigenia also uses the prayer formula in which an apology can be slotted into a request. She apologizes for stealing the statue. She had asked for Artemis’ assent in the first of these three prayers, but is worried that it has not been given. The implication is surely that Artemis is angry, or at the very least that Iphigenia understands that the goddess is not happy about the theft of her cult image. The wind that threatens Iphigenia’s life must inevitably remind the audience of the wind that Artemis failed to provide at Aulis in her earlier intervention in this young woman’s life. Iphigenia’s prayer for an idea of an eklasis from evil may have been fulfilled, but it was never clear exactly how—perhaps it was Athena, rather than Artemis, then as at this climax. In any case, the messenger himself seems to think that Poseidon may be responsible (although even these lines look like an interpolation, the work of some actor of the fourth century BCE trying to make sense of the play’s mysterious theology). Athena says that it is Poseidon who has calmed the sea as a favour to her, leaving the audience with an unsettling question mark over the extent of Artemis’ compliance in the denouement.

For this one episode, our heroine reveals herself the equivalent if not the superior of all the male questers in the Greek tradition. Orestes may arrive in the Chersonese on quest, in search of the statue of Artemis. But Iphigenia very soon takes over all responsibility for this mission, with the enigmatic help of at least one goddess. Her Odyssean resourcefulness and invention is actually far more elaborate than Odysseus’ outwitting of the Cyclops, and the lack of irreversible violence inflicted on either the Greek youths or the Taurian natives is striking in contrast with what happens in Polyphemus’ cave.

Iphigenia in IT has qualified as quester on all except one of the criteria we identified. Her nearest rival might be the protagonist of Euripides’ Helen, but Helen in Egypt does not have any of the religious authority of Iphigenia, is not involved in relocating an important religious artefact or the dissemination of the cult of an important Olympian, and her main motivation is to revive her marriage. To turn to that last criterion, is Iphigenia, like ancient male questers, an exemplary figure for her sex? The play was extremely popular in antiquity, and I am sure that this was partly because it offered a fundamental aetiology for the cult of Artemis so important in women’s lives, and in which young women played such a prominent role. There is something extremely touching about her appeal to the chorus to put their lives at

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40 Burnett (1988) 66. Page (1934) 78. On the process by which the texts of Greek tragedy were altered in performance before ‘master copies’ were made in the late fourth century BCE, see above pp. 000.
41 The strangeness of Euripides’ introduction of the wind has been remarked by other scholars, for example Kovacs (2000) 20–1, but I do not find his alternative explanation at all satisfactory, namely that Orestes’ departure must be frustrated to give the chorus the chance to escape on the same ship.
Iphigenia, Quest Heroine

risk in order to facilitate her escape, in terms of affirming one woman’s appreciation of others’ pain, and female solidarity in the face of terror and crisis (1056–63):

Women, my dearest friends, I look to you.
It is in your hands to determine whether I am to find happiness
or be a nothing, deprived of my fatherland, my beloved brother and dear sister.
The first thing to be said is that we are women,
and as such feel a warm affinity and need to protect and keep secure
the things we have in common.
Keep your silence and cooperate in our escape bid.

Remarkably, she offers to make sure that they are rescued too, and Athena confirms that they will be rewarded with this happy conclusion to their own sad exile stories (1467–9). Iphigenia is confident in her personal ability to ensure from a distance the escape of a whole group of women from a barbarian sanctuary, and her confidence is not misplaced.

Women as well as men can enjoy this heroine. Although there may have been few or no women at the premiere of most Greek tragedies at the Athenian Dionysia, it is misguided to try to exclude female spectators from deme theatres, or performances outside Athens, from the late fifth century onwards. But for male audience-members as well, Iphigenia creates an exemplary figure, helping them to understand the virtues desirable in a good sister, or a companion in life’s adventures, or a priestess of Artemis. Iphigenia certainly offers an ideal prototype for sisters, especially older sisters, in her loving memories of Orestes as a baby, her willingness to risk her life to save him, and her question about her other siblings (561). Her concern to attend to the funeral rites of her kin as well as she can, even in absentia, and her conduct in the opening scenes of the play prove her to be an ideal female next-of-kin for any family member. In her resourcefulness she certainly offers a model of female intelligence as family asset, as implied in some passages of the Odyssey and Xenophon’s Oeconomicus. Along with the chorus, she also offers numerous pictures of idealized female ritual, as well as performing antiphonally in their hymns and other ritual songs which we will discuss in the next chapter.

Moreover, these pictures and paradigms are not narrowly polis-specific, unlike Athena’s prescriptions at the end of the play: although referring to cults in particular cities, Iphigenia in exile leads the chorus in imagining their homeland ‘not riven as it was contemporarily by the Peloponnesian War but united Panhellenically by the figure of ritual.’ Her myth also provides a paradigm for the way in which Greek girls and

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43 Goff (1999) 112.
their families in any city could think as they grew up about their role as religious agents within the cults of the city as well as within the family (see Fig. II.6). Iphigenia is obviously an admirable prototype for all ancient priestesses, in her concern for purity and in the dignity and authority with which she runs her sanctuary and her rituals. As we shall see in chapters IV and VII, Iphigenia’s Tauris story was adapted to explain the origins of countless cults of Artemis, Diana, and their Asiatic congeners, from Italy to Cappadocia. Iphigenia’s brains, piety, clear sense of priorities, and courage made her unique as a female protagonist in ancient theatre, as well as a fitting female quester to associate with the origins of an enormously important international cult.

We shall also be seeing in chapter VI how the adventure plot manifested in IT resurfaced in another form in the Greek prose romance novels of later antiquity, including Achilles Tatius’ Leucippe and Clitophon. The conventions of this genre, especially threats to the heroine’s chastity and repeated escape from cruel punishments and death, are in turn interwoven into the fabric of some of the non-canonical stories about the early Christians. In one of the most striking of all the apocryphal apostolic Acts, and one which has clearly been influenced by the conventions of the pagan Greek romance, a virgin heroine named Thekla stakes a claim to quest

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44 Belpassi (1990).
heroine status certainly equivalent to that made by the Black Sea Iphigenia. Th ekla was converted to Christianity and perpetual chastity by St. Paul in Iconion, the central Anatolian city where she had been born into an upper-class family. The Th ekla story in the New Testament Apocrypha relates how she resisted a suitor, was sentenced to be burned alive, but saved by a storm sent by God to quench the flames. She travelled with Paul to Antioch, and successfully resisted the attempts of an aristocrat named Alexander to rape her—she feistily tore his clothes and knocked his garland off. Condemned to be eaten by wild beasts, she was saved again by divine intervention and is often associated, like Artemis, with an entourage of animals.46 Dressing as a man, Th ekla led other young Christians south-west to find Paul in Myra, before returning to Iconion and continuing her mission without him. Th ekla thus travelled large distances, with a purpose, a positive aversion to sex and marriage, and displayed authority and autonomy. No wonder the early Christians opposed to women preaching and conducting baptisms claimed that the story of Th ekla was fraudulent (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.5). No wonder Th ekla is important as a foremother to women in the Christian churches today.47

But in an interesting twist, some ancient versions of Th ekla’s story contain a detail which may reveal that she has a narratological relationship, through Artemis, with Iphigenia.48 An appended section in some texts tells of her later life and death. She travelled ‘in a bright cloud’ to Seleucia, converting many; she lived as a virgin priestess in a cave. The cave itself had such power that even approaching it effected miraculous cures in both the physically and psychologically sick. The pagan doctors of Seleucia plot against her because she has damaged their business by healing everyone. They assume that she is a priestess of Artemis.49 Since the gods would remove all her power if she lost her virginity, even at the age of ninety, they organize a gang rape. But God opens up a cavern in the rock for her to enter, thus saving her virginity even as she dies a death worthy of canonization (in other versions it is at Rome where she dies underground).50 In this story the courageous, independent, much-travelled holy virgin, connected with healing, whose memory is preserved in her miraculous cave, is inevitably assumed by the pagans of western Asia Minor, the epicentre of the cult of Artemis, to be a priestess of that goddess. It is in a cave high

47 See, e.g., Brown (1939), an article much recycled in the debate on female clergy, for example at http://www.whwomenclergy.org/article40.htm.
48 See the translation in Elliott (1993) 364–74, which is based on the text of Lipsius and Bonnet (1891) 235–72. Many thanks to Stuart Hall for help on Th ekla.
50 On the different locations where Th ekla’s shrine was located, see Davis (2001) 42–8.
above the ruins of Ephesus, indeed the great theatre of Ephesus, that an astonishing Christian painting of Thekla and Paul was discovered by Austrian archaeologists.\textsuperscript{51} They are indeed often depicted as a pair, united not sexually, but as travellers who announce the arrival of a new god (see Fig. II.7). In narrative terms, Thekla’s mission is the ancient Christian descendant—and nearest equivalent—to the quest performed by Artemis’ favourite, Euripides’ Black Sea Iphigenia.

\textsuperscript{51} The cave is on the northern slope of Bülbül Dag.
I write to you from the silver strand of the Black Sea... from the foot of a rock on which there is still to be seen a column, the sad relic of Diana's temple, so famous for the sacrifices of Iphigenia; from beside the rock where Thoas precipitated strangers; in short, from the most beautiful and interesting place in the world.

Letter written from Parthenizza by the Prince de Ligne to the Marquise de COIGNY, 1787

III

Travel Tragedy

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS, so much admired by Catherine the Great's acolyte the Prince de Ligne, is a serious play about trauma, with many humorous moments. It is ‘one of the five Euripidean plays that end without a trail of blood and no body count.’ It has a reasonably upbeat ending in which all the principal characters seem reconciled to the futures they are allotted, although the Greeks face a long and hazardous voyage. Nobody in antiquity ever questioned that it was a tragedy, and Aristotle regarded it as one of the supreme examples of the genre, yet there has been a curiously intense debate between classical scholars about the alleged ‘problem’ of its genre and the correct way to label it today. It has been called a tragedy manqué, a tragicomedy, a romance, an escape play, and even a comedy. The problem with this anachronistic fixation on generic classification, however, is that it leaves us insensitive to the far more interesting question of poetic ambience. In performance this is obvious; one reviewer of an important Philadelphia production in 1903 noticed the ‘tang of the neighboring sea that once and again scores the verse.’ Yet hardly any scholarly attention has been paid to the way that this text, set in close proximity to the sea, with characters coming and going from the beach below the temple, subjects the idea and experience of travel, especially sea travel, to prolonged aesthetic and intellectual scrutiny.

1 Translation quoted from de Ligne (1927) 47.
3 A full and judicious account of this longstanding scholarly obsession is available in Wright (2005) 6–55, with further bibliography.
4 See some of the more colourful labels collected by Belfiore (1992) 359.
Crucial components of this experience are the atmospheric, picturesque choral odes. If works of literature were classified less by their ostensible genre than by their subject matter and the atmosphere they conjure, then *IT* would belong with other great fantasies on the theme of the sea—the *Odyssey*, *The Ancient Mariner*, or *Moby-Dick*. The sea is a thing of danger and fear in *IT*—it means storms and shipwrecks, clashing rocks and death. But it also washes mud from cattle and pollution from murderers and statues: as Iphigenia tells Thoas, 'the sea washes away all the evils of humankind’ (1193). Although this line is part of her deception of Thoas, along with the whole ritual purification, it stands metonymically for the ritual function of the whole play—Orestes is to be absolved of pollution and cured of madness by means of his return voyage to the Black Sea. The ancient responses in the visual arts show that travel was a dimension of the play which registered profoundly with its ancient audiences, some of whom will have travelled long distances, by sea, to watch performances: vase paintings show Orestes and Pylades in the special broad-brimmed hat which marks out the traveller (see below pp. 000), and in Roman sarcophagus art their Argive ship becomes a regular element in the iconography of the story (see below, Fig. IV.7).

The physical location of Tauris matters (Fig. III.1). When the African Christian Tertullian wanted to attack the heretical teachings of Marcion, who was a native of Sinope in Pontus, he opened his polemic by associating the character of his opponent with the savagery of both the weather and the mythology of the Black Sea (*contra Marcionem* I.1):

Everything is stagnant and stiff with cold. Nothing there radiates with life, but with the savagery which has given to the stage its stories of the sacrifices of the Taurians, the passions of the Colchians, and the torments of the Caucasus.

In the imaginations of Tertullian and his readers, therefore, the Black Sea was immediately suggestive of two plays by Euripides (*IT* and *Medea*) and one attributed to Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*. But *IT* is alone amongst all ancient plays in being actually set on the Black Sea coastline. In the first stasimon, the chorus evoke the distinctive Tauric cliff-top setting with a beautiful set of images which catch both the terror and the beauty that Greeks must have experienced on their perilous voyages to the northern Black Sea (421–38):

But how did they manage to pass through the Clashing Rocks?
How did they get past

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6 Patton (2007) has adopted this line as the title of her interesting book on marine pollution in the light of catharsis myths.
the shores of Phineus that never sleep,
as they skirted along the sea-battered coastline
on the surf of Amphitrite?
There, where choruses
of fifty Nereids
circle as they sing,
and the winds fill the sails,
the steering oars at the stern
whistle with the southern breeze
or westerly squalls,
on the way to the land thronged with birds,
the white shore, Achilles’
lovely racing-track,
across the inhospitable sea.

Despite the lyric form, the narrative line is transparently that of a ‘periplous’ of
the Black Sea, a genre of writing which describes places in the order they would be
encountered on a sea voyage. The chorus imagine travelling in a ship which passes
through the Thracian Bosporus, the (very) approximate location of the ‘clashing
rocks,’ symbolic gateway between barbarism and civilization; the existence of this
legendary hazard, which is a recurrent emblem in the play of the obstacles lying
between home in Greece and limitless danger (124–5, 241, 1389), will have been
confirmed in travellers’ experience. Wildly conflicting circular counter-currents do
indeed divide the Black Sea down the middle, between the Crimea and approximately Heraclea on the south coast. This is the shortest but most hazardous route of all.\(^8\)

The imaginary ship then skirts the shores of Salmydessus associated with the blind seer Phineus, forever under attack from ravenous harpies arriving by air to steal his food.\(^9\) This part of the Black Sea coastline connects what is now north-western Turkey with Bulgaria. It was near this coast, at the ancient city of Dionysopolis-Balcik not far from modern Varna, that a fourth-century Greek or Hellenized Pontic barbarian once chose to honour a grave with a bronze krater, the relief of which depicted the story of Iphigenia's adventures in Tauris.\(^10\) The winds that can assist the voyager past these bays and then north-east across the sea inhabited by Amphitrite and the Nereids, as the women of the chorus know, come only from the west or the south. Perhaps their own dances replicated the image of the Nereids, a marine maidens' chorus accompanying the billowing sails, while a darker aural note is struck by the gales whistling through the oars at the stern.

Achilles’ racing track, with its white sands, is then identified by the chorus, an identification which has confused some commentators. The mention of white sands has led to a desire to associate the chorus’ language here with ‘Leuke’, the ‘White place’, which the epic \textit{Aethiopis} said had been Achilles’ destination after his funeral.\(^11\) Ancient geographers and more recent scholars have tried to pin down Leuke to particular Black Sea islands, both Berezan off Olbia and Ostriv Zmiinyi, ‘Snake Island’, which is a Ukrainian possession near the Danube delta of Bulgaria. Athenian pottery of the late sixth century has been found in a sanctuary on this island.\(^12\) But ‘Leuke’ was a place in the ritual and mythical rather than strictly cartographic imagination. It was the name of the residence of the immortal Achilles as recipient of Black Sea hero cult—‘Lord of Scythia’ as the poet Alcaeus called him (354 L-P), a place in some ways equivalent to ‘Elysium,’ and distinctly portable.\(^13\) As Burgess puts it, ‘heroic otherworld existence was often thought to be multi-local.’\(^14\) There is archaeological evidence for Achilles’ Black Sea cult in several places.\(^15\) There is no reason at all why he should not have been worshipped as the heroic sprinter in a sandy location somewhere near the

\(^9\) This myth was well known to seasoned Athenian theatre-goers: see Hall (2006) 116–8 and fig. 4.1.
\(^10\) Robinson (1932) 350, with further bibliography; Curtius (1934) figs. 1–2; Jucker (1988) fig. 17.
\(^11\) \textit{Argumentum} 4; West (2003) 112–3.
\(^12\) Koromila (1991) 49 with fig. 33.
\(^13\) Burgess (2001).
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temple of the maiden goddess in the Tauric Chersonese, if not further north on
the fenland which divides the Crimea from the central Ukraine, which Strabo
knew as the race-course of Achilles (7.3.19). This certainly seems to be com-
patible with the Euripidean Thoas’ famed skill at running (IT 32; see also Eur.
Andromache 1260–2).

More importantly, the mention of Achilles, fabled to have taken up residence
after death in ‘Scythia’, reinforces Iphigenia’s mention of the lie—the marriage
promise—with which she was lured from the Peloponnese. She refers to her own
journey in a ‘bitter carriage, drawn by horses’ from her home to be sacrificed
at the sandy shores of Aulis (214–17), thus undertaking one of the many past
or future journeys embedded in the verse of the play. The melancholic remem-
bering, narrating, prediction, or imagining of journeys, past and future, is a
fundamental constituent of this restless, maritime drama. It is a poetic fantasia
on the themes of map-making and navigation, from Iphigenia’s very opening
lines, ‘Pelops, son of Tantalus arrived in Pisa with his swift horses’ (1–2). Verbs
of motion and images of travel—by horse, on foot, in chariots, by miraculous
god-assisted means, on the wings of birds, by sea—occupy a startlingly high pro-
portion of its verses.

In an influential essay, ‘The odysseys within the Odyssey,’ Calvino explored the
plurality of tales echoing the master theme of wandering and return that are embed-
ded within that epic—Eumaeus, Eurycleia, Telemachus, Nestor, and Menelaus all
have their own odysseys, not to mention the travelling gods such as Hermes, who
flies across the surface of the sea to Calypso’s island. Euripides was aware of the rela-
tionship between the story told in his play and the Odyssey as archetypal travel epic,
since he prompts his audience to remember Odysseus’ long exile at sea. Iphigenia
asks what has befallen Odysseus, and Orestes responds that he is alive, but mis-
erable and unable to return home (533–6). Odysseus is lost on his voyages at the
very moment when Orestes and Iphigenia are talking. The Greeks, whose epic hero
Odysseus made a raft for himself to brave the sea and leave Calypso’s island, will have
warmed to the Taurian messenger’s interested description of their Greek captives’
naval technology (1345–53):

Then we saw a Greek ship,
it’s oars fanned out like feathers, neatly arranged,
with fifty sailors, holding their oars ready on the thole-pins,

16 Hedreen (1991) 318–9, who points out that fifteen graffiti bearing the name of Achilles or an abbreviated form
of it, some of which date from the fifth century, have been found in Tauric Chersonese.
and the two young men, released from their bonds, standing free on the ship’s stern. Some of the sailors were steadying the prow with poles; others were rushing to bring ladders in their arms, and lower them from the stern into the sea to help the foreign woman.

To an audience who knew their Homer intimately, this passage will have reminded them above all of the archetypal verses in the *Odyssey* when Telemachus launches his own quest from Ithaca in pursuit of news of his father (2.421–8):

Owl-eyed Athene sent them a following wind, strong and from the West, which whistled out across the wine-dark sea… They lifted the pine-wood mast, set it upright in its socket, securing it with forestays; with ropes of twisted ox-hide they then hauled up the white sails. The wind filled out the mainsail, and the purple wave roared out noisily, while the front end of the keel sliced through it as the ship pressed on.¹⁸

In *IT*, the most important journeys of all are the parallel expeditions of the goddess Artemis in company with her priestess which frame the play. Near its beginning, Iphigenia tells how she was seized by Artemis and carried through the shining air to be deposited in Tauris (29–30); at its conclusion, Iphigenia, who is alone allowed to touch Artemis’ image, carries it in her arms, like a child, away from Tauris and across the sea to Attica. It has never travelled anywhere before except when Zeus hurled it down from the sky.

The chorus, who long to go back to Greece themselves, imagine Iphigenia’s return journey in lyrical terms, accompanied by the sound of god-made music—pipe, lyre, and male singing voice (1123–37):

And you, mistress—the Argive ship with its fifty oars will take you home; the whistling pipes of the mountain-god Pan, reeds bound with wax, will urge on the oarsmen; Phoebus the prophet will sustain the music of the seven-stringed lyre, singing as he brings you safe

¹⁸ On this aspect of the *Odyssey* see further Hall (2008) 11–4.
to the Athenians’ dazzling land.
But I will be left behind here
As you leave me with splashing of oars,
your swift ship carrying you away,
and the forystays spreading the sails out all along the prow.

But the tone in which travel is evoked is predominantly miserable. The dismal mood is connected with the underlying coercion—the enforced mobility of characters whose attachment to their distant homeland is profound. All the Greeks are in Tauris against their will. In the choral stanza which precedes the one just quoted, the Greek women explain their presence in the play (1106–16):

The streams of tears
that poured down my cheeks
when my towered city was destroyed,
and I was forced to sail away
by the enemies’ spears and oars.
I was bartered for glittering gold;
my destination was a barbarous one.
Here I serve the virgin attendant
of the deer-slaying goddess,
the daughter of Agamemnon,
at altars where it’s not sheep that are sacrificed.

We never do discover the place from which they originated, except that it was Greek, and (depending on one disputed textual reading) it is possible that they are supposed to have originated from somewhere near the Spartan river Eurotas. They are a remarkable chorus in the complexity of their relationship with the space they currently inhabit. Greek tragic choruses are usually either ‘space defenders,’ inhabitants of a city who have a vested interest in its security and preservation, or ‘space invaders,’ like Euripides’ Bacchae, who come from elsewhere and threaten that security. But the Greek women in Tauris have no collective identity except the one they gain from working at their captors’ sanctuary. However much they desire to escape it, and rejoin the festivals attended by women all over Greece, they take their ritual

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99 At 115 the chorus sing that they have left ‘Europe,’ but this may well have been a misreading of ‘Eurotas,’ implying that the chorus come from somewhere near that river in the Peloponnese. In ancient Greek, the difference between the reading is a single scribal stroke of the pen. Diggle (1994) 418 has accepted the arguments put forward in Hall (1987) in defence of Joshua Barnes’ suggestion that it is the Eurotas which is here named. But see Cropp (1997) 25–7.
duties as servants of Artemis seriously. Their identity is hybrid, whether they like it or not, and this may have been powerfully expressed in the music. When they describe the lament they will sing for Orestes as a mournful strain ‘in barbarous Asiatick Dialects,’ to use the earliest translation of IT into the English language,\(^\text{20}\) Euripides is certainly writing a cue that allows performers to use exotic music they associate with barbarian culture. The chorus have learned the appropriate Taurian religious music to sing as they practise Taurian religion, even if they do not sing like this all the time.

There is in fact no reason to think they must necessarily all have come from the same place in Greece: each one was sold into slavery after her city was destroyed. This befits a community of women whose perspective on Greek cult, like Iphigenia’s, is remarkably Panhellenic rather than polis-specific. In one of the most beautiful stanzas in Greek tragedy, the chorus conclude this ode by singing that they would like to fly in the path of the sun to sing choruses, instead, in their homeland(s) (1138–52):

I wish I could travel in the bright pathways
of the horse-drawn chariot of the fiery sun.
I wish I could hover, the wings on my back held still,
over the rooms of my home.
I wish I could take my place in choruses,
where once in my mother’s presence I danced as a girl,
with twirling feet,
in ensembles with my age group,
rivals in grace
in soft, expensive clothes;
I prepared for the contest
by dressing in embroidered robes
and braids that cast shadows on my cheeks.

The daily journey of the sun god across the sky has already been evoked twice, in references to the moment when he turned away his face or changed path entirely in order to avoid witnessing the primordial theft of the golden sheep in the family of the Atreids (186–93, 823–6). In this choral ode, almost everything about the vocabulary and imagery is in the style of the Spartan partheneion or maiden song, of which the surviving extant examples are by Alcman: the comparison with the bird, the whirling maiden dances connected with maturation and marriage, the rich clothing, the

\(^{20}\) West (1749) 164. The translation has often escaped noticed because it is inconspicuously appended to a volume of Pindar translations and an important dissertation on ancient sport.
rivalry and celebration of the young women’s beautiful hair. But the point is more
generic and cultic than topographic. It is as celebrants of Artemis that their songs
return time and again to the particular topography traditionally associated with this
goddess: both her sanctuary by the Eurotas in Sparta, and her birthplace on Delos,
which she shares with her brother Apollo.  

At the heart of the play (which will conclude by providing an aetiology for rituals
connected with childbirth), this choral ode had begun, indeed, with the archetypal
Olympian scene of childbirth on Delos, introduced by an address to the halcyon, a
bird that may have resembled the kingfisher (1089–105):

Halcyon-bird, you sing a lament for your fate
beside the rocky crags of the sea,
a call that the wise well understand
to be your ceaseless sung lament for your husband—
I, although a wingless bird, compare my dirge with yours.
I yearn for the festivals of Greece,
I yearn for Artemis of childbirth,
who resides by the Cynthian hill,
and the soft-leaved palm-tree
and the maturing laurel
and the sacred shoot of the silvery olive,
and the lake where the water ripples in a circle,
and the tuneful swan serves the Muses.

When the chorus long for the festivals of Greece, the divinity who first occurs to
them here is Artemis of childbirth, whose original Greek birthplace and favoured
home was Mount Cynthous on the Cycladic island of Delos. It does indeed tower
above the site of the ancient ceremonial lake, beside which grew the palm tree onto
which Leto was said to have held as she gave birth to Artemis and Apollo. A palm-
tree flourishes on the very spot today (see Fig. III.2). But the chorus here also insert
the olive tree, Athena’s plant, into the narrative of Leto’s labour, perhaps for the first
time in the legend’s history.  

In specifying the olive tree on Delos, and giving such prominence to Delos in IT,
Euripides reminds his audience of its prominence in Athenian religious and political
history. Although the connection is still not fully understood, Delos was clearly of

22 Cropp (2000) 140.
great importance to Athenian self-promotion and imperial policy throughout the classical period. Peisistratus, the Athenian tyrant who may have been responsible for bringing Brauronian Artemis to the Acropolis, had also purified the island of Delos between 540 and 528 BCE. But Euripides’ audience was probably far more interested in the recent purification of 426 BCE, when the Athenians had expiated the island, removed all the coffins of the dead upon it, and decreed that henceforward no birth nor death should take place there (Thuc. 3.104). They also revived the ancient Ionian festival of the Delia, with its choruses and sacrifices, and added horse races for the first time. This festival cannot have been far from Euripides’ audience’s mind when the chorus of IT, in their next, remarkable ode, later to influence John Milton (see below pp. 000), pick up the same theme by returning in their imagination to Delos. Their interest now is the birth of Artemis’ brother Apollo, the other god so important to the remarkable theology of the play until Athena irrupts into its conclusion to insert her own city-state into the ritual cartography of the cult of Artemis (1234–82):

It was a wonderful child that Leto once bore, in the fruitful valleys of Delos—

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24 See Brock (1996).
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golden-haired, an expert lyre-player
who takes pleasure in well-aimed arrows.
She brought her child from the seaside rocks,
leaving that birthplace of renown,
to the peak of Parnassus, the mother
of gushing waters, Dionysus’ celebrant.
Here the dark-faced, mottled serpent,
glinting metallically in the shady laurel leaves,
an enormous monster of the earth,
guarded the chthonic place of prophecy.
Still a sweet baby, still romping
in your mother’s arms,
you killed it and entered the sacred oracle.
And you sit on the golden tripod, on the throne that tells no lies,
giving mortals predictions of divine decrees,
from inside the shrine, resident in Earth’s central
halls, beside the streaming Castalia.
But when he had dismissed Themis,
dughter of Earth, from her holy oracle,
Earth gave birth to night-time dreams,
which told human communities of the beginnings,
the present and the things to come,
as they slept on the ground in the darkness.
Earth bore a grudge on account of her daughter
and robbed Phoebus of his sacred privilege.
Swift-footed Lord Apollo rushed to Olympus,
and wrapped his infant arms around the throne of Zeus,
begging him to rid his Pythian home of the earth goddess’s wrath.
Zeus smiled because his son had come so quickly
to ensure he received the rich offerings of gold.
He shook his head to stop the voices that came in the night,
and deprived mortals of the truth-telling nocturnal apparitions,
and restored to Loxias, on his busy, much-frequented throne,
the right to give people confidence in his chanted decrees.

In yet another of the journeys which criss-cross the poetry of this text, the cho- 
rus trace Leto’s own route, with Apollo still a baby in her arms, from the rocks of Delos to Parnassus. Here there occurs one of this play’s rare acknowledgements of Dionysus—the god at whose ‘revels’ the tragedy was itself performed. The infant
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

Apollo then killed the serpent which guarded the oracle at Delphi, driving away Themis, the ancient prophetess of the tripod. But her mother’s revenge meant that Apollo had to travel again, this time unaccompanied, to Olympus and back, in order to secure Zeus’s endorsement of his possession of the Delphic oracle and its superiority as a prophetic instrument over the divination of dreams.15

Orestes, the tragic hero with the ‘vagabond destiny,’16 has been a far more reluctant traveller, as he explains to his horrified sister (939–86). Driven by the Erinyes from the Peloponnese to Delphi, Apollo sent him to Athens to stand trial. Even though he was acquitted, some of the Erinyes continued to drive him incessantly onwards until he returned once again to Delphi. The oracular voice there commanded him to go to Tauris to fetch the image of Artemis and take it to Attica. The future journeys of the siblings are described in greater detail by Athena at the end of the play, as we saw in a previous chapter (p. 000): Orestes is to travel to Halai in south-eastern Attica and Iphigenia to the nearby sanctuary at Brauron. So the play interconnects, through its multiple embedded journeys, the sacred sites of Delos, Delphi, Sparta, and Olympia; to this nexus it adds both Tauris and several sites in Attica. The divinities whose journeys are recollected, imagined, or enacted include Artemis, the Sun, Leto, Apollo and, latterly, Athena. In Iphigenia’s fantasy of the festivals a young woman might have hoped to attend in Greece, for Hera at Argos and Pallas at Athens (220–4), the play further embeds the ideas of travel with the purpose of attending festivals—_theòria_—between the major cities of Greece. But in their first stasimon the chorus had used well-known mythology to set the scene for the action of the play, recounting other journeys into the Euxine in generations past (392–7):

The dark, dark seas flow together
where the gadfly which flew from Argos
crossed over the hostile ocean-swell,
passing from Europe to Asia.

Another young Greek girl, Io, had once found herself, in bovine form, pursued by Hera’s gadfly across continents; here the chorus refer not to the Hellespont but the Bosporus between the Sea of Azov (which the ancient Greeks called Lake Maeotis) and the Black Sea. These were the straits which, in the ancient Greek mind, divided Europe from Asia. Perhaps there is a suggestion of a link between the cow-woman and the Taurians, whose name was often connected with bulls and indeed may have

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15 On dreams in the play see further p. 000. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 231–2 argues that this choral ode ends on a positive note which prefigures the positive outcome to the play.
been the original reason why Artemis, with her cult title ‘Tauropolos,’ ‘bull-herding,’ was associated by both the Greeks and the Taurians with the Crimean maiden goddess.\footnote{Lloyd-Jones (1983) 96.} This etymology is memorably embodied by Euripides in the first Taurian we meet, the cowherd messenger, who has himself undertaken his own mini-journey, from the cattle pastures down to the seashore.

Now the chorus women ponder the new arrivals, the young Greek men who have been arrested by the cowherds washing their cattle in the sea: to judge from the river’s the chorus name, they guess that they may be Spartan or Theban (397–408):

So who are they, then? Have they left the lovely waters and green reeds of the Eurotas or the sacred streams of the Dirce to come here, to come to this antisocial land, where human blood stains the altars and pillared porticoes for the goddess Artemis?

They wonder, understandably, whether the young Greeks are plunderers or traders (408–19):

Was it the competitive urge to acquire ever more household riches which made them sail across the ocean waves in their ship, with its twin banks of surging oars, and linen sails billowing in the wind? People cherish hopes that can never be fulfilled to their own detriment. They amass a heavy load of wealth, drifting across the sea-swell, roaming through barbarian towns, all with the same ambitions.

Pylades is right to be concerned that something may happen to his ship and he may lose all his belongings (755–8). Sailing the Black Sea was notoriously dangerous. The ancient reputation has been more than confirmed by underwater archaeology. Many dozens of anchor-stones have been discovered by Bulgarian divers off their coast, some dating from well before Greek colonization. They can be seen in the museums of Sozopol (ancient Apollonia) and Varna.\footnote{Koromila (1991) 41–2, 44–5.} In the mid-1960s, Russian divers discovered the wreck of a commercial ship from Heraclea near Donuzlav in
north-western Taurica. Amphorae on board for wine had stamps which date them to the second quarter of the fourth century BCE. Further east, on the other side of the straits of Kerch, the Russian Prime Minister starred in a publicity stunt in August 2011 in which he donned a diving suit and personally retrieved two ancient amphorae from the sea off Phanagoria. The photographs of his manly torso emerging from the waters symbolically reinforced the claim first made by Catherine the Great and Potemkin, that Russian imperial control of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov was a legitimate inheritance transmitted from Greco-Roman antiquity, when the Greeks colonized Tauric Chersonesos and Mithridates VI cultivated his image as Hellenized monarch of the Bosporan Kingdom.

The amphorae Putin ‘found’ underwater had been planted for the purpose. But many thousands of others are genuine evidence of the frequency of ancient sailing catastrophes in the Euxine. For no amount of danger would have stopped the Greeks putting out to sea. At the core of the ancient Greeks’ identity was the idea that they were seagoing and coastal creatures. Aphrodite opens *Hippolytus* by describing the world which worships her as ‘all those who dwell between the Euxine Sea and the Pillars of Atlas and look on the light of the sun’ (3–4). In Plato’s *Phaedo* Socrates says, ‘I believe that the earth is enormous, and that we who dwell in the area extending from the river Phasis to the Pillars of Heracles inhabit only a small portion, around the sea, like ants or frogs about a pond’ (109B). The ‘Greek world’ extended from the edges of the Black Sea across the Mediterranean, approximately bounded to the west by the Pillars of Heracles at Gibraltar.

The sea defined the ancient Greeks’ sense of geography, and was the ‘pond’ at its centre, fringed around by Greek civilized habitations. Greek colonizers tended not to found settlements much more than 35 kilometres or so—a day’s journey—inland. One of the unifying factors in ancient Greek life, both in reality and psychologically, was sea travel. But in conjunction with endless trading by sea, one strand in elevated Greek literature from the *Odyssey* onwards traditionally denounces merchants and traders. It contrasts them with the aristocratic traveler who is defined by the athletic skills he can develop in the permanent leisure which his financial independence allows him to enjoy. The *locus classicus* for this contrast is the scene in *Odyssey* 8, where Odysseus proves that he is no déclassé trader by his skill in discus-throwing. In *IT*, the aristocratic athletic training of Orestes and Pylades is brought out in the

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30 http://www.newsbcm.com/doc/992. I am grateful to my editor, Stefan Vranka, for pointing this news story out to me.
cowherd’s description of their fight on the beach, in which they use most of the skills involved in the violent contact sport known as the pankration. Yet here, beneath the lyric and legendary sheen, is a real historical situation.

The Athenians were involved in extensive Black Sea operations in the later fifth century, although the precise nature of these is disputed. Plutarch’s Life of Pericles states that Pericles sent thirteen warships to remove the tyrant of Sinope (on the south coast of the Black Sea opposite the Crimea), and thereafter to settle six hundred Athenians in that city. At the same time, Pericles made an impressive show of strength from coast to coast (20.1):

He also sailed into the Euxine Sea with a large and splendidly equipped force. There he brought about what the Greek cities wanted, and treated them humanely. But to the neighbouring barbarian peoples, with their kings and dynastic rulers, he showed the size of his armament and displayed the magnitude of his forces and the daring bravery with which they sailed wherever they wanted, bringing the whole sea under their control.

It may be that Plutarch’s account of the death of a man named Aristides, while he was on public duty in the Black Sea (Arist. 26.1), is connected with the same expedition. By the second half of the fifth century, Euripides’ Athens was permanently involved in maritime activities in the Black Sea, where it was pursuing its usual policies of establishing cleruchies and attempting to impose control on key maritime routes. It had a special interest in Nymphaion, round the coast of the peninsula from Tauric Chersonesos. It set up a garrison there; its leader was Gylon from the Athenian deme of Kerameis (Demosthenes’ grandfather), and the amount of its yearly tribute—one talent—implies ‘considerable resources.’

There was at least one tragedian from the Black Sea in Athens in the late fifth century, Spintharus of Heraclea, who is said to have enjoyed great success (Suda s.v. Spintharos; Diogenes Laertius 5.92). But we have practically no evidence for theatrical performances in the Greek theatres of the northern Black Sea. A few pieces of material evidence are highly suggestive. One is a fragment of an Athenian vase painted in 430–420 BCE, found in Olbia and first published in 2002. It shows two chorusesmen performing in a tragedy, wearing female masks, painted white with elaborate wigs and decorated head-

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34 For an account of the debate, with bibliography, see Tsetskhladze (1997) 461–6, although I think he is himself overly sceptical; for the Athenian perspective, see especially Braund (2005).
35 Moreno (2007) 165.
36 Aeschines 3.171–2; Craterus FgrH 142 F 8. See Moreno (2007) 166 with references in n. 115.
37 Froning (2002) 72, fig. 88. The fragment is held in Kiev at the Museum of the Academy of Sciences.
pieces. The masked men, dressed in patterned robes, dance to the accompaniment of an aulos player who stands in the centre of the fragmentary image, beside his seated assistant. The assistant holds a box containing accessories for the aulos—mouthpieces and reeds. This vase is a crucial piece of evidence for theatre history, since it represents tragic performers in action with an unprecedented degree of realism, as Eric Csapo has shown, and it is remarkable to think that it was used and enjoyed so far north, in Olbia, where the theatre has yet to be identified and excavated. A northern Black Sea interest in choral dancing is certainly implied by this fifth-century bas-relief of a dancer, found at Nymphaion just before World War II (see Fig. III.3). Rumours of the discovery of a theatre in Nymphaion have recently started to fly in Ukrainian archaeological circles. There was certainly considerable integration of Greeks and non-Greeks there. Sixth-century inhumations reveal Athenian, Ionian, and Iranian artefacts. The settlement became noticeably wealthier from the middle to the late fifth century. Panticapaion

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38 Csapo (2010) 8–9 with fig. 1.3.
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also enjoyed a building spurt during the same period, constructing amongst other things a monumental Ionic Temple to Apollo Iatros.\textsuperscript{40}

The economic prosperity in the Crimean and northern Black Sea settlements at this time was not yet primarily based on grain, but on trade in cattle, horses, furs, animals, slaves, and fish. Meyer and Moreno argue that ‘Athenian economic hegemony in the Aegean’ influenced trade in the Crimea during the second half of the fifth century to a ‘considerable extent,’ which can be demonstrated by evidence of weighing technology and the interchangeability of Athenian and Black Sea market weight standards.\textsuperscript{41} There must have been a good number of men in the original audience of IT who had undertaken part or the whole of the voyages which the play evokes.

It is not that Euripides’ primary concern is with topographical precision. His play could be enjoyed by any spectator regardless of how much or little they knew about the navigation of the Black Sea, with which the cult of Artemis was very closely associated in Greek sources from Herodotus onwards. Euripides does not ever specify where exactly within Taurian territory the temple of Artemis, with its adjacent city, is situated. It may seem perverse to question its identification with the city known as ‘Tauric Chersonesos’ in antiquity, where the Parthenos was indeed worshipped with special devotion, along with lesser cults of the Nymphs, Dionysus, and Asclepius.\textsuperscript{42} ‘The titles ‘queen virgin,’ \textit{anassa parthenos} (IT 1230) and ‘deer-slayer,’ \textit{elaphoktonos} (1115) are exactly what we would expect from the archaeological and especially numismatic evidence for the cult in the region of Tauric Chersonesos. Yet the vagueness could be designed to prompt audience members to identify it with almost any place where they had passed in their ships as they sailed round the spectacular peninsula.

The most recent writer on the Black Sea Artemis is surely incorrect to argue that Euripides’ play was exclusively concerned with the cult of Artemis in Attica and ‘not at all concerned with the Black Sea region.’\textsuperscript{43} The quantitative evidence for the cult of Artemis in the Black Sea, on this scholar’s very cautious methodology, will inevitably be slight, since she excludes, for example, a domestic shrine from Chersonesos which may well have been dedicated to Artemis, Apollo, and Leto, the ‘Delphic triad.’\textsuperscript{44} But she does acknowledge a substantial number of dedications, dating from the fifth century BCE, in Olbia and Kerkinitis in the Crimea. She also accepts epigraphic

\textsuperscript{40} Moreno (2007) 158.
\textsuperscript{41} Meyer and Moreno (2004) 214.
\textsuperscript{42} Braund (2007).
\textsuperscript{43} Bilde (2009) 105.
\textsuperscript{44} See further Bilde (2009) 311.
evidence for a fourth-century statue of Artemis dedicated at Hermonassa (eastward across the straits from Kerch), for the existence of Epicrates, the priest of Artemis at Olbia, and for priestesses of Artemis named Apollonis and Kathara in cities on the west coast of the Black Sea.  

Tauric Chersonesos itself was a well established city by the fourth and third centuries BCE, with a democratic constitution and a stone theatre (see Fig. III.4). There is a good deal of debate about its earlier history. Pomponius Mela recorded a tradition that it was actually founded by the goddess Diana (2.1.3). Scholars used to accept almost universally the account of its foundation in the geographical poem attributed to pseudo-Scymnus (822–930), which may contain information going back to the third century BCE. This poem says that Chersonesos was founded by people from both Heraclea (on the south coast of the Black Sea) and Delos in accordance with an oracle. This account sent the scholars on a quest to find a moment in history when both Delians and Heracliotics might have felt under pressure to found a new colony, and discovered it in the late 420s BCE, when the Athenians were putting pressure on adversaries in both Delos (see above) and Heraclea. The myth of the 421 BCE foundation of Chersonesos was born. Yet there is now a substantial amount of archaeological evidence of Greek activity at Chersonesos from the sixth

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45 CIRB 1040; IOSPE 1 190, IScM I 172, IScM III 78.
46 Schneider with (1897) 3–5; see Sarykin (1997) 11.
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century BCE, including pottery sherds and terracottas from Ionia (perhaps Miletus), Athens, Corinth, Thasos, Lesbos, and Chios. In the current state of our evidence it is impossible to be sure when this lively commercial community first turned into an official city-state.

So who were the Taurians, the real indigenous ethnic group who lived in the southern part of the Crimea? Were they really as frightening as the early Victorian traveller Laurence Oliphant believed, when he had a vision of a brave Greek colony, founded after the escape of Orestes and Iphigenia, which only survived continuous attacks for centuries from the savage native Taurians by building a long defensive wall to exclude them? The fact is that we still know precious little about the Taurians. Can they be identified with the archaeologically familiar ‘Kizil-Koba’ culture in the region, which can be traced from the ninth to the third centuries BCE? The settlements and group burials of the Kizil-Koba people, some of which are in stone sarcophagi, suggest that they were engaged in both arable and animal farming, perhaps like Euripides’ cattle-farming Artemis-worshippers; they also made pottery. We have no idea to which language group they belonged. Russian scholars have for at least thirty years identified them with the Taurians, but of this there can be no certainty.

Another strategy has been to hear in the play echoes of the long-lost oral culture of the peoples who lived in the Crimea before the Greeks came; the occasional ethnologist has tried to relate the tragedy to the earliest surviving Russian epic, the twelfth-century Armament of Igor. This poem retains traces of pre-Christian mythology, includes a bird-goddess named Obida who arrives from the sea, takes the form of a swan, and exerts influence over the coastal region of the Black Sea to the east and south of Kiev; she is also associated with the Tatars’ legendary ‘Swan-Maiden’ who haunts the coast of the Crimea. Both of these stories, in turn, have been connected with the ancient traditions relating to the Parthenos of the western Tauric Chersonese, as first mentioned by Herodotus (4.103): the temple of the Maiden, ‘some sort of daimon,’ who gives her name to the cliff outside the city—Parthenion—where the temple of the goddess and her image are to be found.

The ‘problem’ of the mysterious lost tribe of the Taurians is exacerbated by inadequate documentation of the early archaeological activities prior to the Crimean War, the massive destruction wrought both then and during World War II, the Cold War conditions of secrecy under which the 1950s Chersonesos excavations took

\[47\] Saprykin (1997) 62–4 with further (Russian) bibliography.
\[48\] Oliphant (1853) 252–3.
\[49\] The sensible review of the main evidence and arguments in Leskov (1980) is still useful.
\[50\] Kris (1981).
\[51\] Manning (1920).
place, the inaccessibility in the western world of much of the relevant Russian and Ukrainian scholarship, and the ideological agendas underlying work on the relations between Greek colonists and whatever indigenous peoples they encountered. It seems to matter a great deal today, as Braund has shown, whether the Greeks and the Taurians lived side-by-side in harmony, even sharing burial grounds and civic amenities, or were in constant conflict.\(^{52}\) The traditional reading of the single fifth-century inscription from the Crimea area which has been thought to provide an example of the ethnonym ‘Taurian,’ a Panticapaion epitaph of a man with the (very Greek) name Tychon, has recently been disputed.\(^{53}\) With the disappearance of this Hellenized Taurian, well enough regarded to be buried alongside Greeks, there disappears much of the archaeological evidence supporting the pleasant picture cultivated by some scholars of a friendly hybrid community of Greeks and Taurians in the fifth century BCE.

Audiences of \textit{IT} who had not visited the Black Sea may have heard the historian Herodotus discuss it at one of his public recitals. Herodotus, indeed, goes out of his way to enable his listeners to understand the exact shape of the part of the Crimean peninsula inhabited by the Taurians: it is like the high part of the southern promontory of Attica, from Thoricus down to Sunium (which region happens to be the location of Artemis’ cult at Brauron and Halai Araphenides), or in South Italy, the promontory south of Brindisi and Taras (where as we shall see in the next chapter, Artemis was a prominent divinity). Herodotus insists that the Taurians, who inhabit the southern part of the whole Crimean peninsula, are completely different from the Scythians. But others in antiquity were not so sure, and the place where Iphigenia was priestess was often elided with Scythia. The very concept of the Taurians was already sufficiently bewildering that the writer of the first paragraph of the hypothesis to \textit{IT}, probably Aristophanes of Byzantium in the third century BCE, felt the need to clarify that the land of the Taurians was in ‘Scythia.’ By Pliny’s time, the term ‘Tauro-Scyths’ had been invented (\textit{HN} 4.85).

Herodotus discusses the Taurians in the course of his account of the Persian King Darius’ attempt to subjugate Scythia in book 4. One of the most interesting meetings in his book is the summit of eight northern Pontic rulers convened by the Scythians when Darius had invaded their kingdom in the early fifth century: the kings of the Taurians, the Agathyrsi, the Neuri, the Androphagi, the Melanchlaeni, the Geloni, the Budini, and the Sauromatae. The Agathyrsi are polygamous and communistic and similar to the Thracians; the Neuri, Androphagi, and Melanchlaeni resemble Scythians; the Budini are an aboriginal people and still nomads; the Geloni, who

\(^{51}\) Braund (2007).

\(^{52}\) Braund (2004).
practise arable farming and worship Greek gods, including Dionysus, are in fact descended from Greek refugees; at this point Herodotus does not enlarge on the Sauromatae. But the first tribe in the list, and the one on which he spends by far the most time, is the Taurians (4.103):

They sacrifice to the Virgin goddess (*parthenos*) anyone who is shipwrecked there, and all Greeks forced to enter their harbour in the following way: after the preliminaries, they hit the victim on the head with a club. Some accounts say that they then cast the body from the cliff (the temple is built on a cliff) and stick the head on a stake. Others agree about the head, but say that the body is not cast down from the cliff, but buried in the earth. This goddess to whom they sacrifice the Taurians themselves say is Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon. When they take their enemies captive, they treat them like this: each one who has taken a prisoner beheads him, carries the head to his house, impales it on a long pole and raises it high over the house, usually over the chimney. They say by putting them up so high, the heads protect the whole household. They live off war and plunder.

The Taurians live by the sea in houses. They are not nomads. Early Modern artists much enjoyed visualizing the appearance of the Taurians’ town, seen here on the left (see Fig. III.5) in a tapestry representing the epiphany of Athena.

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**Figure III.5** Athena appears *ex machina* to Thoas on a tapestry by Pieter de Cracht (1648–62).
Regardless of whether any historical truth lies behind Herodotus’ account of the customs of the Taurians, some of it corresponds closely with some of the detail in Euripides’ play, notably the temple, the human sacrifices (especially of Greeks), and some aspects of the treatment of enemy corpses. Herodotus paints a picture of a grim seaside town, inhabited by professional looters, where the decapitated heads of sacrificed enemies loom over the domestic chimney-pots. Fascinatingly, one of the Scythian (rather than Taurian) religious images that may have struck Greek visitors as particularly frightening and which could have fed such rumours has turned up on a pendant in Chersonesos: a snake-footed goddess portrayed as a figure similar to Greek images of the ‘mistress of wild animals’ (potnia therōn), but who also holds aloft severed male heads.\(^{54}\)

In *IT*, of course, barbarism is not a barbarian prerogative. Euripides uses occasional irony to remind his audience of the human sacrifice authorized by Agamemnon, and Orestes’ murder of his mother.\(^{55}\) One of the most important lines in the play is Thoas’ response to the information that the two Greek strangers have killed ‘their’ mother: ‘Apollo! even a barbarian wouldn’t do that’ (1174). The journeys of *IT* are not only between physical spaces. The audience of *IT* is invited to ponder the connection between the ideas of surviving psychological ordeals and of surviving hazardous journeys; in ritual terms, the journey also represents the transition from childhood to adulthood for both sexes, a journey which in the cases of Iphigenia and Orestes can now finally be achieved despite its previous cruel disruptions. The audience is also invited to think about the link between knowledge and travel, and even to laugh about it. Pylades is referring to Agamemnon and Menelaus when he says that ‘everyone knows the story of the sufferings of those kings—at least, everyone who travels’ (671–2). Surely there is some humour behind making Iphigenia, who despite living in such a remote location has done very little travelling, insist rather indignantly that her brother is extremely famous in several whole square miles of the Peloponnese, ‘throughout Sparta as well as Nauplia’ (803–4). But the play offers a far more wide-ranging virtual tour of the Greek world which worshipped Artemis and the other Olympians than Iphigenia has ever accomplished. *IT* presents us with a poetic ticket to ride, fly, sail, and run from Sparta and Argos to Aulis, Aulis to Tauris, Tauris to Halai Araphenides, Brauron, and Delos, from Delos to Delphi, from Delphi to Olympia, Athens, and Tauris, and from whatever parts of the Greek world the chorus came, like the spectators at the Athenian Dionysia, to a front-row seat at the Tauric sacrifices. The next chapter’s adventure takes us to the other side of the Greek world, to its western colonies, which embraced the Black Sea Iphigenia with enthusiasm.


The best recognition of all is the one which is produced by the incidents themselves, with the astonishing discovery happening plausibly, like the recognition in Sophocles’ Oedipus and in the Iphigenia; for it was inherently likely that she would want to send a letter.

Aristotle, *Poetics* 16.1455a16–19

### IV

**Plots and Pots: the Fourth-century Popularity of Iphigenia in Tauris**

*This single sentence* in Aristotle’s *Poetics* ensured that *IT* would attract sustained attention on the stages of Early Modern and Enlightenment Europe. Aristotle’s *Poetics* was rarely far from the desks of the humanist intellectuals interested in the theatre, at least after Francesco Robortelli’s 1548 commentary began to circulate widely. Aristotle’s treatise here identified the letter scene in *IT* not only as an example of the best kind of recognition in tragedy, because it arose so naturally from Iphigenia’s situation, but as the joint holder of the title of ‘tragedy with the best recognition scene of all’. In Aristotle’s mind, Sophocles’ *Oedipus* and Euripides’ *IT* seem to form a pair of exemplary tragedies. In both plays the recognition and the reversal coincide, in that the recognition is instrumental in bringing about the transformation of the characters’ situation. But that transformation of fortune moves in opposite directions in each play—in *Oedipus* from good to bad, and in *IT* from bad to good.

The scene in which Orestes recognizes Iphigenia after she recites the contents of her letter to him, so admired by Aristotle, is also portrayed on a large number of vases of the fourth century BCE which were buried with the dead in funerals in Italy. Indeed, there are more illustrations of *IT* in Greek vase-painting of the fourth century than of any other tragedy. This chapter explores possible reasons for the popularity of the play during this period. It suggests that it was connected with both the suitability of the affective relationships, explored so successfully in the intense recognition scene of the play, to the context of a family funeral, and with the rapid expansion of the cult of Artemis amongst the western Greeks.

Aristotle does not think the second recognition in *IT*, when Iphigenia recognizes Orestes through tokens, is equally impressive. But the play is one of his favourites. He has already singled it out for high praise earlier, in his crucial discussion of the
ways in which the emotions proper to tragedy, fear and pity, are best aroused. Again, *IT* is placed in the top category, this time actually ahead of *Oedipus*, as representing, along with two other plays which have not survived, the sort of action which best produces these emotional reactions. Aristotle says that by far the best way of arousing fear and pity is ‘from the inner structure of the piece’ rather than spectacular means, which risk creating a sense of the inappropriately monstrous (14.1453b8–10). The violence which produces the fear and pity needs to be between close family relations rather than enemies or individuals indifferent to one another (14.1453b19–22). But Aristotle then considers in detail which circumstances ‘strike us as terrible or pitiful’, dividing them into four categories. First, the action may be done consciously: here Aristotle gives the example of Medea, who kills her children. Secondly, the action may be done in ignorance and the bond discovered afterwards, as in *Oedipus*. Thirdly, the action may be about to be done consciously, but somehow averted (here Aristotle does not identify an example). But the fourth case is ‘when someone is about to do an irreparable deed through ignorance, and makes the discovery before it is done’. Aristotle says that the runner-up in this section is the second subcategory exemplified by *Oedipus*, when the deed is perpetrated and the identities discovered subsequently (14.1454a4–9):

But the last case is the best, as when in the *Cresphontes* Merope is about to kill her son, but, recognizing who he is, does not kill him. And in the *Iphigenia*, the sister recognizes the brother and in the *Helle*, the son recognizes the mother when about to hand her over.

Aristotle actually regards as supreme the type of tragic plot in which the audience is prepared for the imminent prospect of intra-familial violence through misunderstanding about identity, but does not actually experience it.

Euripides’ ‘problem’ tragedy was therefore very far from being a problem to Aristotle, who analysed tragedies according to the emotional effects that they produced in the audiences during the process of enactment, rather than the ultimate fate of the characters or the emotional situation at the end of the play. Euripides’ *IT* was judged to be an example of the best possible practice both in terms of its interlocked, organic recognition and reversal and its arousal of pity and fear. In terms of its emotional effectiveness, its plot is perfect. Aristotle seems so taken with this diagnosis that he produces one of his most glaring inconsistencies in praising so highly the fact that the kin-murder is averted, which seems to contradict his statement that the best kind of action in a tragedy sees its hero pass from good to bad fortune, rather than the other way round (13.1453a7–10). Indeed, in that section,
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which addresses the nature of the most appropriate kind of tragic hero, *IT* does not feature at all, although it may be meant to be covered by the mention of Orestes in the list of suitable mythical figures to star in tragedy, along with Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Meleager, Thyestes, and Telephus (13.1453b19–22). But that discussion is dominated by *Oedipus*, in which the hero, as a man from a good family who is neither outstandingly virtuous nor outstandingly wicked, is identified as exemplary. Aristotle would never, of course, have praised the choice of Iphigenia as protagonist, since in his patriarchal view, women should not be characterized as either intelligent or brave, since that is inherently implausible (15.1454a22–4).

Yet the prominent position held by *IT* in Aristotle’s consciousness as he worked out his theory of tragedy is further underlined by the section in which he gives practical advice to the aspiring playwright on dramaturgical method. The general outline of the plot should precede the composition of individual episodes (17.1455b2–12):

The overall plan can be considered by taking the example of the *Iphigenia*. A girl is sacrificed and disappears inexplicably from the sight of the people performing the sacrifice. She is transported to another land, where it is the custom to sacrifice foreigners to the goddess, and she holds this sacred office. After some time has passed the priestess’s brother happens to arrive. The fact that the god for some reason told him to go there and the reason for it are extraneous to the overall plan of the play. But he arrives, is arrested, and when about to be sacrificed, reveals his identity. The recognition can be done in the way Euripides did it, or Polyidus, who made Orestes say, very plausibly, ‘So not only my sister but I as well must be sacrificed.’ These words are what save his life.

This is the ’general plan’ of the action of the play. The essential action is that Orestes ‘arrives, is arrested, and when about to be sacrificed, reveals his identity.’ This action arouses the pity and fear and the situation which is reversed by the recognition. Aristotle then describes two of the episodes which need to be ‘filled in,’ and which must be relevant to this central action—Orestes’ mad fit which leads to his capture (that is, the first messenger episode), and his ‘deliverance by means of the purificatory rite’ (which means the action of the play after the recognitions). But the most interesting detail in this section of the *Poetics* is the comparison of the way in which the recognition was handled by Euripides and another writer named Polyidos. In Polyidos’ play on the same theme, there was apparently no letter. Orestes revealed, when his death was imminent, that his sister had been sacrificed. This saves his life,
presumably because Iphigenia realizes that she is that sacrificed sister. Aristotle thinks this is a natural and plausible recognition, and commends it as such (16.1455a6–8).\(^1\)

The importance of the story told in IT in the fourth century BCE is also demonstrated by the thirteen known vase paintings of that date which portray Iphigenia as priestess, sometimes inside and sometimes beside the naïskos which represents the Taurian temple of Artemis, and at least one of the two Greek men (usually both), outside it.\(^2\) One pot is Athenian; all the others were made in Italy in ‘Magna Graecia,’ more appropriately called Megale Hellas. Most are from the south-eastern district including the ‘heel,’ Apulia, and three are from further west, in Campania. Their whereabouts today reflect the history of the export of fine ‘Greek’ vases across the planet—only five remain in Italy. Three are in Moscow or St. Petersburg, reflecting Russian imperial interest in this tragedy (see above and below, pp. 000); others found their way to Paris, Basel, New York, Sydney, and England.\(^3\)

Most of these vases include the letter, held by Iphigenia, at the moment when she passes it to Pylades. The letter itself is not only a theatrical ‘prop’ required by actors when they performed the play,\(^4\) but a complex metatheatrical reminder of the process of acting a role. When Iphigenia tells the Greeks the contents of the letter, she enacts a future scene she imagines at Argos in which Pylades will recite her lines to an audience including Orestes. Here she speaks her own ‘lines,’ not reading from the letter but knowing them by heart, while holding the letter like an actor’s part. The role of writing in the rehearsing of Greek tragedy has been debated, but a recent papyrus find has confirmed that actors used ‘parts,’ which evidence on vases and in comedy had long since suggested was the case.\(^5\)

Iphigenia’s account (addressed to Pylades in Tauris), of the contents of the letter she is holding in her hand (which is addressed to Orestes in Argos), begins by referring to herself in the third person, but after an interruption by Orestes and a parenthesis, soon resumes the recital of the letter and moves into the first person (769–78):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Iphigenia}  Tell Orestes, Agamemnon’s son, ‘The one who was slaughtered in Aulis sends this, Iphigenia, who is alive, although the people there think she is dead…’
\end{quote}

\(^{1}\) On the enormous importance to Aristotle of probability, often better translated as ‘plausibility,’ see the excellent remarks in Belfiore (1992) 364–7.

\(^{2}\) There is a small group of other vases on which the paintings have occasionally been thought to be related to IT: see Philippart (1925) 12–3.

\(^{3}\) The lost one was in the possession of the Duke of Buckingham.

\(^{4}\) On this and other props in Greek tragedy related to writing, see Easterling (1985) 4–6.

\(^{5}\) Hall (2006) 39–48 and (2010); see below, ch. VI, pp. 000.
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Orestes  So where is she then? Has she returned from the dead?
Iphigenia  She is the woman you’re looking at. Stop distracting me!
 ‘Take me to Argos, brother, before I die,
and take me away from a barbarous land and the rites
of the goddess, where I hold the office of sacrificing foreigners…
Orestes  Pylades, what shall I say? Where on earth are we?
Iphigenia  …or I become a curse on your household.’

After another interruption, marking the moment when Pylades recognizes her as
Iphigenia, she concludes the recital of her letter, the speech which Pylades is to per-
form like an actor, moving back into and finally out of the direct speech representing
her voice in the future to her own voice in the present (783–7):

Tell him that ‘Artemis saved me, replacing me
with a deer, which my father sacrificed,
believing that it was me into whom he drove the sword,
and she settled me in this land.’ This is what the letter says;
these are the words written in the tablets.

Simply to follow this scene in the theatre requires concentration. The spectator is
reminded of role-playing on numerous levels. Iphigenia is acting out a scene where
a message is reported in Argos by a man who will impersonate her words, and is
handing over her ‘part’ to him. Pylades and Orestes shift from the role of listening
to a sad woman they have just met to listening to a woman of extraordinary impor-
tance to them, who they previously believed was dead. Euripides immediately pref-
aced the climactic and emotional recognition which ensues with this intense and
multi-layered moment of reflection on the very process of theatrical role-playing.
The reference to this moment can only have helped the viewer of the vases to remem-
ber that the painted scene was related to a scene performed by speaking actors.

There is no letter on one of the Apulian volute-kraters which, found in Ruvo and
now in Naples Archaeological Museum (Naples 3223, inv. 82113), is relatively early,
dating from around 370–360 BCE. It is at least theoretically possible here that the
vase-painter was reacting to the version of the play not by Euripides but by Polyidos,
which was well enough known to be quoted by Aristotle (see Fig. IV.1). Orestes,
unusually, is actually seated on the altar, looking dejected, indeed ‘his whole atti-
tude betokens sorrow’—a reminder that he really is doomed to die in this play, and

7 Huddilston (1898) 127.
perhaps his slaughter is imagined in this image to be imminent. Iphigenia gestures towards him with her right hand, but it does not contain a letter. Iphigenia’s gesture could be interpreted as one of sudden comprehension turning into an attempt to calm her brother down. Pylades is not receiving a letter: he looks on, rubbing his head, clearly perplexed at the turn in events.

Polyidos’ lost tragedy and Euripides’ version shared, however, the situation in which Orestes is about to be sacrificed by his sister before they mutually recognize each other. This is what Aristotle regarded as so perfectly geared to creating the emotional response proper to tragedy. Looking at these vases, the viewer knew the identity of the individuals involved (on the Naples vase in Fig. IV.1 the names are actually inscribed). But Orestes is still suffering. The vase therefore both offers the experience of psychological pain—pity and fear—and the promise that all will soon be well. The vase painters are using visual means to suggest the same sequence of emotional shifts which Euripides has written the script to elicit, and which Aristotle identified as properly tragic. He seems intuitively to have anticipated the findings of modern neuroscience, which have shown that the pleasure brought about by recognition relies heavily on the prompting of anticipation of the recognition well before it actually takes place.

Raphael Lyne’s application of such analytical concepts to Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, when Imogen’s recognition of her two brothers is postponed repeatedly until the final scene, has suggested that our understanding of the way ancient drama works would be enhanced by better understanding the unconscious responses it
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produces. The audience at a performance of Euripides' *IT* will usually have known that Orestes and Iphigenia would discover each other's identity, and brain-imaging research has demonstrated that the *anticipation* of pleasurable experiences is pleasurable in its own right in a way distinct from the peak pleasure itself. Although he was obviously not aware of the relevant neural mechanisms, which involve waves of dopamine and adrenalin, Euripides had learned in practice how to draw out the process of recognition for an extended part of the play, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats, as the moment of actual recognition is delayed.

The emotions evoked by anticipation of events like the recognition of long-lost siblings on stage involve no fewer than five functionally distinct physiological systems: imagination, tension, prediction, reaction, and appraisal. Preparing for the anticipated moment of recognition involves both motor preparation (arousal) and perceptual preparation (attention), affecting heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, perspiration, muscles, pupils, and concentration. An engaged audience of the prolonged scene before Iphigenia and Orestes recognize each other might even experience chills and physical frissons—feel that their hair 'is standing on end' or that their 'heart is in their mouths'. Since Euripides leaves the audience in uncertainty over when the recognition will happen, the attention level is heightened for an extended period. During this time, the audience is in a state of 'wanting,' desiring to see the siblings recognize each other. The peak emotional response evoked by witnessing the desired outcome, in this case the happy reunion, corresponds to what has been labelled the consummatory or 'liking' phase, representing fulfilled expectations and accurate reward prediction. Yet Euripides does not allow his audience to dwell for too long even on this emotion. The dialogue advances quickly. The characters immediately plan the escape, sustaining the tension before allowing the play to reach its resolution. During the play, the audience is prompted to feel admiration for skill, admiration for virtue, and compassion for pain caused by social circumstances—'social pain'; all three emotions pertain to the Atreids' immediate circumstances. The last two have been shown by cognitive scientists to heighten one's awareness of one's own condition and its moral implications, which is a process that could not be more appropriate to a genre that Aristotle said offered the opportunity to 'learn with pleasure' about difficult subjects (4.1448b9–17).

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8 Lyne (forthcoming). I am very grateful to him for allowing me to see the paper, and to Felix Budelmann and Jussi Nybom for help on this issue.

9 Salimpoor et al. (2011) 1.


12 Salimpoor et al. (2011) 1; Berridge (2003) 117.

13 Immordino-Yang, McColl, Damasio, and Damasio (2009) 8024.
That Polyidos’ lost Tauric tragedy delayed the famous recognition even longer than Euripides’ version shows that Euripides’ IT had exerted such an influence that it had become one of the canonical fifth-century plays to stimulate new playwrights into writing plays on the same themes.⁴ A third play on the IT theme, the Orestes and Pylades, is mentioned in the Suda under the entry for someone named Timesitheus, and one line survives from the south Italian Rhinthon’s burlesque Iphigenia in Tauris (fr. 7 Kaibel). ⁵

The creation of new plays on established tragic themes was one of the reactions to the boom in tragedy in the late fifth century, a boom first documentable in the deme theatres of Attica. Eric Csapo has accumulated so much evidence for deme theatre in the late fifth century that our understanding of how tragedy was consumed by the population of Attica has had to be revised. ⁶ Plato says that some enthusiasts went round all the different Dionysia to avoid missing a single production (Plato, Rep. 5.475d; Laches 183a-b); in response, deme festival managers tried to capitalize on theatre fever by ensuring that the different deme shows did not coincide. Theatre was also exported from Athens, to Sicily and, after 413 BCE, to Macedonia.⁷ By 380 there were centres of theatrical activity elsewhere in mainland Greece—at Corinth, the Isthmus, Eretria, and Phigaleia. There is also early fourth-century evidence for travelling actors who could set up their stages in market-places, especially in Megale Hellas. ⁸ Far more people could have access to theatrical productions: reactionary males began to deplore the fact that women, children, and slaves now all had their opinions on tragedy (Plato, Laws 7.817b–c). The western Greeks certainly adored vases with scenes related not just to Greek myth but to Athenian theatre; the evidence implies that plays were being produced regularly not only around Herakleia in southern Italy by the end of the fifth century, but at Taranto, Metapontum, and Catane. These have become far easier to study since the publication of Oliver Taplin’s excellent, beautifully illustrated Pots and Plays (2007), to which the title of my chapter here pays respect.

Perhaps the most important landmark in the history of tragedy between 430 and 380 was the institution in 387/6, during the archonship of Theodotos, of the revival of old tragedies at the Athenian Dionysia as a regular part of the festival programme.⁹ A plausible case can be made that it was the energetic sons of famous playwrights who ensured that their works were reperformed, especially Aeschylus’

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⁵ See Kyriakou (2006) 43.
⁸ Taplin (forthcoming).
⁹ IG II 318.201–3.
son Euphorion, Sophocles' son Iophon, and Euripides' son Euripides; pressure to introduce the revivals may also have come from the public and from actors who wanted to break free from contemporary playwrights. They could now build up a repertoire of famous roles contained in the old plays; newly independent from festivals which staged competitions in the productions of new works, they could tour with these celebrated roles to distant places if the pay was good.  

During the fourth century BCE, the thousand or so plays which had been composed in the fifth century were whittled down into a smaller repertoire subject to frequent revival. This process was crucial in the formation of the original 'canon' of classical Athenian plays which influenced the selection of ancient dramas we can still read today. IT, to judge from the available evidence, was one of the most popular. The earliest vase-image, and the only one painted in Athens, in around 400 BCE, is on a pot now in Ferrara (see Fig. IV.2). The relationship of this wonderful image to the text of the play in performance is controversial (see below), but its contents correspond to the type of memories which a spectator might have retained after watching IT in the late fifth century BCE. The space is marked, by the edifice containing the statue at the centre of the upper level, as the area around a temple of Artemis. The upper level contains three female figures—from left to right, Artemis, Iphigenia, and a temple assistant, represented in the play by the chorus members; the lower level contains four male figures—Pylades, Orestes, Thoas, and his attendant who is cooling him with a punkah-fan. The movement in the picture is created by

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the position in which the main characters hold their arms—Thoas points at Orestes, Orestes holds his left hand up in a gesture perhaps of helplessness, Iphigenia passes a letter to Pylades, who holds out his hand with alacrity to receive it. Thoas, the temple assistant, Iphigenia, and Orestes all turn to face the left-hand side of the vase, drawing its viewer’s gaze ineluctably towards Pylades, about to receive the letter; in the play he hands it straight to Orestes, thus making the mutual recognition of the siblings and their consequent reversal of fortune inevitable.

Vase painters interacting with scenes enacted in Greek drama did not usually represent a single scene but a visual composition including elements from different parts of the play. In Euripides’ tragedy, for example, Artemis does not appear physically, and her embodied presence in the image therefore represents her perceived presence in the area of the sanctuary and the spiritual lives of her worshippers, which include both the Greeks and the Taurians. Nor is there any scene in the tragedy in which Thoas appears simultaneously with Orestes and Pylades—indeed, the actor who played Thoas must previously have worn the mask of one of the Greek heroes, so this would have been impossible. But it is Thoas’ kingly authority which maintains the practice of human sacrifice at the temple, and since he seems to be an absolute monarch, he is the main obstacle to the Greeks’ need to escape from the dangerous situation in which they find themselves. The inclusion of this conspicuously oriental Thoas, whose peaked hat, leggings, seated posture, and punkah-fanner are typical indicators of Persian or less specific ‘oriental’ ethnicity in the iconography of the time, in my opinion makes the scene on this vase the truest to the experience of the play as a whole—it includes the danger Thoas embodies as well as the touching emotion produced by the interplay of the Greek characters. And yet on the many other vases illustrating IT he does not appear at all. He seems to have been dispensable in the visualizing of the story.

All the surviving vase paintings, except one (see below pp. 000), represent a fundamentally similar scene, and one which chimes perfectly in tune with Aristotle’s reasons for admiring the plot and emotional effect of the tragedy. The key element is the passing of the letter from Iphigenia to Pylades: this prompts the recognition, and thus provides the emotional ‘bridge’ in the play between the misery and psychological isolation of the female and the male Greeks which precedes it, and the joy and collaborative escape bid which arise out of it. But beyond what we can infer from these fascinating images, the vases are extremely difficult to handle as evidence for cultural history.  21  Almost all that scholars agree on is that they were placed in the graves of individuals who had died in south Italy in the fourth century BCE. But there is vociferous disagreement about several questions. Why were they put there?

Plots and Pots

Had the vase painters, the deceased, or their mourners ever seen a play in performance? Did they speak Greek or an ‘indigenous’ language, or were they bilingual? If their language was Greek, then what dialect of Greek? Are we even entitled to talk about a connection between the images and theatrical performances, as opposed merely to knowledge of mythical narratives?22

Since this scholarly controversy has become complicated, I will put my own cards on the table. To take the last question first, in the case of this particular tragedy, although there were new derivative versions by dramatists such as Polydios, the mythical narrative was first formulated by the tragedian Euripides, which means that the connection between the images and theatrical performances is inherent within the composition of the picture. We are inevitably talking about the dissemination of a fundamentally Euripidean version of the story of the young Atridae, even if we are not talking about its dissemination through actual recent or even remembered performance.23 Secondly, there must be some reason, whether it is religious or social, for the popularity of this scene in vases displayed at funeral rituals.

Plays did not have to be performed at festivals of Dionysus. Kowalzig has argued that the performance of Aeschylus’ Persians in Hieron’s Syracuse, attested in the ancient Life of Aeschylus, needs to be seen in the light of cultural and economic exchange between Sicily and Athens, an exchange in which the cult of Demeter played an important role.24 There may have been some kind of dramatic performances held at a festival in honour of Zeus and the Muses at Dion in Macedonia in Alexander’s day (Arrian 1.11.1).25 There were certainly theatre performances in southern Italy at this time, and I do not think it at all unlikely that the people who organized funerals in wealthy families had seen IT being performed near their homes at some point in their lives, even though there is no explicit evidence to prove it. Equally, there was considerable contact between the Greek-speaking communities in south Italy and cities in mainland Greece, including Athens (Euripides is said by the well-informed Aristotle to have visited Syracuse himself on a diplomatic mission (Rh. 1384b11)). It is possible that some of the mourners at funerals had seen the play performed further away from their homes; whoever brought that

22 At one extreme, scholars used to assume that such images were conscious and careful ‘illustrations’ of plays: in the case of IT see, for example, Huddilston (1898) 121–39. Others, such as Cambitoglou (1975), have argued that there is practically no connection between the two. A much more plausible and nuanced account, exemplified in the work of Taplin, emphasizes the probability that there was an important and extensive performance tradition in southern Italy in addition to intense cultural interaction with Athens.
23 Of the twelve large pots excavated at Policoro (ancient Heracleia) in 1963, from a single tomb which date from as early as 400 BCE, three portray scenes that can be connected with very specifically Euripidean accounts of myth in his tragedies Medea, Children of Heracles, and Antiope. See Taplin (forthcoming). 000.
25 On theatre in Macedonia at an earlier date, see Revermann (1999–2000).
Attic vase now in Ferrara from Athens to Italy may have seen or heard about the play in Athens itself.

Nor do I think it impossible that theatrical performances took place at funerals in south Italy, as they did in later Roman times, although positive evidence for this is wholly lacking. Luca Giuliani has argued for a slightly different interpretation of the evidence. He thinks that such vases were put on display at funeral ceremonies, when the meanings of the pictures they bore were explicated in special funeral orations. These could have been delivered by travelling actors, hired to praise the dead and console the living, but they did not actually amount to theatrical performances.¹⁶ But his attractive hypothesis is not provable. We need to think about the images in terms which make it unnecessary to assume any particular type of performance, theatrical or rhetorical. It may be simply that the sheer number of *IT* vases suggests that the choice of scenes from this play became ‘fashionable,’ as it were, as it did later in Roman imperial sarcophagus carving,²⁷ and perhaps easily available or commissionable at the local centre for purchasing funeral accoutrements. It is absolutely indisputable that someone—whether mourners or retailers—had selected the image as suitable for the purpose of obsequies. The same goes for the bronze krater of the same date depicting the *IT* story found in a grave far away near the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria.²⁸ The perceived relevance or appropriateness of the images to funerals may not be dismissed, although it may have to be explained in broad cultural terms.

We know so little about the identity of the dead individuals in the graves concerned that it is not possible to ascertain any pattern connecting the *IT* scenes with their gender, age, or family status. It is possible that these vases were popular choices for young adults of either sex, women who had died in childbirth, specially loved sisters, or close family friends, but this remains speculation. The affective relationships between members of the same natal family and close family friend are nevertheless relevant. The story told in the play, with its buoyant ending, absence of death, and avoidance of sex, had few rivals as a ‘safe’ choice at a moment of emotional crisis. The recurring scene of the recognition, usually incorporating also the mutual predicament in which the friends find themselves, invites the viewer to participate in the most intense symbolic moment in these relationships. The vases would have been on display at a social ritual in which family and familial friends publicly exhibited and affirmed their social and affective bonds with the deceased and with others present. The relationships between the three principal Greek characters were ones in which responsibility for death rites featured importantly. This

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²⁷ Aravantinos (2008) 79–85; see below chapter VII.

²⁸ See above pp. 000.
will have been clear to any viewer who dwelt on the image, regardless of whether he or she was particularly familiar with the tragic poetry which includes Iphigenia’s concern to perform rituals and her beautiful dirge for the brother she believes dead (61–2, 157–78), Orestes’ longing for a sister to perform the death rituals over him and Iphigenia’s promise to prepare his corpse for the flames with honey and oil (627–35), and above all the pledge Pylades makes as he agrees to this request of Orestes’ to act as his heir and kēdestēs, or adopted male next-of-kin who took responsibility for his funeral, dependent womenfolk, and the future well-being of the family line (695–707):

If you survive, you will have children with my sister, whom I gave to you to be your wife, and my name will live on; my ancestral household will never be obliterated through childlessness. So go, live, and manage my father’s house. When you arrive in Greece, at Argos where horses graze, this is the obligation which I charge you with, by your right hand: make me a funeral mound, and put my memorial stone on it, and let my sister leave her tears and hair on the grave. Tell them that I died at the altar, at the hands of an Argive woman, purified for slaughter. And never abandon my sister, however forlorn my father’s house, which you have joined by marriage, may seem.

The importance of this oath should not be underestimated. The oath ritual formalizes the relationship between the two men, already related by marriage through Electra. With their ritual clasping of right hands, they make official an interstate and interfamilial friendship (xenia) between them that resembles very intimate kinship, since it incorporates the obligation to oversee obsequies. The bond will not expire with the death of Orestes, and Euripides’ audience will have assumed that it would outlive them and be passed on, in the male line, to their descendants. The bond has also been inherited from their fathers. Orestes was raised by Strophius, Agamemnon’s friend, who agreed to this responsibility because Agamemnon was first at war and then prematurely dead. Herman compares the real-life situation of Philopoimen of Megalopolis, whose father died when he was a child, and so he was reared and educated by his father’s xenos Cleander of Mantinea (Polybius 10.22).

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29 For illustrations see Herman (1987) 50–4.
31 Herman (1987) 11.
It is difficult to imagine a play more suitable for remembering at a funeral. We do not need to speculate, as scholars have occasionally, that the escape from Tauris had eschatological or mystery cult reverberations suggesting passage from the earthly body to a blessed afterlife. Few classical Greek narratives, as we have seen in chapter II, are so intimately bound up with the rites and cults of a particular divinity and star a priestess. Iphigenia herself is represented on every single one of these vases, which means that a priestess of Artemis is made visually present in the graves where the vases were found. The temple setting of the play is represented on every single vase, and either Artemis herself, or her cult statue (sometimes both), is to be seen on nearly all of them.

What the vases show, therefore, is an emotional and social transition taking place in a sacred space. The situation in the play, which involves the transition from emotional pain and trauma and family death, through danger and exile, to joyful reunion and escape from danger, could only have been reassuring and positive for the bereaved at a time of crisis. Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades are mythical examples of young people who need to grow up and assume the roles of adults in the place of the previous generation, and the obligation to ensure the proper conduct of funeral rites was an important factor in the achievement of adulthood. It fell ideally on a son who was also the legitimate heir. Before a funeral, the body, after being washed and dressed by female relatives, was displayed on a couch to relatives and friends at the family home. They assembled around the corpse, mourning it with loud laments. The funeral itself, which was called the ekphora (‘carrying out’), took place after sunrise, when the mourners processed from the house to the tomb. Further ritual visits to the tomb were made on the third, ninth, and thirtieth days after the interment. The shape of the collective that engages in the funeral rites defined the shape of the future household and its relationships within the community, which is exactly what happens in IT: Orestes is to be cured of his madness and restored to his ancestral throne; Pylades, made his formal chief mourner by oath in the play, will lead a new generation with Orestes’ sister Electra.

The two figures who appear in every IT vase painting are Iphigenia and Pylades. They are all that is needed, in the context of a temple, and with the letter, to suggest the moment of recognition. The painters could even dispense with Orestes. The most minimal representation of this scene is on the Campanian vase of the third quarter of the fourth century BCE now in the Nicholson Museum at Sydney (see Fig. IV.3): Iphigenia is handing the letter over to Pylades; besides the flaming, blood-streaked altar and the Ionic columns, there is little more for the viewer to digest. The scene encapsulates both emotional states in the play, since the truth is still obscured.

King (1933) 72.
from the sad Iphigenia, while Pylades has recognized her. This is recognition coinciding with reversal of fortune in precisely the way Aristotle advocated.

A few vases do not include the letter at all. One is the naively designed image on a bell-krater in the Louvre (K 404), dated to about 325 BCE. The dialogue, which takes place in front of the statue of Artemis on the left, seems to be lively; it may, as Trendall and Webster suggest, be intended to represent the discussion after the recognitions, where the Greeks discuss alternative methods of escape.33 But the simplicity of the image’s conception could mean that it was designed to imply the moment of recognition, even without the instrumental letter (see Fig. IV.4). This scene is remarkable on account of its depiction of the stage, which asks the viewer to imagine the story enacted in performance, and also because of the figure on the left, which seems to be the statue of Artemis on a pedestal. She is dressed in Phrygian costume, with sleeves, leggings, and peaked cap. Indeed, the other dimension some of the vase paintings share with the narrative dramatized by Euripides, besides the emotional situation, the close ties of philia, and the cult of Artemis, is its barbarian setting.

The earliest vase, the one painted in Athens (see above and Fig. IV.2), presents Thoas using what was standard iconography for a barbarian monarch, based on

33 Trendall and Webster (1971) 113.3.31.
popular images of the Persian kings. A recently discovered Apulian bell-krater (Taplin no. 49) includes a ‘very striking portrayal of Artemis, wearing an animal skin and riding at full tilt in her panther chariot’.34 As Taplin says, although Artemis is not seen in the play herself, this image ‘may convey a dramatic and rather frightening impression of her outlandish Taurian cult in the far north of the Black Sea.’ 35 The largest painting to represent this scene, on an amphora in St. Petersburg (inv. 1715, St. 420), is also one with substantial barbarian detail—specifically the three men in barbarian costumes, two of whom are armed with shields, below and to the right of the temple building (see FIG. IV.5). Two of them are talking to women who perhaps represent the women of the chorus; one seems to be offering a crown of leaves to a deer. They remind the viewer of the vase that the temple is in a barbarian country and that the Greeks have to escape from armed barbarian temple guards.

Did the ethnic interaction entailed in the narrative, or more specifically the ‘victory’ of the Greeks over the barbarians, enhance its fourth-century popularity? This is at least circumstantially suggested by the echoes of the play in the third part of Xenophon’s Anabasis,36 written between the 390s and his death in the 350s, at exactly the time when IT was establishing its central role in the theatre performance repertoire. In the Anabasis, Xenophon’s brilliant strategic thinking leads the ten thousand Greek soldiers from mortal danger in the heart of barbarian Asia to ships which can

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34 Taplin (2007) no. 49.
36 Calhoun (1921) 144.
take them home to Greece in safety. In thanks for this, when the Spartans establish him ‘as a colonist’ near Olympia (5.3.7), he builds his own temple of Artemis on his estate near Olympia (a miniature version of the Ephesian temple), and installs there an image (xoanon) made of cypress wood (5.3.12). Did the idea of victory over barbarians also have an exceptional appeal to the colonial mindset of Greeks in Megale Hellas, as some episodes in the wanderings of Odysseus (also mentioned in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*), especially the Cyclops and Laestrygonian episodes, certainly did?  

People who spoke Greek established a series of settlements in eastern Italy toward the end of the eighth century BCE, soon after followed by numerous settlements in Sicily and Calabria, the ‘toe’ of Italy. There was certainly violence between some of the settlers and some of the local people they encountered. In Syracuse, for example the Corinthian settlers drove out the previous inhabitants (Thuc. 6.4.1–2). Moreover, the Greek communities faced a common enemy when the Syracusans defeated the Carthaginian barbarians, assisted by Etruscans, at the battle of Himera in 480 BCE, a victory which Pindar compares with the victories of the mainland.

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37 For a discussion of this episode, see Tuplin (2004).
38 Hall (2008).
Greeks over the Persians at Salamis and Plataea (Pyth. 1.72–80). The people of Taras were beaten by the rather mysterious Iapygians in a bloody battle in 473 (Herodotus 7.170.3, Diodorus 11.52.3–4). The Sicels of eastern Italy did rise up and try to regain lost territory in the mid-fifth century (Diodorus 11.76.3, 11.78.5).

Yet doubt has been cast on the legitimacy of talking about a systematic or formal programme of Greek colonization in south Italy. Some scholars prefer to think in terms of a haphazard and heterogeneous process, the motives and nature of which differed from settlement to settlement. The model of two distinct, bounded communities within Italy—incoming Greeks and indigenous populations—has begun to be replaced with a more flexible approach that emphasizes mutual interaction and the creation of new mixed cultural forms. There is mounting evidence that Greek-speakers and native people lived physically close to one another, and that Greeks learned to use non-Greek orthography, which may suggest bilingualism if not intermarriage. Even more suggestively, archaeological finds have shown that several non-Greek communities adopted types of building and architectural styles from their Greek neighbours, instantiated in, for example, the large (unfinished) Doric temple at Segesta. Moreover, some of the most important theatre-related pots were buried in settlements of not Greeks but ‘indigenous’ communities, including Ruvo in northern Apulia, which strongly implies that some of its inhabitants, who were wealthy enough to acquire such vases for their funerals, knew a good deal about Athenian tragedy. When it comes to contact with the communities from which the settlers had arrived, it may be mistaken to think in terms of a gradually weakening link with the mother city; in Taras, for example, although there are few signs of material interaction with Laconia in the eighth and seventh centuries, contact with Laconia seems actually to have intensified in the sixth century and later, for example with the importation of the cult of the Dioscuri.

How did these people react to the victory of Greek brains over barbarian brawn in IT? Although we have seen how barbarian colour is insinuated into some of the images, the question of Iphigenia’s acculturation to Tauric ways is left ambiguous. In the last image we have looked at here, one of the women in attendance (arguably representing the abducted Greek chorus) may be slightly ‘orientalized’ by the parasol across the centre of the bottom level. But Iphigenia herself, although wearing an ornate dress with patterned hems and a deep patterned panel brushing her feet, does

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39 Jonathan Hall (forthcoming).
42 Taplin (forthcoming) ‘Appendix’.
not seem to me to look particularly ‘barbarian’. In the play, there is no internal ‘stage direction’ in the form of a textual description of her appearance, and so performers of the play were at liberty to present her as barbarized, or as Greek, as they wished.

In some of the vases, her costume seems designed to mirror the taste of the place where the vase was made rather than any theatrical setting: see, for example, the identifiably Campanian dress on the Sydney vase above (Fig. IV.3). As a priestess, Iphigenia would be expected to wear an impressive and ornate robe, regardless of its ethnic resonances. Moreover, the issue is complicated by the fact that stage costumes were often ornate and influenced by the techniques painters used for suggesting foreign ethnicity, and in vase paintings related to theatre it can become difficult to tell whether the painters were implying a magnificent theatrical costume or an identifiably foreign one. In just one vase it seems to me that Iphigenia’s dress and headgear are so elaborately patterned that the painter may be wanting to draw attention to it in a way that may be connected with the non-Greek setting (see Fig. II.4 above). It certainly suggests that the sacerdotal fi gure of Iphigenia, whose robe is so sacred that it must not be touched (798–9), was a visually arresting presence.

Yet the focus on interethnic contact can’t be wholly separated from the religious meanings that the images conveyed to viewers in southern Italy. The images denote a narrative, involving characters who have killed or been sacrificed themselves, which explains the presence in the Greek-speaking world of a cult involving bloody sacrifices. Of course the recipient of this cult, Artemis, as the divinity who oversaw the biological transitions in women’s lives—birth, menarche, death—would be appropriate to any Greek or indeed bicultural Greek-Italian woman’s grave; she was also important in the initiation of men, and the sister of Apollo, who appears in some of the scenes. Artemis remained the quintessential ‘Mistress of sacrifi ces’, and so appropriate for a wide range of rituals. For any sacrifi cial ritual in honour of Artemis, in whatever capacity—as saviour, childbirth goddess, healer, huntress—the predominance of the sacrifi ce ritual in IT made the play ‘not merely an aition [i.e., mythical account of a ritual’s origin] but a paradigm’. Yet the specifi c status of Artemis in fourth-century Megale Hellas has not been fully appreciated in relation to the phenomenon of these images.

Taking his cue from Diodorus Siculus’ statement of the importance of the cult of Artemis in Syracuse, where there was ‘from early times at least one major polis sanctuary’ of the goddess, and where one month was named Artamittios (5.3.4), Tobias Fischer-Hansen has recently examined the evidence for the importance of

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46 Sansone (1975) 287.
the cult of Artemis in Sicily and south Italy in the classical period. Artemis certainly had a major sanctuary on the little island of Ortygia to the east of Syracuse (Pindar, *Nem.* 1.3), where the Homeric *Hymn to Delian Apollo* (3.16) says Artemis was born, and indeed there may be some ancient connection between this island and Delos, which was sometimes itself called ‘Ortygian’ (*Od.* 5.123). But terracotta figurines of the goddess, found in very large numbers in south Italian and Sicilian sanctuaries, as far west as Selinus, suggest ‘an upsurge of cults of the divinity from the late fifth century and, above all, during the fourth century.’ 47

The diversity of votive figures points to the versatility of Artemis in the religion of these areas; she is found in her familiar roles as mistress of animals, as huntress, and indeed as the goddess whose arrows presage death. 48 But she also appears with a boat on her shoulders as protector of sailors. 49 This is suggestive for *IT*, in which Iphigenia, on-board, makes her dramatic prayer to Artemis to rescue the Greek ship (1398–402). On the metopes of ‘Temple G’ at Selinous, moreover, Orestes seems to be one of several mythological subjects depicted, along with Artemis and Apollo. In a very few places, such as the seventh-century Artemision at San Biagio, 50 the Artemis cult can be traced back earlier than in the others. But Fischer‐Hansen argues that the Artemis cult in these areas usually arrives relatively late, no earlier than the fifth century. 51 The worship of Artemis gradually superseded that of both Athena and Demeter and Kore in Akragas in the late classical period. 52 At Gela, representations of Artemis occur no earlier than 405 BCE but become significant immediately thereafter. 53 She is attested in the fourth century in places which loom large in discussion of the dissemination of theatre in the area, such as the island of Lipari as well as Taras and Heracleia, where she was worshipped under the title *Sôtêira*. 54 As we shall see in a later chapter, traditions were circulating by the Hellenistic period that Orestes had transported the Taurian cult image of Artemis to several locations around the straits of Rhegium between Italy and Sicily, hiding it in a bundle of reeds. 55 It may be that these narratives originated in the fourth century or even earlier.

49 Fischer-Hansen (2009) 211.
53 Orlandini (1968) 57–9.
On the southern shores of the 'toe' of the boot, at Locri Epizephyri, many figurines of a young woman holding a crudely carved cult image of Artemis on her head with both hands have been found, dating from the fifth century as well as the fourth (see Fig. IV.6). They imply a local ritual procession for the goddess in which her statue was carried.  

This of course has a famous literary and theatrical precedent in the procession scene in IT. Artemis continued to spread: she took hold at a rural sanctuary in the hinterlands of Thurii in the late fifth century, and at Poseidonia by the fourth. Numerous terracottas of Artemis begin to appear at Taras in the late fifth century, with animals, armed with bow and quiver, or leaning against an altar. It may also be relevant to the depiction of scenes from IT on funerary vases that there are persistent connections of the late classical Sicilian/south Italian Artemis with chthonic cults in general and funeral cults in particular. Artemis seems to have played a role alongside Demeter and Kore in some cults, for example the necropolis

near the Convento di S. Francesco di Paola inland from Taras, where votive figures of Artemis have been found with animals and bows but also with chthonic symbols such as the torch.  

Just one painting, on one of the vases now in Russia, portrays a different scene which corresponds to a later moment in the play. This scene is to become important in the funerary art of Italy hundreds of years later (see below ch. VII). Iphigenia, carrying the statue and flanked by Orestes and Pylades, is moving in haste from the temple (see Fig. IV.7). The vase painter responds to the escape with the statue as it is reported by the messenger to Thoas. The pathos and melancholy of the scenes which portray the recognition of the siblings is replaced by an unusual detail of Taurian savagery in the human head, running with gore, in the top right-hand of the picture, and the excitement and haste of the escape bid.  

Figure IV.7 The escape from the temple on a Campanian vase, 330–320 BCE.

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journey from Tauris to the Greek world is unaffected. This narrative could speak to any people who worshipped Artemis, and also connect them with her ancient worship as far away as the north coast of the Black Sea. Our adventures with Iphigenia have turned out to be adventures not only with the Peripatetic theorization of the function of tragic poetry and the internationalization of theatre in the fourth century, but with the epicedian [i.e., funerary] sensibilities of Greeks in Italy and the international dissemination of the cult of Iphigenia’s goddess.60

60 I am much indebted to Oliver Taplin, who read and commented on an earlier draft of this chapter.
IN 1884 the members of the Fairmount Park Association of Philadelphia paid $2,250 for a bronze fountain to be cast. It was to adorn their place of public recreation in the ‘city of brotherly love.’ Posed on the plinth were Orestes and Pylades beneath a bust of Diana (see Fig. V.1). The designer, Carol Johann Steinhauser, was famous for statues in Germany celebrating Goethe and his works, including an almost identical Orestes and Pylades group near the old Hoftheater in Karlsruhe. It is obvious why the quasi-fraternal loyalty of Orestes and Pylades should have attracted the philanthropists of the birthplace of the American constitution, and Iphigenia’s deletion from the narrative should not be surprising given that women still were not recognized as political entities under that constitution. Moreover, as we shall see in this chapter, the upstaging of Iphigenia by Pylades and Orestes and their passionate friendship is a feature of the reception of Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy which originated in the literature of the Roman republic, the main civic model adopted by the founding fathers of North America.

In the previous chapter it emerged that the irreducible three elements that appeared on every single Greek vase painting of the IT myth were Iphigenia, the temple of Artemis, and Pylades: even Orestes was dispensable to the iconographic shorthand of the vase painters, as we saw in the case of the Campanian vase now housed in Sydney (above Fig. IV.3). Yet in Republican and Augustan Rome, Iphigenia was emphatically upstaged by her emotional little brother. There are signs of familiarity

with the Greek play in Plautus’ *Miles Gloriosus* and *Rudens*, but Iphigenia is not mentioned at all in the most famous Republican reference to the *Iphigenia* story, which occurs in Cicero’s dialogue *On Friendship*:

What shouts filled the whole theatre at the performance of the new play of my guest and friend Marcus Pacuvius, when—the king not knowing which of the two was Orestes—Pylades said that he was Orestes, while Orestes persisted in asserting that he was, as in fact he was, Orestes! The whole assembly rose in applause at this mere fictitious representation. (Cicero, *de Amicitia* 7.24)

The most important missing piece in the puzzle constituted by the reception of Euripides’ *Iphigenia* is undoubtedly the Roman tragedy by Pacuvius here celebrated by Cicero. Cicero puts this stirring account of the theatre audience’s response to Pacuvius’ Orestes and Pylades, when competing for the right to be sacrificed, into the mouth of Gaius Laelius, shortly after his best friend Scipio had died in 183 BCE. Like the rest of Roman Republican tragedy, Pacuvius’ tragedy has not survived. But it was to become the canonical Roman celebration of the power of

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3 On Cicero’s admiration for the friendship of these two Republican heroes, who had also been the principal characters in his earlier *de Re Publica*, see Leach (1995).
friendship between men in the Stoic sense—amicitia, the topic of Cicero’s dialogue. This is what pushed Euripides’ gutsy heroine into an auxiliary emotional role. Much of the extensive evidence for the Roman popularity of the story dramatized in Euripides’ *IT* from Cicero’s time onwards includes a reference to the scene admired by Cicero’s Laelius, which has no precedent in Euripides. In this crucial scene, according to Laelius, Pylades actually says that he is Orestes, in response to the king’s inability to identify him. The implication is that the king is physically present at the Greeks’ display of competitive impulses towards self-immolation, an inference supported by Cicero’s other reference to the same famous theatrical scene, in *de Finibus* (45 BCE):

> How excitedly the masses and the uneducated shout in the theatre when they hear those words ‘I am Orestes,’ and the riposte, ‘No, it is I, I say, who am actually Orestes!’ And then when both of them offer the solution to the confused and perplexed king *(exitus ab utroque datur conturbato errantique regi)*, beseeching him to slay them both so they can die together—however often this scene is acted, does it ever fail to excite the greatest admiration? (5.22.63)

It is difficult to imagine why the king should be described as confused and perplexed unless he was physically present and thus able to be addressed directly by the desperate Greeks.

In the internal world of the play, Thoas was the spectator in front of whom Pacuvius’ rousing dialogue between Orestes and Pylades was performed. In the surprisingly large number of Roman wall paintings depicting the *IT* story, a very few portray scenes which can be linked quite straightforwardly with a specific episode in the Euripidean drama, for example, a small Herculaneum fresco which depicts the first encounter of Iphigenia and the captive Greeks. But in most of them, the important psychological engagement in the scene is indisputably between Thoas and the two young men, who stand together, their hands bound, while Thoas scrutinizes them. In an emotional differentiation which is reproduced on nearly all these scenes, Orestes looks dejected and bemused, his head hanging and his body sometimes slumped, while Pylades holds his head courageously high and stares at his captors impassively. It is conventional wisdom that the picture galleries of scenes from myth on the walls of Roman houses are evidence of a desire to affect Greek culture, and that it is therefore Greek literary or theatrical sources to which they are primarily

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5 Naples Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 9518. Hermann (1904) fig. 117.
relevant. But there is a misfit between Euripides’ play and these images. Are the wall paintings related to Euripides’ tragedy or Pacuvius’ version, or to shared knowledge of a ‘myth’ which existed independently in the cultural imagination?

We should not underestimate the Pompeians’ experience of theatrical performances. Pompeii was a stage-struck town, already prosperous enough by the second century BCE to enjoy its own large theatre; it had built another, smaller one in addition by the mid-seventies BCE. It therefore had two stone theatres before Rome had even acquired one. It was a cosmopolitan, eastern-looking community, and close to parts of Italy where Greek had long been the dominant language. Comic writers adapted Greek stage plays into the Latin language and Roman cultural idioms. The plot of Plautus’ *Miles Gloriosus*, which is set in Ephesus, recalls at many points the fundamental structure of *IT*: the heroine Philocomasium is being held captive in the city of Artemis, by Pyrgopolynices, a soldier with more brawn than brain, after being abducted from mainland Greece. She is secretly reunited with her Athenian lover Pleusicles, who has come to find her; their escape, along with that of the loyal and clever slave Palaestrio, involves tricking her captor into letting all three of them go, with a large number of valuable gifts, under his very nose. Philocomasium even fakes tears as they depart. The Roman Republican tragedians also turned repeatedly to Greek models but created Latin adaptations. This certainly does not mean plays were never performed in Greek. After all, Julius Caesar felt it was wise to perform the stage plays he put on for the Roman populace in several different languages, according to Suetonius’ biography (1.39), and we know that Greek libretti could be performed to accompany pantomimes in Rome (Macrobius *Sat.* 2.7.13). But it is *prima facie* more likely that Pompeians had enjoyed the story in Pacuvius’ version, which the evidence in Cicero suggests had a famous reputation.

It is possible that the immediate impetus for the popularity of the *IT* theme was a response to a famous work of visual art. Unfortunately, we have no information about the contents of the famous picture of Orestes and Iphigenia in Tauris painted by Timomachus of Byzantium, an artist much admired by Julius Caesar (Pliny, *NH* 35.136). Timomachus specialized in the depiction of complicated emotional scenes which had been made famous by canonical dramatic texts. But there is no evidential basis for the widespread scholarly assumption that Timomachus’ picture lies behind this example, which was found in the House of the Citharist (see Fig. V.2).

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8 Hall (2008a) 13–4.
9 See also Trenkner (1958) 54–5.
10 Latin libretti were certainly also used: see Hall (2008b).
12 Assumed by, e.g., Fantham (1992) 274–5 with plates 1 and 5. For discussion and further bibliography on the alleged connection with Timomachus, see Schefold (1952) 117–8 and 198.
an attendant to the lower right, gazing over an altar, with jug and sword ready for the sacrifice, at the two young Greek men. Iphigenia is standing on the steps at the temple doorway. As a celebration of friendship, this may have been seen as an especially suitable scene for a semi-public room in which to entertain guests. There are at least two other visualizations of a similar scene decorating the walls of Pompeii houses, including the rather more elaborate, architectural fresco in the House of Pinario Cereale (see Fig. V.3). The overall effect of this painting is very different. It is much more psychologically distant, setting the scene against an elaborate stage building which dominates the visual field, and including an imposing statue of the goddess behind Iphigenia and two female attendants. Iphigenia gazes away from the young Greek captives, in a ‘down-stage’ direction towards Thoas, who is in turn much more interested in Orestes and Pylades.

In two other, much more psychologically intimate renditions of the encounter between Iphigenia and the Greeks, from the Casa del Centenario and the House of Caecilius Iucundus, we are able to study Iphigenia’s face in detail. In both, her dark-ringed eyes gaze out mysteriously to the left, well above the heads of the young Greek men; she invites inspection, but not emotional identification.

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13 The latter is reproduced as Jucker (1988) fig. 19.
Orestes, Pylades, and Roman Men

The inscrutable, almost blank expression of Iphigenia in these frescos raises another question about the resonances of dramatic texts here, since there is a possibility that, in Pacuvius’ tragedy, Iphigenia was presented as possessed. There was certainly one such version of her story in circulation by the time that the frescoes were painted. The evidence lies in an epigram in the *Greek Anthology* describing a picture (16.128).

Iphigenia raves (*mainetai*) but the sight of Orestes leads her back to the sweet memory of kinship. Since she is stirred by anger and also gazing at him, her visual expression is as of one carried away by mixed pity and madness (*maniē*).

There is no more detail: we do not know whether Iphigenia in the painting described in this short poem was in a Dionysiac state in preparation for the sacrificial ritual (although this is certainly implied by the verb *mainetai*). Perhaps she was simply overwhelmed by the sight of Orestes and the memories flooding back to her. Nor do we know whether the manic Iphigenia belonged to the Pacuvian tradition. The mystery is further compounded by the peculiar nature of Iphigenia’s appearance in a mosaic of the second or third century CE found in the ‘Gardens of Maecenas’ (see Fig. V.6). Although her breasts are clearly indicated beneath her mantle, her mask-like face is extremely masculine and angular, with no softening veil, ribbons, or hair to frame her...
cheeks. The two figures are unusually positioned—a standing and almost aggressive Iphigenia towers over a seated man who is presumably her brother. His marked lower jawline also suggests a mask, and his expression is decidedly unhappy.\textsuperscript{14}

The issue is yet further complicated by the questions surrounding Pacuvius’ \textit{Orestes}. It may have been one of an unofficial cycle of plays, also including his \textit{Dulorestes}, \textit{Hermiona}, and \textit{Chryses}, dealing with the fates of Agamemnon’s children.\textsuperscript{15} It may have overlapped, especially in its portrayal of Orestes’ pursuit by the Furies, with Ennius’ \textit{Eumenides} and perhaps with Naevius’ \textit{Iphigenia}.\textsuperscript{16} It may well have inspired the famous reference to Orestes’ pursuit by the shade of his mother and by the Furies in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid};\textsuperscript{17} although references to the theatre in this epic are rare, Dido is compared with the deluded Pentheus, or (4.471–3):

\begin{quote}
Agamemnon’s son Orestes, driven across the stage when he runs away from his mother, her torches and black snakes, and the vengeful Furies sitting on the threshold.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The mosaic was published by Bevilacqua (1978–1979) with plate 16.
\textsuperscript{15} Fantham (2003) 114–15; Manuwald (2003) 28. On the Chryses myth see below, ch. 000
\textsuperscript{17} See Servius on \textit{Aeneid} 4.473 and Manuwald (2003) 115.
**Figure V.5** Iphigenia at the temple with attendants on a Pompeii mural (c. 10 BCE).

**Figure V.6** Mosaic with Orestes and Iphigenia found in Rome (late 2nd or early 3rd century CE).
These are uncertain waters indeed. But I suspect that when the Augustan poets have been thought to be echoing Euripides’ *I T*, the mediating role of Pacuvius’ Latin tragedy in the Roman apprehension of the Tauris story has been severely underestimated.

The question of literary relationships is perhaps, ultimately, not of such great significance except insofar as it helps to answer the really important question, which is why the well-to-do citizens who inhabited villas in or near Pompeii and Herculaneum liked Tauric scenes integrated into the spaces of illusion they created on their walls. The contemporary valence of the Orestes myth at Rome between Virgil’s day and the catastrophe at Pompeii may have had less to do with literary prototypes and more to do with Augustus’ appropriation of the famous cult of Diana at Aricia in the Alban hills: we shall see in a subsequent chapter that, by the time of Strabo, this was widely believed to have been founded by Orestes after he had left Tauris (below ch. VII). But one reason why Augustus had found the *I T* story easy to adapt to his own brand of Roman civic ideology, of which we may be seeing material reverberations in the *I T* scenes in the houses of the Bay of Naples, was the traditional importance of the principle of friendship (*amicitia*) in Roman social and political life.

In an excellent analysis of friendships in Plautus, Burton has identified the key components of Republican Roman *amicitia* that distinguish it from modern western notions of friendship, and which throw light on the emotive power of Pacuvius’ scene in which Orestes and Pylades competed for the privilege of dying. *Amicitia* is a status-conscious institution (more so than Greek *philia*), in which both parties needed to be of the same class. It often manifests itself as an elite, senatorial-class phenomenon. This valued symmetry extends not only to status, but to age-group and life experiences, in a manner to which the Greek concept of *philia* does not exactly correspond. Roman *amicitia* also had a paternalistic streak, which meant that friends were encouraged to think that they knew what was best for the other party. Laelius can say in Cicero’s *de Amicitia* that the goodwill which needs to underlie friendship is a virtuous quality, which can protect others and determine what is best for them (50), as Pacuvius’ Pylades seems to have thought he knew what was best for Orestes. Roman friendship was also, paradoxically, competitive. Friends competed

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18 There may be a subtle reference to the *I T* story in Propertius’ beautiful shipwreck fantasy (1.26): in this, he first dreams of the sea-divinities he will propitiate after Cynthia is shipwrecked, and then of the wind-tossed ship on which he would happily sail with her on seas including those of the Pontus. The girl stranded alone across distant seas, and the exciting joint voyage, may have put Propertius’ readers in mind of Iphigenia and Orestes, alongside the Ulysses and Jason who are explicitly referenced in the poem. See Kerry (1921). Alluding to the aetiological story of Iphigenia and Orestes in Tauris in such a way as to provide a parallel to a private erotic fantasy would fit well with Propertius’ irreverent approach to the myths which Augustus was appropriating to the Roman public and patriotic past. But the loss of Pacuvius’ tragedy means that we may be missing explicit verbal echoes of the canonical Latin version of the story.

to show that they were superior in the performance of amicitia, both to their friends and also to a wider public in order to win political advantage. Pacuvius actually stages such a competition when Pylades claims that he is Orestes. Finally, discussions of friendships are surrounded with an intense degree of passion which is confusing for us, since we associate that register with sexual rather than non-sexual relationships. Thus Laelius at one point in the de Amicitia speaks of (non-erotic) love and affection between friends which ‘blazes forth’ (efflorescit, 100) in intensity.

The importance of symmetry in friendship still provides the dynamism to an epigram by Martial, in which he uses Orestes and Pylades as an example in proving his point that he can’t be true friends with someone obviously much wealthier than himself (6.11):

Are you surprised, Marcus, that people like Orestes and Pylades don’t exist today? Pylades used to drink the same thing as Orestes, and Orestes did not offer better bread or fowl. They both got exactly the same meal. You gorge on Lucrine seafood, while mine is from watery Peloris. But it’s not that my palate is any less refined than yours. You get your clothes from Cadmean Tyre, while I wear greasy wool from Gaul. Am I supposed, in my coarse cloak, to be friends with you when you’re wearing purple? If I am to play the role of Pylades, I need an Orestes, and just talking about it isn’t enough, Marcus. If you want to be loved, then love properly.  

As this poem suggests, the friendship between Orestes and Pylades became a standard example of male loyalty in Roman rhetoric. It kicks off the list of such stories to which orators might find it helpful to allude in the chapters on friendship in Valerius Maximus’ Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings 4.7, composed during the reign of Tiberius. The most significant literary heir to the Black Sea exhibition of loyalty by Orestes and Pylades is Ovid, who himself experienced lonely exile on the Pontic litoral, and thus enters the cultural history of IT as the earliest of several individual creators of artworks who have identified their own situations closely with those of Iphigenia or Orestes. As Iphigenia had a letter which she was desperate to send to her brother in Argos, so Ovid writes two semi-epistolary poems, from exile in Tomi, in which the story of Iphigenia and Orestes in Tauris is transformed. Ovid turns it into narratives which parallel his own experiences, lending them pathos, drama, topographical colour, and mythic glamour.

In Tristia 4.4, Ovid writes to Messalinus, a contact but not a personal friend, although Ovid was friends with Messalinus’ younger brother Cotta. Messalinus was an orator with influence over Augustus; Ovid suggests to him that ‘if someone were to petition’ for leniency, it might be granted (53-4). All the poet wants, he

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20 See also Martial Epigram 10.11.
21 Trenkner (1958) 78 and n. 4.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

says, is to be moved somewhere a little nearer Rome: the rest of the poem consists of Ovid's evocation of the horror of the place in which he now resides, by eliding it with the Tauris of the theatrical tradition (59–88):

There are tribes round it, seeking plunder and mayhem, and the land's no less fearful than the hostile sea. Those you hear of, men delighting in human blood, live almost beneath the same starry sky as myself. Not far from us is where the Taurian altar is spattered by terrible slaughter of the quivered goddess. In past time, men say, this was Thoas' kingdom, not envied by the wicked nor desired by the good. Here the Pelopian maiden, for whom a deer was substituted, cared for certain rites of her goddess. Here afterwards Orestes came, either pious or wicked, driven by his own Furies, And his Phocean comrade, a model of true love, who were one mind in two bodies. Straightaway bound, they are led to the grim altar, which stood, bloodstained, before the twin doors. His own death scared neither man; both were sad at the other's end. And the priestess was already standing, sword drawn, barbarian bands binding her Greek locks, When in their talk she recognised her brother, and instead of death, Iphigenia gave him embraces. Happily she carried off from there, to a better place, the statue of the goddess who hated cruel rites. So this is the region, almost the edge of the entire world, which men and gods fled, which is next to me; Near my land are rites of death, if a barbarian land can really be Ovid's own land. Would that the winds which carried Orestes away might carry home my sails too, with the god appeased!

Ovid's poetic ploy is in literal terms absurd. The actual distance from Tomi to Tauric Chersonesos is 739 miles by land, or 212 nautical miles by sea. By no standards, ancient or modern, does this qualify as a short journey. But the myth is nevertheless well chosen: the people with whom Ovid must live are symbolized by Thoas, his fate feels as bad as
if he faced death by human sacrifice, and he lives adjacent to the edge of the world. The emotional identification is entirely with Orestes. Ovid is stranded far away, driven by ‘his own Furies’ even though it is not clear whether he is ‘pious’ or ‘wicked’—here he implies to Messalinus that although he has indeed created his own problems, he was guilty of stupidity rather than immorality. The end of Ovid’s story is, moreover, still unwritten: he might still be rescued by the power of friendship, and restored to his family’s embraces, if ‘the god’—here Augustus rather than Diana or Neptune—can be appeased.

Far more innovative, in literary terms, is Ovid’s more extensive engagement with the Tauris story in one of his other series of exile poems, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.2.39–102. This is addressed to Cotta, the younger brother of Messalinus (Corvinus’ youngest son). Ovid had a much more intimate relationship with Cotta, who (he says) is now his last remaining friend. After a fleeting allusion to one of the other famous examples of friendship—Theseus and Pirithous—Ovid characterizes Cotta as his Pylades, and says he will give him an equivalent immortal reputation. Since he has learned how to speak Getic and Sarmatian, Ovid has been praising Cotta’s loyalty to the local tribesmen in their own languages. Recently, an old man who had been listening ‘in the circle’ responded to this praise, saying that he comes from a part of Scythia which used to be called ‘Tauris’. We are treated to the most fascinating narrator of the Tauris story in all literature—an old man from Tauris who can report on the lasting impact on his people of the actions played out in the Euripidean drama (3.2.48–102):

‘That tribe worships Apollo’s companion goddess. A temple remains there today resting on huge columns which is entered by four score steps. Rumour reports that there was a heavenly statue there, and to prove it, the pedestal stands bereft of the goddess and the altar, which was of naturally white stone, is discoloured, stained red from the blood spilled. A woman who has not known marriage tends the rites, Who surpasses the Scythian women in nobility. The nature of the sacrifice, as our parents ordained, is that a newcomer falls, killed by the virgin’s sword. Thoas, famous in the Maeotic region, ruled the kingdom, nor was anyone more famous in the Euxine waters. While he held the sceptre, men say that some Iphigenia made a journey though the clear skies, and, carried over the waters in a cloud by gentle winds, Phoebe is believed to have deposited her there. She had duly presided over the temple for many years
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

fulfilling grim rites with her unwilling hand,
when two young men arrived in a sail-bearing ship
and disembarked on our shores with their feet.
They were equals in age and love, one named Orestes,
and the other Pylades; report retains their names.
Straightaway they are led to the harsh altar of Trivia,
Their twin hands bound behind their backs.
The Greek priestess scattered the captives with lustral water
So a long fillet might encircle their blonde locks.
While she prepared the rite, while she covered their heads with bands,
And while she herself found reasons for slow delay:
“I am not cruel, young men, forgive me,” she said,
“I make sacrifices more barbarous than this place.
This is the rite of the tribe. But what city do you come from
And why did you seek a journey on an unlucky ship?”
The pious maiden spoke and when she heard the name
of the fatherland, she discovered they shared her own city.
“One of you,” she said, “must fall a victim to the rites,
and the other go as a messenger to his ancestral home.”
Pylades, ready to die, ordered his dear Orestes to go:
he refused and in turn each fought to die.
This was the one thing on which they did not agree:
everything else was harmonious and quarrel-free.
While the beautiful young men strove in a contest of love
she marked out written signs to her brother.
She was sending orders to her brother, and the man she gave
the orders to—tragic reversal!—was her brother.
There’s no delay: they snatch the statue of Diana from the temple
and slip off by ship over huge waters.
The love of the young man was amazing; many years
have passed but they still have a great name in Scythia.’
After that famous tale was told by that man,
everyone praised deeds of pious devotion.
Evidently here too, the most savage shore of all,
the name of friendship moves barbarian hearts.
What should you do, who were born in the Italian city,
when such deeds touch the hard-hearted Getae?11

It takes a poet of Ovid’s calibre to paint such an atmospheric picture of Tauris more than four centuries after Herodotus and Euripides first evoked its sacrifices. A vast flight of steps leads to a temple with massive pillars and a significantly empty pedestal. The white altar is stained dark red with human blood. Iphigenia and the statue may have left, but the human sacrifices still continue generations later, performed before the empty pedestal by a chaste Scythian noblewoman. Ovid’s Roman readers will have thrilled to these sensational and dismal details.

In a perceptive study, Jennifer Ingleheart has explored how Ovid here develops one of the figures he favours in his exile poetry, where he presents himself as playing a role in a tragedy. In Tr. 3.3.65–8, for example, he writes to his wife that she may have to play the part of Antigone. He will be Polynices, Augustus will be Creon, and she will come to bury him. But by far the most extended engagements in the exile poetry with Greek tragedy are with the plot of IT. There are also two other brief references to Orestes and Pylades’ Black Sea mission, stressing their devoted friendship. In Tr. 1.5.21–2, Orestes is described as tristis. In 1.9.27–8, the surprising information is supplied that Thoas approved of the devotion to each other of Orestes and Pylades. Would this be another clue to the tenor of Pacuvius’ play?

Ingleheart argues that Ovid’s invented old man acts like a chorus, replacing in effect the chorus of captive Greek women. This stresses further Ovid’s isolation. But the elderly Taurian also has some similarities with Ovid himself, since he is the primary narrator, and has left his native land himself. Ovid, in turn, plays with the possibility of figuring himself as sad Iphigenia. She was in the Black Sea for many years (Ovid always stresses the length of his exile throughout these poems), and she carries out ‘sorrowful’ (tristia) sacrifices with an unwilling hand, which parallels Ovid having reluctantly to write poems called Tristia. The letter motif provides a parallel with Ovid’s attempt to write a letter that will reach Cotta, but it is also altered, certainly from the Euripidean version (we do not know whether there was a letter in Pacuvius’ play), in that Iphigenia in Ovid gives the letter to Orestes rather than Pylades. But the statue of Diana may also be analogous with Ovid’s literary works—it is another artifact that needed to be rescued from the savagery of the Black Sea.

Ovid also here inaugurates (at least in surviving literature) one of the most important developments in the cultural history of IT—the trope of the ‘admiring barbarian.’ The praise of the bond of friendship unto death between Pylades and Orestes, two young Greeks, is magnified by being placed in the mouth of a senior barbarian, who might have been expected to diminish rather than emphasize any signs of virtue in members

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of a people to which his own had historically been inimical. In Euripides’ play there are
two passages which perhaps lie behind this new development in the tradition. The first
is the cowherd’s comment that some of his comrades were so impressed by the physical
appearance of Orestes and Pylades that they assumed they were divine (268–74); the other is Thoas’ expression of respect for Greek ritual know-how (1180). But there
is no precedent in the extant literary tradition for a Taurian articulating wonder at
the friendship of the two Greek heroes. Perhaps Thoas was given such a speech in
Pacuvius’ version: such an inference would not be incompatible with the Roman wall
paintings in which he looks up at them from his seat, gazing at them intently.

It is surely Ovid’s innovation, however, to create a scene, theatrical enough in itself
—he is addressing an audience of barbarians, standing around him in a circle, in their
own language, on the theme of Cotta’s excellence), in which an ageing inhabitant
of Tauris relates the story dramatized by Euripides and Pacuvius. Ovid is inviting
his own friend to equate their Roman friendship with the legendary friendship
between Orestes and Pylades; to do so he becomes the ventriloquist of an imagi-
nary descendant of Thoas’ own people, whose favourite example of loyalty between
friends relates to Greeks rather than to barbarians. The ventriloquized Taurian him-
self avoids speaking any words attributed to the heroes he admires, impersonating in
direct speech, rather, the female figure in the story, and the one who had resided in
the Black Sea for by far the longest period of time. But the inspiration behind the
episode that he describes—which elicits admiration for the self-sacrificial friends—is
almost certainly the scene which was so admired by Cicero’s Laelius, the emotional
centrepiece of the Pacuvian tragedy.

The tradition of the admiring barbarian reached its definitive form in a text,
Toxaris: A Dialogue of Friendship, written in the second century CE. Its author was
Lucian of Samosata, a Syrian, writing in Greek, under the Roman Empire. In this
dialogue a Greek named Mnesippus is imagined talking to a Scythian named Toxaris
(‘Archer’). Toxaris claims that the Scythians are better than Greeks at admiring the
example of heroes, and cites as his first example the temple to Orestes and Pylades
in Scythia, in which they are honoured with sacrifices. Far from being neglected
because they are foreigners, they are counted as honorary Scythians because of their
unparalleled loyalty (5–6, quoted below pp. 000). Little children in Toxaris’ country
have to commit the story first dramatized in Euripides’ IT to memory, and moreover
are able to see the exploits of the Greeks in their country in ‘pictures by the artists of
old’ hanging in the corridor of the temple (6).

Orestes sailing with his friend, and then the ship smashed up on the rocks;
Orestes captured and prepared for sacrifice, and Iphigenia making them ready.
But on the wall opposite we see Orestes pictured after escaping his bonds and
killing Thoas along with many other Scythians. Finally, they sail off, in possession of Iphigenia and the goddess. The Scythians try in vain to grab hold of the ship, but it has already set sail, and they grab at the rudders and try to get on board. Since they achieve nothing, and are either injured or fearful of being injured, they swim back to land. That is the exact point in their combat with the Scythians that the two friends’ benevolence towards each other can be seen to best advantage. For the painter has shown each of them disregarding the adversaries attacking himself, but instead warding off the ones who are bearing down on the other man, trying to intercept the missiles for him, and caring nothing if he dies provided he saves his friend, and takes on his own body the blow which is being struck against the other.

Some (although not all) of these scenes are indeed represented in visual form on a substantial number of Roman sarcophagi, as we shall see in ch. VII. The legendary friendship of Orestes and Pylades sounded most admirable, however, when it was honoured not by ancient Greeks or Romans, but by the barbarians like Toxaris and his countrymen here ventriloquized by Lucian, so struck by each young man’s enthusiasm for dying on behalf of the other.

On the other hand, Augustine of Hippo, a Roman African and no Scythian, confessed to his readers that he would not have been prepared to give up his life for his best friend, like Orestes and Pylades. He describes how he felt when the youth he loved above all others died (Confessions 4.6):

I was miserable, but I was more attached to my own life than to the friend whose loss had made me miserable. For although I would have liked to have done something to alleviate my unhappiness, I was not as prepared to lose my life as I had been to lose my friend. I suspect that I would not have been prepared to lose it even to be with him, as tradition has it, rightly or wrongly, that Orestes and Pylades did. They wanted to die for one another, and both together, because for both of them, life without the other one was worse than death. But I was in a strange emotional state which was the exact opposite of theirs, since I was at the same time both completely tired of life and very afraid of dying.

At this point our adventures with Euripides’ IT take us into some very turbulent waters, since this reference to the relationship between Orestes and Pylades has recently been at the centre of the acrimonious debate on homosexuality and the Christian church. It is one of a small handful of passages in Augustine which, taken together, have been used to argue that Augustine had homoerotic sexual relations in his youth. Of course, this would hardly have been surprising in a young man growing up in the pagan culture of the Roman Empire in the fourth century CE. Yet what Augustine did or did not do with his
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

genitals, and with whom, are questions that matter greatly in the modern world because of the continuing discrimination against gay people within Christianity. The assumption that Augustine had homosexual experiences has been used both to defend the right of gay men and lesbians to be fully accepted by the church, and to attack their claim on the ground that Augustine bitterly regrett ed his early homosexual experiences.

In one of the other passages, where Augustine describes the temptations of the city when he went to live in Carthage in 371 CE, he clearly says that he had ‘contaminated’ the pure spring of friendship (amicitia) with desire and lust (concupiscentia and libido, Conf. 3.1). This implies that he had given a good deal of thought to sex with his friend, even if they had not actually enjoyed intimate bodily contact. Yet this may or may not be the same individual as the one to whom he is referring when he compares their relationship to that of Orestes and Pylades at 4.6. Moreover, Augustine actually distances himself in this passage from the intensity of the love between those two legendary heroes by saying that he had not been prepared to die for this beloved friend, and he does not use a single word with a sexual overtone.

This is not to say that Augustine has not subtly implied that sexual feelings formed part of his (clearly intense) attachment to his dead friend. The precise nature of their relationship is left up to his readers to infer or imagine as they wish. Some of them will have known of the tradition that Orestes and Pylades were fully fledged sexual partners, perhaps suggested in the physiology of Orestes in some classical vase-painting, and certainly exemplified in a treatise attributed to Lucian entitled Erotes. In the course of a reported debate between advocates of women and boys as sexual partners respectively, Orestes and Pylades become the most important example adduced as evidence by the proponent of same-sex relationships between men. This advocate of homosexual love is an Athenian (of course) named Callicratidas. He says that, at the moment when Orestes insisted that Pylades must live, Orestes was in the position of the ‘lover’ and Pylades of the ‘beloved’ (Erotes 47):

Their erotic friendship was not confined within the borders of Greece, but they sailed to the most remote parts of Scythia, one sick, and the other looking after him. As soon as they landed in the Tauric land, the Erinys of matricides was there to welcome them, and when the barbarians surrounded them, the one was struck down by his usual fit of madness, but Pylades

‘wiped away the foam and attended to his body, sheltering him with the finely woven fabric of his robe.’

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For a range of expressions of these different positions, see, e.g., Soble (2002).


On the controversy over the authorship and date of this treatise, which does not affect my argument here significantly, see recently Jope (2011).
He conducted himself as much as a father would as a lover. At any rate, when it was decided that one should remain behind and be killed while the other should go to Mycenae and deliver the letter, each of them wanted to be the one to stay behind for the other’s sake, since each thought that he would live on if the other survived. But Orestes refused to take the letter on the ground that Pylades was more worthy to do so, and thus showed that he was the subject as well as the object of love.

‘For it pains me greatly if he is sacrificed, since I am the one who has led us into this disaster.’

And just after that continues,

‘Give the letter to him. For I will send him to Argos, where all will be well for him, but let anyone who wants kill me.’

This version of the Tauris episode, despite the heightening of the sexual temperature between the young men, is not only surprisingly close to that in Euripides, but includes no fewer than three embedded (slightly inaccurate) quotations from the play (IT 311–12, 598–9, 603–5). The author is harnessing the famous Euripidean tragedy, which he clearly knows in detail, to an erotic polemical cause. Moreover, the man to whom this speech is reported, Theomnestus, leaves the reader in no doubt what kind of relationship he thinks has been under discussion when he speaks of the difficulties involved in looking at beautiful youths without inflaming the desire for further physical contact (53):

To Eros, pleasure is like a ladder. The first step is visual, but as soon as he has seen the object of his desire, he wants to get closer and touch; as soon he has touched with his fingertips, waves of gratification flow through his whole body. Having achieved this much easily, he reaches the third stage and tries out a kiss, just lightly brushing the lips and pulling back before they make complete contact, to allay suspicion. Seizing the opportunity, he relaxes as the embraces become longer, sometimes softly opening the mouth and keeping his hands busy, since obvious caresses through clothing stimulate desire. Or sometimes he will gently slip a furtive hand down the front of the body, and squeeze the nipples that are swelling beyond their normal size; he quickly explores the smooth, firm belly and then the downy flower of puberty.
This passage demonstrates beyond all doubt that the relationship between Orestes and Pylades had certainly been discussed in the context of detailed and actualized physical desire between men by the time St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions*.

It is impossible for us to solve the alleged ‘problem’ of the exact nature of St. Augustine’s sexual experiences. But we can see why his discussion of Orestes and Pylades in the *Confessions* and the version of *IT* in the Lucianic *Erotes* have both become core texts in the fashionable study of ancient discourse on sexuality, extending far beyond the Classics academy, for example, to the Lesbian and Gay Studies establishment. They are usually discussed together with the two other extended second-Sophistic texts which set up a rhetorical competition between advocacy of heterosexual and homosexual love respectively, Plutarch’s *Dialogue on Love* and the debate in book 2 of Achilles Tatius’ novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Indeed, this development became inevitable once Foucault had discussed the texts together in the final chapter of the third volume of his *History of Sexuality*.  

From the perspective of my own book, and the cultural history of Euripides’ *IT*, it is important to notice how emphatically Iphigenia’s emotional life and subjectivity were effaced in the Roman world, from Pacuvius to Augustine, by the male psychodrama—however we may define it—of her brother and his best friend. But it is also interesting to notice that ancient Greek fiction, in the form of embedded tales of devoted friendship in Lucian’s *Toxaris* and the erotic debate in Achilles Tatius’ novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, has made its own dramatic entrance into our narrative. The next chapter will open with an exploration of some further aspects of the relationship between Euripides’ *IT* and ancient prose romances.

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18 See, e.g., Halperin (2000).
MY CLAIM THAT Euripides’ IT was one of the most influential of his plays in pagan antiquity may seem to be called into question by its absence from heavyweight philosophical writings of the Hellenistic and Imperial eras. Hardly any ancient philosophers quoted from IT, as they often did from Medea, Hippolytus, Phoenician Women, Orestes, and Bacchae. But another way to measure influence is to look at a text’s penetration to all levels of society, across diverse cultural media and genres. In this chapter we shall explore evidence for the impact of the story told in IT on the ‘escape’ narratives typical of popular, often erotic, fiction and theatre of the Roman Empire. We have already found Cicero, Martial, and Augustine using the relationship between Pylades and Orestes as an exemplum of one kind of intense male bond and another, and in Plutarch’s treatise How a Man May Become Aware of his Progress in Virtue (= Mor. 75c) there is evidence for the widespread cultural impact of another aspect of IT. Plutarch is arguing that sudden conversions to virtue are quite impossible, and can’t happen, for example, in a single day or overnight. We should not deceive ourselves that such dreams of instant self-improvement are possible. He quotes Iphigenia’s neat iambic trimeter when she learns that Orestes is alive (IT 569), ‘Farewell then, false dreams. You counted for nothing, after all.’

Elsewhere IT surfaces in an imperial text which takes us, through ancient ideas about the significance of dreams, into a more down-market stratum of ancient society than the readership of Plutarch’s moral essays. Iphigenia’s dream in IT was also known to the ancient professional dream interpreters. Our sole surviving handbook

1 See the still useful appendix in Beers (1914) 96–111.
of dream interpretation is the work of Artemidorus of Daldis in Lydia, written in the second century CE during the age of the Antonines. Its contents demonstrate beyond all question that the customers of dream interpreters included members of every social class, including domestic slaves near the bottom of the household pecking order. Artemidorus quotes a line from the speech in which Iphigenia recounts her dream (quoted above pp. 000). She recalls how she had seen herself performing funeral rites over a pillar of her house which she believes represented Orestes: ‘For male children are the pillars of households’ (IT 57; Artemidorus, Oneirocritica II.10). Artemidorus names Euripides as author but does not name the play. The beautiful imagery of Iphigenia’s dream must have helped to keep it alive in the ancient memory, but in this reference Artemidorus may be making a larger point. Iphigenia’s interpretation of her dream, as indicating that Orestes has died, is revealed by the play to have been wholly incorrect. But the dream itself, in that she will find herself in the situation of preparing Orestes for death, turns out to have made an accurate prediction. Iphigenia dreams true dreams but needs a more competent dream-interpreter.

Artemidorus was himself born in Ephesus—it was from his mother’s birthplace that he became known as the man from Daldis—and his very name reveals the importance of the goddess there. His dream-book reveals intimate local knowledge of the temple of Ephesian Artemis: he tells us that a prostitute of slave status was freed and became able to give up the sex trade after she dreamt that she had entered Artemis’ temple (4.4), ‘for she would not have been allowed to enter the shrine if she had not given up prostitution’. Artemis’ Ephesian temple, on which work began in around 550 BCE, was pronounced one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. The poet Antipater of Sidon celebrated its supremacy even amongst other wonders in this epigram (Greek Anthology IX.58):

I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the Colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, ‘Look, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on anything so grand.’

Xenophon tells us in his Anabasis that he built a miniature reconstruction of the temple near his estate in the northern Peloponnese in the fourth century BCE (5.3.9–13). Indeed, IT has been seen as an important archetype structuring the adventurous journey into the barbarian hinterland described in that famous work, the story of

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1 Hall (2011).
2 See Calhoun (1921).
the escape of the dashing young Athenian aristocrat and his doughty Greeks from near-certain death at the hands of the Persians to the sea in the early fourth century BCE. The *Anabasis* was in turn one of the primary forerunners of the ancient novels, another genre of writing, like the dream interpretation handbook, enjoyed and consumed by a wide cross-section of the population. Most of the novels, including Achilles Tatius’ *Leucipe and Clitophon* and Heliodorus’ *Ethiopian Tale*, are exciting and sometimes titillating or sensational prose romances in Greek. They relate how a heterosexual couple is separated, to face overseas travel, near-death ordeals, and captivity at the hands of barbarians before being reunited and returning home (which could serve as a description of the plot of Euripides’ *IT* if the term ‘heterosexual couple’ were replaced with ‘sister and brother’). The man often has a significant loyal male friend.

In chapter II we considered how the story of Saint Thékla, in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*, was conditioned by both the conventions of the ancient Greek novel and by the heroic figure of the virginal priestess of Artemis with powers of healing. In chapter V we briefly encountered an erotic passage in the most skilfully written of all the ancient novels, Achilles Tatius’ *Leucipe and Clitophon*. Another passage in this novel, the final showdown, begins when the heroine (still a virgin) has taken sanctuary in the Ephesian temple of Artemis to avoid being raped by the thuggish Thersandros, to whom she has been enslaved. The plot engineers events so that her beloved Clitophon is also in the temple, facing a retrial on a charge of murder of which he has already been found guilty once, and for which he was sentenced to death. Thersandros turns up, demands his slave girl be restored to him, and strikes Clitophon three times.

Blood streaming from his nostrils, Clitophon speaks up (8.2):

‘Even malefactors are offered refuge in the safety of the sanctuary, but I—who have harmed no man, and am a suppliant of Artemis—I am struck at her very altar—the shame of it!—where the goddess herself can see…. The floor of the sanctuary is stained with human gore. Who makes such libation to the goddess? Is this not the way of barbarians, of Taurians before the Artemis of Scythia? They are the only ones whose temple runs with blood like this. You have transformed Ionia into Scythia; blood that flows among the Taurians now flows in Ephesus as well…. Yes, your murderous, bloody hand has performed the work that is done at a human sacrifice.’

The novelist is of course assuming that his readership as well as the internal audience of Milesian citizens could see the parallel between Clitophon’s predicament and that of Orestes in *IT*. He is also trying to associate Thersander with Euripides’ Thoas. But this complex intertextual reference goes much deeper. The story told in *IT* seems to
have been well known at Ephesus, where one of a series of scenes from famous plays depicted in the wall paintings of a splendid private house showed a woman named [Iphigene]ia and a man clad in a barbarian costume with leggings, probably Thoas. Yet the Scythian Artemis and the Milesian Artemis stand for different types of novelistic plot element—on the one hand, the savagery of primitive tribes and threats of human sacrifice which the heroes and heroines in the genre face from barbarians, and on the other, the elegant, civilized lifestyle of the Hellenistic Greek cities from which they are transplanted to their wild overseas adventures. Thersandros, it is implied, has no place in the closing chapters of this novel, in the temple which symbolized the pinnacle of the civilization of the Greek East.

There have, in fact, already been several episodes in *Leucippe and Clitophon* that have been strongly reminiscent of other elements in *IT*. These include Clitophon’s relationship with his (half-) sister, a predictive dream involving death (2.23), a terrible wind which threatens the hero’s ship but which abates after prayers (3.5), an important cult statue (3.6), the (mistaken) belief that the heroine has undergone human sacrifice, bloodthirsty barbarian rituals (3.15–16), the heroine’s special relationship with Artemis (4.1), a letter that arrives too late to avoid a good deal of suffering (5.12), and a subsidiary female who has been abducted by pirates (5.16). Other Greek novels reveal similar affinities with the plot of *IT*, especially Xenophon of Ephesus’ *Ephesian Tale*, which is likewise a romance strongly associated with Artemis’ great city of Ephesus. The affinities here include specific echoes: when Apsyrtus the robber chief takes the hero and heroine Habrocomes and Anthia to Tyre, ‘barbarians who had not previously set eyes on such radiance thought they were gods’ (2.2), just like the Taurian cowherds when they first caught sight of Orestes and Pylades (*IT* 268–74). There is also a close escape from human sacrifice by barbarians (2.13). Anthia’s stratagem when she is sold to an Indian king named Psammis in Alexandria, which involves telling him that she is a special favourite of Isis who protects her virginity, seems to be inspired wholesale by the priestess Iphigenia’s deception of the superstitious Thoas (3.11). Although Psammis is impressed by Anthia’s sex appeal as much as by her understanding of the rules governing her goddess’s cult, he is a clear cultural descendant of Euripides’ gullible Thoas.

In the last chapter we also saw that in his *Toxaris* Lucian used the Euripidean story of the Greeks’ adventures in Tauris, as painted in scenes hanging in a Scythian temple, in order to introduce his dialogue. The technique of storytelling through *ecphrasis*, or description of imaginary paintings, is one which was very highly developed

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5 See Grenfell and Hunt (1903) 42.
Iphigenia’s Imperial Escapades in Greek literature by Lucian’s time. Although it had begun with the description of armour in Homeric epic, it was fertilized to an incalculable degree by the visual dimension of ancient theatre. Lucian pays homage to the debt owed by ecphrasis to tragic theatre when he makes his Scythian Toxaris remind the Greek Mnesippus, after the ecphrasis of pictures illustrating the *IT* story, that when tragedians represent the *IT* story on stage, the Greeks ‘applaud loudly, since the sight of one friend risking his life for another normally brings you to tears’ (*Toxaris* 9).

Indeed, scenes from tragedies are amongst the most important and popular subjects for ecphrastic treatment in the literature of the Empire, from Lucian to Philostratus’ *Imagines* and above all the ancient novel. I do not think it has been fully appreciated how key Lucian’s *Toxaris* is to the way in which the Second Sophistic thought about the relationship between ancient fiction and the tragic stage—or rather, Euripides’ ‘adventure tragedies’ in general and his *IT* in particular. For the *IT* section with which Lucian chooses to open *Toxaris* kicks off a competition in storytelling about friendship, in which most of Mnesippus’ stories use exactly the type of personnel and plot motifs that are characteristic of the ancient romances.

The first story concerns the friends Agathocles of Samos and Dinias of Ephesus. Dinias courts a rich Ephesian lady named Charicleia (he is so devoted that he has a statue made of her). He ends up murdering her and her husband and is exiled, but is never deserted by his friend. In the next tale, two friends are shipwrecked and one risks his life to save the other from the sea. In the third, a friend stands by the wishes of a dying friend and looks after his womenfolk, as Pylades promises to look after Electra in *IT*. Mnesippus’ last tale concerns two well-born Athenian youths’ adventures in Egypt. One of them gets accidentally caught up in a temple robbery, and subjected to appalling captivity on the charge of sacrilege. His friend finds him, and makes a false confession of complicity in the crime in order to join his friend in prison, but they are eventually both liberated.

*Toxaris’* tales add other elements characteristic of the ancient novel—battles, barbarians, strange foreign customs, bloody savagery, and physical ordeals. They are also all set in the Black Sea. In the first, a brutal war between the Scythians and the Sauromatae results in one friend allowing his eyes to be torn out on behalf of the other. In the next, two friends die fighting a lion, but kill it first and are buried side by side. In the

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6 On the centrality of ecphrasis to the novel, especially Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, see Bartsch (1989) 8–31; 109–43. On Second Sophistic ecphrasis and tragedy, see the excellent essay of Elsner (2007).
7 Most experts on the ancient novel, for example Reardon (1991) 151–3, seem to think that Euripides’ *Helen* is more important than *IT* to the genesis of the characteristic features of ancient romance, but both *IT* and *Andromeda* (see Wyles [2007]) left a far greater impact on the ancient imagination than *Helen*, of which there is little trace beyond Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*.
8 See above p. 000.
third, love of a dazzlingly beautiful Pontic princess involves the hero and his friend in decapitations and terrible battle injuries; in the fourth, Toxaris himself and his friend Sisinnes are robbed of everything on a journey to Athens. Sisinnes saves their fortunes by becoming a gladiator in a Pontic city; he also marries Toxaris’ sister. In the fifth, a friend saves his friend in a Borysthenis house fire before he saves his wife and children on the ground that he could beget other children, but not another true friend.

Lucian is in Toxaris certainly making fun of the ancient novel. The stories summarized in this dialogue are quirky, and for the most part brazenly lack the essential ingredient of the amazingly beautiful love-interest heroine. In Mnesippus’ stories, such a woman features in just one, and then only to be debunked. For his fourth story, the only one which ends in a happy marriage, is precisely about one of the ugliest women who had ever lived, but had nevertheless, by her virtue, managed to attract and retain the interest of a good husband. In Toxaris’ penultimate tale, the love story is wholly overshadowed by bloody narratives of inter-ethnic violence in the northern Black Sea; his last tale, hilariously, shows the incompatibility of tales of ideal male friendship with those of idealized heterosexual romances. The link with IT, in which Orestes’ non-erotic, kin connection to Iphigenia is entirely compatible with his affective feelings about Pylades, begins to become even clearer. Lucian has seen that almost all the staple elements of the Greek prose romance find their prototypes in Euripides’ IT, with the exception of the romance itself. Perhaps his commentary on the relationship between the Black Sea tragedy and the prose novel would be further illuminated if more than two scraps had survived of the novel Kalligone, the heroine of which came from Olbia. At least part of the action was set around the Sea of Azov, and included a Bosporan monarch, Amazons, and Sauromatians. I would certainly like to be able to identify the setting of another fragmentary novel, which opens with a scene in a seaside temple and involves Artemis. With a despot who makes remarkable dedications in the temple, the washing of an object, a multiple murderer, a heroine named Anthia, and characters called Euxeinos and Lysippos, it bears some sort of relationship to Xenophon’s Ephesian Tale.

We can be very certain that the IT story travelled even further than Orestes and Iphigenia. One of the most remarkable ancient artefacts depicting the story told in IT is a linen medallion, once sewn into an ancient Egyptian tunic as a textile ornament, depicting in a slightly comical, cartoon-like idiom the figures of Artemis, Iphigenia, a barbarian male, and the two Greeks by a burning altar. It dates from the third or fourth century CE or even later, and was found, miraculously well preserved, in the sands of

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10 Stephens and Winkler (1995) 277–84; at p. 284 they suggest that the detail of the washing ‘faintly suggests the Iphigenia in Tauris.’
Antinoe on the banks of the Nile. Our story penetrated much further inland into the remote parts of Upper Egypt, to a tributary of Lake Moeris that formed a branch of the same river. In the heat and dust of the provincial town of Oxyrhynchus, the local people took their seats one day in the second century CE to be entertained in the theatre. This performance space, now lost beyond recovery but glimpsed by the archaeologist Flinders Petrie in 1922, must have witnessed many kinds of performance. But one burlesque musical comedy was quite unlike any other ancient entertainment, which has survived in sufficient extension for us to appreciate its flavour and impact. It was not a pantomime on the mythical theme of the Black Sea Iphigenia, danced by one of the beautiful masked dancers so popular all over the Roman Empire, although Lucian suggests that the adventures of Iphigenia and Orestes in the Black Sea were performed in that medium as well (On Dancing 43). Nor was it a mime as that genre is usually understood, a dramatization of a comical domestic fracas set in the ‘here-and-now’ of the audience, featuring lowlife and grotesquely stereotyped characters. It is a mime that is also a burlesque, relying on a familiar, and more elevated archetype, and as such has more in common with the popular burlesques of Euripidean tragedy that were a feature of the Greek comic stage in the fourth century BCE, but which have survived only in the most exiguous of fragments.

The importance of burlesqued tragedy in earlier eras of the Greek theatre makes all the more noteworthy the discovery in the rubbish dumps of Oxyrhynchus of this tattered script for a comic performance of a mime plot very similar to that of IT, but set in India and starring a Greek maiden named Charition (POxy 413). This precious text—referred to henceforward as Charition—takes us with unparalleled vividness into the world of popular theatre entertainment under the Roman Empire in the early or mid-second century CE, a time at which theatres were being built all over Roman Egypt. It offers our most extended example of the delineation of the Fool in mime, which is a type of role that informed more elevated and influential literature, including the self-presentation of the Apostle Paul in his account of the flight from Damascus. In Charition it is the Fool who supplies most of the humour, play-

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12 It is intriguing that at On Dancing 64, when Lucian wants to make a point about the attractiveness in Neronian Rome to barbarians of the ‘tragic’ ballet known as pantomime dancing, he chooses to place the admiration of Greco-Roman theatrical culture in the mouth of a monarch from the Black Sea.
13 ‘Surely the single most important piece of evidence for the style and performance of Greek mime in Egypt of the 2nd century A.D.; an example of the ‘fantastic entertainments’ whose significance ‘for our understanding of ancient popular culture is…compelling’ (Fantham [1993] 168). The papyrus itself is of the second century CE: the likely date of composition is late first or second century. See Page (1944) 357.
15 2 Corinthians 11.32–3; see Welborn (1999) 126.
ing off the lines given to others by misunderstanding their meaning, taking them too literally, or imitating them to comic effect.

Since it is intimately related to the circumstances of its performance, the text is also a significant document in theatre history. It indicates the speakers with a rare degree of specificity (‘A’ is Charition, ‘B’ is her slave who acts as the Fool, ‘T’ is Charition’s brother, and there are several other designated roles); it is unique in offering several ‘stage directions’ of a percussive kind (tumpanismos, krousis, krotalismos, and ‘fart’), indicating where drums, cymbals, or other instruments were to accompany the action, dance, and song.\footnote{For a detailed discussion of the musical stage directions see Skulimowska (1966). The uniqueness of the stage directions offered in this text relative to all our other surviving theatre papyri is well brought out by Gammacurta (2006).} Yet its recent Italian editor Santelia is probably misguided in thinking that the text represents a complete performance script.\footnote{Santelia (1991) 21.} There are reasons for thinking that it is a musician’s copy, telling him when to play his percussion instruments—instructions which would not require a transcription of the entire dialogue. On the other hand, it may represent a substantial section from a ‘performance outline’ to be used by the director of the entertainment; it includes the necessary information concerning cues for the entrances, exits, commencement of new sequences, and detailed dialogue where sound effects are required, but assumes that the individual actors will expand the spoken and sung material by improvisation. Wiemken is surely correct in thinking that the demands of staging would require a fully scripted version of the challenging passages containing barbarian speech, metrical sections, and choral responses, but that the surviving textual record of the play is in other respects compressed.\footnote{Wiemken (1972) especially 72–6; see also Fantham (1993).}

The entertainment offered subject matter that was, in comparison with the other surviving evidence for Greek mime, unusual. \textit{Charition} enacts a plot rather different from the domestic quarrels, cobbler’s shops, and quotidian crises that Herodas, together with the anonymous fragments and those attributed to Sophron, have led scholars to associate with Greek mime. The entertainment in \textit{Charition} consisted of what would now be called ‘musical drama’ or even ‘comic operetta’; although it included song-and-dance routines, and was undoubtedly aiming at laughter, it was neither revue nor vaudeville: it enacted an identifiable adventure narrative. The importance of the action at the expense of mimically elaborated character has led some scholars to question whether it should be described as a mime at all: other terms that have been suggested include ‘farce’, ‘music hall’, and ‘burlesque’.\footnote{See Sudhaus (1906) 269–70, and, on burlesque, further below.} \textit{Charition} also entails an exotic setting, an exceptionally large cast, at least two groups equivalent to
choruses who speak and sing in unison, and the flamboyant juxtaposition of prose and verse.

It is necessary for us to pause for a while to be reminded of the actual contents of this unfamiliar text. At the beginning there is a discussion of how salvation might be procured through farting; the Fool says that he contains the necessary equipment in his bottom, and addresses a prayer to a divine personification, Lady Fart, mentioning a statue of her made of silver (1–8). At this point somebody announces ‘they’re here’; to the sound of drums a group of voices (indicated by the direction ‘all’—κοι[νεί]), interspersed by an individual female voice, delivers noisy utterances in sounds intended to represent a barbarian language—‘aboratoni’, and ‘malalagabroudittakota’. This is an encounter between some barbarians and Greek individuals who are unhappy about being in a foreign country. The barbarizing dialogue continues for several lines until the Fool, accompanied by cymbals, releases the air from his ‘fully compressed bottom’ (17); in farts compared with the effect of a noisy storm at sea, he sends the barbarian chorus, some at least of whom are female, in retreat to the river Psolichus (40).

The next episode (41–54) sees the Fool, Charition, and Charition’s brother discussing their plans for escape, a parody at some level of the intense conversations between Pylades, Iphigenia, and Orestes. The Fool suggests that Charition remove some of the objects dedicated to the goddess in the temple at which the drama is set; she refuses, in elevated language, to offend the goddess by such impiety. She tells him to prepare wine for the local people to drink neat, since they are unaccustomed to its effect and will not understand that it needs to be diluted. She then goes inside.

At this point there arrives the Indian King, to the sound of drums and with an entourage of ‘Indian chiefs’ (πρωμοι, 90). They are all apparently fresh from a bath (λελουμενοι, 56), which the following sequence implies was connected with the rituals they were about to perform. It consists of a drinking scene, and the text offers detailed indications to its original user concerning the correct (and increasingly frequent) moments for cymbals and drums to be struck. The king, two other individual barbarian voices, and the barbarian ensemble babble ever more incoherently as lots are cast, drinks are poured for them by the Fool, and Charition’s brother ensures that the wine is kept undiluted. The Oxyrhynchites were here witness to nothing less than an Indian drinking orgy.

20 For the history of the chorus in drama down to imperial times, see Appendix I in Sifakis (1967).
22 The text used throughout is Cunningham’s improved and reordered Teubner text (1987) 42–7.
23 Other sources stress the noisiness of the fanfares that accompanied exits and entrances and finales in popular theatre under the Roman Empire: see, e.g., Petronius’ Satyricon 31.4–6, 32.1.
As the Indians become intoxicated, they begin to respond (still in their own language) antiphonally to their king (83–4); at the climax of this scene, he bursts into Greek song, in the Sotadean metre. This rhythm, invented in the third century BCE by Sotades of Maronea, creates a bouncy effect which ancient Christians, at any rate, regarded as unusually undignified and licentious. It is in this verse form that the Indian king sings as he is leading the ‘barbarian and immense chorus’ ([ba]rboron anagō choron apleton) to their goddess, Selene (88). The rhythm of their dance is to be accompanied by their steps, which are distinctive, since at least three adjectives of unclear meaning are used to describe them. The command to dance is reinforced by Charition’s brother (93). At this point the Fool farts once more, and on the brother’s instructions trips up the king, before binding him fast with ‘sacred girdles’ (93).

Cued by the stage direction ‘many drums: finale (katastole)’, there now ensues the closing sequence of the entertainment, which is delivered in iambic and trochaic verse and accelerates manically. The Indians are drunk, their king has been tied up, Charition reappears, and discussion takes place with the captain of the Greek ship about its readiness for departure. It is close by and probably visible. Charition is full of fear, and prays to the goddess (96–106): most scholars have assumed that she was about to be offered as a human sacrifice to Selene. But the fun with the barbarians is far from over, since their women now appear, equipped with ‘huge bows’, from the hunt (115–18). If not actually Amazons, they share many features with those matriarchal archers of Greek tradition. Charition uses a word of their language—alemaka—which they repeat in response (124), and it is clear that she thinks she can thus control them from the rebuke she addresses to the Fool: ‘Wretch, they took you for an enemy and almost shot you’ (125–7). With another tremendous fart, he carries out his stated intention of blowing them, like the group of barbarians on stage at the opening of the papyrus text, all the way to the river. The last lines involve a discussion between Charition, the Fool, and the ship’s captain about their imminent departure: Charition repeats her pious refusal to rob the temple, and the captain tells the Fool to offer the barbarians more undiluted wine.

This sequence of spectacular and ludicrous actions, involving the planning and execution of the escape of a Greek heroine and her brother, by sea, from a barbarian community, reveals a plot that is a linear if undoubtedly bizarre descendant of IT. In both dramas the Greeks win both by physical means (the Fool’s powerful farting is a substitute for the physical fights which Orestes and Pylades have with the

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14 See Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians* I, 2, who complains that his opponent Arius had written a theological work using this lewd and unelvated metre; the epitome of Philostorgius’ *Ecclesiastical History* II.2 is referring to Arius’ Sotadean poetry when he talks of songs written for ‘sailors and mill-workers’.

15 For a detailed discussion of the models for Charition, especially IT, see Santelia (1991) 12–14.
Taurians) and more intellectual ones: the barbarian king in both plays is devout but gullible, and a trick can be played on him in relation to the ritual practices in the temple cult of his indigenous goddess. The setting is a temple of the goddess near the coast, and a major issue is whether the Greeks should take objects dedicated to her there with them when they abscond. There are therefore no structural differences between the basic plot outlines of this Oxyrhynchus musical comedy and Euripides’ play: the differences are in detail. For example, the trick played on the Indian captors exploits their inexperience of alcohol rather than (or in addition to?) their ignorance of Greek rites for washing away pollution. But it is the heroine in both plays—Iphigenia or Charition—who is clever enough to think up the stratagem. If the role of Charition was performed by a female actor, which is certainly possible, the scene would have taken on an even more insouciant tone.26

In another Greek tragedy, Aeschylus’ Suppliants, the fact that Egyptians drink beer rather than wine is a component in the ethnic caricature and presented as a sign of their inferiority (953).27 The motif of initiating barbarians into the pleasures of wine was one which might have had a real resonance in Egypt, a beer-drinking region to which it was indeed Greek immigrants who had originally introduced viticulture.28 The Greeks in Roman Egypt drank beer freely, however, and were indeed expert brewers,29 so it is not clear that a point is being made in Charition about the type of alcoholic drink that the Greeks are offering the Indians. The point seems simply to be that the Greeks know how to get the Indians intoxicated. The ancestry of this archetypal story leads back, of course, far beyond tragedy to the Odyssey book 9, where Odysseus escapes from the ‘supernatural barbarian’ Polyphemus by making him drink wine, and blinding him when he has become inebriated.30 The Cyclops story was a theme in which comedians always delighted. As Sandy put it, the Odyssey was adapted ‘for many a piece of low comedy’, citing Aristoxenus’ inclusion of Cyclops Humming and Odysseus Solecising (Kuklôps Teretizôn and Odusseus Soloikizôn) amongst the repertoire of the ancient stand-up comedians known as gelôtopoiôi.31 Both these titles are suggestive of the vocal possibilities that attracted humorous performers.

The ancient motif of escape-from-the-barbarians is one that seems to have been assimilated first by the tragedians when writing their satyr plays—for which the Odyssey was a favoured source of plots (e.g., in Aeschylus’ Proteus and Circe as well as

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26 Female mimes are of course attested (see especially Webb (2002)), and several scholars, including Sifakis (1966), have argued persuasively that women sometimes performed in comedy in imperial times.

27 See Hall (1989) 133.


29 See, e.g., the evidence collected in van Minnen (2001).

30 Trenkner (1958) 55 and n. 3 collects numerous instances in Greek and Roman literature of making the enemy drunk, which she describes as ‘one of the commonest motifs known to popular tales of cunning’.

Euripides’ *Cyclops*). Later, the motif was adopted by Euripides in his famous escape tragedies, *Helen, Andromeda*, as well as *IT*. The impact that the escape-from-barbarians plotline made is clear from the Aristophanic comedy *Thesmophoriazusae*, a parody of the whole plot type as well as a repository of parodies from individual examples, especially *Helen* and *Andromeda*.

The cultural penetration and stamina of *IT* tells us a great deal about the dominant concerns of the ancient Greek- and Latin-speaking communities of the ancient Mediterranean world, who were constantly negotiating issues of ethnic identity and difference. The audience at the Oxyrhynchus theatre on the south-western side of the town, in which we can safely assume that *Charition* was performed, was no exception. The Oxyrhynchites were an ethnically hybrid colonial community, perhaps partly descended from Greek immigrants, who lived under the authority of an absent Roman emperor. They cultivated indigenous Egyptian gods in their theriomorphic form as animals, even if their cults were publicly syncretized with those of anthropomorphic Greek deities in human form (Neith with Athena, for example). Greco-Egyptian families sometimes took double-barrelled names that included one element from each language, and individuals of Egyptian birth took Greek names, although Greek-speaking families were less likely to learn the Egyptian language than Egyptians to learn Greek. This mixed society did perhaps produce in those who felt they were Greek, and therefore superior, a strain of ‘low-level contempt’. One Oxyrhynchite’s letter reads, ‘Please send me a policeman with a warrant against Lastas. He has afforded me considerable violence. Don’t forget! You know how Egyptians are.’

An inextricable connection existed between the discourses of ethnic difference and of social class. The administrative structure of Oxyrhynchus rested on a hereditary class system; the rights of citizenship, or membership of the elite and inherently Hellenic institution of the gymnasium, were ancestrally transmitted. Being civilized and cultured is therefore presented in Greek correspondence by Oxyrhynchites as equivalent with being Greek, whereas lower-class identity could render one liable to accusations of being an Egyptian and a barbarian, or at least behaving like one. It may have been resented that from the Roman viewpoint, at least, many Greek-speakers counted for practical and administrative purposes as ‘Egyptians’. There is anxiety about ethnic identity informing the request of a third-century correspondent, who writes: ‘Please don’t think me a barbarian or an inhuman Egyptian.’

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34 Parsons (2007) 43.
35 POxy vol. 42, no. 3061.
36 See Turner (1952) 131.
The story enacted—however riotously—in *Charition* is unlikely to have brought anything but pleasure to the more educated members of this island of Greek-speakers, far from the sea, whose identity was dependent on their sense that they were the custodians of Hellenic tradition. Moreover, from time to time they must have felt vulnerable to invasion and domination by barbarians beyond their gates: the ‘Revolt of the Herdsmen’ in 171/2 was an example of Nile Delta brigands becoming a more serious and organized threat. Two of the major differences between *IT* and *Charition* are that, in the latter, the actual process of linguistic translation between Greek and a barbarian tongue becomes a dominant feature, and that the heroine can speak the local language. It must not be forgotten that the Greek community in Roman Egypt daily faced this type of bilingual situation in reality.37

Regardless of their anxieties, it seems that Oxyrhynchites across the class spectrum enjoyed their entertainments and were prepared to pay for them: a second-century account records the outlay of 496 drachmae for a day’s performance by a *mimos*, 448 drachmae for a reciter of Homer, and payments for music and to a dancer.38 One gymnasiarch (magistrate in charge of athletic contests) curried favour with his public by donating money in order to subsidize the cost of theatre tickets.39 The size of the theatre suggests that it was designed to include lower-class spectators. Estimated by the archaeologist Flinders Petrie to have been large enough to hold over 11,000 spectators,40 out of a population estimated by some at only 15,000,41 this was a substantial civic space. It was the scene of festivals, overseen by the *epistratēgos* (‘over-general’, a very senior official in charge of a large portion of Roman Egypt) to greet the proclamation of a new emperor or watch an ephebic display.42 But there are also signs that the theatre was attractive to Oxyrhynchites high up the social scale. One ambitious young man had gone as a student to Alexandria intending to find scholars to teach him Rhetoric. In the letter he wrote to his prominent father (who held the office of High Priest of the Nile), there are two ominous references to a scandal ‘about the theatre’ in which they had both been embroiled.43

A tragedy by Euripides may have been burlesqued in *Charition*, but we know that his tragedies were also still being performed, unadapted, in Oxyrhynchus. Several Oxyrhynchus papyri have long been identified, by marks in the margins (‘sigla’) indicating changes of speaker, as almost certain to have been used during rehearsals of

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38 *POxy* vol. 7, no. 1050; see also vol. 3, no. 519. See the discussion of Alston (2002) 243–6.
39 Mitteis and Wilcken (1912) no. 33; see Parsons (2007) 52 with n. 5.
40 See Turner (1952) 129.
42 Turner (1952) 130–1.
43 *POxy* 18.1190, a revised text of which is published in Rea (1993).
Greek tragedy for performance. One important example contains six fragments of Euripides’ *Cresphontes* (POxy 2458); the marginal notations indicate not changes in speaking role, but rather the several parts in the play assumed by a single actor. Recently, however, the publication of a new papyrus (POxy 4546) has thrown unprecedented light on the ways in which individual actors prepared themselves. It shows that actors could be given texts of their own lines in a play. Dated to between 100 BCE and 50 CE, it contains the thirty lines spoken by Admetus at Euripides’ *Alcestis* 344–82, but excludes the lines delivered in the dialogue by his interlocutors—the actor playing Alcestis (seven lines: 344, 346, 347, 348, 355, 357, 376), and the chorus (two lines: 369–70). Marshall’s study suggests that no other criterion for the selection of these lines fits the form taken by the text in the papyrus. It is most unlikely to be a schoolboy exercise in copying out, unless its purpose was performance-related. The large handwriting is designed to be easily read, perhaps by an actor who needed to practise movements as well as oral delivery.

Euripides’ *Cresphontes* and *Alcestis* therefore seem to have been performed in Oxyrhynchus, and it is possible that his *IT* was staged there as well. Who was in the audience at the performance of such tragedies? Modern scholarly discussion of Charition has repeatedly suggested that there was a correlation between the Oxyrhynchus spectator’s level of literacy and the type of stage play he or she enjoyed. This is how Eric Turner in 1952 influentially imagined the audience of this entertainment:

> For the bulk of the inhabitants, Egyptian in name and writing Greek (if they are not actually illiterate)…life offers a hard round of toil in order to live. The apparatus of daily life is scanty, and it is often pawned to satisfy the tax-collector. But there are holidays from labour—twenty days a year are specified in apprenticeship contracts—and ill-spelt letters reveal the anticipation of family reunions on such occasions. No doubt these are the people who crowded the theatre to applaud the mime of Charition.

Turner here draws a link between the type of person likely to ‘applaud’ *Charition* and shaky levels of literacy. The link is reinforced in his subsequent concession, ‘But

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44 Occasional attempts are made to argue that the very existence of substantial numbers of papyri of tragedy, especially by Euripides, is indicative not just of a vital tradition of reading and studying his plays in much later antiquity, but of regular theatrical performances. See especially Pertusi (1959). For more general remarks on the Euripidean finds at Oxyrhynchus see Krüger (1990) 257.

45 Two actors are indicated, α and γ, suggesting that actor β had made an appearance previously. Turner (1962) 76 concludes that ‘this papyrus represents an acting copy … presumably … used for actual representation in the theatre of Oxyrhynchus’. See also Donovan (1969) 76–8.


48 Turner (1952) 131.
there will have been members of the higher classes who applauded this performance, for their papers show that many persons in comfortable circumstances, including Roman citizens, could not write. The question of whether or not this entertainment would be found pleasurable is, according to Turner, determined specifically by literacy and not by ‘class’.

This is dangerous ground. The issue is clouded because the nature of the evidence means that we have little idea what educational level and what understanding of Greek literature and theatre was achieved by what proportion of Oxyrhynchite society. It is important not to patronize the Oxyrhynchites by underestimating the levels of literary sophistication and confidence that they enjoyed: the literary culture of late antique Egypt, at least by early Byzantine times, was vital and flourishing. Nonnus of Panopolis’ *Dionysiaca* assumes a high level of erudition and literary experience. At one end of the scale the owner of an impressive Oxyrhynchite private library seems to have owned a copy of Euripides’ *Hypsipyle* as well as Pindar’s *Paeans* and an extensive collection of prose writers. It is important to remember that the tradition of Oxyrhynchite scholarship goes back to at least the second century BCE, when this town was chosen as home by Satyrus the biographer (a copy of whose *Life of Euripides* was preserved by his adoptive city). Since Oxyrhynchus was a ‘mere nome-capital, not a Greek foundation’, the range of classical Greek literature found there has been judged by one historian of ancient Egypt ‘astonishing’. There is evidence not only of book-learning at Oxyrhynchus, but of individuals specifically interested in both tragic plots and character construction in comic drama. *POxy* 2192, a letter of the second century, includes this postscript:

Make and send me copies of Books 6 and 7 of Hypsicrates’ *Characters in Comedy*. For Harpocration says they are among Polion’s books. But it is likely that others, too, have got them. He also has his prose epitomes of Thersagoras’ work *On the Myths of Tragedy*.

Below this, another person has made a note suggesting circles of readers and booksellers well known to one another:

According to Harpocration, Demetrius the bookseller has got them. I have instructed Apollonides to send me certain of my own books which you will hear of in good time from Seleucus himself. Should you find any, apart from

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50 Cameron (1965).
52 Turner (1952) 137.
53 Bell (1948) 81.
those which I possess, make copies and send them to me. Diodorus and his friends also have some which I haven’t got.\textsuperscript{54}

There is evidence that girls as well as boys could attend school, and that secondary education entailed the study of set canonical Greek texts, including tragedy: on the strength of numbers of papyri, Euripides seems to have been overwhelmingly the most popular tragedian amongst Oxyrhynchus readers both in school and out of it.\textsuperscript{55} There even survives a rather poorly copied school exercise reproducing the prologue of Euripides’ \textit{Phoenissae}.\textsuperscript{56} Yet we do not know what proportion of the population experienced such an education. Oxyrhynchus was a town with a substantial number of specialist tradesmen (and some tradeswomen), who are unlikely to have enjoyed high levels of education or long periods of leisure in which to read and write.\textsuperscript{57} In \textit{IT} the heroine is recognized by her brother when she has to dictate a letter detailing her identity because she does not know how to write, a plot device much admired by Aristotle (\textit{Poet. 1444a5–10; 1445b1–10}). If the author of \textit{Charition} retained this famous anagnôrisis, it will have struck chords with the many Greek-speakers in his audience.

The second problem, however, raised by Turner’s correlation of literacy levels with the enjoyment of theatrical genres is the assumption that semi-literate or illiterate people would not enjoy a serious production of \textit{Cresphontes} or \textit{Alcestis}, when the popularity of Euripides in antiquity implies the opposite. \textit{IT} was well regarded by Aristotle, meriting comment and praise in the \textit{Poetics}, even though the philosopher himself preferred plays that ended with the protagonist suffering ill fortune. And Aristotle, as Sifakis has rightly insisted, regarded tragedy as a medium that had something to say not only to philosophers but to all members of a citizen audience (\textit{Poet. 1444b8–19}).\textsuperscript{58} It was only because tragedies such as \textit{IT} proved popular at both ends of the social spectrum that it would even occur to composers of comic operas like \textit{Charition} to use them as the basis of their plots. The Greek-maiden’s-escape-from-the-barbarians story type was only so successful in the burlesque theatre because it had been so successful on the more serious tragic stage, and had therefore enjoyed wide circulation and cultural penetration across several centuries.

Similarly, there is no reason to assume that an educated individual could not find pleasure in \textit{Charition}. People do not cease to find scatological or ethnic humour amusing just because they can spell accurately. Moreover, the spectator with a

\textsuperscript{54} Turner (1952) 116.


\textsuperscript{56} POxy vol. 45, no. 3244.

\textsuperscript{57} For the many trades in Oxyrhynchus see Daris (2003) supplement 3.

\textsuperscript{58} See above all Sifakis (2001) 35–7.
thorough knowledge of IT would also have had access to the more intellectual pleasures to be derived from detecting the ebb and flow of the prototype in the parodic adaptation. For *Charition* represents a rare example of a type of ancient theatre that despite its signal popularity has almost completely disappeared—*burlesque* of canonical tragedy. It seems to have been Cratinus who, in the 420s BCE, invented the idea of a comic drama that parodied serious literature, in his *The Odysseuses*, which (like *Charition*) featured a Greek ship as a dominant part of the stage action, and centred on the story of Greek brain outwitting savage brawn, in its parody of the Cyclops episode.\(^{59}\) It may have been Aristophanes who pioneered the theatrical burlesque of specifically theatrical productions in his treatments of Euripidean tragedy (for example, of *Telephus* in *Acharnians* and of *Aeolus* in *Aeolosicon*), although it was a type of humorous drama with which the name of the comic poet Plato is particularly associated. By the mid-fourth century, Greek theatregoers would have been struck by the degree to which the comic poets had come to depend on the plays of the tragedians. Eubulus made his name with his travesties of popular Euripidean tragedies, including *Ion, Auge,* and *Antiope.* The comic poet of Taras, Rhinthon, wrote a burlesque *Iphigenia in Tauris* (see above p. 000). The convention of literary parody is also apparent in the Hellenistic mimes of Herodas.\(^{60}\)

But mythological travesty—of epic as much as tragedy—was also a staple in the Atellan farce (a form of buffoonish comedy associated with the town of Atella in Campania, Italy), and this indigenous Italian taste may be reflected in the garbled version of the Trojan War that Trimalchio recites in Petronius’ *Satyrica* 59.3–5. The mimographer Valerius’ fragments suggest that depreciation of the tragic style was a consistent source of laughter in Latin-language mime: one of his characters asked why another is using tragic verses and a tragic costume—*Quid hic cum tragicis versis et syrma facis?*\(^{61}\) It has been argued that ‘mimic spoof’ of weighty intellectual authors was one of the most important idioms of Roman popular theatrical performances, and one of the prime pieces of evidence supporting this view specifies Euripides—along with Menander, Socrates, and Epicurus—as one of the august Greek figures most vulnerable to this approach (Jerome *Ep.* 52.83 = *PL* 22.535).\(^{62}\) This is surely reminiscent of the effect of the contrast between the high-flown tragic speech of Chariton and the scatological humour of the Fool.\(^{61}\)


\(^{60}\) Crusius (1892) 15, 54, 124, 126, 127.

\(^{61}\) Valerius, line 192, in Bonaria (1965).


\(^{61}\) It is interesting that the fragment of a Greek picaresque novel found at Oxyrhynchus (no. 3010) and published by Parsons (1971) seems to have included both quotation from Euripides and the figure of a Fool. The papyrus dates from the mid-second century.
If burlesque is approached as a form of what is now termed ‘popular culture’, with a view to understanding the mass communication systems in the society that produced it rather than to pronouncing aesthetic judgement, it raises important theoretical issues in all literary cultures for a variety of interlocking reasons. For a start, burlesque can help us reconstruct which original texts made the most impact on the imagination of previous eras. Shakespeare has provided material for an astonishing number of humorous versions precisely because Shakespeare is so widely and deeply disseminated through different levels of culture. Greek tragic theatre has been susceptible to burlesque in every period at which it has been enjoyed in performance; comic versions of Oedipus Tyrannus can today be downloaded on the Internet. In Victorian Britain, comic burlesques of Greek tragedy became popular in the mid-century popular theatre—the plays that were burlesqued included Sophocles’ Electra and Antigone, Euripides’ Medea, Alcestis, Bacchae, and Iphigenia in Aulis, and even Aeschylus’ Agamemnon and Prometheus Bound. This phenomenon raises a range of questions relating to the levels of literacy and indeed access to classical culture enjoyed by the socially heterogeneous audiences at Victorian burlesques, especially those who gathered at some of the more demotic London theatres, which attracted the poorest members of the working classes as well as fun-loving aristocrats. Burlesques of famous tragedies—Hamlet as well as Antigone—were also enjoyed by academics and judges, in addition to prestigious literary authors such as Dickens. To them it offered the pleasure of recognizing detailed references to the serious ‘under-text’, just as we can surely imagine the more educated Oxyrhynchites thinking about the Euripides they read at school as they sat down to enjoy Charition’s escape from India alongside their semi-literate neighbours. These, however, may have been educated primarily through the dissemination of myth through theatre and other visual media rather than papyrus rolls.

Burlesque of an archetype that is fundamentally familiar to everyone can in fact offer a powerful sense of social unity and cohesion. The ideological project of a performance like Charition is extremely complex. On the one hand, it could be seen as a witty subversion of the texts underpinning an education in classical Greek literature that was the preserve of the upper classes in Roman Egypt, with all that might imply for an audience that included many people who had no access to the privileges associated with such an education. Yet although it was ostensibly mocking or repudiating a tradition of canonical tragedy, Charition was simultaneously appropriating the

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64 For a discussion of the history of the debate over ‘popular culture’, see Lowenthal (1961).
65 See the excellent account of Shakespeare in the context of the dichotomy between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture in Hawkins (1990) 103–18. Pruett (1992) is an indication of the extent to which research into ‘popular entertainment’ has now become respectable within the Academy.
tradition for its audience. Parsons suggestively compares the experience of watching this burlesque of Euripides with the parodic retelling of the labours of Heracles also found at Oxyrhynchus, with its comic-book ink cartoons. 67 Like nineteenth-century classical burlesque, Charition surely belongs to that subcategory of burlesque literature which comic theorists identify with travesty—the ‘low burlesque’ of a particular work or story achieved by treating it ‘in an aggressively familiar style’. 68 Such a ‘familiar’ treatment paradoxically implies a form of cultural ownership. The audiences enjoyed the sense of cultural possession which their own familiarity with some aspects of the tragic canon, affirmed in burlesque, then bestowed upon them.

Moreover, to look at a tragedy through a comic lens has serious ideological ramifications. In an important study of the all-pervasiveness of the comic spirit in Victorian culture, Roger Henkle defines the Victorians’ ‘comic attitude’ as the avoidance of the upsetting aspects of a subject, or a reduction in the consumers’ confrontation with its social implications. 69 This is exactly what both Victorian burlesques of tragedies and Charition seem to have done with their harsher aspects. The process of turning serious tragic myth into comic musical theatre implies a ‘moral distancing’ which allowed rapists and murderers and those responsible for other terrible crimes to be inspected without psychological jeopardy.

It is easy to deride this type of theatre as appealing to the lowest social common denominator, but a different perspective can suggest a rather more complicated picture. Indeed, the fact that the Oxyrhynchites enjoyed this kind of burlesque drama, which parodies a canonical tragedy, might suggest that their tastes were relatively refined. There is indeed a good deal of unsophisticated humour apparently derived from bodily noises, but there is also the much more sophisticated pleasure to be derived from bathos, especially the deliberate contrasting of the elevated diction of tragedy spoken by Charition with the coarser speech registers of some of the other characters. 70 The heroine, with whose subjectivity the audience is asked to identify, moreover, is the most refined character in the play, which invites the audience to adopt her perspective on the more uncouth characters and on the barbarians. What is even more interesting is that everyone in the audience will have known someone called Charition, shown to be a popular name in Roman Egypt from papyri containing census returns. 71 Charition offers its audience a heroine with exotic adventures in foreign parts, but one more approachable and much easier to identify with than the Euripidean

68 Jump (1972) 2.
70 Santelia (1991) 64–5 argues that the solemnity of the language used by Charition is appropriate to her role as priestess, rather than an indication of a generic link with tragedy.
71 PMeyer 9 (a census return) from Arsinoe (Fayum) shows that Charitian was a regularly used name by ordinary families in the mid-second century CE.
Iphigenia, priestess of Artemis, daughter of a Mycenean monarch, rescued by the gods from a sacrificial altar before mysterious translation to the Pontus. There are other signs that the tragic material is being treated in a way that would make it more familiar and accessible to the audience; rather than the arcane aetiological details of the rituals to be founded in Attica in memory of the episode in the Tauric Chersonese, the discussion between Charition and the Fool centres (twice) on whether it is appropriate to steal from temples with statues of goddesses within them. It just so happens that we have a record of a scandal in the mid-second century CE concerning the theft of gold from the statue of Athena Thoeris, the Most Great Goddess of the Oxyrhynchites, from her grand temple complex.72

The remote inland community of Greeks in Oxyrhynchus may have responded with particular warmth to plots set in motion by a ship landing or being wrecked on distant shores far across the ocean. This scenario was closely associated with both the prose romance and with mime, two entertaining genres catering to two popular tastes under the Roman Empire, and which mutually influenced one another. Indeed, one scholar has argued that the plot of Charition is closer to ‘a popular story by Xenophon of Ephesus’ than to IT.73 Seneca refers to a mimed shipwreck (mimicum naufragium);74 the famous list of stage properties in the Berlin Papyrus 13927 includes a representation of a river and ship’s tackle.75 This is particularly suggestive in terms of the interaction of theatrical and plastic arts, when we remember that the ship on which the Greeks escape in IT is a prominent feature in Roman imperial sarcophagus carving (see Figs. VI.1 and VI.2). The popularity of the shipwreck theme in ancient Greek literature generally, and in mime in particular, reminds us that, as Northrop Frye put it, ‘of all fictions, the marvelous journey is the one formula that is never exhausted.’76 We do not know how Charition arrived in India, but her cultural ancestress Iphigenia arrived in the land of the Taurians by decidedly ‘marvellous’ means.

The widespread influence of IT reminds us of the global context in which Charition should be read, however provincial the inland town in which it was performed. Trade in spices, silk, and other luxury goods flourished between the Roman Empire and southern India, as Ptolemy’s Geography and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea attest. Goods were brought to Berenike or Myos Hormos (Quseir al-Qadim), great trading centres and Ptolemaic and Roman terminuses for the sea routes from India. From the coast, goods would be carried westward across the desert along the old

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72 Parsons (2007) 48–9; POxy vol. 8, no. 1117 (dating from 178 CE).
73 Little (1938) 211.
74 de Ira 2.1.5; cf. Petronius, Sat. 117.7 and Mart. Spec. 26.
75 PBerol no. 13927 = Manteuffel (1930) no. 17. Sandy (1974) 343 suggests that the shipwreck in Petronius, Sat. 114.1–7, which has sometimes been regarded as an element in Petronius’ parody of Greek love romances, following Heinze (1899), was actually inspired by shipwrecks in mime.
76 Frye (1947) 31.
**Figure VI.1** Iphigenia helped aboard by Orestes on a funeral relief in Vienna (2nd century CE).

**Figure VI.2** Fragment of a sarcophagus from Aquincum (2nd century CE).
route to Qift (Coptos) on the Nile, and thence shipped up the river to Alexandria.\textsuperscript{77} Oxyrhynchus, about ten miles west of the Nile, was hardly remote from this great trading route. Peter Parsons has suggested to me that it is perfectly possible (although of course quite unprovable) that Egyptian Greeks trading in India would need to learn at least one of the languages (like a British East India Company employee in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century), especially if they settled in one of the trading posts on the west coast.\textsuperscript{78} Such a merchant could conceivably have retired home to Oxyrhynchus, having made his fortune, to regale his neighbours with tales about the strange people he had encountered and specimens of their language.\textsuperscript{79}

Berenike has produced texts in Tamil-Brahmi and ‘considerable finds of south Indian domestic pottery’, which ‘suggest that Indians were residents as well as visitors’.\textsuperscript{80} And it is from Quseir al-Qadim that some fragmentary epigraphic remains of trade with India have survived. There are two short inscriptions in Old Tamil dating from the second century CE. There is also an ostrakon in Prakrit, written in a non-calligraphic variety of the script that has been found in southern Indian sites and dates from the second to third century CE. Its text has previously been interpreted as an epitaph for a merchant named Vishnujit Na[y]ak[a], but Salomon has recently proposed a different reading involving three individuals with the Indian names Halaka, Vinhudata (= Visnudatta), and Nakada (= Nagadatta?), along with a list of specified quantities of oil, meat, and wine. Salomon argues that it ‘represents an interesting case of a non-Indian type of record written in an Indian language and script, evidently the work of Indians travelling or residing in Egypt. These Indians were no doubt merchants engaged in the flourishing trade between India and Rome.’\textsuperscript{81} Prakrit and Old Tamil are both languages of southern Indian, the area in the subcontinent where most Roman coinage has been found.\textsuperscript{82}

The question of Indian languages leads us into perhaps the most interesting aspect of the mime, on which there has never been scholarly agreement, and that is the sound-picture it paints of oral communication in India. The linguistic caricature may simply be pure fantasy, a set of deliberately ludicrous noises designed solely to

\textsuperscript{77} A famous mid-Ptolemaic inscription at the shrine of Pan of the Desert at El-Kanais, near where the desert road reaches the Nile at Edfu, has controversially been emended to read as the thanks recorded by a ‘wise Indian’, sophôn Índos, in return for a safe journey: see Tarn (1938) 370.

\textsuperscript{78} In an extended study of the possible influence that the performances by travelling Greek actors may have had on the development of Sanskrit drama in southern India during its formative phase two millennia ago, Free (1981) 83 points out that Greek mercenaries appear in this medium, and that Greek merchants are a presence in Tamil literature.

\textsuperscript{79} Personal communication, 21st November 2007.

\textsuperscript{80} Bagnall and Rathbone (2004) 191.

\textsuperscript{81} Salomon (1991) 733.

\textsuperscript{82} Wheeler (1951) 360–7; see also Wheeler (1946).
It strikes me as quite possible, and not unlikely, that the long foreign passages, especially those of the King, were delivered by *native Indians*, who had been brought across the sea to Egypt; and that these parts were written in Greek, either because their own vernacular had not been reduced to writing or because they were illiterate in it.  

Yet Rice was an exception, and otherwise there was scarcely any audience of classicists for the interesting discussions of the text by Indian scholars of the 1920s and 1930s, who even attempted to translate the passages in what they believe to be the Kannada language.  

More recently, in 1985, the case was made by a further Indian scholar that what the barbarians in *Charition* are actually speaking is Tulu (another ancient Dravidian tongue). In the present state of our knowledge there can never be certainty, but the question should surely be approached with an open mind. What is really fascinating, however, is the discovery of scholars in what was still a part of the British
Empire engaging so fully with the work of European classical scholars and with the long history of contact between the ‘western’ world and India. Few scholars of Greek in the 1920s and 1930s would have been able to discuss fragmentary texts of any ancient Indian language with anything like such competence, or cosmopolitan intention.\(^9\)

\(^9\) This chapter has benefitted enormously from the advice of both Richard Alston and Peter Parsons; while I have irresponsibly ignored some of their comments, I am very grateful to both of them.
...latet arbore opaca
aureus et foliis et lento uimine ramus,
Junoni infernae dictus sacer;
In a shady tree there lies concealed a bough,
with golden leaves and a supple stem,
said to be sacred to Juno of the Underworld [i.e. Proserpina]

VII

Escorts of Artemis

These are some of the most famous lines in the Aeneid, made even more famous by inspiring the title and intellectual project of Sir James Frazer’s The Golden Bough (1890).1 The Sibyl of Cumae tells Aeneas that, before he can enter the underworld, he needs to locate the special tree which conceals the gold-leaved bough (6.136–8). The remark on this passage made by the fourth-century commentator Servius shows how the Black Sea adventure of Orestes and Iphigenia had become implicated even in this most Roman foundation narrative. Servius says that although experts on the rites of Proserpina say that it is in her mysteries that the golden bough is used, the ‘general view’ (publica opinio) is different:

Orestes, after the killing of King Thoas in the Tauric land, fled with his sister Iphigenia… and the image of Diana that he brought from there he set up not far from Aricia. In her precinct, after the sacrificial ritual was changed, there was a certain tree, from which it was not permitted to break off a branch.

In this version, the golden bough grew on a tree within the sanctuary of Diana near Aricia in the Alban hills—that is, the sanctuary of ‘Diana of the wood’, Diana Nemorensis, one of the most ancient and important cult places in Italy. Moreover, it grew in a sanctuary which had been founded by Orestes when he installed the very image of Diana which he had brought with him from the Taurians. The version of the story presented by Servius includes Iphigenia, but it is Orestes who is the founder of the cult, just as in

1 See the brilliant discussion in Smith (1978) 221–34.
Euripides’ play he was to found the cult at Halai Araphenides, the destination of the image of Taurian Artemis. Servius’ aetiology for the Cult of Diana Nemorensis contains one major difference from the story told in Euripides. Servius’ Orestes only became responsible for the preservation of the image and thus of the cult because he had killed King Thoas. The violent method by which each successive priest of Diana, each ‘King of the Wood’ (Rex Nemorensis) was replaced in the cult, when a runaway slave mounted a challenge and then defeated the incumbent priest in single combat, was thus provided with an ancient precedent in Orestes’ execution of the Taurian king.

This is a strikingly vivid transference of a Greek aetiology to Roman religion. In this chapter we shall catch glimpses of the living presence of the story of the cult of the bloody Black Sea maiden goddess in several other places in Italy, and also in the eastern Roman Empire from Lydia to Cappadocia. Perhaps the main reasons for the consistent popularity of the story first told to the Athenians in IT was that it could be used to explain the arrival of an Artemis cult almost anywhere else, provided that the Atridae were diverted from Athens and made to escort the ancient image to another part of the ancient Mediterranean world.\(^2\) In previous chapters we have seen how important the social and ideological aspects of IT were to its continued importance in antiquity—above all its portrayal of ethnic confrontation and its idealization of male friendship. The aesthetic dimension—its nature as an adventure narrative in which attractive heroic characters first face mortal jeopardy and then escape it—was, as we have also seen in chapters I, II, and VI, fundamental to one of the directions in which ancient literature and entertainment developed in classical antiquity. But in chapter IV it became clear that we ignore the importance of the metaphysical dimension at our peril. It is now time to explore some of the intricate relationships between the myth which Euripides had popularized and the religious sensibility of the societies which reused it until the Christians’ closure of the pagan sanctuaries.

Servius’ connection of the foundation of the cult of Diana at Aricia with the arrival of the image from Tauris was anticipated several centuries earlier by the Pontic Greek Strabo, whose massive Geography was written during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. Strabo, although a supporter of Roman imperialism, was through his mother related to individuals who had served under Mithradates VI of Pontus, and may have had a particular interest in Black Sea legends. Strabo writes that Aricia lies on the Appian way, and on the left as you ascend from Aricia is the Artemision, which is named ‘Nemus’ (5.132):

They say that the sacred image of the Arician goddess is a copy of the one from Tauropolos. And in fact, a somewhat barbarian and Scythian element

\(^2\) The argument in this chapter builds on, and is deeply indebted to the important article by Graf (1979).
predominates in the temple customs. For they establish as priest a runaway
slave who becomes the priest by slaying with his own hand the previous man
consecrated to that office; he is therefore always armed with a sword, look-
ing around for attacks, and ready to make a defence. The temple is in a grove,
and before it is a lake which resembles the sea; and around it in a circle lies an
unbroken and very high mountain brow, which encloses both the temple and
the water in a place that is hollow and deep.

Strabo describes with great accuracy the setting of Lake Nemi, which made a consid-
erable impact on all the gentlemen who toured classical sites in Italy in the eighteenth
through the early twentieth centuries. Turner’s watercolour of 1840 shows the classi-
cal ruins in the lower right-hand section which lead towards the town on the hilltop,
while a girl tends her goats beside the mirror-like disc of water high in the Alban
hills (see Fig. VII.1). Macaulay’s poem ‘The Battle of the Lake Regillus’ in Lays of
Ancient Rome (1842) helped young Victorians embed the grim succession ritual of
the King of the Wood in their memories:

The still glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia’s trees
Those trees in whose dim shadow

The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain.

Strabo says that in the mysterious sanctuary on the shores of this lake the cult image of Diana of the Wood was ‘copied’ from the Tauric one, but he intelligently perceives that the purportedly ‘barbarian’ element within the rituals practised at Aricia may have less to do with their provenance than with a psychological quality, in somehow symbolizing their particular savagery.１The emphasis on savagely severed heads above the altar where Orestes and Pylades sit on an Etruscan vase of around 150 BCE offers yet another Italian cultural ‘translation’ of the savagery of the rituals which the Greek tragic narrative actually renders obsolete (see Fig. VII.2). Other Etruscan examples of similar scenes have survived. The scholar who has examined them in most detail has concluded that this phenomenon must be connected with the survival of actual human sacrifice amongst the Celts, the Etruscans’ northern neighbours.４But it is

４See Bonfante (1984), with figs.
much more likely to represent the inclusion, in the Etruscan cult of their maiden goddess Artumes, of the story of Orestes and Iphigenia in Tauris.

When Frazer wrote *The Golden Bough*, the world had rather suddenly woken up to the exciting Arician cult of Diana. In 1886 seven bales and sixteen cases of antiquities excavated at Nemi arrived at the Castle Museum in Nottingham, donated by the amateur archaeologist Sir John Savile Lumley. An ambassador in Rome, he forms a link with the nineteenth-century antiquarians we met during our adventures in Russia in chapter I, such as the German Charles Koch and the British army officer William Munro, for he had been First Attaché at the British Embassy in St. Petersburg until its entire staff was expelled in 1854. Lumley’s finds gave a thrilling context to Ovid’s story that the wife of Numa had disturbed the rites of ‘Orestean Diana’ at Aricia in the seventh century BCE (*Met.* 15.487–92). There had certainly been a sanctuary in Aricia, an atmospheric location eleven miles south of Rome, since at least the sixth century.

The first significant temple there may have been the grand building, with a gilded roof, erected in around 300 BCE after Aricia was incorporated fully into the Roman state. This Etrusco-Latin half-sized bronze votive figure of the second

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century BCE, found at Nemi, may represent a worshipper of Diana (see Fig. VII.3). The sanctuary expanded during the later Republic, acquiring baths and a small theatre. These were excavated in the 1920s but covered up again when Eduardo Gatti, the excavator, died. Lucia Morpurgo, who in 1931 published what had been inferred about the theatre before it disappeared, described a cavea (space hollowed out as a seating area) with banked seats, a scaenae frons (permanent stage facade) with three doors, a room for actors, and frescoes portraying theatrical props. It has been suggested that in addition to performances intimately related to rituals, the theatre may have been the venue for performances of ‘translations of Greek plays (Euripides especially) and the Latin plays of Ennius, Pacuvius, and the rest.’ Iphigenia in Tauris or Pacuvius’ Orestes may actually have been performed there.

Augustus, whose mother was Arician (Cicero, Phil. 3.6.15–17), had a particular interest in the area and the cult. In identifying himself with Apollo, he used iconography at different times to associate Diana with his mother, sister Octavia, and daughter Julia. But Arician Diana became crucial to his self-representation shortly after the battle of Actium. It was almost certainly at this moment that the bones of Orestes, which were said to have been long held at Aricia, were moved to Rome. They were put on display in an urn at the temple of Saturn, close to the Temple of Concord. The bones constituted one of the seven sacred ‘pledges of Roman rule’ (Servius on Aen. 7.188), which also included, for example, the Palladion of Athena from Troy. Tonio Hölscher has argued persuasively that Octavian deliberately adopted the remains of Orestes as a symbol of himself as the ‘avenger from Aricia’; in Orestes’ expiation lay a prototype for Augustus’ proposed solution to the violence of the civil war in Italy. Octavian thus created a privileged place for ‘Scythian’ Diana, through her association with Orestes, in the ideological web he spun around the imperial family and Roman state religion.

The connection between Diana Nemorensis and the Tauric Artemis probably dated back to the fourth century BCE, when the story of IT became popular in the vase paintings produced further south in Italy. By the time of Cato the Elder (234–149 BCE), the Taurians had been directly associated with southern Italy as well, as we can see from a fragment of his prose history Origines (fr. 71 in Peter [1914]).

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7 Morpurgo (1931) 192–9.
8 Morpurgo (1931) 302.
9 Green (2007) 64.
13 See Green (2007) 77–9 and above pp. 000.
Although the spellings of the proper names are doubtful, he says that there was an ancient people who lived in the region bordering Rhegion, somewhere on the western coast of southern Italy, called the ‘Thesunti’ or ‘Tauriani’. They acquired the second name, says Cato, because it was to one of the rivers in their territory that Orestes came to be purified, in company with Iphigenia and Pylades. The Italian Taurian claimed that Orestes had left a sword in a tree there when he departed. In this fragment of Cato, we have clear textual evidence that the people of southern Italy had made a direct connection between their own territory and the Taurians of Euripides’ IT. This in turn may have been associated with a name ‘Phakelitis’, under which Artemis was worshipped in southern Italy in the region of the straits dividing the mainland from Sicily. The name was explained by the story that Orestes had brought the image of Artemis there, hidden in a bundle of reeds. One late source locates a cult of Taurian Artemis ‘Phakelitis’ as far north as Kyme, as well as in two other Euboean foundations, Rhegion and Tyndaris, and there is also some evidence for an early cult of Artemis at Naples. Here we may be dealing with one of the routes by which the traditions of the Tauric Artemis travelled north to Latium, to arrive at Aricia and be fused with the cult of Diana Nemorensis.

At some point a conceptual triangle was forged to link (1) the cult of Artemis under the title ‘Phakelitis’ in southern Italy, (2) the Taurian statue, and (3) Diana at Aricia. This complex set of associations is outlined by Servius when he comments on Apollo’s oracular allusion to the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aeneid 2.116:

After Thoas was killed, Orestes stole the statue, concealed in a bundle (fasces) of wooden twigs, and so she is also called ‘Facelitis’—this is not just because of the torch with which she is painted, which also explains the title ‘Lucifera’. And he brought her to Aricia. But afterwards, when the cruelty of her rites upset the Romans, even though only slaves were being sacrificed, Diana was transferred to the Laconians.

In a breathtaking tour of the world of Diana/Artemis, Servius connects Orestes’ arrival in Italy with a cult title under which she was worshipped in the Greek (Euboean) colonies of Rhegion and Tyndaris, as well as with Aricia. But to this he adds Sparta, in this version the ultimate destination of the Taurian statue. The much-travelled image has been passed from the Black Sea to Aricia and thence to Greece, forging international mental links between multifarious manifestations of

15 A scholion on Augustine’s City of God 2.3. The text is reproduced in Frederiksen (1984) 76, 83 n. 150. See also Mele (1987).
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

her cult. As we shall see below, Sparta did indeed lay claim to the ‘original’ Tauric statue.\(^\text{16}\)

The single most significant factor in the maintenance of the story first dramatized in *IT*, across the nine centuries between Euripides and Servius, was therefore its twin nature as a paradigm for sacrificial ritual and a foundation narrative for cults of Artemis/Diana in the Greek and Roman worlds. Just as Iphigenia is the only priest-protagonist in Greek tragedy, so *IT* is one of the handful of canonical Greek tragedies set in the sacred space of a sanctuary rather than the secular space at the entrance to a palace, tent, or cave. Performing it, or visually representing it, necessarily meant mimetically creating a place where a divinity was worshipped. Most of Athena’s speech *ex machina* in Euripides is devoted to detailed instructions for not one but two cults of Artemis in mainland Greece (see above pp. 000). Few ancient texts are so explicitly and extensively connected with the foundation of significant cults. A similar function is performed by Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, with its establishment of the cult of the Kindly Ones beneath the Athenian acropolis, by Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, which creates the narrative underlying the cult of Oedipus as hero in Attica, and *Bacchae*, which tells of the arrival of the cult of Dionysus in Thebes. But *IT* was the ‘Artemis cult’ text of antiquity par excellence.

Maiden goddesses connected with the biological transition into adulthood, with male hunting and female reproductive energy, were extremely important figures in ancient polytheism. Artemis’ connection with healing, which we have had cause to notice earlier when looking at her popularity in fourth-century south Italy, is also a persistent feature in later evidence for the cult of the ‘Tauric’ Artemis. Braund points out that in Tauric Chersonese itself, Asclepius was a key deity, and his cult is likely to have been connected with that of the Parthenos.\(^\text{17}\) Take the arresting figure of Vera, priestess of Artemis of Patmos, and daughter of a doctor. Vera is the subject of an inscription found on her island, dating from the second or third century CE:

Artemis herself, the virgin huntress, herself chose Vera as her priestess, the noble daughter of Glaukias, so that as water-carrier at the altar of the Patmian goddess she should offer sacrifices of the foetuses of quivering goats which had already been sacrificed. As a young girl Vera was raised in Artis [i.e. Lebedos, north of Ephesus], but she was born and nursed on Patmos, the island of which Leto’s daughter is most proud, which she protects as her throne in the deeps of the Aegean Sea, from the time when the warrior Orestes, having brought her from Scythia, installed her, and he was cured of the terrible madness which

\(^{16}\) See Dyson (2001) 142–3.

\(^{17}\) Braund (2007) 195.
Escorts of Artemis

followed the murder of his mother. Now the lovely Vera, daughter of the wise doctor Glaukias, has sailed by the will of Scythian Artemis over the wintry swell of the waters of the Aegean in order to bring lustre to the rites and the festival, as the divine law instructed.  

Perhaps there is more than a coincidental link between Glaukias’ profession and his daughter’s office as priestess of ‘Scythian’ Artemis, who cured Orestes of his insanity.

Patmos, described as ‘the most sacred island’ of Artemis (i.e., Artemis of the Ephesians) in Acts 19:28, was under Ephesian governance at this time. But it was also the site of some of the principal early Christian activities and traditions. It is possible that in Glaukias’ proud description of his daughter’s selection as priestess, and her striking sacrifice of pregnant nanny goats and their foetuses, we can hear the defiance of the old pagan religion, symbolized in the cult of bloodthirsty ‘Scythian’ Artemis, in the face of perceived encroachments of the new Christian faith.  

It is certainly the case that the cult of Artemis seems to be singled out as an especially potent symbol of pagan ritual practice in the New Testament. Otherwise it says little on the topic of the old religion. Only Zeus and Hermes are mentioned besides Artemis, and not at anything like such length; the epigraphic evidence in the eastern Aegean and Turkey confirms the exceptional status of Artemis in those regions during the first and second centuries CE.  

St. Paul encountered stiff opposition when he took his Christian mission to Ephesus in the sixth decade CE. He was almost certainly imprisoned at least once, and feared for his life (2 Cor.1:8–10). The most dramatic evocation of any pagan cult in the whole New Testament is the account in Acts of the Apostles ch. 19 of the riot of the silversmiths which followed Paul’s sermon in the great theatre of Ephesus. A silversmith named Demetrius, ‘who made silver shrines of Artemis’, providing a good deal of business to silversmiths and craftsmen in allied trades in the city, organized a meeting and told them that Paul would damage their business. Paul had been claiming ‘that gods made by hands are not gods at all’, which, argued Demetrius, would damage the reputation both of the temple of Artemis and the entire province of Asia. His audience ‘became enraged and began to shout, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”’. The city became filled with uproar, and two of Paul’s companions were dragged into the theatre: when a Jewish lawyer named Alexander was put forward to address the situation, the crowd became further enflamed (Acts 19:34–41):

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18 This is my translation of the text of the inscription as edited by Merkelbach and Stauber (1998) 169–70.
19 Merkelbach and Stauber (1998) 169 suggest that this inscription documents an attempt to reintroduce traditional old customs, probably in the time of Julian.
21 Here quoted in the NET online translation.
for about two hours they kept on shouting, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ The town clerk, however, quieted the crowd. ‘Men of Ephesus,’ he said, ‘all the world knows that our city of Ephesus is temple-warden of the great Diana and of that symbol of hers which fell from heaven. Since these facts are beyond dispute, your proper course is to keep quiet and do nothing rash. These men whom you have brought here as culprits have committed no sacrilege and uttered no blasphemy against our goddess. If therefore Demetrius and his craftsmen have a case against anyone, assizes are held and there are such people as proconsuls; let the parties bring their charges and countercharges. If, on the other hand, you have some further questions to raise, it will be dealt with in the statutory assembly. We certainly run the risk of being charged with riot for this day’s work. There is no justification for it, and if the issue is raised we shall be unable to given any explanation of this uproar.’ With that he dismissed the assembly.

It was not going to prove easy to convince the inhabitants of the province of Asia to give up their bloodthirsty goddess, regardless of whether they were primarily motivated by religious conviction or perceived a threat to their income and international status. In the event, the temple of Artemis was burned down in the third century CE, only to be restored; the cult was only finally scrapped in around 450 CE. There is a note of triumph in the Ephesian inscription set up by a Christian named Demeas, who emphasized with the sign of the cross his claim that he had taken down the ‘false image of the daimôn Artemis’ (not the great cult statue inside the temple but one that stood in front of the doors). 22

One of the features of the Ephesian Artemis which made her so special was that her main statue was believed to be diopetes, to have fallen from the sky, cast by the hand of god, onto the spot where the sanctuary was built. This provenance is echoed in IT by Iphigenia, who arrived in Tauris not by ship but from the ‘shining air’ through which Artemis has carried her (29–30). There were very few ‘sky-fallen’ statues in antiquity, and this is therefore one feature which the Ephesian cult emphatically shares with the Tauric cult portrayed in Euripides’ IT and in all the sanctuaries where it was claimed that the Tauric image had been brought by the Atreidai. In the course of this chapter we have already encountered two places besides Halai Araphenides, specified by Euripides’ Athena, which claimed they possessed the ‘original’ Tauric statue: the Arician cult of Diana Nemorensis and the cult of Artemis on Patmos where Vera presided. But the claim was made in other important sanctuaries of Artemis as well.

Indeed, by the travel writer Pausanias’ day, in the second century CE, it was at Brauron rather than (or in addition to) Halai Araphenides that the Athenians claimed to keep the ‘real’ Taurian statue (1.33.1); they said that Iphigenia had not stayed at Brauron, however, but had travelled onwards to Athens and Argos. Perhaps Argos, too, reinserted itself into Iphigenia’s myth by at least claiming that she had died there. But one of the best-known cults of Artemis, rather than Iphigenia, was based in Sparta beside the river Eurotas—the cult of Artemis Orthia. When Pausanias visited Sparta in the second century CE, he was told that Orestes had brought the Tauric statue to this sanctuary (3.16.7):

They say that the xoanon [‘archaic wooden image’] there is the one that Orestes and Iphigenia once stole away from the Tauric land; and the Lacedaemonians say that it was brought to their territory because Orestes was king there as well. I think they make more sense than the Athenians. For why would Iphigenia have left the agalma [‘statue’] behind at Brauron? Or why, when the Athenians were preparing to abandon their land, didn’t they take that [agalma] too onto their ships?

The Spartans and Athenians, at least by this date, were in competition over the ownership of the ‘true’ image from Tauris. Pausanias—or his source—believes that the rival statue was at Brauron, rather than the Euripidean Halai Araphenides, but that is a minor detail. The cult aetiology in Euripides’ play is still, over half a millennium after its composition, underlying the controversy.

Pausanias offers ‘other evidence that the Orthia in Lakedaimon is the wooden image from the foreigners.’ Contact with the image has caused insanity (here we see the medical link again), and on one occasion even mass deaths at the altar and an outburst of disease caused by quarrel between men from rival local villages which broke out during sacrifice. Pausanias says that this prompted an oracle saying that in order to obtain a cure, ‘they should stain the altar with human blood’; and the Spartans used to practise human sacrifice, choosing the unfortunate victim by lot. But Lycurgus had changed the ritual to flogging instead, thus staining the altar with human blood:

By them stands the priestess, holding the wooden image. Now, it is small and light, but if ever the scourgers spare the lash because of a lad’s beauty or high rank, then at once the priestess finds the image grown so heavy that she can hardly carry it. She lays the blame on the scourgers, and says that it is their fault that she is being weighed down. So the image ever since the sacrifices in the Tauric land keeps its fondness for human blood.
The image which Euripides’ play brings from Tauris to Greece thus oversees and intervenes in one of the most notorious rituals in antiquity, the flogging of the young Spartan warriors.

A pattern is emerging. The crude wooden image in the name of which humans were slaughtered in Tauris symbolizes the bloody violence underlying all animal sacrifice, explained as having evolved from the killing of a human, long ago, whether in Attica, Sparta, Patmos, or Aricia. It is almost certainly necessary to add to this list north-western Turkey, in the region of the Troad. In about 1960, a small silver repoussé kantharos cup, its handles and foot missing, was acquired by the British Museum. It is Roman, said to have been found in Turkey, and dates from between 25 BCE and 25 CE (see Fig. VII.4). The scene shows Orestes, Iphigeneia, and Pylades at Sminthe, an island (or a sanctuary on the mainland) near Troy. It is important because it is the only complete visual depiction of any exploit of Iphigeneia, Orestes, and Pylades after their escape from the Taurians, although a few fragments of Arretine pottery show similar scenes. The setting is the sanctuary of Apollo Smintheus, renowned in the literature of antiquity because it was presided over by Chryses the priest in the first book of the *Iliad*.

The sanctuary setting is indicated by a filleted omphalos, a kouros-like statue, and dedicated weapons suspended from a sacred tree. Pylades and Orestes, wearing only mantles, have taken refuge at the altar/tree of this sanctuary; Iphigeneia sits between them, veiled and desolate, holding a small female statue on her knees.²³

²³ There are good close-up photographs of all the figures on the cup reproduced in Stenico (1966).
The scene shows why they are seeking sanctuary: they have been pursued by Thoas, who has arrived with a bodyguard. But between the Taurians and the refugees stand a young priest and a veiled priestess. She is Chryseis, the famous war-prize whom Agamemnon had to return to her father, the priest of Apollo. But in the myth portrayed here, she subsequently gave birth to Agamemnon’s child, who grew up to become this young priest Chryses, in succession to his grandfather. The suppliants he is about to hand over to Thoas are in fact his half-brother and half-sister: he is another Atreid. Fortunately, their relationship will be discovered before any death ensues.

This ‘sequel’ to the story of *IT* is not well known because Sophocles’ play about it, *Chryses*, has not survived, and neither has the Roman version of Pacuvius. But we do have a summary of a similar story by the Augustan scholar Hyginus, which also features the now aged grandfather of Chryses the younger, after whom he was named (*Fab. 121*):

Later when Chryses was about to return Iphigenia and Orestes to Thoas, he [Chryses the elder] learned that they were children of Agamemnon, and revealed to Chryses [the younger] the truth—that they were brothers and that he was a son of Agamemnon. Then Chryses, thus informed, with Orestes his brother, killed Thoas, and from there they came safe to Mycenae with the statue of Diana.

This plot replicates several features of *IT*—averted sibling-murder, a sanctuary setting, priestly personnel, a recognition, and the totemic image of Apollo’s sister.\(^{24}\) The story may have explained (or created a reason for introducing) the inclusion of Artemis in worship of Apollo in the Troad. The plot differs from that in *IT*, however, in that Thoas has apparently not accepted the removal of the statue from Tauris, and is killed off by the half-brothers Chryses and Orestes. Orestes also brings the statue neither to Attica nor to the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, but to one of his family’s legendary seats of power at Mycenae. The final destinations of the statue carry on multiplying.

Pausanias augments the list we have so far accumulated with several places in Asia, where he says (3.16.8) that the reputation of the Tauric goddess remained so high that her ‘original’ image was claimed by the Laodiceans in Syria, the Cappadocians, and the Lydians, who called her *Anaitis*. In the case of Cappadocia, Pausanias’ statement is supported in the sixth century CE by the Byzantine historian Procopius. He claims that Orestes actually founded three temples in two cities south of the Black

Sea, since both the Pontic and the Cappadocian cities by the name of Komana traced their origins to the foundation of a temple of Artemis by Orestes (*History of the Wars* 1.17.11–20). When the three Greeks had fled from the Taurians, Orestes became ill, and was told by an oracle that his illness would continue until he had built a temple to Artemis in a spot just like her Tauric sanctuary, cut his hair, and named a city after the place where he had built the temple and shorn his hair (the Greek for ‘hair’ is *koma* or *komē*). He first came to Pontus, but after building the temple, founding the city Comana, and cutting his hair, still obtained no relief; so he continued on south to Cappadocia, where he built an imposing city and two temples, the one to Artemis and the other to his sister Iphigenia, which the Christians have made sanctuaries for themselves, without changing their structure at all. This is called even now Golden Comana, being named from the hair of Orestes, which they say he cut off there and thus escaped from his affliction. But some say that this disease from which he escaped was nothing else than that of madness which seized him after he had killed his own mother.

The Cappadocian connection will have been particularly tempting to draw because the ancient name of the high Anatolian mountain range, *Taurus*, was easily confused with the home of the Crimean Tauri. Indeed, this etymological connection probably explains the strangest aetiology which Euripides’ *IT* ever prompted: the connection of the city of Tyana with Thoas. In the second century CE, the Bithynian Arrian noted that the inhabitants of Tyana in Cappadocia liked to say that their city used to be called *Thoana*, ‘Thoas’ city,’ since the Taurian King had travelled there and died when pursuing Orestes and looking for a cure for an incurable disease (Arrian, *Periplus Ponti Euxini*, 6). Thoas has almost merged, for etymological convenience, with the sick wanderer Orestes who visited his kingdom.

Tyana lay beneath the Taurus mountain range, near the city of Castabala, where Strabo says there was yet another temple of Artemis, the one known as ‘Persian Artemis’, since ‘the priestesses there, it is said, walk with naked feet over hot embers without pain. And here, too, some tell us over and over the same story of Orestes and Tauropolos, asserting that she was called “Persian” because she was brought “from the other side.”’ (12.2.7) Perhaps we are to understand here, with Strabo’s false etymological connection of this Artemis’ title with the Greek adverb *perathen* (‘from the other side’), that she was brought from the other side of the Black Sea. Orestes and the Taurian goddess, under different names and titles, had thus penetrated deep into the imagination and religious life of the eastern Roman Empire.

The last local divinity who Pausanias (3.16.8) said had been connected with ‘the Tauric goddess’ was the Lydian Anaïtis, and in a recent brilliant study, Barbara
Burrell has shown that a coin from Philadelphia in Lydia signifies the story dramatized in *IT*. The coin image makes the claim that Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades fled from the land of the Taurians to Philadelphia in Lydia (modern Alasehir in Turkey), and there set up their stolen image, identified by the Philadelphians as their patron Artemis Anaitis. This fits with the profile of a late antique city which the Neoplatonists called ‘little Athens’ on account of its enthusiasm for the festivals and temples of ‘the idols’ (Proclus *de Mensibus* 4.58).

The scene that needs interpreting is on the reverse of a bronze coin issued by Philadelphia in Lydia in commemoration of its relationship with the city of Ephesus; it is known through three examples. On the obverse is inscribed ‘Emperor Caesar Gaius Quintus Trajanus Decius’ over his laureate draped cuirassed bust, as most coins of this kind from the Roman provincial cities of Asia did during Trajan Decius’ reign (249–51 CE). But on the reverse is inscribed ‘Under Aurelius Rufinus, archon; concord of Philadelphians, temple-wardens, of Ephesians’. The illustrations show a woman, carrying a small Anatolian-style dressed image, walking left, turning her head right toward two males. They are both naked except for cloaks, standing right and looking left at her; on the left is a distyle temple with diamond-patterned roof, in three-quarter view (see Fig. VII.5). Burrell has noticed that the image bears a strong resemblance to the vase painting of the escape of Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades on

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*Burrell (2005). On the association of Artemis with Anaitis see also Brosius (1998).*
the St. Petersburg vase which was discussed above at the end of chapter IV, and to several scenes on Roman sarcophagi to be discussed below. Previous numismatists offered quite different interpretations, for example claiming that the obverse figures were members of the imperial family, or that the woman is a city-goddess (despite her lack of kalathos or mural crown and cornucopia, which might be expected in such a personification), or that the scene represents the introduction of the cult of Ephesian Artemis into Philadelphia. But the heroic nudity implies that we are talking about a mythical version of the arrival of a cult, and I am wholly convinced by Burrell’s argument that the scene is derived from the myth of IT.

Euripides’ ‘Artemis play’ therefore left its traces on numerous ancient cults of that goddess. Some of them seem to have said that they were visited by Iphigenia or that their goddess Artemis was in some sense conflated with her. The Megarians had a herōion (hero-shrine) for Iphigenia and said that she had died there (1.43.1), while the citizens of Hermione in the Peloponnese worshipped Artemis under the title ‘Iphigenia’ (2.35.1). Further north in the Peloponnese, in Aegeira, there was a temple of Artemis with a statue of the goddess that looked modern to Pausanias, and one of Iphigenia that was archaic (7.26.5). But many more Artemis cults claimed that their own cult image was the one which had first fallen from the sky in the far northern Pontic coast, and had been removed by Orestes and Iphigenia.

The places which we know for certain linked themselves to the story told in the play therefore included Halai Araphenides, Brauron, Sparta, Mycenae, the Troad, Laodicea in Syria, Comana in Pontus, Golden Comana and Tyana in Cappadocia, Castabala in Cilicia, Philadelphia in Lydia, in addition to the great sanctuary of Diana in the Alban hills of Italy, Kyme, Rhegion and Tyndaris, making at least fifteen in all. The connection of Diana Nemorensis and Artemis Phakelitis with the image which Orestes brought from Tauris also reminds us of those thirteen vase paintings which were put on display at funerals in Italy in the fourth century BCE, discussed in chapter IV. Of these, while most portrayed the recognition scene, or Iphigenia and the Greek men before they stole the statue from the temple, just one portrayed her actually holding the statue as they escaped from Tauris (above Fig. IV.7). The same scene is represented on that coin in Lydian Philadelphia centuries later, probably to celebrate the inauguration of a new cult fusing Artemis with the local goddess Anaitis. But versions of this scene are also to be found on another substantial group

16 When the coin was published two centuries ago by Mionnet (1809) 108–109 no. 597, he identified one of the men on the obverse scene with Trajan Decius, the other as his son Herennius Etruscus, and the woman as the empress Herennia Etruscilla. As Burrell (2005) 225 points out, this interpretation fails to explain why she carried a statue that looked like the Artemis of Ephesos, why the Emperor and his son seemed to be the same age and were identically (un)dressed, and where the scene was set.

17 Kampmann (1998) 373 n. 2; Burnett (1999) 145 fig. 121.
of ancient artefacts, Roman sarcophagi, most of which date from the mid-second century CE.

The simplest design amongst this group of sarcophagus carvings is in Bonn. Iphigenia, carrying the statue, moves swiftly away from the temple, the apex of the tomb sculpture mirroring the top of the temple pediment it portrays. Tomb and temple of ‘Tauric’ Artemis meld into one (see Fig. VII.6). Iphigenia is flanked by her brother and Pylades, heroically naked but carrying swords. In the background is a deer, apparently slain, and a sacrificial altar, but there is no other detail. At the other end of the spectrum of elaboration and complexity stands a famous relief, on a sarcophagus in the Munich Glyptothek. But in the eighteenth century it was in the Villa Ridolfi in Rome, and through later artists’ responses to it, forms an important link between the ancient and modern reception of Euripides’ *IT* (see below pp. 000 in Christians and 000 in Goethe). Reading from left to right, the sarcophagus takes us through four scenes. First, the statue of Artemis stands beneath the branch of a tree, tended by Iphigenia, to whom the captive Greeks are presented by a Scythian archer (see Fig VII.7). In the second, Orestes, seated, is tended by Pylades while being hounded by a Fury. In the third, Iphigenia is carrying the statue while one of the young Greeks attacks two Scythians. In the fourth, Iphigenia is carrying the statue to the ship, holding a man’s hand and protected by either Orestes or Pylades. The viewer of this relief sculpture is taken psychologically from danger to safety.

Numerous examples of scenes like these survive on Roman sarcophagi of the second century CE. Most of these were found in Italy, but there are a couple of fragments of examples from Attica, and others from much further west, in Marseilles/Massilia, and north, in Slovenia, Germany and Gaul. Sections of a rather crude version carved

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**Figure VII.6** Pediment of a Roman funeral monument from Frenz.
on limestone, with a distinctively chubby Taurian guard, were found near the town of Sens (ancient Senonis) in Burgundy; it dates from the late first century CE. There are variations in the choice of scenes; sometimes the recognition through the letter appears, and sometimes it does not. They are often paired with scenes depicting scenes from Orestes’ earlier life, especially the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; sometimes one story is told on the lid and the other on the sides of the sarcophagus. But there are rather more sarcophagi in total showing the IT story than the previous episodes in Orestes’ life, which raises the question we asked in a different form in the discussion of the Greek vase paintings: what are Orestes and Iphigenia’s adventures in Tauris doing in Roman funerary art?

The question is made much more difficult to answer because the sarcophagi were usually torn from their contexts and removed to galleries where there is no sense of the social and ritual milieux for which they were originally designed. In 1942 François Cumont took a great stride forward when he argued in Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains (1942), that scholars need to think about how the Greek myths were psychologically mediated through Roman filters by the sculptors and their customers. Rather than focussing on the Romans’ knowledge of Greek

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19 See, e.g., the fragmentary sarcophagus reliefs in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, published by Alexander (1910) 38 with fig. 3.
literature, it was more fruitful to focus on their core values and ideal virtues, such as *clementia*, *amicitia*, *pietas*, and *concordia*. The stories of Meleager, or Admetus and Alcestis, popular on sarcophagi, have proven susceptible to this type of reading. In the context of bereavement, the emotional parallels which the viewer might draw with mythical figures are another important factor. In his work on sarcophagi with sculptures dealing with Achilles, Giuliani has proposed that the world of the depicted heroes and that of the humans—both the deceased and the mourners—became psychologically fused, and produced a syntax of canonical images, structured scenes, and sequences of episodes, corresponding to structural elements in sepulchral rhetoric of the Empire. These may indeed commemorate the deeds and death of the deceased, but they also express the feelings and obligations of those left behind.

This question has recently been explored specifically in relation to the Iphigenia and Orestes sarcophagi in a brilliant study, with plentiful illustrations, by Ruth Bielfeldt. She draws on the model Tonio Hölscher developed for thinking about the reciprocal and highly charged relationship in political art between myth and environment: just as the citizen becomes ‘heroized’ by the process of identification with a mythical hero, so the hero underwent a corresponding process of being turned into a modern citizen. She identifies several different ways of thinking about the resonances of the episodes from the *IT* story frequently found on sarcophagi. The image of the two men approaching the altar functions as a display of *pietas* and *amicitia* in a sacred space, which was one way of thinking about the social role of mourners at a funeral (a suggestion which I made in connection with the fourth-century vase paintings in chapter IV). Two friends saddened by the prospect of the other’s imminent death, and a sister’s acknowledgement of her brother, sometimes suggested by Iphigenia’s lifted hand, have obvious affective resonances suitable for funerals and for consolidating the identity of an extended *familia*.

The scenes of fighting with the Taurians will have appealed to a military sensibility, and the pleasure in vanquishing barbarians, in the sight of other barbarians, is of

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52 See, for example, the discussion of Achilles in sarcophagus art in Giuliani (1989).
54 The most accessible point of access in English to these ideas is Hölscher (2004).
56 Bielfeldt (2005) 195–8, 215–31, 196; see also 257–8, where she points out that the late Latin author Dracontius suggestively compares the relationship between Orestes and Pylades to that of loving brothers (*Orestis Tragœdia* 147). On p. 297 Bielfeldt suggests that Iphigenia’s beauty and purity made it easy for her and Orestes, although siblings, to substitute for an ideal married couple.
course evident in much Roman art of this period besides funerary sculpture. The depiction of Iphigenia getting onto the boat may have prompted associations, in the context of a woman’s death, with the idea of Charon’s ferry. But Bielfeldt also thinks that the connections with the cult of Diana Aricia, and thereby with Orestes’ bones in Rome, were of crucial importance. By making Orestes’ bones one of the sacred pledges of Rome, which guaranteed its success and power, the cult of Taurian Artemis was associated with the Palladion, the wooden statue of Athena, which fell from the sky to Troy and was brought thence to Rome. The viewers of the sarcophagi will probably have felt a strong analogy between the Roman foundation legend and the story of the statue of the Taurian Artemis. There were obvious connections to be drawn. The figure of Iphigenia, fleeing terrible danger with the cult image in her arms, offered a parallel to the abduction of the Palladion by the Greeks from Troy. But it also resembled the flight of Aeneas and Anchises with their Penates (‘household gods’). Moreover, in some versions of the legend, the Palladion was said to have

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39 The equivalence is illuminated by comparing the figure of Ulysses holding the Palladion, which protrudes above his left shoulder, on a Pompeii fresco (Bragantini and Sampaolo [2009] 271, no. 116).
been given to Aeneas by Diomedes.⁴⁰ Cicero had already called the Palladion one of the *pignora fatalia* (Scaur. 48); Julius Caesar issued a denarius in 48 BCE with Aeneas as a nude warrior, carrying the statue.⁴¹ The analogy with Aeneas, as Bielfeldt points out, was obvious in some of the earlier imperial frescoes depicting Iphigenia carrying the statue in scenes from the *IT* story (some others of which have been discussed above in chapter V). The best examples are in the Casa dei Dioscuri in Pompeii,⁴² in the colourful Iphigenia discovered at Madgalensburg, Kärnten in Austria,⁴³ and in the panel of the Villa San Marco at Stabiae (see Fig. VII.8).

Many funerary relief sculptures depicting the story of Orestes and Iphigenia in Tauris were discovered in or near Rome, where the foundation myths will have resonated most deeply. Others may have found their way there at the time when serious collecting of classical artefacts began during the Renaissance. But the fresco portraying Iphigenia found at Magdalensberg (Roman Virunum) in Austria reminds us that this story meant something to bereaved families much further afield in imperial times. An outstanding example is the tomb of the Priscianus family not far from Magdalensberg at Šempeter near Celje (Roman Celeia), in east-central Slovenia. This is adorned with a remarkable triptych of three reliefs portraying the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis, the moment when Orestes and Iphigenia meet in Tauris, and the flight from Tauris. The reliefs were made in the late second century CE, of local marble by local craftsmen.⁴⁴ In these three images, there are specific artistic features characteristic of the art of the region, developed for centuries before Roman domination by the ‘Norican’ Celts who inhabited the area south of the Danube in what is now Austria and the Pannonians in the west of what is now Hungary. The figures in the story are simply and austerely portrayed. Yet the scholar who has compared the Šempeter depictions of the *IT* story (as well as two other *IT* reliefs found elsewhere in Slovenia) with those found at Rome, insists that they all ‘speak’ the same language of Roman ‘ecumenicity’ in terms of the normative symbolism and narratives felt appropriate to the burial of the dead regardless of the first language or ethnic identification of the

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⁴⁰ Galinsky (1969) 49, 115–6; Bielfeldt (2005) 244–7. In yet another statue myth, Aeneas was said to have dedicated at Laurentum, where he received the Palladion from Diomedes, a statue of Venus Frutis he had acquired in Sicily (the source is Cassius Hemia, quoted in Solinus 2.14).

⁴¹ Galinsky (1969) 5 and fig. 2a.

⁴² This obscure image is illustrated best by the drawing in Bielfeldt (2005) fig. 81 = LIMC ‘Iphigenia’ no. 63. See also the figures on the fresco in the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, Bielfeldt (2005) 243 fig. 77 = LIMC ‘Iphigeneia’ no. 61.

⁴³ Bielfeldt (2005) fig. 79 = LIMC ‘Iphigenia’ no. 34.

family involved. The story of the Black Sea Iphigenia was susceptible to infinite cultural translation.

Despite all the stylistic variations, differences in stone quality, and stone-cutting techniques, the same fundamental images of Iphigenia, Orestes, Pylades, and the Taurians were carved on the containers in which families placed their dead across vast tracts of the Roman Empire. The direct relationship between most of these sculptures and the stage performance of Euripides’ tragedy or its Roman derivatives may often have been slight or almost non-existent: a well-known basic design, even if ultimately inspired by a play, can develop its own autonomous life in the visual imagination of a culture, to be reproduced over generations. Yet the awareness of the theatrical origins of the story is still sometimes encoded into even the most mainstream of recycled imagery in sarcophagus art. The IT story is carved in great detail on the lid, for example, of a beautiful, elaborate sarcophagus in the Vatican. It was discovered in 1839 in Rome, near the Porta Viminalis.

At both corners of the lid of the sarcophagus, in the form of akroteria, are carved two large heads, which represent Taurian guards. Their noses are broad, their lower jawlines are heavy, and one is bearded. They both have long hair and Phrygian caps with the peaks bent forwards. These accoutrements create the distinct effect of stage masks, suggestively framing the images within them in theatrical terms. The mythical images are carved on the long, continuous relief and divided into three

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45 Kastelic (1999) 278.
scenes, portraying the meeting of Iphigenia and the young Greek men, the procession, and the flight respectively. The scenes include curious concrete details of objects not often encountered in other sarcophagi, for example in the scene where Iphigenia is handing the letter to Pylades, there is a *capsa* or special kind of pot for containing epistolary scrolls standing at their feet (see Fig. VII.9). But what is most remarkable is the way in which the important Taurian gazing out at the viewer—presumably Thoas—is carved in the procession scene (see Fig. VII.10).

He is not dressed in Scythian fighting gear with weapons, as he and other Taurians usually are on the sarcophagi, and as his soldiers are on this one. Rather, he wears a long, soft robe and pointed shoes that have been described as ‘an actor’s costume’; he ‘stands in the pose of one reciting on stage’. 49 He also holds a large torch in his left hand. Moreover, the positioning of the figures ‘accentuates the architectural scenery by Thoas on the right:’ a fluted pilaster arching over his head creates the unmistakeable impression of the exit marked by palaces in the Hellenistic and Roman theatres. 50 Although our adventures with Iphigenia in the ancient world have taken us deep into the world of religion and ritual, in almost every corner of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, the sculptor who designed this scene had not forgotten that the story was inextricably bound to its genesis in the world of theatre.

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VIII

The Christian Conversion of Iphigenia

Many Christians, of diverse denominations—Catholic, Anglican, and Russian Orthodox—adapted IT between the first Renaissance version and Catherine the Great’s annexation of the Muslim Crimea in 1783. Their works constitute the subject matter of this chapter. It argues that the ease with which Euripides’ play was assimilated to Christian models of behaviour, worship, and especially cultural self-definition against Islam illuminates its popularity as a prototype until the late eighteenth century. The first eloquent Christian to refer to the Tauris myth is Dante, on the second terrace of whose Purgatory the envious are punished with lashes made of Love. Love is illustrated by three disembodied utterances which resound forever. The first and third respectively consist of words once said by Mary mother of Jesus, and by Jesus himself. Sandwiched between them, however, Dante hears the sentence spoken by both Orestes and Pylades as they vied for the privilege of dying in the other’s place: ‘I am Orestes!’ (13.31–2).

Dante has found this exemplary episode, fit to be recalled alongside sayings from Jesus’ miracle-working and Sermon on the Mount, in Cicero’s account of Pacuvius’ tragedy, discussed above, pp. 000. The presence of the IT myth in Cicero and three other well-known Latin authors, Ovid, Martial, and the Christian Augustine, ensured, indeed, that it was preserved in outline at least in the Christian Latin tradition of the west. In the late fifth century CE, for example, the Christian Dracontius of Carthage compressed the Ovidian account into fewer than twenty lines of his Tragedy of Orestes (863–84), which is not a tragedy but an epyllion in hexameters. A second route by which the influence of Euripides’ IT survived the Middle Ages is in the presence of the pagan cult of Artemis lying beneath the surface of some Christian centres of worship
The Christian Conversion of Iphigenia

and Christian saint’s personalities. A century later than Dracontius, in the sixth century CE, we have encountered in the east the Byzantine historian Procopius saying that three temples of Artemis and Iphigenia, founded by Orestes in the Pontus and Cappadocia, had been converted into Christian churches. We know that sanctuaries of the pagan Artemis and Iphigenia metamorphosed into shrines which still exist today not only of the Virgin Mary but also of Saint Thekla, the Anatolian missionary and medicine woman with special power over wild animals. At Brauron itself, the temple of Artemis was replaced by a church of St. George; in Tauric Chersonese, a cathedral was built for St. Vladimir, to commemorate his baptism there in 988 CE. The cult of the pagan Artemis thus became buried under layers of Christian accretion.

The actual Greek text of Euripides’ IT also went at least metaphorically underground perhaps not many decades after the rare papyrus fragment containing some lines from the play, found at Hibeh in the borderland between Upper and Lower Egypt (Hibeh papyrus 24), was copied out in the middle of the third century CE. In the course of our adventures with Iphigenia we did briefly meet a Byzantine scholar named Proclus, who worked before the ninth century CE and mentioned the Tauric tradition in his summary of the stories told in the epic cycle. Otherwise there is no evidence of awareness of Euripides’ text in the Byzantine world for many centuries. But at around the date of Dante’s death in 1321, the Black Sea Iphigenia achieved the most astonishing feat of escapology in her entire cultural history. She reappeared in the form of an actual manuscript of her play, discovered by someone working in the Thessaloniki scriptorium, or scribe-workshop, of a Greek scholar called Demetrios (usually known as Demetrius Triclinius). The manuscript itself had been copied from another or others (now lost) in the late twelfth century; it included texts which had survived anyway in other manuscripts, such as the works of Hesiod, most of Sophocles’ extant plays, and some of Aeschylus’. But alongside these, miraculously, this manuscript preserved nine plays by Euripides. They all began with the letters epsilon, eta, iota, and kappa. It seems that they constituted a single volume of a complete ‘works’ of this poet in alphabetical order. Iphigenia in Tauris is one of the nine.

The immediate environment into which Euripides’ play was so serendipitously reborn into its second life was therefore Byzantine. But Thessaloniki had passed out of Byzantine hands and into Roman Catholic ones from the moment when Constantinople was captured by the fourth crusade of 1204. This situation lasted until 1246. Despite the damage this conquest had caused to relations between the

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1 See above p. 000.
2 See above p. 000.
3 See above p. 000.
4 Alongside Electra, Helen, Heracles, Heracles’ Children, Hiketides [i.e., Suppliant Women], Ion, Iphigenia in Aulis, and Kyklops.
churches, vital cultural cross-currents between east and west had been established. It was only a matter of time before news of Demetrius’ manuscript reached papal circles. By 1348 it was at the court in Avignon, in the possession of a great teacher of Greek (later Bishop of Gerace in southern Italy), Simon Atumanus; by 1457 it had reached Florence, where it remains today. It was acquired by the Medici family, and was deposited in the magnificent library, the Laurentian, when it was built in the sixteenth century. It is known as L (for ‘Laurentian’) 32.2.

Before it was even first printed as one of the seventeen plays of Euripides, by Teobaldo Mannucci (better known as Aldus Manutius) at his Venetian press in 1503, L 32.2 had therefore passed from a seat of one kind of Christian power, in Byzantine Thessaloniki, to another, in Medicean Florence. By the date when IT first appeared in print, the man who ruled the Crimea was not a Christian at all. The ‘Thoas’ of that day was the Khan Meñlı I Giray, a tribute-paying vassal of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (see Fig. VIII.1). In 1441, the Crimea, which had been under Italian control, was taken over by the Turkic Crimean Khans, beginning with Haci I Giray, a descendant of Genghis Khan. Even though the Ottoman Sultan had absorbed the area into his empire in 1475, he allowed the Crimean Khans to continue ruling as his tribute-paying vassal princes. When Renaissance Greek scholars or Italian humanists began to read Euripides’ IT in L 32.2, they may not have been overly concerned with the precise location of ‘Tauris’, but they knew that it was adjacent to Scythia and somewhere in the distant parts of the Black Sea, which meant at that time that it was part of the Ottoman Empire.

When these same scholars read Herodotus or Xenophon, they systematically imagined the barbarians who fought under Darius and Xerxes or Tissaphernes as kitted out in Ottoman-style turbans and scimitars. Ancient barbarian and contemporary Muslim infidel were fused at the moment when the Christian Renaissance reconceptualized itself as the cultural heir of the classical Greeks. Thoas and his Taurians were seen in a similar light to the Asiatic and Pontic barbarians described in Herodotus’ Histories and Xenophon’s Anabasis—as precursors and ancestors of the vassal kings of the Ottoman emperors. Until the late eighteenth century, when Catherine the Great annexed the Crimea into the Russian Empire, Euripides’ Tauris remained ill-defined and its savage, pagan culture only vaguely specified. But beneath the amorphous and slippery ‘Other’ against whom the heroic Greeks were defined lay a Self which was fundamentally Christian. This implied Christian ‘self’ was shared by all the poets and playwrights, major and minor, from John Milton to the almost inexhaustible stream of Italian librettists who adapted the play for the opera house until Gluck’s definitive version.

5 Hall (2007a).
It is in this historical and religious context that we need to read the Tauric Iphigenia’s first Renaissance manifestation. This Iphigenia makes her entrance as a thinly disguised Roman Catholic nun dedicated to the Virgin Mary. She was created by a close friend of the Medici family. The text is the Oreste of Giovanni Rucellai, a drama completed about 1520 when the Turkish threat was growing more apparent every day, as even the peace-loving Erasmus had to concede. Rucellai was a Florentine, son of the wealthy banker and statesman Bernardo di Rucellai, builder of the Palazzo Rucellai which can still be seen in Florence. He moved in elite cultural

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6 I discount the drawing by Giulio Romano at Chatsworth House, catalogue number 903, sometimes said to be an illustration of Iphigenia escaping with Pylades and Orestes: see Hartt (1958) vol. 1, 289 no. 42, reproduced as vol. 2 fig. 108. Romano was Raphael’s assistant, apprenticed to the master painter in perhaps 1509, and the only Renaissance artist to be named by Shakespeare: the statue of Hermione in The Winter’s Tale Act V scene 2 is said to be the work of ‘that rare Italian master, Julio Romano’. Romano was known to have had wide and eclectic tastes in classical literature: see Hartt (1958) vol. 1, xvi–xvii, 13. But I do not think that the subject of the drawing is taken from IT since the woman about to embark the ship is not holding a statue and looks inappropriately dejected.

circles, and studied intensively with prominent Neoplatonists and Humanists before entering the church. He was close to the Popes Leo X and Clement VII and as an adult lived in Rome. He wrote two tragedies, Rosmunda as well as Oreste, and a didactic poem Le Api, The Bees, based on Virgil’s Georgics IV. His interest in the Iphigenia plays was fed by the publication of the Aldine edition of Euripides, and also by Erasmus’ Latin translation of Lucian’s Toxaris (1506). All the Renaissance humanists enjoyed the plethora of examples of friendship in Toxaris, which found their way into popular emblem books. Once Erasmus had added the lustre of his name to the work, it became widely known.

The influence of Erasmus’ Toxaris on Rucellai’s play is clear in a speech delivered by Pilade to Oreste, which offers a self-consciously metatheatrical prediction that plays on the theme of their friendship will be enacted on the stages of eras to come:

Perhaps they will say a thousand years from now, how kind was heaven to that age, in that it illuminated the world with such sincere friendship! It will be pointed to and spoken of by the people: this is the shore where they were taken; here one protected the other with his own body so many times, making a shield with his arms; this is the fountain where they both drank; there are the beautiful weapons still stained barbaraously with blood; their mighty shields shot through with arrows and spears: perhaps our story will be sculpted in bronze and in marble; and then celebrated on theatre stages by great poets, an example of glory and prowess imitated by the human race.

Rucellai’s knowledge of Toxaris also surfaces in the unexpected detail that his Taurians have an amphitheatre adjacent to the temple, in which his Toante watches animals fighting, and into which he wants Oreste and Pilade to be thrown. This must have been inspired by the lively description delivered by Lucian’s Toxaris of the gladiatorial fights conducted in the amphitheatre of the Pontic city of Amastris (see above p. 000). Indeed, Rucellai’s Taurians, however terrifying, seem to enjoy a more magnificent level

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8 Aesthetically speaking, some of the more elaborate poetry displays features of the then fashionable Petrarchism; the descriptions reveal the impact of contemporary artists, including Rucellai’s associated Leonardo da Vinci. For Rucellai’s family and its social position in the networks of the Florentine elite, see Rubinstein et al. (1981).


10 Rucellai (1772) 82–3.

11 Rucellai (1772) 73, 102–3.
of civilization than those in Euripides. Toante has an entourage of knights, listed as Baroni or Cavalieri; one has a speaking part. The temple adjoins a massive fortified palace, walled and turreted, with iron doors, a moat and a drawbridge (I: 93–4, 113–18). The scale of the edifice imagined by Rucellai is suggested by this Italian engraving (see Fig. VIII.2), which (along with surviving sarcophagus reliefs) his Oreste inspired. This vast building is close to the amphitheatre where Toante watches his blood-sports, and is perhaps intended to be visible; the sacred rituals of Tauris now perform an additional, more secular function, as entertainment for a bloodthirsty ruling class (empia gente d’uman sangue ingorda). Tauris, like the palaces of the Khans and Sultans (as well as the Medici) in Rucellai’s time, is crowded with courtiers; religion and politics

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12 Rucellai (1772) 43–4; see Di Maria (1996) 137.
13 See also the monumental architecture in the frontispiece illustration reproduced in Rucellai (1772).
14 Rucellai (1772) 45; see Di Maria (1996) 138.
have fused into an inseparable entity, symbolized by the architecture of Toante’s city. To Rucellai’s audiences, the cruelty of the barbaric rituals practised there will have had resonances of the cruel punishments and executions which they had heard the Ottoman sultans inflicted on criminals, Ottoman and foreigner alike.

Yet an interesting tendency in terms of the reception of ancient drama emerges here. Rucellai is fascinated with grisly physical details. The disgusting remains of previous victims are described by Pilade as he studies them through a window; he can read the law which condemns all foreigners to death, and can see blood dripping from the walls where human limbs are suspended. Toante’s language is bloodthirsty, especially his opening speech of Act III: this reaches a climax when he declares:

There, where many piles of bones lie,  
dead people, human skins and human skulls,  
there I will cut off their heads with my hands;  
if I could drink human blood, I would slake my thirst  
with their blood and drink nothing else.

The death of Agamemnon extends to one line in Euripides (552), but fifty-two in Rucellai. The signs given by the image of Artemis/Diana (described in just two lines by Euripides—‘The image of the goddess turned away, backwards, in its place’ (1165) and ‘It closed its eyes as well’ (1167))—is expanded by Rucellai to twelve lines describing a sensational and gory prodigy:

While I was standing in front of the divine image,  
I saw its beautiful eyes bleeding and rolling  
in such a way that I trembled in horror  
and I still tremble now in remembering it.  
After that it wept blood from its clear eyes;  
its face and breast were wet with red sweat.  
Then I saw its lips swollen with anger, white with foam,  
opening themselves three times;  
three times the image chattered, gnashing its teeth.  
Then I heard the strong string of its curved bow,  
as if it had released its trembling arrow, sounding three times.

15 Rucellai (1772) 44.  
16 Rucellai (1772) 73.  
17 Rucellai (1772) 109.  
18 Rucellai (1772) 64–5.  
19 Rucellai (1772) 105.
The Christian Conversion of Iphigenia

The influential ancient text here is neither Euripidean drama nor Lucianic dialogue: it is Senecan tragedy. In Cinquecento drama, Senecan horror was the stereotypical procedure for contrasting barbarism with Christian virtue and piety.20 The Greek mythical tyrants of the Neronian imagination, above all the Atreus of Thyestes and Aegisthus of Agamemnon, have here informed the Pontic tyrant whom Rucellai is creating in his Christian version of Euripides.

The Christianization process is manifest in other ways. One reason why Rucellai removed the epiphany of Athena was because he took Aristotle’s strictures on this theatrical device as seriously as did his close friend Giangiorgio Trissino, the author of Sophonisba (1515), the first ever Renaissance ‘classical’ tragedy along Greek lines. 21 But removing Athena also helped Rucellai to avoid emphasizing both the Athens-specific actiology of IT and the ancient Greek polytheism (he used more than forty instances of the elastic Italian term ‘god’ and its derivatives, dio, dea, etc.).22 Iphigenia is refashioned with ease as a nun in the service of the Virgin Mary (‘O glorious Virgin, help your nun who loves you humbly with her heart and voice’).23 The madness of Oreste is eliminated as he becomes a self-controlled, exemplary hero with an almost Christ-like willingness to sacrifice himself to save the others. As the chorus says, ‘Death is surely beautiful when it comes for another’s sake’.24 The new ending suits a providential, ethical drama conformant with a Christian sensibility: this ‘god’ metes out justice after death. Pilade urges Oreste to act according to the will of god, who inspects human behaviour from above and offers the righteous direction.25 Rucellai’s Greeks have a concept of a beautiful death, expressed in terms of Roman Catholic martyrology, and a happy afterlife for the just that is quite alien to the concept of death in Euripides. Oreste, like a good Neoplatonist, is not afraid of death, for it is then that the human soul can return to the spiritual realm of God; he actually pities the unconverted Toante who commits crimes out of ignorance of the providential nature of the universe. The chorus celebrate their god, who created angels with eternal minds, and in whom piety and fortitude were conceived.26

At the end of Rucellai’s play, Toante remains alive, but furious. He creates in the spectators’ minds ‘an indelible image of a mad and godless king athirst for a bloody

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20 Bergel (1965).
21 In Sophonisba Trissino applied Aristotelian theories of tragedy to the historical narrative about this Carthaginian noblewoman provided in Livy, books 29–30. It is possible that Trissino made a significant contribution to Oreste. According to the dedication to The Bees, published in Florence in 1539, when on his deathbed Rucellai asked his brother to ensure that Trissino ‘corrected’ Oreste in the name of the two poets’ long friendship.
23 Rucellai (1772) 59.
24 Rucellai (1772) 56.
25 Rucellai (1772) 44.
26 Rucellai (1772) 75, 95, 58.
revenge at any price’. The play leaves unresolved the conflict between the ethically exemplary Christianized Greeks and the belligerent tyrant who, far from being impressed by religious ritual and expressions of divine will, merely abuses religious customs in order to defend his autocratic hold on political power.

*Oreste* was written for performance, but the documented productions occurred after Rucellai’s death. The actor and theatre reformer Luigi Riccoboni, born in 1676 into a family of actors, records that *Oreste* was performed in Venice in 1712. All five sententious and static choral odes were omitted; the scenery showed a temple and a palace on stage and a mountain in the background. A second, more spectacular production followed in 1726, at the Collegio Pio Clementino in Rome, when the play was further altered to allow a march of soldiers and flag-bearers between the first and second scenes. The setting represented the royal hall, a garden, a courtyard, a wood, a royal room, and the temple of Diana. It is only possible to imagine what impact the raving Toante of Rucellai will have had on an audience of young noblemen being educated in Rome in an institution closely bound up with the identity of the Roman Catholic church, since it had been founded by one Pope (Clement VIII) in 1595, and re-founded by another (Urban VIII) half a century later.

Rucellai’s *Oreste*, one of the earliest Italian attempts at a tragedy in imitation of the Greek model, even if it is inspired by Euripides’ *IT*, is a neoclassical dramatic fantasia on the theme of proto-Christian heroism. *IT* is rather more surprisingly connected with Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* Part I (1587), especially with the characterization of the religion of the Scythian antihero. Tamburlaine professes himself to be a worshipper of Orestes and Pylades. In scene 2, he describes two of his friends in the following terms:

> These are my friends in whom I more rejoice,  
> Than doth the king of Persia in his crown:  
> And by the love of Pylades and Orestes,  
> Whose statues we adore in Scythia,  
> Thyself and them shall never part from me,  
> Before I crown you kings in Asia.

The question of Tamburlaine’s own creed is one of the most controversial in English literary studies, but Marlowe can surely have had little idea of the religion that might

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27 Di Maria (1996) 142.
28 Rucellai’s other tragedy, *Rosmunda*, was definitely acted in the gardens of his father’s palazzo, for Leo X. *Oreste* may have been, too.
29 Riccoboni (1741) 194.
30 See the remarks in the edition by Maffei (1746) I.78–9 on the adaptations of the play for the 1712 representation. When the chorus took part in the action, it was represented by an individual actor only.
31 The record of a second production, in 1726, is found in Mazzoni (1887) 313, an edition of all of Rucellai’s works.
have been practised by the historical figure underlying his hero, a fourteenth-century Mongol of the Barlas tribe. The historical Tamburlaine will have spoken Uzbek and may have held shamanic, Buddhist, or Muslim ‘beliefs’, or indeed a mixture of all of them. Marlowe’s hero, however irreverent and hubristic, seems, rather, to adhere to an atavistic pagan polytheism with an Olympian flavour. This contrasts with both the identifiable Islamic and the Christian beliefs of the Turks and Hungarians with whom Tamberlaine has contact. He may not think that gods are as glorious as earthly kings (I: 2.5.56–8), which would count as disrespectful to the higher powers in any deist system, but he has personally followed the example of ‘Jove’ overthrowing his father Saturn (I:2.7.12–17; see also I:4.4.79–80) and knows that ‘Mars’ disapproves of him (I:2.7.56–61). Marlowe may have been prompted here by Ovid, a poet whose elegies he translated, but Ovid cannot have been the sole source of Tamberlaine’s cult of Orestes and Pylades. Although the old Taurian of Ex Ponto 3.2 admired these heroes, in Ovid’s version there is no suggestion of their deification. But the trope of the barbarian admirer did reach its definitive expression in a text on which Marlowe was drawing, Lucian’s dialogue on friendship, *Toxaris*.

Lucian of Samosata was a pagan Syrian, writing in Greek, under the Roman Empire of the second century CE. As we have seen in chapter VI, *Toxaris* is a dialogue about friendship between a Greek named Mnesippus and a Scythian named Toxaris (‘Archers’). Here Toxaris opens his explanation of the reasons why the Scythians have actually built a temple to Orestes and Pylades and deified them (5–6):

‘What particularly impressed us about these two men and makes us admire them is this: they seemed to us to have been the best friends the world has seen and to have set precedents for other people in terms of the way friends should share whatever fortune brings. And everything that they suffered with one another or on behalf of one another was inscribed by our ancestors on a bronze column which they set up in the Oresteion. They passed a law that the first lesson their children should study and learn of by heart was written on this pillar. Indeed, they would all forget their own father’s names than the deeds of Orestes and Pylades.’

As a fourteenth-century ‘Scythian’, Tamberlaine is appropriately imagined to have worshipped Orestes and Pylades, since the Scythians’ reverence for these Greek heroes had been stated in Erasmus’ translation of Lucian’s *Toxaris*, a foundational text in the Renaissance revival of ancient Greek studies. The tradition that Orestes and Pylades were themselves worshipped by the Scythians is, indeed, cited by no other ancient authority.

Marlowe will almost certainly have encountered Lucian’s *Toxaris* as a pupil at The King’s School, Canterbury, since Lucian’s *Dialogues* were a standard textbook
in Elizabethan grammar schools; they were sometimes read in Greek in the upper school, and in the second forms in the selection which Erasmus and More had translated into relatively easy Latin. Marlowe had almost certainly come across this passage of Erasmus’ translation, one of the several forms which the trope of the ‘admiring barbarian’ had taken in antiquity:

Itaque quaecunque alter cum altero vel alter pro altero tulit, ea maiores nostri descripta in columna aerea reposuerunt in templo Orestis, ac leges statuerunt ut ea columna prima esset institutio disciplinaque liberis suis, si meminissent quae in illa essent adscripta.

And so our forefathers recorded everything that they endured with one another and for one another on a bronze pillar which they placed in the temple of Orestes, and they passed a law that the primary component in the education of their children should be the learning by heart of everything which is inscribed upon the pillar.

Marlowe’s Tamburlaine is an indirect descendant of Euripides’ Thoas, but he is also a power-crazed blasphemer, mad with love for a woman of another race, and responsible for some of the nastiest atrocities in Renaissance theatre. Although Marlowe’s own religious views have been as hotly contested as those of Tamburlaine—he has been thought to have been attracted both by atheism and Arianism, specifically anti-Trinitarianism—his Scythian antihero most resembles an Olympian polytheist. This needs to be borne in mind when we encounter some of the more extreme forms taken by Euripides’ Taurian king in the Christian versions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In non-dramatic poetry, one of the finest Christian literary responses to IT ever to have been composed is, however, resoundingly Protestant. It is this section of young John Milton’s ode ‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’ (stanzas 18–19):

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
Th’old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
And, wrath to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

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33 Erasmus (1969) part i, 427.
The Oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The ode celebrates the triumph of Christianity over paganism, symbolized by the greatest of all the pagan oracles, at Delphi. In a sparkling subversion of ancient mythology, first the Python and then Apollo are silenced by the baby Jesus—‘our babe’—still a tiny child in his mother’s arms, just as in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* the infant Olympian wrests power from his chthonic predecessors. But another ancient text has contributed even more to Milton’s poetic conception: the ‘Delos to Delphi’ ode performed by the chorus in *IT* 1234–83 (see above pp. 000), a passage which Milton annotated in his own copy.\(^3^4\)

The arrival of the cheerful baby, the dispersal of the dark forces, the hymnal tone and verbal echoes show how much Milton had thought about the Euripidean stasimon. Milton used a bilingual Greek/Latin text of Euripides to help him write this wonderful poem—his first in the English language—in 1621. The Latin translation was the work of William Canter, and had first been published in 1571. Milton’s English diction responds synthetically to both the Greek and the Latin parallel translations. The ‘old Dragon under ground’, for example, echoes William Canter’s *draco* and *oraculum... subterraneum* (1244–9).\(^3^5\) This is a reminder of the extent of the influence of Latin translations of ancient Greek drama in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before modern language translations became available.\(^3^6\)

Milton’s simultaneous use of ancient Greek religious literature and transformation of its theology adumbrate his future projects in *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost*. One of the poets who influenced his great Christian epic was the Dutch poet and dramatist Joost van den Vondel (see Fig. VIII.3), now regarded in Holland as the ‘Dutch Shakespeare’. He and Rembrandt are held to represent the twin peaks of golden-age Dutch culture.\(^3^7\) Perhaps Milton reciprocally influenced Vondel; it is a curious coincidence that the earliest version of Euripides’ *IT* which can claim to be an actual translation into a modern language rather than an adaptation was

\(^{3^4}\) Milton (1931) vol. 18, 331.

\(^{3^5}\) See also Quint (1999) 197–8.

\(^{3^6}\) Ewbank (2005).

\(^{3^7}\) Schmidt-Degener (1928) 1–2.
Vondel’s *Ifigenie in Tauren* (1666). Vondel was born into a family of Mennonites in Cologne in 1587; fleeing persecution, they settled in the less intolerant atmosphere of Amsterdam in the new Dutch Republic. Vondel joined the Remonstrant church (a Dutch group of Calvinist dissenters who rejected the notion of predestination) before finally converting to Catholicism in 1741. During his life he belonged to all three of the persecuted religions in the Netherlands. This was wholly exceptional and is significant in the context of his insistence on tolerance and the value of diversity.

Vondel’s attraction to Euripides’ *IT* also needs to be understood in the context of the seventeenth-century apex of the empire-building Dutch republic. After the 1609 treaty with Spain, the Dutch economy gained strength daily. Maritime activity, exploration, and trade boomed, the Dutch empire established itself in the east, and soon challenged the colonial monopoly which Portugal and Spain had previously enjoyed in India and Central America. The Dutch trading empire was ‘the first which was truly global.’ Euripides’ ‘travel tragedy’ almost inevitably appealed to a society which produced, in the Delft jurist Hugo Grotius’ *Mare Liberum* (1608), the first articulation of the doctrine of the freedom of the seas—that every nation has equal rights to navigate and fish the world’s oceans. The doctrine was of course a response to the practical needs of the merchants and traders amongst his compatriots at the time. Vondel, a close friend of Grotius, was far from the only Dutchman to be inspired by *IT* in the seventeenth century: there are important Dutch visual representations of the play before Vondel’s

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39 Israel (1990) ix.
41 Indeed, he translated Grotius’ Latin *Sofompaneas* in 1625.
tragedy. First, Pieter Lastman’s stunning ‘Iphigenia and Orestes and Pylades in Tauris’ (1614) (see Fig. VIII.4). Lastman was the son of a catholic goldsmith, but seems himself to have at least publicly conformed to the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church, since he was buried in the Oude Kerk in central Amsterdam. He spent five years in Italy in the first decade of the seventeenth century, where he was impressed above all by Caravaggio. He was the leading painter in Amsterdam in the first half of the century, and indeed was Vondel’s favourite artist: in a poem written in 1660, six years before the publication of his translation of *IT*, Vondel called him ‘the Apelles of our country’.  

The poet will certainly have studied Lastman’s *IT* painting intently.

What interested Lastman was Pylades and Orestes’ plight, as outsiders, in a community which performs human sacrifice. The ritual takes place in an open space, the altar overlooked by a sinister statue of Diana/Artemis in the upper right-hand corner, her crescent-moon head-dress perhaps lending Satanic reverberations to the sacrifice. The colourful processional pomp and ritual, scarcely to the taste of Dutch Protestants, are carefully detailed: standards, scarlet pennants, extravagant displays of flowers on the altar, varied musical instruments, crackling flames, plumes of smoke, and a male attendant with glittering basin and jug of lustral water. The procession winds its way down the hill in the top left-hand corner; several details derived from Euripides are on exhibition—the skulls of previous victims and the

**Figure VIII.4** Pieter Lastman, oil-painting, ‘Iphigenia and Orestes and Pylades in Tauris’ (1614).

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Taurian on the right blowing his conch-shell trumpet. All eyes lead us to the figures of Orestes and Pylades, arguing about which one of them should be sacrificed, and all the intense emotion in the picture is contained within their two figures; Iphigenia, letter ready in hand, looks on impassively. From the perspective of an inhabitant of Amsterdam in the early seventeenth century, what seems to have been most interesting was the act of imagining the appearance of religion as practised by the total society in the ancient land of the Taurians. This is especially clear in comparison with the less crowded earlier Italian visualization of the play (fig. VIII.2 above), which is dependent on the standard depiction of the captive Orestes and Pylades on Roman sarcophagi, and contains only the three Greek principals and two ‘extras’.

Lastman did not know what an ancient Taurian might look like; his Thoas (far left) is a slightly effete blonde aristocrat in a pink velvet suit and feathered head-dress; his subjects, however, include both a primitive club-wielder, naked except for a rough loincloth, and several men in the conspicuous turbans which in the art of the time suggested high-status officials of the Ottoman Empire. The turbans are also a conspicuous feature of the three stunning tapestries which illustrate passages from IT in the ‘Story of Iphigenia and Orestes’ sequence, made between 1648 and 1662 by Pieter de Cracht in Gouda, from designs by Salomon de Bray (see Fig. VIII.5). At a time when Dutch merchants were investigating all kinds of peoples in remote parts of the furthest oceans, this ethnographic confusion had a particularly colonial resonance. This window on an unfamiliar religion in a distant land reflects the nature of the Dutch republic as a lively, heterogeneous ‘pivot of internationalism—in its alliances and conflicts, its economy and culture.’

The French connection, combined with the association of the territories of the Dutch empire with the plot of IT, is transparently clear in the first modern-language parody of a serious adaptation of Euripides’ play, Alain-René Lesage’s harlequinade

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43 See above pp. 000 and fig. 000.
The Dutch had finally taken the capital of Sri Lanka from the Portuguese in 1656, just ten years before Vondel completed his version of IT, and the first modern burlesque to enter the cultural history of IT was unsurprisingly set on that island, under its old Arabic name Serendib (whence comes our word ‘serendipity’). Arlequin roi de Serendib shows Lesage to be a master at parodying the texts of vaudevilles and composing bizarre plots. In this one, Harlequin is shipwrecked on the island, having robbed and perhaps killed a wealthy lawyer. His traditional companions Pierrot and Mezzetin enter, disguised as women in order to avoid falling victim to the local custom by which one male stranger a month was sacrificed after having been made king for a day. They have secured appointments as priestesses in the service of the local goddess Késaya, whose statue is central to the plot, under the command of the terrifying figure of the ‘grand sacrificateur’. The Grand Vizir has been smitten with the charms of the cross-dressed Mezzetin and has elevated him/her to the office of High Priestess. Lesage revels in the sexual ambiguity of the situation, as Mezzetin expresses anxiety and a wish that s/he had fewer charms (see Fig. VIII.6). Harlequin, meanwhile, is happy to be captured and made king, before discovering that he is destined to be sacrificed. Much hilarity and music ensue before the trio make good their escape to France.

Arlequin roi de Serendib (1715). The harlequinade, published in Lesage (1722), parodies the Duke de Vancy’s libretto Iphigénie en Tauride, to an adapted version of which music was composed by Henri Desmarets and André Campra. The opera was first produced in 1704, and had been revived in 1711.

Figure VIII.5  Orestes and Pylades before Iphigenia, tapestry by Pieter de Cracht (1648–62).
The way that Lesage mapped IT onto the new Dutch colony supports the view that Vondel’s Dutch translation of the Greek plays was in part a response to the Dutch maritime empire and the intellectual internationalism in seventeenth-century Amsterdam. But it was just as important that poets in the city at the time regarded themselves as the opposition to religious dogmatism and partisanship. In order to gain full membership of the Dutch Reformed Church, citizens of Amsterdam had to undergo clerical scrutiny and accept church discipline. Dissident Calvinists, such as the Arminians, and Catholics were alike persecuted by the assembly of Reformed ministers; literary people, led by Samuel Coster, openly resisted the persecutions. Coster’s own 1617 drama Iphigenia, based on Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis, was an allegorical attack on Calvinist preachers. In places it is scarcely even allegorical, for example, when the chorus
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mentions the ‘pulpit and town-hall’. By 1625, the poet Vondel had despaired of Calvinist theocratic doctrines. He joined the Arminian Remonstrants and wrote a ‘classical’ tragedy using material from Ovid but under a Euripidean title, Palamedes, of Vermoorde onnooselheyd (Palamedes, or Murdered Innocence). Vondel’s Palamedes symbolized none other than the Lord Advocate Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had been executed in 1619. The play attacked his jurors and the Calvinist ministry.

Vondel became increasingly liberal in his religious views, and once national independence seemed assured, his flight from Calvinist tyranny led him to convert to Catholicism in about 1640. But, for all his intellectual sophistication and liberal outlook, he was perhaps the most truly devout of all the writers discussed in this chapter. He was less interested in the details of worship and doctrine than the metaphysical conflict between the human impulses to rebel and to look for peace in God. His liberalism stopped well short of a religious relativism that could embrace religions other than Christianity. What he feared above all—a fear expressed in many of his works—was Christian schisms, mainly because they laid Christendom open to Ottoman invasion: ‘Like water bursting the dam the Turkish hordes will flood the German land and wash their blood-stained reins in the Rhine at Cologne. There they will stable their horses. Then will Christians know how sadly they have erred and won a cursed spoil through internecine war, seeing the wolves set upon the sheep-fold of Christ’.

Altogether less earnest and morally searching than Vondel’s translation of Euripides’ IT was the first known performance of a play based on IT of which the script is extant, Charles Davenant’s raucous Restoration Circe (1677), which I have discussed in another book, but in which there are some faint attempts to associate the Taurians with the Ottoman world. Very shortly afterwards, on 22nd July 1678, to celebrate the name day of the Kaiserin Eleonora Magdalena in the garden at Schönbrunn, Antonio Draghi (who had already written over seven operas, mostly on classical themes) produced the music to a libretto by Minato and a ballet by Johannes Schmelzer under the title Il Tempio di Diana in Taurica. It was revived on 2nd September. The floodgates were opened. Between Davenant and Gluck, a century later, every theatre and court in Europe, it seems, wanted to stage an Iphigenia play or opera, and many of them chose the Tauric version.

49 Barnouw (1925) 60.
51 Quoted and translated in Barnouw (1925) 105.
52 A play entitled Pylade et Oreste (now lost), by the Rouen author (and friend of the Corneilles) Coqueteau de La Clairière, is said to have been performed by Molière’s company, in 1659; see Gliksohn (1985) 70.
53 Neuhaus (1913) 155.
Unfortunately, it is very difficult to be sure of the degree to which the dichotomy between Christianity and Islam was played up in the visual effect of these productions, since illustrations of entertainments based on \textit{IT}, written or performed in any country during this period, are in short supply. One of the best candidates is an engraving which illustrates the version by Pier Jacopo Martello (see Fig. VIII.7). The value of the beautiful illustrations in his works, which are signed ‘F. Aquila’, are as ‘perhaps the only reliable indication in eighteenth-century art of the contemporary stage-scenery’ in Italy, which ‘as such furnish material for a reconstruction of stage-decoration’.

Martello was one of the group of dramatists who wanted to establish an Italian theatre to rival the French, and he tried to fuse the techniques of Corneille and Racine with a fresh, Italian response to the Greek tragedians. But the religious flavour of the play is not really clarified by this appealing illustration. No such visual evidence survives for the early eighteenth-century British versions of \textit{IT} which succeeded in transforming the story into an exemplar of anti-Jacobite and anti-Catholic Whig Anglicanism.

It is even more to be regretted that there is no visual record, either, of the occasion in 1758 when the Tauric Iphigenia was to be found nearer to her original home than ever since antiquity, for an \textit{Iphigenia in Tauride} was staged in the far east of Europe, in Moscow—the \textit{opera seria} of Francesco Araja (1700–67). Araja was the very first opera composer and conductor to live in Russia. In 1735 he was summoned, along with newly engaged Italian singers, initially to St. Petersburg. He stayed in Russia until 1759. After the assassination of Peter III in 1762, he tried to return. The new Empress of Russia, Peter’s widow Catherine, stopped him since she did not want to employ a musician associated with her deceased husband. But Araja was extremely popular and influential in Russia, and it is likely that his 1758 Moscow \textit{Iphigenia in Tauride} awakened interest in the Crimean connection of the ancient Greek play.

Just a year after Araja first arrived in Russia, the alliance of the Hapsburgs and the Russians against Poland segued into an alliance against the Ottomans. The Russians regained territory round Azov, and with Hapsburg encouragement began to foster an ambition to take Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Crimea. At this time the Crimea was generally known as ‘Little Tartary’, or ‘Crim Tartary’, and cartographically conceived as part of ‘Turquie en Europe’ in order to distinguish it from the seemingly endless stretches of ‘Great Tartary’ in Asia. But it was indeed at some point between the 1730s and the 1770s that the dream of recreating ancient ‘Taurida’ in the

\begin{footnotes}
\item Quigley (1920) 121.
\item E.g., John Dennis’s \textit{Iphigenia} (1700); see Hall and Macintosh (2005) 5–4.
\item Wolff (1994) 168–9.
\item Wolff (1994) 191.
\end{footnotes}
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southern Crimea was conceived. Catherine’s plan was to create a paradisiacal imperial ‘garden’ there, and her Greek archbishop Eugenios Voulgaris obliged by inventing a new etymology for the old name of Tauris, deriving it from *taphros*, which (he claimed) was the ancient Greek for a ditch dug by human hands.  

Catherine the Great came to the throne of Russia in 1762. Her attraction to Euripides’ *IT* was almost overdetermined. She loved theatre, fostered the creation of Russian-language drama, and built theatres in her palaces, including the Hermitage Theatre, designed to imitate Palladio’s Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, with its semicircular auditorium and display of neoclassical columns and statues; the first performance there was in 1785, just two years after the Russian annexation of the Crimea. She loved Euripides, incorporating a performance of *Alcestis*, complete with choruses in reconstructed ancient musical modes, within her own patriotic drama, *The*

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60 See O’Malley (2006) 8, with fig. 1.2. Catherine also formalized the training of theatre performers in Russia for the first time by founding the Imperial Theatrical School in 1779 and the Marinsky Opera Company in 1781.
Beginning of Oleg’s Reign. Furthermore, opera became intensely fashionable under her, especially in St. Petersburg, where it was closely linked with both the church and the military. Potemkin’s private capelle performed cantatas to celebrate military victories such as the end of the war with Turkey in 1792.

Perhaps the most important dates in the history of reactions to the Tauric Iphigenia came in 1768, ten years after Araja’s first Ifigenia in Tauride in Russia, when the new opera on the theme by Baldassare Galuppi premiered at Catherine’s St. Petersburg court. Galuppi had been official composer for three years. He used Marco Coltellini’s dramatic new libretto, composed in 1763 for Traetta. Galuppi was a prolific composer of operas—he penned more than a hundred—and much travelled; his works were performed a good deal in London. During the early years of his residency in Russia, Catherine adored him. Ifigenia in Tauride was his third opera for the court, after Il re pastore and Didone abbandonata. First performed on 21st April 1768, to celebrate ‘the glorious anniversary of her Imperial Majesty’s birth,’ it was a sufficient hit to be translated and performed in Russian subsequently. A witness described it as offering ‘very powerful affekty [emotional effects] and ten choruses’.

We can only speculate on the extent to which Catherine’s desire to wrest the Crimea from Muslim hands was linked in her imagination to the performances of operas based on Iphigenia in Tauris, although she had made the link by 1771. In a letter he wrote to her on July 30th of that year, Voltaire mused on the possibility of her acquiring ‘the kingdom of Thoas’, where ‘the beautiful Iphigenia’ had resided, and Orestes had found a statue. No monarch possessed a greater drive to foster the triumph of Christian civilization over the Ottoman Empire than she did. In 1779 Catherine decreed that a newborn godson be named ‘Constantine’, since he was destined to become the Emperor of Constantinople once the Russians had led the Christian Orthodoxy in deposing the Ottoman administration, the Sublime Porte, from its place in history. In the same year, the success of the first performances of Gluck’s opera, which as we shall see in the next chapter became an instant favourite across all of Europe, is evidence that the reinvention of classical ‘Tauris’ in Euripidean terms had become inevitable. It had been, of course, with a performance of this particular opera that Joseph II had welcomed Catherine’s grandson to Vienna, the Hapsburg capital, in 1781.

One of the features of Iphigenia in Tauris which made it so loved in opera and drama with musical interludes was that it presented an opportunity for the performance of music with a savage or barbarian character; Handel achieved some striking

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62 Wotquenne (1902) 57–70.
64 Reddaway (1931) 123.
effects in his arias for Toante in his Oreste in London in 1734. IT also allowed a good excuse for music in the Turkish style, often known as Janissary music. This was introduced into western Europe in the seventeenth century: when the Grand Envoy Memhmed Pasha entered Vienna on 8th June 1665, he was accompanied by an impressive Turkish band or ‘mehter’.65 The typical mehter incorporated a variety of instruments, including trumpets, shawms, cymbals, kettledrums, and bass drums; it played on the battlefield and on state occasions. Fascination with Turkish music began to affect western musical entertainments a few years later, not only in the use of Turkish instruments in operas with exotic or foreign characters of almost any description, but in the types of melody and rhythm, unison writing and simple harmonies—the ‘alla turca’ style. This certainly helped to make Euripides’ IT popular amongst opera composers, most notably in Gluck’s garish Turkish effects for Thoas and the Taurians in 1779.66

By the time that Potemkin did finally annex the Crimea for Russia in 1783, the creation of a revived ancient Greece in the northern Black Sea—the most telling of symbols of European resistance against the Ottoman Empire—became almost inevitable. Euripides’ Black Sea drama then played a crucial role in the conceptual de-Ottomanizing of the Crimean peninsula. Many accounts of European travelers to the region before the annexation stress the luxuriousness and savagery of the infidel inhabitants. The ancient story of the escape of an intelligent heroine from a backwards and religious barbarian community will have reflected actual fears of what might happen to European women at the hands of rapacious Ottomans at the time. Ottoman forces were still attempting to besiege Vienna in 1683; they failed, but between that year and the treaty of Jassy in 1792, Turkey was at war with either Austria or Russia for no fewer than forty-one years. The Turks made notable advances in the years leading up to 1740, and it was not until the 1770s that the Ottoman Empire ceased to look like an immediately pressing threat to Christian civilization at large. The turning-point was the Russian-Turkish war of 1768–74, by the end of which everyone agreed that the Russians were a worse threat to European stability.

The appeal of IT in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during the course of which it was adapted into numerous operas and plays, needs to be set against the theatrical background of the countless ‘abduction’ plays and operas of the time. These usually portrayed a Christian woman, abducted and taken prisoner at the court of a Muslim monarch, facing torture and sexual slavery. The best known of these (and one of the least xenophobic, although that is not saying much) is Mozart’s

65 Pirker (2007).
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

Die Entführung aus dem Serail. It premiered in Vienna in 1782, and includes, like Gluck’s Iphigenie en Tauride, ‘Turkish’ styles of music. In Die Entführung, the janissary Osmin is one of the greedy, gullible, sadistic, and lecherous Muslim stereotypes who regularly walked the Enlightenment stage. It was no accident that the great bass singer Karl Ludwig Fischer was famous in the roles of both Gluck’s Thoas (in the first Vienna production of his IT opera) and three years later of Osmin, the gullible Ottoman janitor in the premiere of Entführung aus dem Serail.

The project of re-Hellenizing and Christianizing the Crimea sent Catherine and her acolytes hurrying to rediscover everything they could about the history of this strategically invaluable peninsula in Greco-Roman antiquity. In January 1787, Catherine embarked on a notorious tour of her empire, which climaxd in the newly acquired Crimea. Over the gate through which she passed into the newly founded city of Kherson was the inscription: ‘this is the way to Byzantium’. The annexation of the Crimea, as Sara Dickinson has argued, ‘provided a welcome opportunity for Russia to more assertively claim the status of a western-style empire. By adopting western techniques of ‘otherization,’ Russia was able to describe itself as comparatively ‘more European’ than peoples such as the Ottoman Turks and Crimean Tatars. Catherine’s attempt to use an ancient Greek identity in her war on Islam was ridiculed in western European propaganda, which presented her as an androgynous ancient Amazon—therefore herself a curious amalgam of classical Greek and barbarian—fearlessly taking on Oriental, Islamic tyranny (see Fig. VIII.8). But for Catherine and Potemkin, the two most important ancient narratives in this ideological programme were the defence of the Crimean Greeks against Scythian foes in the second century BCE by Mithridates VI Eupator, and the encounter between the Greeks and the Taurians as dramatized in Euripides’ archetypal Crimean adventure story.

Catherine presented her journey as the mission of an enlightened European princess in a land retarded by oriental despotism, as ‘a demonstration of mastery over bears and barbarians’. The party visited what could be seen of the ruins of ancient Chersonesos, near the fortress of Sevastopol; but according to Catherine and her associates, the actual location of the temple was on a more southerly tip of the peninsula at Parthenizza. They also stayed in the ancient palace of the Khans at Bakhisaray. Bakhisaray had been the Crimean capital, a little inland north-east of Sevastopol.

69 As a powerful female leader, the inevitable comparison of Catherine with an ancient Amazon also led to a more general view that the Russians as an ethnic group were the descendants of Herodorus’ Amazons and Sarmatians. See Anon. (1855) 467.
70 Wolff (1994) 129.
71 Oliphant (1853) 226–7.
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The Victorian traveller Laurence Oliphant was there shown the bed in which the Tsarina had slept, and the marble bath, fed by a fountain, which Potemkin had gallantly prepared for her. Potemkin had the place restored in the original style, which he and Catherine believed was the appearance of the place when Khan Mehli I Giray had built it in 1480. In a fantasy clearly informed by the tradition of the escape plot, Catherine’s tour companion the Prince de Ligne (who was obsessed with the Iphigenia in Tauris and believed that the estate Catherine bestowed on him in the Crimea was the setting of the action in Euripides’ play) speculated what ‘Europe’ would think if the whole party including Catherine herself were to be carried off and delivered as prisoners to the barbaric court of the sultan in Constantinople.

The attraction of the story of a Christian maiden’s captivity in a Crimean Khan’s palace, in which de Ligne here indulged, outlived Catherine by several decades. The most famous of such stories is the narrative poem ‘The Bakhisarian Fountain’, written in St. Petersburg and published in 1824, by Alexander Pushkin himself. Much influenced by Byron, Pushkin visited the palace in 1820, and was touched by the

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72 Murray (1888) 364.
story of the origin of the ‘fountain of tears’, dating from 1764, which he saw in the courtyard.

According to the poem, the Khan who ruled the Crimea for two separate periods in the 1750s and 1760s, Qirim Giray, after attacking Poland, has put the Polish Catholic Princess Maria in his harem in the Tauride. He falls madly in love with her and therefore no longer visits his former favourite wife, a passionate Caucasian woman, half-Christian herself, named Zarem. Maria remains chaste, and he respects her and lets her have a private chamber containing a statue of the Virgin Mary. Eventually Zarem begs Maria to engineer circumstances so that Giray will return to her, and makes dark threats about the consequences if she doesn’t. Maria dies mysteriously (it is implied by suicide), Zarem is put to death by being thrown into an abyss, while Giray goes mad and invades Russia. He later returns and installs a fountain in Maria’s memory. The story told by Pushkin is not, of course, a linear descendant of Euripides’ play, but its genesis and popularity stem from precisely the same historically specific Christian and Russian sensibility that found Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy so very topical and appealing. This sensibility will become relevant again later, when we find it demonstrably intertwined with the Ukrainian reception of IT in the early years of the twentieth century.
I

Gluck's Iphigénie in Pain

JUST THE PROSPECT of attending a performance of Gluck's Iphigénie en Tauride (which had first been performed several decades previously, in 1779) was sufficient to induce overpowering physical symptoms in Hector Berlioz. It was a performance at the Paris Opéra that made him vow, as a young man, to give up medicine and make music his profession, despite his father's disapproval. There is no other work for which he reserved such hyperbolic praise, especially in this description, written appropriately enough to one of his sisters, of the way in which the opera had overwhelmed him:

Short of fainting, I could not have had a greater experience when I saw Gluck's masterpiece Iphigénie…. You see a vast plain (I tell you, the illusion is complete) and further still the sea. The orchestra presages a storm: black clouds slowly descend and cover the plain—the theatre is only lighted by flashes, in the most telling and truthful fashion. There is a moment of silence: no actor on the stage: the orchestra murmurs dully: you seem to hear the soughing of the wind….Gradually the excitement grows, the storm bursts, and you discover Orestes and Pylades in chains, led by the barbarians of Tauris who sing a frightening chorus: ‘We must have blood to atone for our crimes’…. I defy the hardest-hearted being to stay unmoved at the sight of these two wretches longing for death as their greatest hope—and when it turns out that it is Orestes’ sister Iphigénie, the priestess of Diana, who must sacrifice her brother, well, it is ghastly….And the orchestra! It’s all in the orchestra. If you could only hear

To-night they are playing… playing Iph… Iphigenia in Tauride.

Berlioz’s diary

IX

1 Berlioz (1969) 15, 56.
how every situation is depicted in it, especially when Orestes seems calm: there is a long held note in the violins suggesting tranquillity, very piano; but below, the basses murmur like the remorse which, despite his apparent calm, throbs in the heart of the parricide. But I forget myself.²

The strength of the vocabulary here—‘excitement’, ‘frightening’, ‘moved’, ‘ghastly’, ‘remorse’, ‘throbs’—replicates the emotional effect the performance of the opera had exerted upon Berlioz. It had reduced him nearly to fainting, and merely the recollection of it could make him lose control of his prose.³

Few Greek tragedies have been so intimately tied up with a single, specific musical realization as Euripides’ IT. Gluck’s opera is not only regarded as the crowning masterpiece of his career, but the consummation of French lyric tragedy, and the defining moment in the victory of reform opera over the familiar opera seria (recitatives-plus-solo-showcase-arias) in the previously dominant tradition called ‘Metastasian’ after its most famous exponent, the librettist Metastasio.⁴ The history of its performances is interwoven in fascinating ways with performances of Goethe’s stage play Iphigenie auf Tauris almost from the moment of the opera’s premiere on May 18th 1779, uncannily soon after the first performance of the early, prose version of Goethe’s tragedy just six weeks earlier, on April 6th of the same year. Later, when Euripides’ own play was rediscovered as a performance text in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gluck’s opera enters our story once again, since it was also realized in two of the twentieth century’s most influential performances of dance, by the pioneering choreographers Isadora Duncan and Pina Bausch: Bausch’s company keeps her exquisite production alive and on tour after her death today.

The recording of Maria Callas’ legendary Italian-language performance of Gluck’s opera at Milan’s La Scala opera house in 1957 is still a bestseller,¹ partly because her eloquent rendition of Iphigenia’s great lament in Act II, ‘O unhappy Iphigenia!’ (O sventurata Ifi genia), where the G-major key and the oboe solo combine to present a picture of grief and despair heroically transcended,⁶ has come to symbolize this unparalleled diva’s lonely and traumatic personal life. Like Iphigenia in Tauris, she had no contact with her family and no children; it was in 1957 that she began her affair with Aristotle Onassis (see Fig. IX.1). Recent productions, including the New York Metropolitan Opera performance starring Susan Graham and Placido

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¹ Berlioz (1966) 11–2, in a letter written to Nanci from Paris on 13th December 1821.
² For further evidence of Berlioz’s singular obsession with Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride, see Berlioz (1966) 81; Berlioz (1969) 93, 488.
³ The best general introduction to Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride, with good photographs of some important modern productions, is Noiray (1984). Metastasio was the pen name of Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi (1698–1782).
⁴ Available on the EMI Classics label as audio CD. The conductor was Nino Sanzogno.
⁵ Cooper (1988) 223.
Gluck’s Iphigénie in Pain

Domingo, beamed to cinemas live across the planet in February 2011, have kept Iphigenia’s adventures in Tauris high on the cultural agenda. The lament made famous by Callas, in its original French-language version, ‘O malheureuse Iphigénie’, is a soprano showpiece, incessantly excerpted and anthologized; Pylades’ song of his love for Orestes, ‘Unis dès la plus tender enfance’, is an acknowledged tenor masterpiece. And the vocabulary that surrounds this story-within-a-story, the reception of Gluck’s opera within the reception of Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy, is always the same and refers to the dramatic enactment and expression of emotion.

The importance of Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride in the history of musical theatre is well demonstrated by looking at its impact on singers and other composers. Mozart admired it and imitated some of its features in his Entführung aus dem Serail (1782). Mozart’s close friend, the Irish tenor Michael Kelly, who sang in both the premiere of The Marriage of Figaro and the 1781 German-language Vienna production of Gluck’s opera, regarded Gluck as the most stirring opera composer of all time:

For describing the strongest passions in music, and proving grand dramatic effect, in my opinion, no man ever equalled Gluck….I speak from my own feelings, and the sensation his descriptive music always produced on me. For example, I never could hear, without tears, the dream of Orestes, in Iphigenia: when in sleep, he prays the gods to give a ray of peace to the parricide Orestes.

FIGURE IX.1 Maria Callas as Iphigenia in Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride, Milan (1957).

7 This took place on 23rd October. The translation was the work of the young Viennese writer Johann Baptist Edler von Alxinger; Gluck slightly changed the music to fit the new libretto. He also converted Orestes’ role from baritone to tenor.
What can be more expressive of deep and dark despair?—And the fine chorus of the demons who surround his couch, with the ghost of his mother, produced in me a feeling of horror, mixed with delight.  

Beethoven seems to have been influenced by Gluck’s Thoas when creating the role of the villainous prison governor Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* (1805). The violinist Corsino suffered a minor breakdown while playing in the orchestra during ‘O unhappy Iphigenia!’, overcome ‘by an inexpressible emotion’; ‘at the moment when this prolonged lament of the priestesses blends with the voice of the royal orphan and with the heart-rending tumult in the orchestra’, he began to sob so violently that he had to be taken home. Wagner, who adapted Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Aulide*, learned from all Gluck’s later works when it came to his own revolt against the idea of opera as a series of separate vocal displays, and his own insistence on the abolition of the distinction between aria and recitative and their replacement by continuous melody. More specifically, the opening storm and the relationship between the tormented Orestes and his sister Iphigénie in Gluck’s Tauric *Iphigénie* clearly foreshadow Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, with the heroic sister abducted and living in a wilderness, the revelation of her identity to her twin brother Siegmund, and her dream of the destruction of her household (see Fig. IX.2). For his part, Richard Strauss created his own adaptation of what he saw as Gluck’s crowning achievement, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, for performance in Weimar at the Hoftheater in 1889, which entailed fusing the third and fourth acts. His version was sometimes revived in the earlier twentieth century, for example, for the opera’s first performance at the Metropolitan Opera in 1916.

In technical terms, how did Gluck’s opera achieve this high status amongst composers and singers of opera? He had always chosen his libretti carefully, and changed them as much as he wanted; as we shall see below, he was singularly fortunate in the libretto to *Iphigénie en Tauride*, which was based on an outstanding stage play. But his concentration on the organic relationship between music and language increased after his correspondence with Gottfried Herder in 1774. Herder challenged Gluck to do nothing less than create a new aural medium in which neither music nor poetry dominated the other, but rather were complementary:

The great schism betwixt Poetry and Music, which has brought these two arts so far asunder, lies in the question, Which of the two shall lead, which follow? The musician would have his art rule, the poet his; so that they often stand in

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8 Kelly (1826) 253.
10 Berlioz (1929) 343.
each other’s way. Each wishes to turn out a fine whole, and frequently fails to consider that he must deliver but a part which only when combined with the other part shall produce a perfect whole.  

In order to achieve this, Gluck dispensed with castrati and coloratura, wrote clean, singable melodic lines, and banned his singers from using their favourite ornaments like the short passing notes (appoggiatura) which broke up the sustained hold on the notes he had written for them.  

He insisted on simple language without flights of artificial rhetoric or estranging elevation, and thought hard about how music could underline—and in some cases consciously and ironically undermine—the emotion which the singer was expressing. He deprived the orchestra of the interludes in which they were used to having their ‘turn’ to shine, as well as integrating

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12 In a little-known letter of 5th November 1774, printed decades later in the *Steiermarkische Zeitschrift* for 1830, Vol. X.

the overture into the dramatic action (as in the opening storm scene of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, which moves in a manner which was wholly unprecedented, quite seamlessly, into the chorus of priestesses and then Iphigénie's dream narration). But he also made the instrumentalists far more important overall by replacing the traditional, very lightly accompanied recitative (*recitativo secco*) with recitative accompanied by the orchestra and organically integrated with the arias. To take just two examples of this brilliant orchestration, we need look no further than Orestes' mad scene and the recognition scene.

In a perceptive musicological analysis, Cooper has shown how Act II opens with Pylades moving through G major and E major to A minor, a straightforward diatonic progression which Orestes interrupts with starkly contrasting diminished harmonies and dominant sevenths. The music of Pylades and Orestes thus expresses on a sensory level the difference between wholesome sanity and what would now be called an incipient psychotic episode. Orestes lapses into semi-consciousness, singing the aria ‘*Le calme rentre dans mon cœur*’, in which his statement that the calm is returning to his heart is contradicted by the plangent violas and insistent throbbing of the orchestral semiquavers, stressed by a sforzando on the first beat of each bar. This presages the return of the Furies into his deluded, conscience-wracked mind. Berlioz could hardly find the language in which to express to his sister his response to this sequence: ‘I can’t describe to you even approximately the sense of horror one feels when Orestes, overwhelmed, falls down and says: ‘Calm is restored to my breast.’ While he sleeps, you see the shade of his mother whom he has killed, she is hovering about with other spirits brandishing infernal torches above his head.’ Moreover, it was Gluck himself who made the momentous decision to introduce Iphigénie into this scene, making Orestes mistake her for his mother, thus reminding the audience forcibly of the psychological trauma shared by these two children of the same mother.

In the second example, the libretto of Act IV uses the sort of recognition invented by the ancient Greek tragedian Polyidos (see above pp. 000), in which Iphigenia and Orestes only recognize each other at the very moment when she is about to sacrifice him. Gluck compresses an extraordinary sequence of emotional shifts into the space of just twenty-five bars. These begin in a sinister, chromatic A minor as Iphigénie proceeds towards the altar:

Then a pre-romantic string tremolanda depicts her shuddering grasp of the knife; the first violins’ sforzando notes and the Neapolitan B flat which forces

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15 Berlioz (1966) 12.
A minor and D minor express her anguish and are echoed in the calm words of Orestes, which modulate back to A minor.\textsuperscript{16}

Gluck turns this intimate moment into a cliffhanger; Orestes is preparing himself for death, thinking quietly about his oldest sister being sacrificed at Aulis, and she looks at him, knife in hand, pulsating with misery.\textsuperscript{17} The madness and the recognition are of course two of the most dramatic moments, but a similar analysis of the matching of vocal and instrumental writing to psychological register as implied by the language can be made on every single sequence in the work.

Yet such an analysis proves that the innovatory brilliance of the work certainly does not lie in the individual arias, many of which Gluck recycled from other works, especially tuneful Italian arias. Even ‘O malheureuse Iphigénie’ derives from ‘Se mai senti spirarti,’ Sextus’ aria in Gluck’s 1752 La clemenza di Tito. Several passages, including two we have already discussed—Orestes’ extraordinary solo ‘Le calme rentre dans mon coeur,’ and the music as Iphigénie approaches the altar—derive from his 1765 music for the important ballet Sémiramide, choreographed by Gasparo Angiolini.\textsuperscript{18} The plot of the ballet, which was based on Voltaire’s tragedy Sémiramis (1748), shares suggestive features with the story of the Atreids. The Assyrian queen Semiramis suffers guilt and visions after killing her husband, and is in turn killed by her son. The reuse of the music which Gluck wrote for this ballet in his Iphigénie en Tauride means that it is with some legitimacy that the opera has been described as a pasticcio, even if the pasting together of its disparate elements is transformative.\textsuperscript{19}

A better way of thinking about this inspired process of fusion is to concentrate on Gluck’s cultural hybridity and stated desire to make an opera that could transcend boundaries of national taste: he wrote that in choosing libretti, his quest was to find a text ‘in which the poet provides me with the most varied opportunities to express the emotions’, which would provide him with ‘the medium I have in mind for producing a type of music suited to all nations and in eliminating the absurd distinctions between national forms of music.’\textsuperscript{20} Unlike the contemporary composers of Italian opera, Gluck was able to take inspiration from a much more international palette of cultural colours. During his upbringing in Bohemia, he was exposed to the rich folk song and dance traditions and the vibrant church music culture of that area;\textsuperscript{21} he had trained in Vienna and Prague as well as Italy, worked in Austria, and corresponded with poets, literary critics, actors, theatre managers, and dancers as

\textsuperscript{16} Cooper (1988) 234.
\textsuperscript{17} Cumming (1995) 236.
\textsuperscript{18} Cumming (1995) 233.
\textsuperscript{19} See further Noiray (1989).
\textsuperscript{20} Gluck’s letter to the editor in Mercure de France, 1st February 1773, reproduced in Lesure (1984) 8–10.
\textsuperscript{21} Heartz (1988) 517.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

well as singers. His later music, including of course *Iphigénie en Tauride*, shows great ‘powers of assimilation of French and Italian styles, of dance models’. Gluck was also extremely interested in the new English style of realist, emotive acting and sustained verisimilitude pioneered by David Garrick, who achieved similar reforms in spoken theatre as Gluck aimed at in opera. It is no wonder that *Iphigénie en Tauride* proved so successful when performed in languages other than French, whether in German at Vienna in 1781, or at the King’s Theatre in London in Lorenzo da Ponte’s Italian translation (1796). It was designed to be transportable from its very inception. Whereas *opera seria* had never travelled well, since it was tailored to fit and flatter the vocal strengths of the singers for whom it was composed, Gluck’s reform operas were designed to transcend cultural divides.

Gluck also rethought the chorus completely. As a contemporary described it, when discussing what was new about Gluck’s handling of opera choruses,

…we have always used them in our opera, but until Chevalier Gluck, they were as tidy and still as organ pipes; they restricted themselves to performing pieces of harmony and counterpoint that could give pleasure to the ears, but conveyed trouble and confusion in the words. Chevalier Gluck is the first to have kept them in the action, and by providing simple, natural and true harmony, he has embellished the words, strengthened the expression, and imbued the drama with extraordinary movement.

It was perhaps in this creative handling of the chorus that his aspiration to emulate the effect of ancient Greek theatre is most apparent. He made a close study of the chorus in Greek tragedy, and realized that it needed to have its significance within the stage action reinstated. Certainly he tried in his later operas to bring into effect the ‘return’ to the Greek model, with its the integrated chorus with song and dance, recommended in the unofficial manifesto of the operatic reform movement, the polymath Francesco Algarotti’s *Saggio sopra l’opera in musica* (1755). Algarotti wrote that if composers followed his advice:

Then would the Opera be no longer called an irrational, monstrous and grotesque composition: on the contrary, it would display a lively image of the Grecian tragedy, in which, architecture, poetry, music, dancing, and every kind of theatrical apparatus united their efforts to create an illusion of such resistless power over the human mind, that from the combination of a thousand

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22 Rushton (1987) 615.
24 ‘M. L. A.’ [i.e., Abbé Arnaud] in a letter to P. Martini, reproduced in Leblond (1781) 145.
Gluck’s *Iphigénie in Pain* |

pleasures, formed so extraordinary a one, as in our world has nothing to equal it.\textsuperscript{25}

Algarotti’s perceived insistence on the classical Greek cultural model was celebrated in the engraving which appeared as a head-piece to his collected works (1791–4) (see Fig. IX.3). Alongside the theatre masks and the musical instruments, his name is inscribed in ancient Greek letters to symbolize his life’s work. His name is not these days very familiar outside specialist eighteenth-century circles, but his contribution to the history of opera, by recommending its reform through a return to the simplicity of Greek tragedy and its persuasive ‘total theatre’, was first fully realized in Gluck’s ‘reformed’ masterpiece *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

Put simply, Gluck’s choruses in this opera have a plausible reason for being present. They participate in the action, and are characterized ethnically and psychologically through their music. The Scythian ballet and chorus is rauous and savage, perfectly contrasting with the tranquillity and amplitude of the rather often liturgical music sung by the Greek priestesses.\textsuperscript{26} The Scythians and Greeks are differentiated metrically: the Scythians are given uncouthly simple double time, for example, in their first B-minor dance, with its plain string accompaniment, whereas the Greek priestesses’ longest song, at the end of Act II, is in a lilting, polished 3/8.\textsuperscript{27} A further contrast is made between the Scythians’ music and that of the Furies, which although in a minor key (D minor) and in common time, moves in an agitated way through ferocious harmonic progressions, with the trombones playing upwards scales, almost creating dissonance against the vocal line.

\textsuperscript{25} Algarotti (1767) 108–9.
\textsuperscript{26} Cooper (1988) 224.
\textsuperscript{27} Cooper (1988) 225.
Moreover, in *Iphigénie en Tauride* Gluck used a completely new process for the *choeur danse* to exploit to the maximum its dramatic potential within an opera. The very stage direction for the ‘pantomime and chorus with dance’ in Act II indicates his innovatory approach here: ‘The Eumenides exit from the back of the stage and surround Orestes. Some execute a ballet-pantomime of terror around him, others talk to him’ (Act II scene 4).\(^{28}\) Here is a chorus which is integrated with a pantomime; Gluck makes both his singers and his dancers move. In this famous scene, Gluck is probably inspired by the popularity of the story of *IT*, with its spectacular sacrificial procession, amongst choreographers of ‘embedded’ ballets within other operas: a Venice carnival setting of *Demofonte* by Giovanni Paisello in 1775, for example, contained an integrated mini-ballet on the *IT* theme.\(^{29}\) But Gluck is also taking direct inspiration from his choreographer’s ideas: the distinctive music which Gluck composed for the Scythians was written after the choreographer, Jean-Georges Noverre, had ‘dictated to Gluck the characteristic manner of the ‘Ballet of the Savages’ in *Iphigénie en Tauride*. The steps, the gestures, attitudes, and expressions of the different characters which I outlined to him gave to this celebrated composer the theme for that fine piece of music.’\(^{30}\) The new developments in dance drama had produced insights into the expressive possibilities of music, which Gluck, ever a fast learner and brilliant assimilator, discovered before anyone else. Notable amongst these was the use of chiaroscuro, and especially the abandonment of the requirement that music for stage dance needed to be rhythmically homogeneous.\(^{31}\)

These are aesthetic reasons why Gluck’s *IT* opera proved such an instant success in 1779, and which ensured its victory, in the court of public esteem, over the opera on the same theme by Nicolò Piccini (1781).\(^{32}\) Gluck’s aesthetic transformation of opera, a transformation which is rightly identified as coming to completion with this 1779 masterpiece, changed the history of the medium. But the entirely Gluck-focussed way of looking at the history of *IT* operas needs to be qualified. First, Gluck was hardly the first to find in Euripides’ *IT* an ideal vehicle for exploring aesthetic possibilities for the rendition of psychological pain. Gluck’s lyric opera would prove to provide the climax to more than a century of musical dramatizations of the *IT* story, as we saw in the previous chapter, and the adaptations began with Rucellai’s play way back in the early sixteenth century. The fascination of Gluck and his admirers as well as his choreographers with his emotional effects can be read as the inevitable climax of a tradition of putting Iphigenia on stage, after her near-death experience at Aulis,

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\(^{29}\) Hughes (2007) 119.

\(^{30}\) Noverre (1807 1.viii.

\(^{31}\) Betzwieser (2000) 19, n. 53.

\(^{32}\) For a detailed comparison of the two operas, see Rushton (1972).
to tell us about her pain. Rucellai, after all, had already experimented with his main character’s emotional expressivity, giving her in particular aria-like, self-contained sequences with much shorter lyric lines than the dialogue, and a good deal of assonance and repetition. In one such ‘aria’, his Ifigenia had expressed her unwillingness to survive if she has to be her brother’s executioner:\footnote{Rucellai (1772) 99 (my emphasis).}

\begin{verbatim}
Will I ever suffer
To be the executioner
And not to die?
And that you will be eradicated
From my clinging arms
As I already was from yours
And not to die?
And that I see the tepid altar
Flooded
And turning red because
of your blood rather than my own
And not to die?
Then Pylades, if you
Ever loved Orestes
Pity me
Pity him,
The man who dies in your place.
\end{verbatim}

There is something about the situation in Euripides’ \textit{IT} which \textit{obliges} an adaptor to think about how to create interest by the portrayal of emotional states. The only alternative is to mangle and complicate the plot by the addition of romantic love interest, intrigues and subplots, spectacle or intrusive action not present in the remarkably subdued, cerebral, and reflective Greek original. But Gluck treasured these restrained qualities. Even Berlioz admitted that it was not always easy to persuade his contemporaries to stage Gluck’s opera because the costumes were not splendid, the cast was very small, the shipwrecked heroes necessarily shabby, and Thoas and his countrymen were nothing but a ‘down-at-heel’ tribe:\footnote{Berlioz (1969) 554.} The opera has to succeed on its merits as musically expressed emotion, since much of it consists of psychic exploration of subjective consciousness—nightmares, thoughts, and memories—rather than action. The discomfort caused by disturbing dreams, the pain at
the thought of the death of a brother far away, the unique love between friends who have been close since childhood, the psychological agitation caused by memories of trauma, sensations of guilt, the fear of death or of being a survivor who has witnessed the execution of loved ones, and the exquisite relief when one isolated person discovers that they are not entirely alone in the world—these emotional states are both much simpler and much more difficult to convey in music than the inflated baroque passions of rage, jealousy, and desire. It was the combination of the emotionally diverse and subtle Euripidean tragedy with Gluck's creative powers which produced such a sensational new artwork.

Aesthetic shifts may not wholly be divorced from social and political ones. The simultaneous simplicity and sophistication of the emotional expressivity in Gluck's operas had a social dimension. The composer Liszt saw that Gluck was less interested in characterizing the feelings of striking individual characters than in expressing, in the most intense and engaging way possible, feelings which are shared universally by humankind. The new appeal of Gluck's shabby, distressed, and emotionally accessible heroes (curiously, this description is almost identical to that of Euripides as identified in Aristophanes' Frogs) can partly be explained by the striking evolution in taste under the late ancien régime, when more lower-class people began to attend the theatres—a shift noted by the most able music critic of the era, François-Benoit Hoffman. Simon Goldhill has recently reminded us how intimately the aesthetics of Gluck's Iphigénie en Tauride were tied up with the new sensibility of the French revolutionary period. But even this inference needs to be modified by being seen in the context of an earlier opera, Traetta's Ifigenia in Tauride (1763), which had already broken new ground in lyrical expressivity, clarity, directness, and tautness of plot; written a year after Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice, it shows how much Traetta learned from Gluck. But the interaction was not only one-way.

In 1767 Gluck directed a Florence performance of Traetta's Ifigenia, and it certainly informed his own composition on the same theme twelve years later. Traetta's librettist was Coltellini, a writer with a strong theatrical bent who believed that opera should aspire to create the same effect as tragic theatre, by eliciting pity and fear. He began his own campaign to liberate Italian opera of its

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35 On Gluck's innovations in the understanding of the causes and musical portrayal of pathos see especially Dahlhaus (1989).
36 Liszt (1854) 000.
38 Goldhill (2010).
39 Although Gluck's version has achieved a far more importance place in opera history, in its own time Traetta's Ifigenia was famous and often revived; Haydn performed it, with some supplements of his own, in 1786.
formal constraints with the libretto for *Ifigenia in Tauride*. In his introduction to the libretto, Coltellini explains that he has changed Euripides’ play to avoid the confusion of the two goddesses, Artemis and Athena, by making it Pallas who is worshipped in Tauris. But, more importantly, he has decided that Toante needs to be killed for reasons of emotional verisimilitude, on account of the ‘extreme desperation’ of the situation. He incorporated a frightening dance for the Furies in Act II, from which Gluck certainly took inspiration (see Fig. IX.4).

Coltellini also shows more awareness than any of the writers who had preceded him in adapting *IT* that Orestes has committed a terrible crime and that there is a pressing need for the repercussions of that crime to be addressed. But what is more significant is that the Traetta/Coltellini partnership also had a *democratizing* effect on the way the story is enacted. One of the most important sections is the lament of the *people* (*populo*) for Orestes’ suffering in Act I scene 5 (‘*O come presto a sera*’), which is heavily chromatic and emotionally charged. As Derek Hughes has emphasized in his study of ritual death in opera and literature, the new sensibility that is associated so strongly with Gluck is audibly present in much of this opera (see Fig. IX.5).

The suitability of *IT* to the new, direct emotional expressivity so prized by the opera reformers even shines through the music of Gian Francesco de Majo’s *Ifigenia in Tauride* (1764), an operatic setting of a deplorable libretto by Verazi, produced the year after Traetta’s, but at Mannheim. A character in the Wilhelm Heinse’s contemporary novel *Hildegard von Hohenthal* (1795–6), in which Mannheim operas are discussed in some detail, wrote that the arias were beautiful, even though, in regards to the libretto, ‘It is incomprehensible how someone could make something so mediocre out of Euripides’ masterpiece’.

What was different about these *IT* plays and operas, produced after the middle of the eighteenth century, from all those that had gone before, was not a matter of quantity. Despite some scholars’ suggestions to the contrary, there were many *IT* operas and plays before the 1760s, comparable in number to those on the theme of *Iphigenia in Aulis* and more than on most Greek tragedies. The majority were Italian, but there were also important British, Dutch, and French versions. One reason for the attraction of *IT* was that it was well known that Racine had hoped to adapt this play as well as *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and had indeed drawn up a plan for Act I. Moreover, the widely

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40 McClymonds and Baldi (2007).
41 Coltellini (1763) ‘Argomento’.
43 Heinse (1903) 190.
44 E.g., Cumming (1995) 220.
read and translated *Le Théâtre des Grecs* by Father Pierre Brumoy, which was first published in 1730, actually comments at the end of his extended ‘Réflexions’ on *IT* that its story contains an inherent force superior to that of most of those dramatized in modern French tragedy.  

*IT* actually proved equally attractive to the creators of Reform Opera as it had in the baroque period, but for different reasons. Where the earlier plays and operas created in Thoas the opposite of their ideal ruler, usually rendered to some degree Turkish, or fusing Turkish features with those of notoriously decadent pagan Roman emperors, in the mid-eighteenth century it became more and more feasible to see in the cruel tyrant of Tauris ‘an Enlightenment dissident’s image of an ancien régime monarch’ much nearer home. Here the identification of the populo with

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47 Brumoy (1730) vol. 2, 76; the *IT* section is pp. 3–76; see Cumming (1995) 222.

48 On the appeal of *IT* to the dramatic and emotive requirements of Reform Opera, see the astute comments of Cumming (1995) 217.

49 Hughes (2007) 106, but he overestimates the possibility of the dissident kind of reading in the late seventeenth century.
Gluck’s *Iphigénie in Pain*

Orestes’ suffering, which we noted in Coltellini’s libretto and its musical expression by Traetta, seems increasingly significant.

The watershed work is the excellent stage play, Claude Guymond de la Touche’s 1757 *Iphigénie en Tauride*, on which Nicolas-François Guillard’s libretto for Gluck was based. The tragedy achieved instant and astonishing success. Its premiere on 4th June 1757 was followed within weeks by a parody at the Comédie Italienne by Charles Simon Favart, entitled *La petite Iphigénie*, which revealingly focuses on the psychological turbulence and emotive effect of the tragedy. Iphigénie’s opening dream is elaborated by a string of absurdly terrifying images, and the deluded Orestes is compared with a mad dog which wants to bite Pylades. The tragedy was also a hit in 1761 at the Burgtheater in Vienna, where it was performed at least twenty-seven times—an exceptional run in those days.50

This version features perhaps the most superstitious and violent Thoas ever to have taken the stage, but de la Touche’s target seems to have been closer to home than the vaguely Ottoman Taurian kings of the previous tradition. Through the characterization of Thoas, his play (the only one he ever wrote) makes an ardent argument against fanaticism, as might be expected from a man who had for fourteen years been a Jesuit before reacting against it with a passion and abandoning the order. Indeed, as Derek Hughes has pointed out, de la Touche wrote a verse satire

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50 See Zechmeister (1971) 477.

**Figure IX.5** Etching by Giovanni David entitled ‘Ifigenia in Tauride’ (1776).
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

*Sighs of the Cloister, or the Triumph of Fanaticism* (1766), in which he consistently compares the Society of Jesus to the type of superstitious and backward cult which practises human sacrifice. The tone of much of his tragedy, which shares Voltaire’s idea of théâtre *à l’antique*, is correspondingly similar to that of Voltaire’s 1764 article on ‘Fanatisme’ in the *Encyclopédie*. But the extraordinary enthusiasm with which de la Touche’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* was received cannot be explained merely in terms of an upbeat Enlightenment rationalist belief that civilization could free the world of all atavistic ritual barbarism, even at a time when the Jesuits were indeed facing suppression in France, Portugal, and Spain.

Hughes is probably correct to stress that in the other *IT* play of the same year, by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Vaubertrand (which was not performed), the point at issue is entirely secular and political—Orestes even killed his mother by accident! Thoas is cynically enforcing the traditional sacrifices in order to keep his subjects under his thumb. ‘Taurica is the crisis-ridden France of Louis XV, recently embarked on the Seven Years War against that great hero of the Enlightenment, Frederick the Great’. Louis XV had become extremely unpopular in France by the late 1740s, and was regarded by many of his subjects as a stereotypical tyrant—debauched, extravagant, wilful, stupid, and incompetent. It is indeed tempting to draw the connection, as Hughes has done, between the Thoas of de la Touche’s play in July 1757, Louis XV, and the appalling public torture and execution in March 1757 of a domestic servant who had tried unsuccessfully to assassinate the king.

Robert-François Damiens was convicted as a regicide, which traditionally incurred capital punishment by drawing and quartering, and although the king was almost unharmed, the ancient punishment was revived. In the *Place de grève*, the square by the Seine which Victor Hugo portrayed in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Book 2 ch. 2, as the ultimate symbol of the vicious justice of medieval and ancien régime monarchs, Damiens was tortured for hours with red-hot instruments, boiling oil, sulphur, molten wax and lead. The king’s executioner, Charles Henri Sanson (to whom we shall return), then attempted to have Damiens’ living body pulled apart by horses. The procedure failed and an axe eventually had to be used to hack his limbs from his torso, which was finally burnt at the stake. This extraordinarily theatrical atrocity, on which Foucault famously lingered in the introduction to *Discipline and Punish*, divided the public: for many conservative and mainstream Parisians it was the only response to the diabolical assault on the body of the king and a necessarily conspicuous deterrent; for the more progressive among the emergent bourgeoisie

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See de la Touche (1766) 11–2; Hughes (2007) 108.  
Gluck’s Iphigénie in Pain

and Enlightenment thinkers, however, it demonstrated the shocking depths to which the aristocracy could sink when it sensed it was under threat, thus epitomizing the coercive and arbitrary violence underlying the French political system. It is indeed a legitimate interpretation to see the two IT plays of 1757 as being connected with the political power play in the streets of Paris.\(^\text{54}\)

The play on which Gluck’s libretto was based, by de la Touche, was therefore born at a moment of constitutional crisis and ideological conflict. Its condemnation of cruelty and tyranny is undoubtedly connected with the emergent sensibility of the antimonarchical movement as well as with the Enlightenment distrust of religion. Its author was fascinated with the nature of humanity and had an almost voluptuous concept of virtue which adumbrates that of Rousseau.\(^\text{55}\) But the ideological tensions underpinning Gluck’s libretto are complicated. Gluck himself was no republican: in 1757 he had begun his two decades as Kapellmeister to the Hapsburg court in Vienna, where he tutored the young Marie Antoinette in music, and it was under her patronage that he came to Paris and staged Iphigénie en Aulide in 1774, the year her husband was crowned Louis XVI of France. She was of course present at the opening night of Iphigénie en Tauride in 1779. But the fashionable taste for Gluck transcended class barriers. Not only the royal family but their more menial staff adored Gluck’s music; the favourite pastime of Charles Henri Sanson, the man in charge of the execution of Damiens, was to play Gluck’s melodies at home on his violin.\(^\text{56}\) Although Gluck himself died safely in Vienna two years before the French revolution, his music, with its universalization of emotions across class hierarchies, was the soundtrack to the momentous events of 1789 and the carnage which followed it over the next few years. Sanson, who loved Gluck, and had executed Damiens, became public executioner after the revolution, brought in the guillotine, and in due course executed Louis XVI himself and subsequently several prominent revolutionaries. His son Henri executed Gluck’s patroness Marie Antoinette.

In Guillard’s libretto, the neoclassical simplicity of the plot renders transparent the extreme oscillations in the balance of power and in the use of violence in ancient Tauris, reflecting those turbulent years of terror in France; the barbarian monarch who stages human sacrifice (as the ancien régime had staged the execution of the would-be regicide Damiens) turns into the victim of his former victims: the Greeks of Guillard and Gluck end the opera exclaiming, ‘Of this odious tribe let us exterminate all down to the last remnant!’ But the impasse can only be resolved by divine intervention. Neither the Greek aristocrats nor the ‘mob of bloodthirsty barbarians’

\(^{54}\) Hughes (2007) 110.

\(^{55}\) Pascal (1997) 35–46.

\(^{56}\) Sanson (1865) 000.
can secure victory. In the essay collection *Music and the French Revolution*, Charlton has stressed that *Iphigénie en Tauride*, despite its miraculously happy ending, ‘is the most tragic in tone of Gluck’s operas’; it can actually be seen as ‘a study in morbid psychology, for three of the four principal characters are convulsed by violent emotion almost throughout’.\(^{57}\) It is hardly surprising that the emotions in this opera spoke so loudly to the European public in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\(^ {58}\)

The intensity of the experience felt to be offered by *IT* entertainments in the late eighteenth century was reflected in its attraction for dramatists who made a living by creating dramas which parodied more serious theatre. Lesage’s Sri Lanka *IT* Harlequinade of 1713 has been discussed in chapter VIII, but the prize for the most humorous and stylish parody of an *IT* play—indeed, one expert in eighteenth-century French stage parody says, of any opera\(^ {59}\)—must go to Charles Simon Favart’s parody of Gluck’s opera, *Les Rêveries Renouvelées des Grecs*. Indeed, this parody had two different lives, for it was originally written as a parody of de la Touche’s tragedy, produced shortly after the premiere of the more serious work in 1757, under the title *La Petite Iphigénie, parodie de la Grande* (see above, pp. 000). So successful did the ‘little Iphigenia’ prove that when de la Touche’s words were reworked by Guillard for Gluck twenty-two years later, Favart cashed in on the renewed *IT* craze by revising his parody to take notice of the new musical production, and renamed it *Les Rêveries Renouvelées des Grecs*.\(^ {60}\)

A fundamental similarity underlies the two versions. Favart’s tactic is to focus on the intense psychological imagery which de la Touche and Guillard used as a vehicle for the expression of extreme emotion, and to push it to even further extremes.\(^ {61}\) In de la Touche’s play, Iphigénie reports her premonitory dream in which her father offered her Death as a bridegroom at her wedding altar. Favart gives his ‘petite Iphigénie’ a dream composed of a whole series of ill omens that she says can be found in ‘the *Dictionary of the Meanings of Dreams*’:

Lightning flashes, bellowings, spectres, pale flames,  
Moans, terror, graveyards, tombs,  
Horror, subterranean noises, gaps yawning in the earth,  
A phantom emerging from the underworld to reveal himself,  
An abyss, plaintive tones, daggers, bloodstained rags,

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\(^{57}\) Charlton (1992) 170.  
\(^{59}\) Grannis (1931) 120.  
\(^{60}\) Published in Favart (1809).  
\(^{61}\) What follows owes much to Grannis (1931) 121–4.
Shadows, crimes, remorse, dread, trembling knees,
A shrine, a temple, a cypress tree, shameful idolatry ...  

Similarly, Thoas says in the tragedy that he has difficulty sleeping because his conscience is tormented by knowledge of the numerous murders he has committed, but the parody amplifies and extends his psychological neurosis to a ludicrous extreme. Orestes is portrayed as a comically bitter individual who delivers excruciatingly long and self-pitying denunciations of Destiny. To this comic exaggeration of psychological pain through verbal extension, in Les Rêveries Renouvelées des Grecs Favart adds parody of the visual stunts with which Gluck's opera had embellished the emotional scenario; the dance of the Furies in particular is heightened so that they gnash their teeth and keep on thrusting serpents in the delusional hero's face.

In Iphigénie en Tauride, Gluck achieved the consummation of the movement for the reform of opera into a dramatic medium capable of intense and nuanced emotional expressivity. His music was perceived as effecting nothing short of a revolution in music, and played an important role in the soundscape of the French revolutionary era. It was a combination of this emotive capacity and Gluck's particular form of early romantic Hellenism which attracted the woman who in the early years of the twentieth century, the period of the Russian revolutions and the agitation for women's emancipation, wanted to put the expressivity into dance. Isadora Duncan changed dance history by throwing aside the painful pointe ballet shoes, corsets, conventions, and traditional postures of classical ballet, and seizing the initiative as a woman, a choreographer and soloist. She became agent as much as spectacle, enacting in her dances 'the self in the process of engagement with the external world, whether that meant love or fate, oppression or death'. She used her growing fame to advocate 'her own version of feminism', announcing in an influential lecture in 1903 that the dancer of the future 'will dance not in the form of a nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette but in the form of woman in its greatest and purest expression. She will realize the mission of woman's body and the holiness of all its parts.' And in this project, the figure of Iphigenia, as musically presented in Gluck's two Iphigénie operas, proved endlessly stimulating. Creating the dances for them provided the methodological bridge between Duncan's earlier pieces, which were, fundamentally, embodied responses to music, and her later, more dramatic pieces. Between 1903 and 1916 she worked on selected sections of both works, developing the choreography of a total of twenty dances into a composite dance-drama—the only one of its

62 Favart (1809) 000.
64 Morgenroth (1998) 93.
65 Duncan (1901).
kind that she attempted. It was a huge success in Holland and Germany, playing to capacity houses. A reviewer who saw her at the Munich Volkstheater in 1906 rapturously claimed that anyone who had seen ‘the elegant artist…moving about majestically, virginally pure, and devoted as Iphigenia, or wholly abandoned to rhythm as one of ‘The Maidens of Chalkis’ and in a portrayal of dancing Scythians—would have to admit that…Isadora Duncan’s dancing to the music of Gluck has to be recognized as simply perfect.’

Why did Duncan choose Gluck’s Iphigenia opera scores to choreograph in her revolutionary style? She took inspiration from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), especially in her idea that her dance, in affirming the selfhood of the dancer and the spirit of music itself, was the modern equivalent of the chorus of Attic tragedy; this inevitably drew her to music that had been composed for choruses in operatic versions of tragedy, such as that dance of the maidens of Chalcis or the ritual procession for the priestesses of Tauris (see Fig. IX.6). Perhaps she knew that Gluck’s choreographer Noverre had made more than a superficial contribution to the evolution of the music (see above p. 000). Or perhaps she was directly prompted to choreograph Gluck through her contact with the ideas of François Delsarte, a nineteenth-century singer, singing teacher, and theorist of expression. His ideas were popularized in two books by his students which achieved massive international sales in the 1880s and onwards. Delsarte had an enormous admiration for Gluck’s operas, especially *Alcestis* and the two *Iphigénie* operas, in which he had performed himself. He was held by his contemporaries to be single-handedly responsible for the considerable revival of interest in Gluck in the later nineteenth century (although admittedly they had a vested interest in downplaying the role of Berlioz, with whom their mentor had famously fallen out, it is said over the precise interpretation of a passage in Gluck!).

Delsarte was also profoundly influenced by the study of ancient Greek art, especially sculpture, and encouraged all his disciples to study Greek artworks in order to observe the relationship between bodily posture and emotional expression. It was in North America that Delsarte’s system had been most widely disseminated, offered in countless schools of dance, elocution, and physical education, and studied in no fewer than twenty-one different books published between 1882 and 1902. These included the bestselling handbook *The Delsarte System of Expression* (1885) by Delsarte’s American student Geneviève Stebbins. Delsartism became more than

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68 Duncan (1918) 96.
69 Arnaud in Delsarte (1893) 278, 359–60.
Gluck’s Iphigénie in Pain

a performance technique: it was a major impetus behind American middle-class feminism, and it was as a Delsartian that Isadora began her training.  

Eight decades after Duncan first designed the movements for her Iphigenia, her cultural descendant Pina Bausch created her own distinctive choreography to the music of Gluck’s Tauris opera, and became the leading exponent and symbol of modern Tanztheater, Dance Theatre, in the process: it was a highly symbolic move when she renamed the Wuppertal Opera Ballet, of which she had been appointed Artistic Director in 1972, the Tanztheater Wuppertal. But her inspirations were many, and included the Laban-inspired movement for ‘expressive dance’, Ausdruckstanzbewegung. Expressive dance was disseminated by the Germans Mary Wigman (through the school she founded in Dresden in 1920, and through numerous tours) and Kurt Jooss, in whose school at Essen Pina Bausch enrolled at the age of fourteen. When she took up her appointment at Wuppertal, the theatre manager there suggested that she choreograph Gluck’s Iphigenie auf Tauris, a relatively conventional choice for a company describing its work as ‘Opera Ballet’. At first Bausch was reluctant to take on a work of this scale, but she certainly felt an affinity with Gluck’s aesthetic project; she regularly included on the theatre programme

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71 Ruyter (1973) 434–5.
for performances of her *Iphigenie auf Tauris* the aesthetic manifesto with which he preaced his *Alceste* in 1769:

> I thought to restrict music to its true function of helping poetry be expressive and to represent the situations of the plot, without interrupting the action or cooling its impetus with useless and unwanted ornaments.\(^{73}\)

There is a clear relationship between this manifesto and Bausch’s own favourite aphorism, that she was interested not in how people move (motion) but in what makes them move (emotion). This has been used to clarify the fundamental distinction between different schools of modern dance; the contrasting tradition, associated with Merce Cunningham, was interested in movement and dance itself rather than as an expression of social or psychological impetuses.\(^{74}\)

\(^{73}\) Translated by Howard (1963) 84; see Zanobi (2010) 240.

\(^{74}\) Jochen Schmidt quoted in Daly (1986) 47.
In a brilliant article, Zanobi has argued that we must not underestimate the degree to which Bausch’s decision to choreograph Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride was affected by her awareness of Duncan’s work on his Iphigenia operas. Bausch was interested in some aspects of the story that Duncan had not addressed, especially the role of memory—the recollections of both Iphigenia and Orestes could not have been more suggestive to a choreographer who has explicitly said that the focus of her work is ‘relationships, childhood, fear of death, and how much we all want to be loved.’ She was particularly interested in the emotional bond between the two Greek men, whose sustained, lyrical physical intimacy was more than a little shocking to the more conservative members of her original 1973 audiences (see Fig. IX.7). Yet the definition of dance as an expression of subjectively experienced emotional states, along with the stress on the upper body and arms through the rooting of the movement in the solar plexus, are clear evidence of Duncan’s lasting cultural legacy. Once Bausch realized how well Gluck’s music could support her own project of the development of creating a vocabulary of embodied feelings, she began to devise the beautiful, emotional, at times gut-wrenching choreography to Iphigénie en Tauride, which is still a favourite piece in the company’s repertoire. Indeed, Bausch’s version, as much as the several recent revivals of Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride in the opera houses of North America and Europe, has since the early 1970s probably been the most significant conduit through which Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy has reached the public. As we shall see in the next chapter, the premiere of Bausch’s choreography coincided almost exactly with the historical moment at which a sustained attempt was made by the German avant-garde to topple Goethe’s tragedy from the lofty position it had so long occupied in the cultural hierarchy.

75 Zanobi (2010). Other women in dance theatre have been drawn to the same myth out of a desire to honour their ‘foremothers’ Duncan and Bausch, for example, the Iphigenia in Tauris performed by Nina Winthrop & Dancers at the Cunningham Studio, NYC in 1992. This was a narrative dance based on Euripides rather than the Gluck opera, for ten dances, with new music by John Cale, and was deliberately chosen in homage to Duncan and Bausch as the inaugural full-length production of the company.

76 Price (1990) 325.
Goethe’s Iphigenie Between Germany and the World

The famous painting ‘Goethe in the Campagna, 1786–87’, by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (see Fig. X.1), was created during the critical period of Goethe’s evolution as a writer, between 1786 and the early months of 1787, when he was traveling in Italy. The painting portrays Goethe in an idealized Italian landscape. In the background are a ruined aqueduct and the tomb of Cecilia Metella from the Via Appia; Goethe sits on a plinth beside a Roman capital and a marble sarcophagus relief sculpture portraying Iphigenia with Orestes and Pylades. This embedded classical picture was not part of Tischbein’s first conception of the portrait. Goethe was not originally a wandering poet having his eyes opened by the treasures of Greco-Roman antiquity, but an Arcadian shepherd in an unidentified pastoral scene. Tischbein incorporated the resounding reference to the story of Iphigenia because Goethe was working on the final version of his play while they travelled. Although he may have made use of a sketch by Winckelmann, Tischbein saw the original sarcophagus (see above Fig. VII.7) in Rome. Before it was bought by the Munich Glyptothek in 1817, it was housed in the Villa Ridolfi, where it was in all probability studied intently by Tischbein and Goethe together. In Tischbein’s portrait, the embedded image, the fragment of an ancient narrative, is the emblem of the poet’s journey in the classical world.

2 Beutler (1962), who points to a red-chalk sketch of autumn 1786, in a private collection in Frankfurt, which is identified as Tischbein’s earliest pensiero for the future ‘Goethe in the Campagna’. See also Moffitt (1983) and Barryte (1984–5).
3 Winckelmann (1767) plate 149.
Neither Thoas nor any other identifiable Taurian or Scythian seems to appear in Tischbein’s fragment of an ancient marble: the identity of the shadowy figures between the three Greeks is not clear. The story’s intense focus on inter-ethnic relations—whether in Euripides or Goethe’s version—is thus erased from Tischbein’s vision. In contrast, Goethe’s Thoas is alive to the colonial ideology underlying ancient Greek mythical travel narrative: as he complains to Iphigenie at the play’s climax in Act V scene 6, in the statue of Diana, Orestes and Pylades came to expropriate something that did not belong to them:

The Greek often turns his greedy eyes
on the faraway treasures of the barbarians,
the golden fleece, horses, beautiful daughters.
And yet their force and cunning did not always
take them home in safety with their loot.

Goethe has radically altered the Euripidean prototype in this one respect. His Greeks do not rob the barbarians of their unique statue: Orestes tells Thoas at the

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4 The much-lauded ‘harmony’ of the ending devised by Goethe was not without precedent. One previous version of the Euripidean play had concluded with the Greeks and Taurians ending on thoroughly harmonious terms, the anti-Catholic Whig Iphigenia of John Dennis, performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in the winter of 1699–1700. Dennis’s Iphigenia is a humane, serious but optimistic, drama concerned with social anthropology, in particular the stages of political evolution. His barbarous Scythians, forced by custom to sacrifice strangers, learn from their Grecian visitors to transcend their primitive superstitions and cheerfully adopt the ways of the Enlightenment gentleman. See further Hall and Macintosh (2005) 41–54.
last minute that he has misunderstood Apollo in assuming that the ‘sister’ he needed
to fetch from the Black Sea was Diana rather than his own sister, Iphigenie. No
blood is shed, the Greeks depart, and Thoas even manages—but only just—to be
polite about the outcome. The victory won in all earlier versions of the play by guile
and force (whether divine or human) is replaced by persuasion and the achievement
of consensus. This shift is the crucial ideological work done by the play, and has been
the source both of the enormous admiration it has elicited, and also, since the 1960s,
of correspondingly acrimonious criticism.

Besides the single first Act of Faust II in which Helen appears, Iphigenie is the
only serious dramatic work by Goethe about ancient Greeks, his only adaptation
of a Greek tragedy, and his only play which directly dramatizes an inter-ethnic
encounter. His other serious dramas stage episodes from German or Medieval his-
tory. Since the Sturm und Drang, German authors had been turning to Shakespeare
rather than the Greeks for dramatic models; and if they turned to the Greeks it was
nearly always to Sophocles, not Euripides. His choice of Greek prototype, with its
barbarian setting, is fascinating given that the French classical dramatists he set out
to challenge had elevated, rather, the stories of Medea, Oedipus, Phaedra, and the
other, more victimized Iphigenia (all set in Greece) to places of prominence. What
was it that the barbarians had to offer Goethe? Is his play—which is certainly com-
posed in the most beautiful poetry—a miracle of cosmopolitan humanism or a sin-
ister crypto-colonial fantasy of domination? The answer to this question matters
because of the sheer scale of Iphigenie auf Tauris’ influence. It is one of most impor-
tant plays ever written in German. It has been an essential element in the school
curriculum and national culture of German-speaking countries. It is also one of the
half-dozen most important adaptations of an ancient Greek tragedy in intellec-
tual and theatrical history, comparable with Racine’s Phèdre, Anouill’s Antigone,
or Pasolini’s Edipo Re.

Goethe’s heroine reflected the nineteenth-century western constructions of ideal
femininity as well as the increasing sense of societal fragmentation, deracination,
and individual isolation ushered in by the industrial revolution and breakdown of
the ancient regimes of Europe. These assume striking visual form in the German
vogue for paintings of Iphigenie as a patient but tragic exile, sitting alone, her face
turned away from the viewer, gazing out across vast oceans to some desired home-
land faraway, especially those of Anselm Feuerbach (see Fig. X.2).

5 Goethe did parody Aristophanes’ Frogs in Götter, Helden und Wieland and Birds in Die Vögel, on which see

6 This question is also asked, although given a different, more psychoanalytically inflected answer in Winkler
The play complicated forever the reception of the Euripidean original. Most significant authors attracted to the story subsequently knew Goethe’s play as well, if not better, than the Greek prototype. His play has itself produced a vast secondary bibliography and, despite the lukewarm reception afforded to the very first performances, an ongoing performance history both in Germany and beyond.

*Iphigenie auf Tauris* was published in English as early as 1793. It was Goethe who put German literature on the map in Britain. This is proven by the nastiness of some of the responses, for example the reaction in the *Edinburgh Review* for June 1816 to the first three parts of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The reviewer complains that German literature has developed far too rapidly: ‘five-and-twenty or thirty years ago’ there was nothing in Germany but narrow-minded philology, ale, and ham. This takes us

8 The earliest translation of which I am aware was the work of the accomplished Norwich Germanist William Taylor. He had spent a year in Detmold in 1781–2, where he had been befriended by the minor literary figure Lorenz Benzler. In about 1789 he made his translation of *Iphigenie*, published in Norwich in 1793. Taylor made a seminal contribution to the popularization of German literature in the UK, and the translation was much admired by literary people; it even received the unusual honour of being republished in Germany by the Berlin bookseller Johann Friedrich Unger.
precisely to the year 1786, when Goethe was putting the finishing touches to the final version of *Iphigenie*. Although *Faust* had many British admirers, the general view was summed up by Goethe’s translator Anna Swanwick in 1892: amongst not only his plays but all his poetry, *Iphigenie* ‘stands preeminent’. She adds that this ‘beautiful drama’ illustrates ‘the recently revived love of Hellenism, which contrasts so forcibly with Mediaevalism’, by which she means the idiom of *Faust* and *Goetz von Berlichingen*.

Young American men were made to read Goethe’s *Iphigenie*, and could be awarded first prize in the Yale Poetry Competition in 1899 for imagining in the first person the frustrated erotic desire of the abandoned Thoas for Iphigenie and all that her Hellenic culture signified to him:

Why did I not,
When she was helpless at my feet, speak out
One kingly word and claim the prize as mine?
O for one moment’s glorious maddening joy,
To see those proud eyes drop before my look,
To seize that soft white body in my arms,
To feel the pulse of life beat wildly high
That would be triumph, that be victory!

In addition to English, *Iphigenie* was translated into Swedish in 1815, by the Jena Greek Iannis Papadopoulos into Katharevousa in 1818, into Danish in 1820, Czech in 1822, and French by 1823. An Italian translation appeared in the year of Goethe’s death (1832).

As we have noticed, the important change Goethe makes in the plot is that Thoas is neither coerced nor tricked into letting the Greeks depart from Tauris in safety. He is, rather, persuaded to do so, as well as to give up forever the practice of human sacrifice. Coercion by physical or military force is replaced, to use the terms of Antonio Gramsci, by the hegemonic achievement of a consensus favourable to the dominant group’s interests. At the core of the play therefore lies a fantasy of imposing a new moral order on international relations, a moral order in which backward peoples *consent* to have their ritual practices and values dictated by more advanced ones. The play offers an improbable vision of a world in which violent antagonism, atavistic ritual brutality, colonial rapacity, concupiscence, vindictiveness, and trauma can all

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9 Swanwick (1892) 338–9.
10 Mann (1899).
11 Subsequent languages in which *Iphigenie* could be read by the end of the nineteenth century included Latin (1841), Romanian (1862), Polish (1863), Russian (1874), Serbian (1887), Hungarian (1888), Ukrainian (1895) and Catalan by 1898.
be eradicated by an ideal of gentleness, or kindness, embodied in Goethe’s psychologically implausible Iphigenie.

Thoas’ famous final (if grudging) words, *Leb' wohl* (‘Farewell’), enact nothing less than a revolutionary transition in international relationships and world civilization. Within the world of the play, in the very recent past, barbarians have raped Greek women, and executed all aliens who arrive on their shore; Greeks, meanwhile, as Thoas points out, have exploited other countries by routinely stealing their most valued and valuable possessions. The two principles dominating this world order have been force and guile, *Gewalt und List*, as Orestes puts it in his final speech. But these principles are to be replaced by a cluster of crypto-Christian virtues. One of these is ‘purity’ and other cognates of the play’s key term—*rein* (‘pure’), used no fewer than fourteen times. Iphigenie uses it often to describe herself or an attribute of herself—she is a ‘pure sister’, she offers ‘a pure soul and pure hand’. Femininity of a virginal and wholly asexual kind—Iphigenie as sister/mother—becomes instrumental. ‘In the figure of Iphigenie, woman stylized as saint becomes the new ideal.’ The other, related key terms appear in the praise which Arkas (the most advanced Taurian) bestows, during the opening scene, on the beneficial effects of Iphigenie’s presence in Tauris: she has ‘exhilarated’ or ‘lifted’(*erheitert*) the King’s bleak mood; she has prevented the Taurians from performing human sacrifices ‘by soft persuasion’ (*mit sanfter Überredung*), and won over Diana with ‘soft prayer’ (*sanftes Gebet*); the King has found new joy in the ‘mildness’ (*Milde*) of her presence, and so has alleviated (*erleichtert*) the burden that showing obedience (*Gehorsam*) towards him had posed his servants. Under Iphigenie’s influence, citizens and kings have evolved a social contract. In this cluster of terms, obedience (*Gehorsam*) is set up as a central issue, since it should be replaced by *Überredung* (persuasion), effected through *Milde* (mildness) by individuals who are *sanft* (soft).

Although Thoas once ruled by popular consent, he has become bitter since his son died, and knows that he now exacts obedience from his subjects only by coercion:

The joyful obedience, which once
I saw flashing toward me from every eye,
is now dulled with distress and discontent.

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13 On the semantic field surrounding purity in the play, see Cuonz (2006) 113–39. In the course of the eighteenth century the intense relationship between the brother and sister began to displace the relationship between the two men as the focus of emotional interest; the romantic interest in brother-sister love was foreshadowed in the title the young Johann Elias Schlegel originally bestowed on his (unsuccessful) attempt to make Euripides’ *IT* into a stage play acceptable to his contemporaries, *Die Geschwister in Taurien* (1737), an adapted version of which was published in Schlegel (1761) under the new but more conventional title *Orest und Pylades*.
Everyone thinks about the future,  
and obeys me, childless as I am, because he must. (I.3)

Yet at the climax, in Act V scene 3, Iphigenie decides that she can only extract what 
she wants from Thoas by consensus rather than force. She admits to him, under 
pressure from her conscience, that there is a scheme to deceive him. She asks him to 
show mercy to the Greeks, who are, she reveals, her brother and his close friend.

Thoas is not swift to give his consent. His anger (Zorn) makes him resist her 
words. She begs for mercy, and asks that he clasp her hand in a gesture of peace. Into 
this impasse first Orestes and then Pylades return, wielding weapons, but Iphigenie 
manages to make all three men agree to talk rather than fight. Thoas must listen 
to the gentle voice of reason, while Orestes must control his youthful impetuosity. 
The focus swiftly shifts from the question of human sacrifice, and whether it can be 
replaced by single combat, to the ownership of the statue of Diana, and it is in this 
context that Thoas addresses to Iphigenie his most important speech in the play, 
part of which has already been quoted (V.6):

And even if your speech erased all my doubts,  
and I managed to constrain the rage in my breast,  
weapons would still have to decide the issue between us;  
I can’t see how peace can be made.  
They have come here, as you know yourself,  
to rob me of the sacred image of the goddess.  
The Greek often turns his greedy eyes  
on the faraway treasures of the barbarians,  
the golden fleece, horses, beautiful daughters.  
And yet their force and cunning did not always  
take them home in safety with their loot.

Orestes explains that he now understands that the ‘sister’ for whom Apollo sent him 
to Tauris was not Diana at all. Thoas will keep the statue, and Orestes will keep 
Iphigenie. Moreover, Orestes will renounce the twin instruments of empire, force 
and cunning (Gewalt und List), and use henceforward ‘pure and childlike trust’ 
(reines, kindliches Vertrauen).

The most important reversals in Goethe’s play are the twin shifts in the psyches 
of Iphigenie and Thoas. The shift in Iphigenie’s stance results in her refusal to practise 
deception even in circumstances where a family member’s life is in danger.\(^\text{15}\) The much greater shift within Thoas’ mind produces his agreement not only to let the

\(^{15}\) There are good remarks on Goethe’s articulation of Iphigenie’s internal struggle in Lee (2005).
Goethe’s Iphigenie Between Germany and the World

Greeks go, but to do so with the semblance of a good grace. Iphigenie's insistence that he be polite about her departure seems, to me at least, outrageously patronizing. It is not only Thoas’ anger which is forcibly muted by Iphigenie. The play enacts a series of restraining orders on strong emotion—or, rather, prohibitions against their public expression or acknowledgement. Iphigenie’s inability to acknowledge any anger against her father is remarkable. In her prologue, she remembers nostalgically her childhood in her ‘father’s halls, where the sun revealed the heavens’ to her; a life bereft of ‘parents and siblings’ is miserable. She prays that if Agamemnon has returned from Troy, Diana will convey her back as well. She does mention the sacrifice, but only in order to cast Agamemnon as the real victim of Diana, meanwhile talking about herself, without using her own proper name, in a distancing third person. Diana ‘plunged the godlike Agamemnon into anguish, demanding his own daughter, so that he brought what was dearest to him to the altar’ (I.1).

The trauma is thus conceived as Agamemnon’s. Iphigenie is in denial. She has not faced up to her past. She wants to go back to a father who ordered her execution, and to a homeland that failed to protect her. When she reveals her identity to Thoas (I.3), she again talks about the sacrifice in terms which obscure the truth that her father had killed her: it was not Agamemnon but an unidentified ‘they’—the Greek army—who lured her to Aulis and ‘they’ who dragged her to the altar; here Iphigenie glosses over the sacrificial violence altogether, and shortly afterwards tells Thoas that she longs to return to her father and (incredibly) bring him joy in his old age! Again, while she is still minded to deceive Thoas in Act V scene 3, she remains determined not to blame her father directly: she tells him she pities the Greek men because she once suffered an experience similar to the fate they are facing. But far from naming Agamemnon, this time she uses the passive voice: ‘the knife was lifted up to pierce through my living breast’.

The emotional and spiritual force exerted by Iphigenie is of course not presented as coercive. The whole play is designed to imply that her new, indeed revolutionary moral sensibility can liberate everyone around her from the repressive, confining morality of the past. The curse on the Tantalids was one imposed on them by the gods, who forged a ‘band of bronze’ to fix on their brows. The metaphysical and moral bondage in which the human race has been held is symbolized by the slavery or imprisonment, either mental or physical, of all the characters in the drama. Even Iphigenie serves Diana, whom she would have liked to serve voluntarily, with ‘silent reluctance’, since Thoas holds her in ‘solemn, sacred bonds of slavery’ (Sklavenbanden). When in Act II scene 2 Iphigenie enters to find Pylades alone, she physically unshackles him, just as she unbinds Orestes at the opening of Act III. Pylades, who amongst the Greeks is the character most attached to the ethics and instruments of compulsion which Goethe is implying
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

are now obsolete, when desperately trying to get Iphigenie to trick Thoas, tells her that she has no choice. The only alternative is that she will destroy him and Orestes. She simply can’t refuse (IV.4):

The iron hand
of Necessity commands, and its
stern gesture is the highest law, to which
the gods themselves must do obeisance.

Thoas is also still thinking in terms of compulsion. He is in danger of reverting to what is presented as an atavistic savagery; at the beginning of the final act, when he becomes aware that he is about to lose Iphigenie, he comes to regret his kindness towards her. He is full of rage (Grimm), both against her and against himself, for foolishly showing her kindness (Güte) instead of treating her as a slave. If she had fallen into his ‘ancestors’ rough hands’, she would, he claims, inevitably have behaved differently (V.2).

Yet Thoas, persuaded by Iphigenie, does choose to change. From one perspective he is a remarkably advanced figure, especially when it is remembered that Goethe was writing in the context of the epidemic of operas, plays, and ballets based on IT, discussed in chapters VIII and IX, in which Thoas and his fellow barbarians are not only culturally inferior to the Greeks, but are physically vanquished by them, and end up dead. Goethe’s Thoas, as we have seen, is different: he has a new, keen sense of the colonial agenda at stake, refuses to allow the Greeks to expropriate the wealth of his country symbolized by the cult image of Diana, and resists, at least temporarily, the idea that they have the right to dictate the ritual observances which his populace performs. What is going on here?

The moral conflicts in the play are a dramatic crystallization of the conflicting stances within the international Enlightenment debate on empire. Jonathan Israel has shown that the Enlightenment cannot be understood if classified by national intellectual trends, but only as an unofficial discussion between intellectuals of different nations, especially Holland, France, Britain, Italy, and Germany. This ‘war of philosophies’ was ideologically triangular, fought quite as much between the moderate Enlightenment mainstream and the radical fringe as between the moderates and their conservative opponents. Israel advocates thinking about the emergence

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16 Pylades openly models himself on Odysseus, whose cunning and cleverness (List und Klugheit) allowed him to accomplish bold deeds (II.1). At the beginning of Act IV Iphigenie finds she is untutored in cunning and never learned to trick anything out of another person (jemand etwas abzulisten).

17 On strands of Enlightenment thinking in Iphigenie see also Rasch (1977) and Lange (1998), although my reading is very different from either of theirs.
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of western Atlantic philosophical modernity as an incessant contest between three competing tendencies—radical Enlightenment, moderate Enlightenment, and counter-Enlightenment. Counter-Enlightenment views are to be heard in the play, especially Thoas’ superstitious atavism and Pylades’ cynical advocacy of force majeure. On the other hand, in his critique of Greek colonial rapacity Thoas also voices the view of the most radical Enlightenment thinkers, such as Diderot, d’Alembert, and Condorcet, who criticized European domination and economic exploitation of the planet and achieved a remarkable level of cultural relativism when thinking about non-European cultures. But Thoas, despite his resistance, is forced to accept the mainstream, moderate Enlightenment position and bourgeois sensibility exemplified by Montesquieu and embodied in Iphigenie, which accepted European imperialism and Christianity and saw European civilization as superior, while condemning obvious brutality, tyranny, inequality, and slavery. This was the institutionalized Enlightenment, ‘which aspired to conquer ignorance and superstition, establish toleration‘, but in such a way as to produce ‘a viable synthesis of old and new, and of reason and faith’.  

Despite these competing intellectual strands, the moral and emotional victory is won by the Greeks. They leave Thoas and his barbarians in a state of lack, of erotized desire, and emptiness, after teaching them a moral lesson, and expecting them to be polite about it. There are therefore two fundamental psychological agendas the play can satisfy. It can be read as a celebration of two communities learning from mutual interaction, or as a celebration of one community demonstrating its superiority over another—a nationalist and imperialist charter myth from which all the rough racist edges have been smoothed away, a picture of international relations in which superficial consensus merely disguises real exploitation and hierarchy. The tension between these two psychological agendas underlay the continuing importance of Iphigenie all the way until the 1960s.

Indeed, Goethe’s Iphigenie effectively put a stop to the writing of new plays on the IT theme, except for the numerous ‘sequels’ dealing with the story of Iphigenia’s experiences after Tauris in Delphi, written in response to Goethe’s own plan for a play on that theme (see below).  

His Iphigenie auf Tauris, with its vision of ideal humanity, was internationally admired throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth—the vision of an international community of peoples bound by ties of friendship, refusing to exploit one another, and respecting each other’s love of homeland while encouraging Enlightenment values, progress, and peaceful

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18 Israel (2001) 11.
19 E.g., Kannegiesser (1843) Schroeder (1844), Garnett (1890), Langner (1948), in addition to the plays by Hauptmann discussed below.
co-existence. This utopian vision not only fulfilled ideological needs, but did so in an actable play which provoked strong emotional reactions.

One idealist living under the Russian Empire in Bialystok (now in north-eastern Poland) invented a new language altogether in order to foster international and inter-ethnic understanding. It is not surprising that he perceived a desperate need for this, connected to the multilingualism of his own city, where Yiddish, Polish, Russian, German, and Belarusian were all spoken. Esperanto was the brainchild of Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof, a Jewish ophthalmologist, who published his proposed international language in 1887. He was clear that his hope for an international *koine* was rooted in his own Jewish identity:

> If I had not been a Jew from the ghetto, the idea of uniting humanity either would never have entered my head or it would never have gripped me so tenaciously throughout my entire life. No one can feel more strongly than a ghetto Jew the sadness of dissension among peoples. [...] my Jewishness is the main reason why, from my earliest childhood, I gave myself wholly to one overarching idea and dream, that of bringing together in brotherhood all of humanity. 20

The first important texts translated into Esperanto, ‘the language of hope’, by Zamenhof were the book of Genesis, two poems by the Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, *Hamlet* (1894), and the *Iliad* books I–IV (1897). By 1904 the first international Esperanto congress was held in England. The fourth Universal Congress was held in Dresden in 1908; on Wednesday 19th August, at the Dresden Königliches Opernhaus, an audience of nearly two thousand witnessed a performance of Zamenhof’s Esperanto translation of Goethe’s play under its Esperanto title *Ifi genio en Taŭrido: dramo en kvin aktoj* (see Fig. X.3).

The lavish production was of professional quality, starring the famous Berlin actor Emanuel Reicher and his daughter Hedwig, who had not only mastered Esperanto but turned it into a beautiful poetic language to hear. 21 This Esperanto *Iphigenio* represents the most poignant moment in the entire cultural history of Euripides’ prototype. All three of Zamenhof’s children were murdered under National Socialism: as Goethe’s Thoas puts it, when rejecting Iphigenie’s insistent plea that doing good deeds doesn’t require reflection, good sometimes leads to evil (‘denn auch dem Guten folgt das Ubel’, V.3). It is one of the sharpest paradoxes in this book that Zamenhof’s admiration for the *Iphigenie* was shared by the cultural leaders of German National Socialism.

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Goethe’s Iphigenie Between Germany and the World

The intensity with which Goethe’s Iphigenie spoke to the Nazis was manifested in Gerhart Hauptmann’s four plays on the theme of Agamemnon’s children. These began with Iphigenie in Delphi (written in 1940), which was directly inspired by his discovery of Goethe’s own plan, recorded on October 19th 1786 in his Italienische Reise, for a continuation of the Iphigenie auf Tauris. In this proposed play, Electra is at Delphi, assuming that Orestes will bring the image of the Taurian goddess there, but comes under the misapprehension that Orestes and Pylades were killed in Tauris by Iphigenie. When Iphigenie arrives, this mistake nearly leads to Electra killing her in revenge. Hauptmann’s play is an enlargement of this scheme, with a powerful recognition scene between the sisters averting yet another kin-murder, and the violent self-sacrifice of Iphigenie, who hurls herself from a cliff, in order to protect her father’s reputation, fulfil all her vows to the goddess, and allow her family finally to forget the past. But this Iphigenie is not the gentle humanist of Goethe. Her goddess is conflated by Hauptmann with Hekate; she is herself a semi-divine avatar of this terrifying, chthonic, deathly archer goddess (the stage directions prescribe that she be taller than the other characters and wear ‘a fixed, archaic smile’). She feels only the faintest

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22 Goethe (1970) 111–2; Hauptmann (1941) 5–6; see Muller (1949) 52–3.

FIGURE X.3 Esperanto performance of Goethe’s Iphigenie auf Tauris in Dresden (1908).
emotional responses to her siblings.\footnote{Hauptmann (1941) 249.} She finally renounces all claim on her homeland, and demands instead to be restored to her previous isolation, with the goddess, amongst barbarians:

In the wilds of some barbarous country,  
Or, if that is not possible, anywhere you like  
that is far from people, merriment and joy.  
All these are hateful to me as a baby’s food.  
Take me away, into some mountain cave or wilderness,  
where nobody can find me in my solitude.

Hauptmann portrays the ancient Tauric cult of Hekate, in which Iphigenia had enthusiastically overseen the sacrifices, as a primitive matriarchal religion now to be superseded by the union of a more Apollonian Artemis with her brother at Delphi. Soon after completing \textit{Iphigenie in Delphi}, Hauptmann conceived the plan for a further three plays which enacted the events preceding this final encounter of the youngest generation of Atreids. He completed \textit{Iphigenie in Aulis} in 1943, and both \textit{The Death of Agamemnon} and \textit{Electra} in 1944.

The degree to which Hauptmann was himself guilty of turning a blind eye to the atrocities being committed in his country’s name has become a tensely contested question. He has been praised as a true liberal democrat who was barely tolerated by the regime, but also criticized as a pusillanimous opportunist, guilty of appeasement at best and active support of Nazism at worst. On the one hand, as the man widely regarded as Germany’s leading literary figure (he had won the Nobel Prize in 1912), it is legitimate to ask whether he might have done more to attract international attention to the fearful situation there, rather than continuing to write plays for performance in the top German theatres. On the other hand, he was already an elderly man of seventy-nine in 1939, and living in a remote Silesian mountain village. While this is not the appropriate place for a full investigation, it is directly relevant to the argument of this book that his \textit{Iphigenie in Delphi} was one of the Third Reich’s favourite plays. In hindsight there is something uncomfortably suitable to the mood of Berlin in the 1940s in Hauptmann’s melodramatic showdown between the sisters Elektra and Iphigenie, along with Iphigenie’s transformation into a disturbingly bloodthirsty and zealous figure with neither the commonsense and grace of Euripides’ heroine, nor the gentleness and high principles of Goethe’s. Berlin in 1941 was a fitting home for a stage character described by her brother in these terms:
Goethe's Iphigenie Between Germany and the World

A woman who is unnaturally cruel,
priestess to the bloody goddess,
a monster who yet speaks the language of the Greeks….
Inside her abattoir she reigns supreme,
more vicious, pitiless, and with a greater thirst for blood
even than Hecate herself.  

If nothing else, Hauptmann conceptualized Iphigenia in a way that today makes a
cryptic, uneasy, and deeply pessimistic impact.  
When the legendary Marxist director Erwin Piscator, by then nearly seventy years old, returned to Germany from the United States in 1962 to direct the Berlin Freie Volksbühne, he opened with a compressed production of Hauptmann’s entire tetralogy. He was in no doubts about the symbiosis between Hauptmann’s Atreids and Germany under National Socialism:

The saga of the Atridae is a conglomeration of catastrophes. Born into disastrous circumstances, the children of Atreus create new disasters. They bring trouble, conflict and murder into the world and die as the victims of their own madness. At a time when Hitler occupied the world with war and death, could there have been a more convincing or persuasive parable than this ancient myth to express the chaos emanating from Germany? Did this archetypal picture of a family driven to destroy itself not stand for raving insanity of a nation—the German nation?

Nazi cultural policy prioritized the theatre; theatres were amongst the first Nazi targets, and very highly supervised, partly because theatre was known to have exerted such a strong political influence during the Weimar Republic. More than a quarter of the Propaganda Ministry’s total budget was spent on the theatre—far more than on film. And Nazi cultural policymakers had adopted Goethe and Schiller (and to a lesser extent Herder and Wieland) as their national poets. Goethe’s plays, especially Faust, Götz von Berlichingen and Iphigenie auf Tauris, constituted a core element of the repertoire encouraged by Nazi officials at the Berlin Staatstheater. Iphigenie auf Tauris was bound to appeal to a nation whose leader was convinced that ‘If we consider the ancient Greeks, who were also Germanic, we find in them a

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25 Hauptmann (1941) 225–6.
26 Hamburger (1969) 90.
beauty much superior to the beauty which is widespread today'. Along with another ancient Greek tale of sisterly devotion, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, the German Iphigenia plays of Hauptmann and Goethe were prominent at the Berliner Staatstheater at the height of the war. *Antigone* of Sophocles was performed 37 times during the 1940–1 season, but the season afterwards, in 1941–2, Hauptmann’s *Iphigenie in Delphi* was performed 39 times (a huge number), and Sophocles’ *Antigone* was performed four times. In the 1942–3 season, Goethe’s *Iphigenie* was performed 22 times and Hauptmann’s *Iphigenie in Delphi* was performed twice; despite heavy bombing and disruptions to the schedule, Goethe’s *Iphigenie* was one of the 11 plays known to have been performed in the 1943–4 season.

This fetishization of German avatars of the Tauric Iphigenia resulted from the prestigious place in the Third Reich occupied by Weimar classicism. Weimar itself was ‘the spiritual home of German *Kulturpatriotismus*’, and an early stronghold of the Nazi party, producing a strong association ‘between high culture and National Socialism in the town of Goethe’. There was also a personal link in the form of Reiner Schloesser, the Reichsdramaturg (an office and title invented for him), who was appointed chief administrator and censor of the Third Reich’s stage. But his childhood home was Weimar, and his father had been a professor of literature and Director of the prestigious Goethe-and-Schiller Archive. The Reichsdramaturg therefore collected a large group of literary and dramatic Nazis around him associated with Weimar, and many actually from it. Along with his ministry chief, Joseph Goebbels, Schloesser did not favour direct propaganda, but ‘a carefully chosen repertoire…to provide ideological mood music…German plays were to be favoured over foreign drama’ and optimistic stories over pessimistic social critique. Goethe’s *Iphigenie*, with its serene conclusion and heroic archetypes, fitted the bill to perfection, especially since the Greeks in it had long been regarded by German patriots as indistinguishable from their own national ancestors:

Goethe’s *Iphigenie* is a landmark of world literature…. Its language is of incomparable simplicity, loftiness, and clarity, as if engraved in imperishable granite. Greek and its related Christian-German development have grown together here in consummate unity.

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38 Vogeler (1900) 116 (my translation).
Goethe's Iphigenie also fought in the cultural vanguard of the Third Reich in Poland, where nine theatres fell under the control of the Nazis soon after the invasion. It was performed by an exclusively German cast to an audience of German officers in the summer of 1940, in the idyllic context of the Roman amphitheatre in the Łazienki park in Warsaw. The amphitheatre is adorned with statues of classical and eighteenth-century poets, and faces the stage, which is built on an island within the lake and separated by a narrow strait from the auditorium. The island stage is beautiful (see Fig. X.4); it was inspired by the ruins of Herculaneum and the Roman Forum. The performance took place at a time when more than 30,000 Poles had been arrested, and the Jews of Warsaw were already coming under intense persecution. It is difficult not to be disturbed by the thought of Iphigenie not only ordering Thoas to agree to the terms under which the Greeks who have arrived—wholly uninvited—in his country now depart, but of her insistence that he be grateful. Even more disturbing is the disjunction between the historical reality in Poland in the summer of 1940 and the sound of the poetry of Goethe's Iphigenie, with its ‘incomparable simplicity, loftiness, and clarity’, drifting across the remarkable beauty of the neoclassical landscape.

Despite the close identification of Iphigenie auf Tauris with the theatre policy of the Third Reich, Goethe's play retained its status as a masterpiece of world theatre and manifesto of humanism until the 1960s, not only in Germany but in the USA and Britain. As James Boyd had noted in 1942, ‘At Oxford and other universities Iphigenie is among the first Goethe texts on the undergraduate’s reading list’. Here, for example, is the Royal Holloway German scholar Silvia Jenkins, writing in 1958:

Goethe has taken the raw material of the contrast between Greek and barbarian, used it much as Euripides did to make superficial contrasts between the subtlety and sophisticated manners of the Greeks and the primitive clumsiness of the Scythians…and yet provided us with a group of characters who seem to represent a progression of the stages in civilization….one of the great moral truths in the play is that all men may hear the voice of truth and humanity…. [Iphigenie] represents a still higher stage [than Orestes] in which the barbarian has become equal to the Greek in his right to reverence and affection.

The National Socialist adoption of Goethe as exemplar of the advanced German civilization, along with Weimar classicism, Bach, Kant, and Cologne Cathedral, was

40 Boyd (1942) 3 n. 3.
41 Jenkins (1958) xlv–xlvi.
thus seamlessly reformulated during the Adenauer era into the elevation of Goethe as representative of the German Enlightenment humanist tradition.\footnote{See also Gump (1961).} It was only in the 1960s that such respect for Goethe began to look like a veil obscuring the guilt of all Germans complicit in the Nazi regime: ‘As part of this critical reassessment Goethe’s preeminence was challenged and he too was subjected to Ideologiekritik as a cultural elitist, political conservative, servant of princes, perpetuator of his own myth.’\footnote{Sharpe (2006) 3–4.} Enlightenment classicism was now beginning to come under sustained attack from the Left and the avant-garde, and seen as completely impossible to take seriously in a non-ironic or non-deconstructive manner. This new response was inaugurated and subsequently epitomized by Fassbinder’s 1968 ‘antitheatre’ production under the elongated title Iphigenie auf Tauris von Johann Wolfgang Goethe, which is still popular with young audiences.\footnote{Text in Fassbinder (1986) 8–27.} Fassbinder took away the plot, and his characters explored their own positions in society in a polyphonic series of static monologues, giving the effect of analytical talking heads, but he relied on his audience’s familiarity with Goethe’s play to make points about contemporary politics and society.\footnote{Barnett (2005) ch. 2.} This process was called Klassikerzertrümmerung or ‘reducing the classics to rubble’.\footnote{Barnett (2005) 84–7.}
There have been numerous ironic, distancing, and subversive dramatic reworkings, novelistic adaptations and scholarly interpretations of Goethe’s *Iphigenie* since Fassbinder’s iconoclastic assault, notably Jochen Berg’s *Im Taurerland* and Volker Braun’s *Iphigenie in Freiheit*. They would take another entire volume to cover adequately. Within scholarship, the later twentieth-century reaction to *Iphigenie* was dominated by a Marxist-influenced critique of the intense relationship between the sensibility and ideology of ‘civilized’ values, mildness, truth, and virtue on the one hand and the emerging bourgeoisie on the other. In 1967, Theodor Adorno came under attack from the Left when he refused to cancel a Berlin lecture that had been scheduled, with the apparently reactionary title ‘The Classicism of Goethe’s Iphigenic’, at the height of the student revolution. Indeed, much of Adorno’s reputation for inability to transform his intellectual work into practical radicalism was associated with this revision of the status of *Iphigenie*. Yet this was entirely to misunderstand his reading of the play, since it offered a radical analysis which transformed the structure of the paradigm within which analyses could be conducted.

Until Adorno, the orthodox literary biography of Goethe had proposed that the verse text of *Iphigenie* shows an author who had outgrown his rebelliousness, his *Sturm und Drang* phase, and found calmness of spirit and a literary mission through a combination of renouncing desires that could not be fulfilled and encountering the classical world in Italy. Adorno shows how this so-called classical humanism, which actually takes the form of bourgeois individuation through renunciation, is only a fragile bridge over a seething volcano of unassuagable passions. These are constantly generated by the mechanisms of authority and control, mechanisms in turn needed to repress those very passions. For Adorno, Iphigenie’s humanism is a thin veneer, achieved primarily at the expense of the barbarians, left behind in their savage backwater as vaguely defined but definitely disappointed, desirous subjects.

The evolution of his line of interpretation can be traced to an important debate between Erika Fischer-Lichte and others in the journal *Diskussion Deutsch* in the 1970s. Then, in an insightful essay of 1985, published in a seminal collection of essays on colonialism in literature, Helga Geyer-Ryan argued explicitly that *Iphigenie auf Tauris* was a charter text of German patriarchy and racism, and had made an important contribution to the shaping of an identity politics that could give rise to National Socialism. With Adorno’s argument she fused the perspective of writers on the constituents of Nazi identity such as Klaus Theweleit, whose now notorious


50 See above all in the essays of Ivo (1973); Lorenz (1974); and Fischer-Lichte (1975), to be supplemented by Burger (1977) and Rasch (1977).
book *Männerphantasien* (1977–8) argued that the Fascist male identity required the displacement of white female sexuality onto degraded figures—the ethnically other, the despicable—and the exaltation of the desexualized white woman as a mother/sister ideal that is the guarantee, basis, and guardian of the social status quo. By fusing the discourse on race and the discourse on sexuality, this displacement inevitably produced the ideal image of the virtuous asexual woman. Geyer-Ryan argues that in the construction of Iphigenie as sister, savior, and symbol of refinement, and of Thoas as backward but desirous of her, ‘what seems to be the humanist advance of the German text could also be read as a much more subtle discourse of social and racial control.… Only in the light of such an analysis can we explain the text’s cultural power in the German literary tradition’.\(^5\) She suggests that this has derived from its capacity to ‘shape and mould the subject into a specific patriarchal and ethnic identity’.\(^6\) A gap in political power becomes translated into the discourse of cultural achievement. Europe is identified as bringer of culture to the barbarians, and it is in this respect that the perceived affinity between the Greek and German thesauroses of images at Goethe’s time are connected with the physical position of both countries between Europe and Asia.\(^7\) Germany, in Goethe’s day, needed to have an ethnic identity construed more urgently than did already existing nation-states, and Geyer-Ryan points out that the ‘history of the Germanic empire has always been determined by its relation to Asia…and its traumas are rooted in the threats posed by the Huns and the Turks’.\(^8\) Goethe’s Iphigenie goes back to Greece, with her brother and his friend, leaving Thoas in a global backwater. Goethe’s numerous nineteenth-century illustrators were clear that Thoas was Muslim: he always looks like some kind of Ottoman *pacha* if not specifically a Crimean Khan (see Fig. X.5). The postcolonial reading of Goethe’s *Iphigenie* in academia has therefore identified the Greeks in the play as expressing German imperialism in a disguised aesthetic form.

Yet within the creative arts, which have indeed made diverse uses of *IT* and its adaptations to think about the Holocaust, the atrocities committed under the Third Reich have suggested not the patronizing self-confidence of the Greeks but the Taurians’ barbaric sacrifices. As early as 1948, the poet and US Air Force pilot Randall Jarrell included in his collection *Losses* a long poem about the war, ‘Orestes at Tauris’, which concludes with this terrifying image of Orestes’ beheaded corpse:

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\(^7\) See also Stobl (2007) 4–5, who points out that the parallel ‘so dear to German nationalist hearts’ contained an element of truth insofar as ‘the institutions of high culture were indeed more broadly diffused in Germany than in most other European countries’, as was the case in ancient Greece.

\(^8\) Geyer-Ryan (1985) 117.
Goethe’s Iphigenie Between Germany and the World

FIGURE X.5 An Ottomanized Thoas in a 19th-century illustration of Goethe’s Iphigenie Act V scene III.

...but no man came,
No man lay hidden there—or saw,
Parting the grasses with a silent hand,
Under the long light of the level sun,
The people, silent, watching with grave faces
Their priestess, who stands there
Holding out her hands, staring at her hands,
With her brother’s blood drenching her hands.15

When Achim Freyer directed Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride at the Bavarian State Opera House in 1977, some members of the public felt that his allusions to concentration camps, although discernible, were insufficiently emphatic.16 When the Polish critic Wilhelm Szewczyk reported the meeting of the international congress of gypsies at Bergen-Belsen on 28th October 1978 (there was an entire Ziegeunerlager at this death

camp), he called his article ‘Iphigenia in Bergen Belsen’ because the event reminded him so forcibly of the ancient play’s portrayal of the ritual murder of human beings simply because they were perceived as different ethnically.\textsuperscript{57} American Germanist Emery George has written a bleak cycle of plays culminating in \textit{Iphigenia in Auschwitz}, where the only escape that can be put into effect by Iphigenie, reunited with her brother and his friend Pavel, is by taking charge of their mutual suicide.\textsuperscript{58} Jonathan Littell’s Holocaust novel \textit{Les Bienveillantes} (2006) follows the brutal SS Officer Max Ave, who is obsessed with his sister and compared with Orestes, to the Crimea; there his mental disturbance, after overseeing the mass murder of Jews and Communists, eventually lands him in a sanatorium. Most memorably, in Imre Kertész’s Hungarian novel \textit{A Nyomkereső} (1977), published in German as \textit{Der Spurensucher: Erzählung} (2002) and in English as \textit{The Pathseeker} (2008), an unnamed ‘Commissioner’ visits a concentration camp and its adjacent factory. He has been there before, although it is never made explicit whether he was present as a victim of the Holocaust, a perpetrator, or bystander (Kertész himself, a Hungarian Jew, was as a teenager indeed interned at both Auschwitz and Tröglitz, near Zeitz, a subcamp of Buchenwald).\textsuperscript{59}

The book is narrated in the third person, although the free indirect discourse sometimes virtually merges with the consciousness of its protagonist, the Commissioner. He meets his wife in the town (a thinly disguised Weimar, which is adjacent to Buchenwald—the camp was built on the path where Goethe used to take his walks). She has come across a copy of Goethe’s \textit{Iphigenie auf Tauris} in a bookshop. The discussion of that play and its myth which results extends beyond the particular German adaptation. By setting the discussion in Weimar, the cultural centre where Goethe’s play was first written and performed, the reader’s mind becomes concentrated on what German romantic classicism had done with the much older, Euripidean tragedy; the Commissioner’s wife, who had enjoyed the Goethe play at school, admires its restrained presentation of Thoas and the anodyne ending where the Greek captives are released and bloodshed avoided. But the Commissioner, who has been affected profoundly by his visit to Buchenwald, tells her that Goethe’s version is ‘what they want us to believe’. What had ‘really’ happened when the king of Tauris sent a squadron of soldiers to arrest Pylades and Orestes was this:

Briefly, the troops in the squad surrounded the men, then they attacked them, disarmed them, and shackled them. Next, before the eyes of the menfolk, the troops violated the priestess, after which, before the eyes of the priestess, the men were hacked to pieces. Then they looked to the king, and he waited until

\textsuperscript{58} George (2001).
\textsuperscript{59} The discussion of Kertész (2008) is drawn from Hall (2009).
he spotted on the priestess’s face the indifference of misery that cannot be exac-
terbated any further. He then gave the signal of mercy to be exercised, and his 
troops finally gave her too the coup de grace … oh, and not to forget! That eve-
ning they all went to the theatre to watch the barbarian king exercising clem-
ency on the stage as they, snug in the dress circle, sniggered up their sleeves.60

In a transparent substitution, the history of Nazi atrocities is told through the 
Commissioner’s rewriting of the German neoclassical rewriting of a far more atro-
cious history. This massacre, or something like it, was the unspeakable atrocity in 
which he had himself been involved decades before. It can’t be named outright 
(indeed, several characters have for much of the novel been tiptoeing around the 
truth). The Commissioner therefore only succeeds in bearing witness through refu-
tation of the canonical version of an incident most famously articulated in Goethe’s 
tragedy. The subjective experience of the raped and murdered victims of the Nazi 
Holocaust is ‘ventriloquized’ through the subjective responses of the Commissioner 
to his visit in a conversation about classical tragedy. Human sacrifice in the Tauric 
Chersonese, as dramatized by Euripides and Goethe, is for Kertesz a mythical ana-
logue to the Holocaust, and the references to these classical texts a signal that he is 
concerned with the contested truth underlying events which some people still today, 
astonishingly, deny ever happened.

Kertesz’s unmasking of the beautiful ‘classical humanism’ of Goethe’s Iphigenie to 
reveal the imperial savagery beneath its surface shows how impossible it has become 
to take the play seriously on its own terms. Its latent colonial ideology has been 
damningly exposed, along with the strategies by which the real violence of bourgeois 
imperialism disguised itself in a cult of virtue, sensibility, mildness, kindness, and 
tolerance, embodied in asexual femininity. But the Adorno/Fassbinder/Geyer-Ryan 
account no longer seems to me wholly adequate. The ideology of the play seems to 
me more complicated, more dialectical, than either the classical humanist version 
or the post-Adorno reactive critique implies. The facts that the Greeks refrain from 
robbing Thoas, that Iphigenia is prepared to learn from him, that he has consid-
erable psychological stature, and himself defines his love for her in terms of com-
panionship and inspiration rather than sex, and that the most brutal and primitive 
impulses in the play are actually expressed by the Greek hero Pylades, all seem to me 
to show Goethe straining at the very limits of the Eurocentric ideologies of race and 
nation taken for granted by most of his contemporaries. Just consigning Iphigenie 
auf Tauris to the dustbin of primary texts in the archive of German and European 
cultural imperialism will not get us far, at least any more. There seem to me to be two

60 Kertesz (2008) 86.
approaches that can be helpful in allowing a properly dialectical, more balanced and dispassionate way to think about this text, which, like it or loathe it, is one of the most influential plays ever to have been written.

First, it is important to sustain the type of literary history that contextualizes what Goethe was doing in terms of German literary history. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* was first produced in the 1779 prose version written and performed at Weimar (Goethe himself played Orest). But it was not until January 1787 that he completed the verse version in Italy. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* was therefore written and rewritten during a period of intense growth in Goethe’s ideas about the role of literature in both national and international cultural progress. As Lamport has stressed, Goethe’s early theatre works need to be assessed in the context of the intensification of the sense of a frustrated national identity in the eighteenth century, especially after the failure of the Hamburg National Theatre in 1768, a frustration manifested in the designation ‘Deutsches Nationaltheater’ bestowed on the theatre in Vienna in 1776 by Emperor Joseph II. Goethe’s *Iphigenie* was preceded by the *Orest und Pylades* of Johann Elias Schlegel, who had tried to create a new type of national drama which did not, like Gottsched’s earlier attempts, simply model itself on Corneille: Schlegel’s other works included a play about the German national hero, Hermann (1743). There was an expectation both in Germany and beyond that a German version of a classic play needed to emerge, crystallized in Madame de Staël’s description of *Iphigenie* as ‘the masterpiece of classic poetry with the Germans’, and one which ‘recalls the kind of impression one receives in contemplating the Greek statues’.

Lamport points out that in Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, begun in the mid-1770s, which is tightly bound up with the genesis and early development of his plan for a play on the theme of Iphigenia, the idealistic young hero dreams of becoming the creator of a great national theatre. But Lamport also points out that over the following two decades, Goethe made an intellectual and emotional journey that led to the satirical epigrams which Goethe and Schiller published jointly in 1797, in one of which they actually mocked the ‘national’ ideal and urged their countrymen to look to more cosmopolitan goals. By the 1820s, Goethe was proposing that the era of national literature was at an end, and coined the term *Weltliteratur*, *World Literature*, in the process. There can be few more controversial terms than this neologism. It became the founding concept of the discipline of Comparative Literature, which has itself been criticized recently for its inherently elitist concept of *belles lettres* as well as its Eurocentrism. Much ink has

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62 Quoted in Hayward (1878) 144–5.
63 On this point see the remarks of Bennett (1979) 98–100.
64 Lamport (1990) 7.
been spent on what exactly Goethe meant by ‘literature’, and whether it includes, for example, African oral poetry. But no such thought has gone into what he meant by ‘world’. In *Iphigenie*, it is noticeable how differently the term is used in different mouths. When Orestes uses the term ‘Welt’, he means the world from the perspective of the solipsistic, irresponsible childlike colonist, an adventure playground in which he can perform heroic deeds against unindividuated nameless barbaric foes; he recalls his shared past with Pylades (II.1):

> When, together, we often hunted game and ran over hills and vales, and hoped, with chests and fists so like our great ancestors, to hunt a monster down with club and sword, or track a robber down and kill him. Then in the evening, we sat quietly, leaning on one another by the open sea, with the waves playing right up to our feet. The whole wide world (*Welt*) lay so open to us then. One of us would sometimes draw his sword, the deeds we would do in the future pressing down on us like the stars without number around us in the night.

When Iphigenie uses the term ‘world’, on the other hand, she means something quite different—it is an arena for making ethical judgement, for the performance of virtuous or vicious behavior (I.3):

> It is only a series of evil or good deeds which eventually brings into the world (*Welt*) either horror or joy.

Yet when Thoas uses the term, it is neither in a solipsistic nor an ethically judgmental sense; it is in a factual, interested, epistemological sense: the world is the cultural community of the mind, the world for which Goethe himself longed, shared by peoples across the planet who exchange stories, art, and information:

> Do you call him [Tantalus] your ancestor, him who the world (*Welt*) remembers was one who long enjoyed the favour of the gods? (III.2)

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65 For a succinct overview of the arguments, see Birus (1999).
The unarguable tensions in *Iphigenie*, the oxymoronic quality which Goethe implicitly recognized when he later expressed regret that he had made it so ‘diabolically humane’ (*ganz vertufelt human*), reveal the poet in the process of making a painful transitional journey. He had begun wanting to write a Greek tragedy that could be adapted into German national drama. But he was taking his first faltering steps toward becoming the man who could at least *imagine* using the Greeks to make a more universal drama. This was the *Iphigenie* which the founding father of Esperanto intuitively felt, several decades before his children were to die in the Holocaust, might befit the international stage of an optimistic, peace-loving world.

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66 In a letter to Schiller of 19th January 1802, in Goethe (1895) xvi, 11.

67 This chapter has benefitted enormously from the close reading and comments of Josh Billings.
I am taken back, inevitably, to a distant repertory theatre on a Sunday night, its stage hung with green curtains, and before them an actress, black-curled, wearing a blood-red scarf over her white robe. It was Lillah McCarthy in her recital from...the Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides; I can recall yet her speaking voice, in its burning contralto, and the words 'His am I and Clytemnestra’s child.'

XI

Rites of Modernism

THE CRUCIAL WORDS in this vivid recollection, recorded by the theatre critic H.C. Trewin in 1967, are ‘black-curled’, ‘blood-red’, and ‘burning’. The production concerned was the first important realization of Euripides’ original play in a modern translation, the premiere of which was directed in 1912 by Harley Granville-Barker. Euripides’ own Iphigenia only found the ‘burning contralto’ voice which could speak with conviction to the modern world at precisely the Modernist moment, and it was the bloody, primitive, shocking element in the play which brought it rather suddenly back into vogue. The production toured internationally and received a great deal of publicity, bringing the Taurians’ brutal customs under the Modernists’ microscope. Euripides’ own authentic play finally challenged the competition from Goethe and Gluck, and took centre stage, in the tragic second decade of the twentieth century, just five years after Goethe’s Iphigenie auf Tauris was performed as the last production at the Weimar Court Theatre before it closed forever.²

A partial explanation for the revival of interest in the play is that it had already been rediscovered in the esoteric circles which enjoyed performing Greek drama in colleges and universities. Between 1891 and 1912 there were at least ten other productions of this particular play in North American colleges and universities, especially women’s colleges.¹ In 1903, for example, a Pennsylvanian teenager named

¹ Trewin (1967).
² See Anon. (1907) with the remarkable photograph there.
³ At Beloit College, Wisconsin, in 1891, 1897, and 1905; at Ripon College, Wisconsin, and Albion, College, Michigan, in 1900, Radcliffe College in 1902 and both Vassar in Poughkeepsie, New York, and Iowa University in 1907; at Rochester University, New York, in 1905, 1907, and 1908; see Hains (1910) 28–30 and 32.
Hilda Doolittle went to watch an ancient tragedy performed at the University of Pennsylvania (‘UPenn’) in Philadelphia, which had been advertised on the campus and around town by an impressive original poster (see Fig. XI.1).  

The play was Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and it was performed in ancient Greek. H.D., as Doolittle was to call herself, was 16 years old. She was later to make her name as an important Modernist and proto-feminist poet who constantly drew inspiration from ancient Greek literature. Having met Ezra Pound, then a student at UPenn, two years previously, she now watched him perform in the chorus. He made an impression that his friend William Carlos Williams regarded as distinctly funny, ‘in a togalike ensemble topped by a great blond wig at which he tore as he waved his arms about and heaved his massive breasts in ecstasies of emotion (see Fig. XI.2).’

Pound’s participation, however comical, ensured that the cultural impact of this production was wholly out of proportion to its scale and quality. Perhaps Pound’s own seminal experiments in Modernist poetry were affected by his intimate personal knowledge

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4 The design was by architecture student George H. Bickley: see Pearcy (2008) 333.
5 Williams (1951) 57; see Carpenter (1988) 42, but note that he is incorrect in his statement that the production was in English.
of the choruses of that Greek tragedy, especially their short lines in non-iambic metres. Looking back later on his early development as a poet, in *Canto 81*, he remembers that ‘To break the pentameter, that was the first heave’. As the postmodern novelist and critic Christine Brooke-Rose has put it, ‘The first free verse of the moderns, usually attributed to Eliot, is stilted compared to Pound’s, whose gift this has been to all successors, even those who have never read him.’ Pound was affected by poetry in many traditions, including Japanese, but his experience of the limpid choral lyric metres of Euripides, contrasting starkly with the iambic dialogues, should not be underestimated.

That performance of *IT* in Greek was a manifestation of the craze for performing ancient plays in colleges which swept Britain and North America from the end of the 1870s. The first experiments were with Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, especially *Birds*? But in women’s colleges, the repertoire was different, because the quest for female choruses and interesting, virtuous roles for young women necessarily made Sophocles’ *Electra* and *Antigone* and Euripides’ *Alcestis* attractive. *IT* was also found to be ideal—it entailed no sex, little violence, an intelligent heroine, and a female chorus. In 1887, the first performance of Euripides’ own play that I have identified in the post-Renaissance period took place at Bedford College, London, the earliest women’s college to be built in the United Kingdom.
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

(see Fig. XI.3); it was later to become one of the two institutions which in 1985 amalgamated to form Royal Holloway, University of London, where I worked while researching and writing this book. But male students soon saw the potential of IT, even if, as at the University of Cambridge in 1894, they replaced the chorus with men, and bestowed just three female attendants on Iphigenia (see above, Fig. II.5).

Watching young men dressed as ancient Greek maidens was often deemed rather exciting. The Philadelphian production certainly inspired H.D. She wrote much later in her unpublished novel of the 1940s, The Sword Went out to Sea, about her early flirtation with Pound, who bears the pseudonym Allen Flint. Flint appears in a school dance, but the narrator’s attention is fixed on another boy, who reads William Morris to her, brings her books, and appears amongst the maidens in a chorus in a Greek play. H.D. has here split her Pound into two different individuals, and she clearly did not react to his performance as a Greek maiden with derision, as did Williams. Yet regardless of the quality of Pound’s performance, the one actor who even the caustic Williams was forced to admit was ‘superb’ was the Messenger. It was this character who rekindled H.D.’s childhood interest in the ancient Greeks, and ‘awakened’ her to the riches of Greek drama and the ancient language: she felt she ‘had heard Greek at last’.

Indeed, Euripides was to remain central to her work

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1 Tuke (1939) 130.
3 Guest (1984) 20; Carr (2009) 56 (although she misidentifies the play as Iphigenia in Aulis).
for the remainder of her life. It was certainly at about the time of this production that H.D. conceived her lifelong fascination with Euripidean choral lyrics.\textsuperscript{11} They were subsequently an element in her romance with Richard Aldington, who chose Euripides to read on their honeymoon. In a letter to her of 1918 he counts Euripides as one of the few people in cultural history, like H.D., who have qualified for the title ‘dreamer of dreams’.\textsuperscript{12}

Many critics have noted that in her translations of Euripides H.D. presents the ancient poet as an imagist in the sense meant by Ezra Pound in his \textit{ABC of Reading} (37).\textsuperscript{13} H.D.’s 1916 collection \textit{Sea Garden} reveals the unmistakeable influence of Euripidean choruses, and indeed specifically of \textit{IT}, especially in the delicate lyrics—with their short lines, sharply etched imagery and strong sense of colour—of ‘The Cliff Temple’:

\begin{quote}
Great, bright portal, 
shelf of rock, 
rocks fitted in long ledges,
rocks fitted to dark, to silver granite,
to lighter rock—
clean cut, white against white.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Modernist poetry’s aesthetic project, the paring down of verbiage to fundamental building-blocks of language, the chiselling of diction and clarification of symbol, seems itself here to be articulated in the very shape of the hewn stones of the Taurian-inspired temple. Another poem, ‘Sea gods’, suggests a rather different way in which the Euripidean tragedy is informing H.D.’s poetic method, and that is through the identification of the poetic voice with rustic inhabitants of the cliffs watching ships approaching their rocky shore.\textsuperscript{15} They resemble the primitive barbarians of Euripides’ play, some of whom, according to the messenger, did indeed think that Orestes and Pylades were gods (\textit{IT} 268–74). H.D. is using the multiple viewpoints expressed both in the dialogue form of the play and its choruses, and the multiple focalizations within the messenger speech itself, to think about the arrival of Orestes and Pylades from a pastoral barbarian perspective. This is a positive response to the Taurians shared by several of the writers sensitive to the Euripidean play’s

\begin{thebibliography}
\item Gregory (1997) 140.
\item H.D. (1916) 30–2.
\end{thebibliography}
inherently colonialist tenor, including the Mexican Modernist Alfonso Reyes (see chapter XIII).

While H.D. was swooning over Ezra Pound and Euripidean lyrics, another female leader of the North American avant-garde, the Californian Isadora Duncan, had by 1903 put together her ideas for the choreography of her performance of *Iphigenia*. As we have seen in chapter IX, she danced in this to the music of both Gluck’s *Iphigenia* operas, to which she was partly drawn because they offered such a range of emotional situations for bodily expression. In one sense Duncan’s choreography for *IT* was driven by an ‘anti-modern impulse’, a nostalgic idea of Greece, as the pure, ‘natural’ childhood of Europe, which essentially belonged to the late eighteenth century and is akin to that of Algarotti and Gluck. But the story of *Iphigenia* also offered Duncan a significant proportion of hardcore religious ritual. Sacrificial ritual, as socially orchestrated violence, was felt by Modernists to reflect the explosive energy which ‘made the early twentieth-century world modern’.

Although nobody is actually sacrificed in *IT*, it is, more than any other ancient Greek tragedy, essentially *about* ritual and especially about human sacrifice. Its protagonist was once prepared for sacrifice herself; now she is in charge of a cult’s performance of human sacrifice. No other Greek tragedy has a priest of either sex as protagonist, let alone one who organizes the ritual slaughter of human beings; no other Greek tragedy opens with the physical remains of human sacrifices adorning a temple. None of the other plays with this ritual at their heart—Euripides’ *Children of Heracles*, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and arguably *Bacchae*—fuses the subjective experiences of both the agent and object of sacrifice in a single character. No other Greek tragedy confronts the doer of the sacrifice with the destined sacrificial victims in an extended and moving scene where the precise ritual actions are detailed; no other Greek tragedy stages a procession with a statue taken from its temple pedestal. *Iphigenia in Aulis* does, however, consider in some detail the physical reality of the experience undergone by the Argive princess, and Duncan chose to meld both operas into one performance. In line with the contemporary interest in ritual, Duncan’s interpretation gave a powerful role to an additional Priestess of Tauris. Indeed, Duncan’s interpretation of *IT* includes two ceremonial sections of Gluck’s music that are not in Euripides at all: a Scythian dance and the Bacchanal dance of the maidens before the sacrificial victims are scheduled to take place. Duncan wanted to recreate the primitive ritual dance for Dionysus for which the classical scholar Jane Ellen Harrison had called in her denunciation of contemporary theatre and her work on ancient myth and religion.

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16 Albright (2010) 64.
Rites of Modernism

Duncan and Harrison, along with anybody else at the turn of the twentieth century who was interested in classics, religion, or anthropology, would have been aware of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890). If they had begun to read it, as millions did, they would immediately have been asked to consider Euripides’ *IT*, since by the very third page they were introduced to the story of the Tauric Artemis, stolen from the Black Sea. Frazer opens with a consideration of Turner’s painting ‘The Golden Bough’, reproduced as his frontispiece, which he (mistakenly) does not believe to represent southern Italy (see Fig.XI.4). He imagines that it is a painting, rather, of ‘the little woodland lake of Nemi, “Diana’s Mirror,” as it was called by the ancients’. He then provides his readers with an atmospheric description of that ancient site:

No one who has seen that calm water, lapped in a green hollow of the Alban hills, can ever forget it. The two characteristic Italian villages which slumber on its banks, and the equally Italian palazzo whose terraced gardens descend steeply to the lake, hardly break the stillness and even the solitariness of the scene. Diana herself might still linger by this lonely shore, still haunt these woodlands wild.  

Frazer is transfixed by the idea of the primitive rituals and superstitions that have underpinned all human communities, their ongoing presence in parts of the world,

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*Frazer (1890) vol. 1, 1.*
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and the vestiges they left in the literature and religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The story which IT provided was susceptible to a close reading informed by all Frazer’s major preoccupations: his controlling idea is the figure of the priest-king who is sacrificed, and Iphigenia is a royal princess-priestess who is also herself the victim of sacrifice. Frazer’s interest in taboos, pollution, and members of the community who are driven out could find an important incarnation in Orestes. Artemis’ role in rites of passage and initiation helped to make the play attractive, especially after the publication of Arnold van Gennep’s *Les Rites de passage* in 1909. The mimetic element in ritual, which Frazer explored at some length, could not be better demonstrated than by the substitution of neck-scratching for slaughter in the rites for Artemis at Halai Araphenides (see above pp. 000). Totemic objects and images of the gods such as those of Attis and Adonis, minutely discussed in Frazer’s fifth book, could find no more accessible example in Greek literature than Artemis’ statue in *IT*. Above all, Frazer was fascinated by the collision in ritual of pragmatism and superstition, which are the two forces which drive the entire dialogue between Iphigenia and Thoas, where they invent rituals and reasons for them ‘on the hoof’, as required by Thoas’ superstition and Iphigenia’s practical predicament.

Frazer made sacrifice, especially human sacrifice, whether in the rites of Diana in the woods at Nemi, the Christian Eucharist, amongst the Maori of New Zealand or the tribesmen of Madagascar, central to the intellectual and indeed aesthetic agenda, since he always insisted on the relevance of the aesthetic sphere to anthropology. In hindsight, the early Modernist obsession with sacrifice has its terrifying aspect. If Girard was right in *La violence et la sacré* (1972) that human history witnesses a growing revelation that violence has a human origin, then the Modernists tried to mask this by their last-ditch attempt to lend violence a metaphysical aspect. Sacrifice is typically imagined taking place on physical and topographical boundaries—whether the shore at Aulis or the Pontic edges of civilization—precisely because it tests ‘the point at which culture most sees itself reflected in barbarism, in which it preserves itself in an act which seems to violate its own premises.’ Even before Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, the racist Ernest Renan had published his ‘philosophical drama’ *Le prêtre de Nemi* (1886), in which the protagonist, an enlightened ancient Roman priest who opposes blood sacrifice, comes sadly to the conclusion that in trying to

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20 Vickery (1973) 53.
21 Vickery (1973) 72, 149.
cure his countrymen of their atavistic religion, he has only succeeded in weakening their moral fibre. In Adorno's brilliant *The Philosophy of New Music*, he writes about *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which centres on human sacrifice. Adorno explores how the individual is drawn into the collective experience through the aesthetic, and how Stravinsky's 'aesthetic flirtation with barbarism' spoke to an exhausted bourgeois culture: 'In fact, the work not only resounds with the uproar of the coming war but takes its pleasure openly in a profligate splendor.... The aesthetic nerves quiver to return to the Stone Age.'²⁴ Adorno saw the Modernist fixation on sacrifice as presaging—and preparing people psychologically—for the horror of World War I.²⁵

The aesthetic nerves of contemporary creative artists and writers were certainly quivering, as John Vickery demonstrated in *The Literary Impact of the Golden Bough* (1973). Vickery argues that Frazer's cultural influence on Modernism was so strong because 'his work constitutes a fertile matrix and mirror of ideas, observations, beliefs, and images central to the age.'²⁶ The sacrifice trope was central to the poetry of Eliot and Yeats as well as to the Modernist novels of Conrad, Woolf, and Scott Fitzgerald.²⁷ The impact of Frazer's sacrifice-centred theories on Classical scholarship, combined with that of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872),²⁸ led the 'Cambridge ritualists' Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, Francis Cornford, and Albert Cook to work intensively and to some extent collaboratively on Greek religion and the origins of drama. Some of them will have seen *IT*, chosen to be performed as the Cambridge Greek play in 1894 (see above and Fig. II.5).²⁹

In 1903 Harrison published her great work on the intimate relationship between ancient Greek myth and ritual in *Prolegomena to Greek Religion*, in which she explicitly acknowledged her debt to Frazer, and indeed used *IT* as one of her illustrative texts.³⁰ Perhaps she discussed *IT* with Isadora Duncan, whom she had assisted by reciting the Greek texts at the dancer’s London performances of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* and the *Idylls of Theocritus* at the turn of the century.³¹ She had certainly discussed *IT* with her friend Gilbert Murray, who was working on the text of Euripides. In 1910, by which time he was Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, as

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²⁶ Vickery (1973) 71.
²⁸ Ackerman (1991) 98–9, who draws attention to Murray’s ‘Excursus’ in Harrison’s *Themis* (1912) 68. Murray cited with approval Nietzsche’s conception of myth as a distinct symbolic language, partly articulated in dramatic mysteries, but destined to be misunderstood as a form of historical narrative by posterity.
²⁹ The Greek play at Cambridge was inaugurated in 1882 with a production of Sophocles’ *Ajax*, and the tradition of a triennial performance of a play in the original ancient Greek language continues today. See Easterling (1998) and Hall and Macintosh (2005) 000.
³⁰ Harrison (1903) xviii, 41, 70 n. 1, 112 n. 2.
well as a regular translator of Euripides for the prominent London theatre director Harley Granville-Barker, Murray published his translation of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. With its dialogue in his trademark archaizing rhyming couplets, and its lyrics in contrasting, rhythmically pointed verse forms, it creates the alluring, antique atmosphere recalled by Trewin in the epigraph to this chapter. Although later derided by T.S. Eliot, the public loved Murray’s translations and found them deeply pleasurable to hear and perform: here are remarks from a typical review of his translation of *Iphigenia in Tauris*:

The prose seems as free as prose, yet the rhyme is delightful to the ear. We feel that if Euripides had written in English, it is thus that he would have expressed himself. All other translations of his works are superseded by these, which are so felicitous that they are not likely ever to be surpassed.

Murray also revelled in the multitude of rituals and the ceremonial language of Iphigenia as the priestess of Artemis, here performing her funeral rite for Orestes:

One lock of hair to wreathe thy tomb,
One tear: so far, so far am I
From what to me and thee was home,
And where in all men’s fantasy, Butchered, O God! I also lie.

In the preface to this play, Murray did not spare his readership, subjecting them to a detailed lecture on Frazerian religious anthropology in which he compares the custom of human sacrifice practised by the Taurians to similar rituals he believed were practised in his own day by peoples of West Africa: ‘As for the scene in which Iphigenia befools Thoas, my moral feelings may be obtuse, but I certainly cannot feel the slightest compunction or shock at the heavy lying. Which of us would not expect at least as much from his own sister, if it lay with her to save him from the altars of Benin or Ashanti?’ But Murray’s preface begins in a rather less animated style:

The *Iphigenia in Tauris* is not in the modern sense a tragedy; it is a romantic play, beginning in a tragic atmosphere and moving through perils and escapes to a happy end. To the archaeologist the cause of this lies in the ritual on which the play is based. All Greek tragedies that we know have as their nucleus

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53 See Ackerman (1986).
54 Rose (1912) 114.
55 Murray (1910) ix.
Rites of Modernism

something which the Greeks called an Aition—a cause or origin. They all explain some ritual or observance or commemorate some great event.... And the rite on which the Iphigenia is based is essentially one in which a man is brought to the verge of death but just does not die.... On a certain festival at Halae in Attica a human victim was led to the altar of Artemis Tauropolos, touched on the throat with a sword and then set free: very much what happened to Orestes among the Tauri, and exactly what happened to Iphigenia at Aulis. Both legends have doubtless grown out of the same ritual.35

It is transparently clear why Murray was so attracted to IT. It is a perfect example of the mantra of the Cambridge Ritualists, given its definitive expression in Harrison’s Themis (1912), that the legomenon, the spoken expression of ancient mythical narrative, is in origin a verbal accompaniment to, or expression in another dimension, of the drōmenon, the ‘thing done’—that is, of ritual practice. As Sansone has put it, IT offers not just an aition for sacrificial ritual, ‘but a paradigm.’36 In the same year, 1912, in his Four Stages of Greek Religion, Murray developed this model, arguing that in the first identifiable stage of Greek religion, the pre-Olympian one, ritual had not yet dissociated itself from myth.37

It was also in 1912 that Murray’s translation of IT was performed in the Kingsway theatre in London, and his ritualist approach to the play explains the way in which the director Harley Granville-Barker, designer Norman Wilkinson, and leading actress Lillah McCarthy conceived it in quasi-liturgical terms. McCarthy invested her role as leader of the Artemis cult with ceremonial charisma and authority, drawing on her commitment to women’s rights, her previous performance as Dionysus in Murray’s translation of Bacchae in 1908, and experience as sole manager of the Little Theatre in John Adam Street, London. Her remarkable beauty, which created an impression of purity and spirituality, her low-pitched, musical voice, and vigorous physical acting style were central to the way the public imagined the priestess Iphigenia (see Fig. XI.5). Some of the best photographs and descriptions come not from the London premiere and other British performances, but the touring production of 1915, when Granville-Barker took his IT, along with his Trojan Women, to several North American university campuses.38 Although this entailed some changes in the cast, and adaptation to radically different performance spaces, the costumes and fundamental design concept remained almost completely unaltered.

35 Murray (1910) vi.
36 Sansone (1975) 287.
37 Ackerman (1991) 119.
38 There are excellent photographs in Slater (2010–11). For bibliographical references to all known reviews of the productions in Britain, see Arlen (1990) 125–6.
The distinctive effect of the play was produced by the combination of the ‘wildly decorative’ visual design and Murray’s sonorous, archaizing, heavily rhythmical verse translation, with its often strained word order, delivered in McCarthy’s ‘stately manner’ and ‘formal cadences’.39

In London, Granville-Barker’s production was experimental in its approach to the theatre space, inspired by the Covent Garden production, just two months earlier, of Oedipus Rex in Murray’s translation. It was directed by Max Reinhardt, in collaboration with Martin Harvey as Oedipus. Lillah McCarthy had played Jocasta. Fiona Macintosh has recently done much to clarify the far-reaching impact of Reinhardt’s Oedipus.40 The affinity between the two productions was immediately noticed by the reviewers of Barker’s IT: ‘it is Reinhardt’s spirit that hovers over the whole picture,’41 and the chorus, in both singing and acting, were ‘in many particulars closely adapting themselves to the Reinhardt model’.42 Reinhardt had built a stage which thrust right out into the stalls, removed the orchestra and all curtains, and made great use of the same doors through which the spectators had entered the theatre in order to

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40 Macintosh (2009) 108–9, 131–2; see also Hall and Macintosh (2005) 523–44.
42 Anon. (1912) 347.
involve them in the action.\footnote{Thomas (1955) 298.} In \textit{IT}, with his wife fresh from working with Reinhardt, Granville-Barker followed Reinhardt’s example; his forestage now covered all three front rows of stalls, in what one reviewer supposed was done ‘with a view to breaking up the picture-setting of the stage’ in an attempt to return to ancient Greek forms of theatre.\footnote{H.W.N. (1912) 1020.}

The actors approached the stage by a sloping gangway, often entering or exiting from the front door of the auditorium or the side aisles. The herdsman, for example, charged into the theatre through one of the audience doors, ‘and madly and excitedly galloped down the side aisle, leaping on to the stage to deliver his news about the two strangers, Orestes and Pylades’.\footnote{Thomas (1955) 298.} The action felt immediate; the pace was galvanizing and exciting in a way which at that time had never been associated with Greek tragedy; the vigorous movement of the Taurians charging in from the expanded wings created a barbaric, indeed ‘almost comic’ effect.\footnote{Kennedy (1985) 121.} Pallas Athena was enormously large, indeed looked like a statue atop a column, and exotically masked; this is thought to be the first time Granville-Barker had experimented publicly with a mask, inspired by a Japanese company in London a few years earlier, and it was the precursor of his famous mask for Polixenes in \textit{The Winter’s Tale} soon afterwards.\footnote{Anon. (1912b) 44.}

The stage was painted deep red and then draped with scarlet fabrics. The massive temple doors, geometrically patterned in black and white, were at the centre back, up a series of steps; all the action revolved around the blood-stained altar at the centre. The redness was emphasized by dull red lighting, with stationary lamps (like those Reinhardt had used to create the wildly exotic ‘Chinese’ effect in \textit{Turandot} in 1911), suspended from the pillars and portico of the temple and the proscenium arch. A great deal of thought, informed by Reinhardt’s notorious chorus scenes in \textit{Oedipus Rex}, went into making the chorus seem an active and integral part of the rituals and unfolding action: ‘for once’, wrote one reviewer, the chorus did not ‘seem in the way’.\footnote{Anon. (1912b) 44.} Granville-Barker did not adopt Reinhardt’s strategy of a seething crowd (which would have been incongruous in the small space of the Kingsway), but made his chorus shift between chanting, speaking individually or as a collective. He experimented with fading them in and out of focus, since their dark purple costumes could blend into the red background when the audience’s attention was elsewhere.

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41 Thomas (1955) 298.
42 H.W.N. (1912) 1020.
43 Thomas (1955) 298.
44 Thomas (1955) 299.
45 Kennedy (1985) 121.
46 Thomas (1955) 299.
47 Anon. (1912b) 44.
\end{flushright}
The choreography revealed an early attempt at an ‘intercultural’ approach which was generally disliked: the ‘symbolic, and rather Indian, dancing… seemed too finikin and mincing—too wavy, sinuous, and prettily intertwined.’ 49 The chorus sang to ballad-like music by Sydney Peirce Waddington, performed with a fresh and spritely swing, quite unlike the sombre music which Granville-Barker had used in his previous, more conventionally ‘tragic’ Euripidean productions (Trojan Women and Medea, for example). The innovative music was disliked by conservative critics, who felt that the animated idiom of the production was insufficiently respectful towards the ancient Greek text. 50 Indeed, the Athenaeum critic said that both Murray and Granville-Barker ‘treated it on the broad plane of romance’, although the problem lay in Euripides’ play, with its ‘almost farcical and ignominious close’, which ‘tumbles us into something like comedy’, especially in ‘the mouthings and rodomontade of King Thoas’.51

The exuberant tone struck in parts of the performance was connected with Granville-Barker’s intuition that the legend it enacted was akin to a ‘romance’ in the sense encompassing not only both Shakespearean plays such as The Winter’s Tale and Twelfth Night (both of which he staged later in 1912) but also medieval Arthurian literature. Murray agreed with him, writing the year after that Euripides’ IT, Helen, and lost Andromeda were all ‘works of pure fancy or romance’, which moved ‘among far seas and strange adventures’.52 This is romance as defined by Northrop Frye in The Secular Scripture (1976), featuring innocence (usually female virginity) in jeopardy, travel to distant locales, quest, magical totems, reunion, and salvation. Indeed, Modernists were attracted in a different way from the pale, elegiac, melancholy Victorian medievalists to the mode of romance. Modernists relished the vibrant anthropological dimension of romance, identifying it as the manifestation of an early stage in the process by which violent ritual was transformed into story; the form of The Golden Bough itself mirrors its own content, since it is informed by several structural features of the tale of romance or quest, as Vickery shrewdly observes.53 The appetite for a return to the magical mystery journeys of romance seems to have been fostered by the very technological and scientific leaps forward that had so recently been taken—aviation, automobiles, escalators, radio—as R.A. Scott-James explained in Modernism and Romance (1908). A Frazerian approach to this question was developed by Jessie L. Weston in her studies of folklore and editions of medieval literature.

49 H.W.N. (1912) 1020.
50 Thomas (1955) 299.
51 Anon. (1912) 347.
52 Murray (1913) 142–3.
from *The legends of the Wagner Drama: Studies in Mythology and Romance* (1896) through to the definitive study *From Ritual to Romance* in 1920, which was immortalized when T.S. Eliot acknowledged its influence upon him, alongside that of *The Golden Bough*, in the notes to *The Waste Land*. For Granville-Barker and McCarthy, *IT* represented a new departure into Greek drama as romance, and they responded by developing a razor-edge energy and at times even frisky tone. As one of the American spectators expressed it, it was ‘vital at every turn; if not scrupulously archaeological, it was certainly a proper reincarnation of the adventurous motif of the play’.  

To lend visual cogency to Granville-Barker’s concept of an anthropological adventure-romance, Iphigenia’s costume suggested one of the late archaic Acropolis korai, down to her braided wig. In the opening scenes, she seemed Greek enough in outline, even if the drapery was intended to associate her with her bloody duties, since they were spattered ‘as if with great spots of blood, and the tunic is striped with waves of red’. Halfway through the play, she became much more alien in appearance when she donned her full priestly regalia, an elaborate wide-sleeved coat and a high, looped head-dress (see Fig. XI.6). Thoas and the Taurians wore imposing head-gear and brightly coloured costumes, decorated with geometric designs, spots,
circles, whisk brooms, stripes, and zigzag lines, creating an impression that was certainly to prove, when the production went to North America three years later, too barbaric and savage for the tastes of some of their Ivy League audiences. This description gives a sense of the impact of the costumes.

The orchestra struck up a wild hill air, and out from behind the grey walls of the Temple of Artemis strode the brawny king of the Tauri, with arms like sawed-off logs, a blood-red beard, a crown as big as a 10 gallon measure and a gilded scepter, shaped roughly like a sapling…. The king wore a tunic of yellow and bluish green leggings and from his massive shoulders swept around behind him a yellow robe lined with blue and embroidered across the back with stripes of white and black…. And forth through the golden gates of the temple came the priestess of Artemis, with a cloak embroidered with geometrical designs and sharply contrasting colours, with her black hair hanging down in long braids and with a spreading metal headdress such as the Queen of Sheba may have sported on holiday.\(^57\)

Indeed, to judge from the contemporary reactions, Wilkinson’s geometric designs implied a close affinity between ancient Greek culture, conceived in a style more Mycenaean than Periclean, and either Native American or African Ashanti art. The reviewer of the Harvard production in *The Bookman* for June 1915 was quite clear that the resonances of the Taurian soldiers’ costume design were African:

> The chorus of *Iphigenia* is costumed in sweeping drapery of black and orange, while the soldiers in the same play are startling enough to please an African savage, for they wear black and white and flaming colours.\(^58\)

The same reviewer comments that the costumes in the other Euripidean play performed on the tour were considerably less colourful, a design choice he puts down to the more tragic tone of *Trojan Women*, and at the end of his article he cannot conceal his preference for the more conventionally classical, non-Primitivist production.\(^59\)

Adorno calls *The Rite of Spring* part of the era ‘in which “savages” were first called “primitives”’,\(^60\) but art critics have long been divided on the question of whether the history of European Primitivism in art should be traced back to Gaugin in the nineteenth century or to very precisely 1906–7, when artists including Picasso began

\(^{57}\) Quoted from Thomas (1955) 300.

\(^{58}\) Smith (1915) 410–11.

\(^{59}\) Smith (1915) 416.

\(^{60}\) Adorno (2006) 111.
to incorporate identifi ably primitive elements into their canvases. Matisse began to collect African tribal art in about 1906, and the dilettante interest had developed into a full-blown vogue by 1914 (just before Granville-Barker’s Greek plays arrived in the United States), when Marius de Zayas staged an exhibition of ‘African Negro Art’ in New York. Recently, under the infl uence of postcolonial theory, the origins of this development have been traced less to Gaugin than to the colonial ethnographic museums and exhibition displays of the late nineteenth century, in which Mexican, African, and Samoan people and their artefacts were brought to the French and British publics, as Native Americans were in similar entertainments in the United States.

The relationship between the ‘primitive’ Greek art of the Mycenaeans, newly excavated by Sir Arthur Evans, and the ‘primitives’ of New Mexico and Africa, was theorized in terms of the discussion of pattern and design in Wilhelm Worringer’s seminal book *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1907), translated into English and very widely read as *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908). Worringer tried to explain the great visual differences between artwork separated by time and culture according to their relative position between two opposing creative urges, which he described as the need for empathy (corresponding approximately to mimesis or illusionism) and the urge to abstraction (corresponding to the need for ornament or flat pattern in visual art). Crucially, he argued that the urge to abstraction stood at the beginning of every tradition of art across the planet; it had receded in Europe, but remained more or less unchanged in ‘savage peoples’. Worringer argued that the primitive urge to create flat patterns is an attempt to divest the world-picture of its chaos and caprice by imposing necessity and regularity, but it also allows paradoxically a truthful ability to penetrate behind appearances to the ‘thing in itself’—a naive but profound form of insight most powerful in non-illusionist primitive art.

Wilkinson’s designs also had an immediate model in the costumes for ancient Greek characters which Leon Bakst had been designing, ever since the 1902 *Hippolytus* directed at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg by Teliakovsky (see Fig. XI.7). Costumes in this idiom had caused a stir during the company’s seasons in Paris. The first season, in 1909, had astounded France; the press had announced the dawn of a completely new era in ballet. The first sensation of the 1910 season

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61 This debate was already apparent in Robert Goldwater’s seminal *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (1938) 3; see Perry (1993) 3–4.
64 Stravinsky’s *Le sacre du printemps* premiered on 29 May 1913. Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, arduous dance archaeologists, painstakingly gathered material scattered in archives, libraries, attics, and museums in order to reconstruct Nijinsky’s formidable choreography and Roerich’s costumes: see Hodson (1996).
Cleopatra, designed by Bakst, and the costume of the dancer who performed the embedded ‘Greek dance’ in this ballet clearly prefigures Wilkinson’s designs for IT, with its geometric lines and circles decorating the fine pleats of the Greek chiton. The following year, at the peak of Diaghilev’s creative powers, the company’s Narcisse took Paris by storm. Bakst had been inspired, on a trip to Greece with his friend Valentin Serov (see above Fig. I.1), to create costumes that breathed vibrant life into classical forms. In Narcisse, the Greek tunics worn by Echo, the Boeotian women, and the young men have variations on his trademark ‘primitive’ geometric designs, especially waves, dots, squares, and circles. By 1912, when Lillah McCarthy appeared in that colourful outfit as the priestess of Artemis beside her bloodstained altar, the world was preparing for the almost identical costumes worn in Paris by

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66 Pozharskaya and Volodina (1990) 53.
67 Spencer (1973) 37.
the nymphs in the 1912 Debussy ballet *L’après midi d’un faune*. Granville-Barker’s German-inspired architectural space and Wilkinson’s Russian primitivist vision of ancient costume were fused with Murray’s rolling, dignified ‘Old English’ verses to create a new, international aesthetic idiom in which to bring the ancient sacrifices of Tauris to theatrical life.

The production opened on March 19th, 1912, and was performed in nine matinees, before being transferred on June 4th for performance in front of a much larger audience at His Majesty’s Theatre, as part of Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s Shakespeare Festival. Much to McCarthy’s delight, the company was also invited shortly afterwards to perform it in the outdoor Greek theatre at Bradfield College, in Berkshire. Thrilled to be given the opportunity to use her ‘burning contralto’ like an ancient actor, in the open air, she went early every morning to the Tate Gallery (which had opened in 1897), and stood on the steps beneath its neoclassical portico to rehearse her role:

> It was as peaceful as the plains of Argos where Orestes and Iphigenia used to play. No one took any notice. A milk-cart clattered by and the driver turned and grinned… and when I knew by the waving of his whip that my voice had reached him, I went home satisfied.  

Her efforts paid off; one reviewer of the Bradfield performance was quite overwhelmed, remembering her ‘stark against the barbaric background and full of tragedy, descending into, as it were, the memory of the dead, pouring out those fine lines of Professor Gilbert Murray.’

Three years later McCarthy had to make Iphigenia’s verses heard in the much larger outdoor spaces of the Yale Bowl, the stadium at Harvard, the Botanic Gardens at Philadelphia, as well as similar venues at Columbia, Princeton, and Piping Rock outside New York. The astonishing ‘Ivy League’ tour of the Granville-Barker production has been meticulously documented in a recent article by Niall Slater. But McCarthy’s memorable Iphigenia had other lasting consequences. *IT* became popular in avant-garde amateur theatres, for example the open-air Forest Theatre run by Herbert Heron in Carmel-by-the-Sea near Monterey, California, which performed it in 1925 (see Fig. XI.8). McCarthy herself revived the role in recitals at Government House in what was then Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe) in 1930.

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69 Pozharskaya and Volodina (1990) 97.
70 McCarthy (1933) 306–7.
71 The Westminster Gazette, quoted in McCarthy (1933) 309–10.
72 Slater (2010–11).
73 McCarthy (1933) 312–13.

It was surely the success of the Granville-Barker production which inspired the newly appointed director of the path-breaking Drama Department, opened in 1914 at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, to choose *IT* as one of its inaugural productions, alongside *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.  

It was almost certainly a desire to distinguish herself from the beautiful McCarthy which in 1915 prompted Isadora Duncan to commission from the poet Witter Bynner a new translation of the play for her to star in. Although the production was not a success, Bynner’s lacklustre translation was indeed performed a good deal subsequently on college campuses, for example, in 1921 at Hunter College in New York. It has had an important afterlife since a revised version was included in volume 2 of the famous Grene and Lattimore Chicago translations of Greek tragedy.

For all its avant-garde primitivism, the discourse surrounding the Murray/Granville-Barker/McCarthy *IT* was often deeply insulting about tribal practices.

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74 White (1951) 284.
76 According to the *New York Times* for 23rd November 1921, the production, in the college’s chapel, was directed by Elizabeth Vera Loeb, and Bynner himself assisted with the staging. See also Kraft (1981) 19.
77 See above p. 000.
in Africa. This is how the staunchly feminist reviewer in *The Nation* described the Taurian 'savages' in this Greek play:

We may suppose them rather higher in the scale than the natives of Kumassi before the bloodstained Ju-ju groves were cleared away; for at least they had heard of Greece. . . . Not destitute of savage virtues, they had reverently received the Greek woman as a visitor from a higher world . . . she was just the right priestess to attend their miraculous image, and so much more adorable than a spear or a horse’s head.78

It is not difficult to hear the echoes of imperialism in Africa and the missionary movement in this response to Taurians’ human sacrifices and the ‘visitor from a higher world’. This may be the conceptual link which underlies the final twist in the strange tale of the Modernist Iphigenia.

In 1930 Levi Post, a young classicist at Haverford College, wrote an article for *Classical Weekly* in which he drew attention—as if it were needed—to a recent best-selling book, *Trader Horn: A Young Man’s Astounding Adventures in 19th-Century Equatorial Africa* (1927). A combination of fantasy and memoir, *Trader Horn* had held fourth position in the USA non-fiction list in 1927, and third in 1928. Post saw that it had used a well-known classical prototype: ‘The situation is quite obviously that of Iphigenia in the play of Euripides, and the general atmosphere is much the same, if we make allowance for the conventional elements in Greek drama.’79

Post was not mistaken. Alfred Aloysius Horn relates how, with the help of his best friend Peru, he helped in the escape of a high-born British girl called Nina from the deadly African tribe which held her captive as a virgin priestess. The book was penned by a British woman who had emigrated to South Africa, Ethelreda Lewis. But she had derived its contents, she claimed, from discussions with the eponymous *Trader Horn*, a British adventurer, now fallen on hard times and living in near destitution. *Trader Horn* is therefore promoted as his own autobiographical account of an extraordinary adventure in the western African interior. Much of the detailed description may well be based on his authentic experiences. But he did admit that the framing plot, about Nina’s escape from the cannibal tribe, was a complete invention. This is the plot which, as Levi Post saw, is so close to that of *IT* for the coincidence to be impossible.

*Trader Horn* rather emphatically opens his own first-person narrative with an account of his schooling in Liverpool, which had included French, Latin, and Greek

78 H.W.N. (1912) 1019.
79 Post (1930) 119.
to an allegedly high standard. Sailing up the river Azinga in search of ivory, he arrives at a ‘skull house or large native Josh House’ at some distance from a large Isorga village. In it resides ‘Izoga’, a woman who has been chosen to be the tribe’s goddess, and is kept isolated as a sacred being by a witch doctor. The edifice is ornamented with skulls, and houses savage orgies and human sacrifices. She is actually ‘Nina T’, the only white woman ‘within a thousand miles’; Trader Horn becomes her ‘blood brother’ in an initiation ritual. Nina was the well-bred daughter of an English merchant who had died suddenly:

It sure was a bit of a shock to find the daughter of a good English family doing her duty as goddess to Isorga. They called her cruel, but ’twas surely not her fault that she had to see so many fearful things. Even the smell of blood can get commonplace. Every enemy’s head had to be brought in to put on the great pile of skulls there.

As Post shrewdly saw, the *IT* story had been filtered through a lens which was also tinted by the colonial adventure narratives of Rider Haggard. The influence of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) is also palpable. But the basic plotline of the ‘Nina’/Iphigenia story was probably the contribution of Trader Horn’s ghostwriter Ethelreda Lewis.

Raised in Derbyshire, Lewis was extremely well read, and a keen theatregoer. She had been living in Cambridge, consorting with undergraduates (one of whom she married) and teaching Eurhythmics, at the time of the production of the university *IT* in the 1890s (see above pp. 000 and fig. 000). Her profession meant that she cannot have been unaware of Isadora Duncan nor of the Delsarte interest in Gluck’s *IT*; she will also have known about Gilbert Murray, since they shared a crucial contact in Vera Brittain, the prominent pacifist and writer. Murray had come into contact with her through his friendships at her women’s college in Oxford, Somerville. Gilbert Murray was, moreover, much involved with South African affairs in the early 1920s: the League of Nations Union itself was formed after World War I, and Murray, as one of the founding members, was appointed as a South African delegate from 1921 to 1923. Indeed, Edwardian middle-class Liberal intellectuals and theatre people tended to know one another and to be plugged in to an international circle of

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80 Horn and Lewis (2002 [1927]) 2. For the facts of the early life lived in reality by Alfred Aloysius Horn, the tramp befriended by Ethelreda Lewis, see the biography by Couzens (1992).
82 Horn and Lewis (2002 [1927]) 22, 33.
83 Horn and Lewis (2002 [1927]) 43.
like-minded people who spanned much of the planet. The characters in the story of the Modernist Iphigenia often met or demonstrably influenced one another, and it is often impossible to be sure who was influenced by whom. But it is highly probable that one of the conversational topics in Liberal-artistic circles between about 1903 and 1915 would have been Tauric rituals. Isadora Duncan certainly had an impact on Diaghilev, especially through the effect of her revolutionary dancing on Mikhail Fokine when she performed in St. Petersburg. She also knew and worked with Witter Bynner, who knew H.D. well. She had worked with Jane Ellen Harrison, who of course was closely associated with Gilbert Murray. One of the actresses who starred in Gilbert Murray’s productions of Euripides in addition to Lillah McCarthy was Sibyl Thorndike, who was good friends with Ethelreda Lewis and visited her in South Africa.

The disguised narrative presence of IIT in a bestselling book is in itself a fascinating phenomenon, showing one of the more important subterranean ways in which ancient Greek stories have shaped our cultural consciousness. This particular tragedy does not seem to have inspired many direct adaptations in prose fiction, George Baker’s sanitized romance The Last Shore (1953) being an undistinguished exception. Sven Delblanc’s 1990 satirical Swedish novel Ifigenia rather promisingly implies that the myth of Iphigenia in Tauris was invented as a public relations exercise by Demodocus, under pressure from Odysseus, to make what had happened to the princess palatable to posterity, but this storyline remains undeveloped. On the other hand, Naomi Mitchison’s The Corn King and the Spring Queen (1931), set in Hellenistic times on the northern coast of the Black Sea in a half-Hellenized barbarian community, is an acknowledged masterpiece. It is clearly written under the influence of IIT, but it is hard to point to specific echoes, although its emotional energy comes from the tension between a brother and sister. Mitchison was fascinated by ritualism, which fundamentally informs the novel; she had read all twelve volumes of The Golden Bough by the time she reached adulthood and indeed written a play based on a myth she discovered in it. Her interest in Euripides was already apparent when she participated in an amateur production of Aristophanes’ Frogs in the spring of 1914. In The Corn King and the Spring Queen Erif Der, the proto-feminist Scythian priestess-protagonist, travels on a quest from the Black Sea across the whole Greek world in company with her brother Berris. The Greek character Euridyce

87 Vickery (1973) 123.
88 Benton (1990) 9, 23.
89 Benton (1990) 23, with fig. 9.
copies out the Greek (indeed Euripidean) myths of Phaedra, Achilles, Iphigenia, and Alcestis in a room also painted with scenes from these stories.\textsuperscript{90}

Through \textit{Trader Horn} I also believe that we can see Greek drama finding its way, not in direct cinematic recording but in a more subtle and influential manner, into that most quintessentially North American modern mass-market medium, the Hollywood talkie. In 1931 MGM released the movie version of \textit{Trader Horn} under the tagline ‘WHITE GODDESS OF THE PAGAN TRIBES. THE CRUELEST WOMAN IN ALL AFRICA!’ (see Fig. XI.9). Directed by the soon-to-be prolific Woody S. Van Dyke, and running to an extremely long 122 minutes, it was one of the first great talkies, and received a nomination for an Academy Award. Today it makes an impact so excruciatingly racist that it is almost impossible to watch. Yet it remains impressively spectacular, since MGM went to the huge expense of sending the entire company to Africa. Filming took place in the Territory of Tanganyika (now Tanzania), the Protectorate of Uganda, the Colony of Kenya, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and the Belgian Congo. The hippos and crocodiles in the rivers make for

\textsuperscript{90} Mitchison (1931) 42.
some tense moments during the safari’s canoe crossings as the party races for safety from pursuing natives (see Fig. XI.10).

*Trader Horn* is part of screen history. It also takes our adventures with the Tauric Iphigenia towards an area of popular culture which I had never anticipated. For *Trader Horn* influenced the evolution of the genre of cinematic adventure epic immensely and was a direct inspiration for director W.S. Van Dyke’s own effort the following year, the first Tarzan movie with Johnny Weissmuller, *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932). It also, by an oblique route, informed the extraordinarily successful series of *Road to* . . . films made by Paramount Pictures, starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour, which started with *Road to Singapore* in 1940. The route was provided by the taste it created for talkies like Paramount’s *Jungle Princess* (1936), in which Lamour played the sarong-clad titular heroine, discovered in a remote location by an air-crash survivor. This type of exotic heroine, combined with a mysterious unknown text described as ‘an old script about two wanderers’ lying around at Paramount, ‘was dusted off’ to create the plot of *Road to Singapore.* 91 It is difficult to be sure whether Euripides would have approved or not.

One reviewer of Harley Granville-Barker’s production of *IT* in 1912 said that it would be easy to argue, as Samuel Butler had in the case of the *Odyssey*, that the author of *IT* was a woman. For evidence, the reviewer quoted Murray’s translation of what is described as the ‘triumphant’ appeal which Iphigenia makes ‘to the common bond of womankind’:

Are we not women, you and I,
A broken race, to one another true,
And strong in our shared secrets? Help me through
This strait; keep the secret of our flight,
And share our peril!

But the psychological, intellectual, and religious stature of Black Sea Iphigenia as a female hero has taken a long time to be appreciated. This situation has begun to change, but only since the mid-1990s—far later than the re-evaluation from a woman’s perspective of other Greek tragic heroines such as Jocasta, Antigone, Medea, Phaedra, and Hecuba, who have long been articulating feminist arguments and critiques of oppressive aspects of the way masculinity is construed in contemporary...
Women’s Adventures with Iphigenia

Since the 1970s, they have attracted major literary and theatrical figures including Ariane Mnouchkine, Rita Dove, Sarah Kane, Deborah Warner, Katie Mitchell, and Timberlake Wertenbaker. Most of this chapter discusses the rivulet—it can’t yet be described as a wave—of North American productions or adaptations of *IT* with an identifiably feminist agenda, written or directed by women, since 1996. The relative lack of interest in the Black Sea priestess of Artemis amongst women theatre professionals is especially striking given the authority and agency with which Euripides invests her. Her stature is arguably not undermined but thrown into ironic relief by her habit of expressing internalized patriarchal opinions—that men are more important to households than their womenfolk, and that their lives are inherently more valuable (57, 1005–6). This Iphigenia, who has suffered such neglect, actually has a great deal to offer a feminist theatre.

When we move further back in time, it is of course possible to see that *IT* was a fairly common choice for performances of Greek plays by female students in colleges and universities (see above pp. 000). The opportunity to stage not only a strong female heroine and choral odes in praise of a maiden goddess, but an appearance

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Figure XII.1 Athen in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in Greek at Bedford College, London (1887).

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of the goddess of intelligence—Athena—proved irresistible (see Fig. XII.1). But it becomes difficult to identify significant women writers or theatre artists who have reacted specifically to Euripides’ Tauric Iphigenia, rather than Goethe’s or Gluck’s. Isadora Duncan tried to revive the original ancient Greek play in 1915, when she commissioned Witter Bynner, an established writer of one-act plays, to produce a new version for her to perform in her own theatre in New York City. She even performed some passages from Bynner’s translation, but the theatre was closed down in mysterious circumstances before he could even complete it; it is not clear whether the closure was caused by the police department, managerial incompetence, or a mutiny by members of the orchestra. In the previous chapter we encountered two other exceptional female admirers of Iphigenia in the Modernist era, the poet H.D. and the actress Lillah McCarthy; McCarthy defined the role and the play in Britain and North America for years subsequent to the 1912 premiere of Gilbert Murray’s translation. There is, however, one more woman whose response to Iphigenia early in the twentieth century deserves serious attention, and she is Lesya Ukrainka.

At almost exactly the same time as H.D. was watching Ezra Pound in the chorus of Iphigenia in Philadelphia, and Isadora Duncan was first choreographing Iphigenia’s pain to Gluck’s music, on the other side of the planet a young Ukrainian woman was reading Iphigenia intensely. Destined to become the founding mother of Ukrainian literature, Larysa Kosach (1871–1913), known under the nationalist pseudonym of Lesya Ukrainka, identified profoundly with Iphigenia. This was partly because she knew that the play was set in her own country, and in a part of it which she had come to know and love. She had celebrated the landscapes of ‘Tauris’ in her poetry collection Crimean Recollections, written between 1890 and 1892, and inspired by the beautiful environment of the Crimean coastline, which she was for the first time enjoying. But her identification with Iphigenia was also connected with her own personal sense of being an exile. She had suffered great loneliness when she struggled with the early death, from tuberculosis, of her lover in 1901. As a Ukrainian writer, she was in a dangerous position since publishing in her mother tongue was banned by the Russian Empire. As an active opponent of the Tsarist regime, and a Marxist, she was deeply alienated from the prevailing political order; she had been affected, at the age of 9, by the arrest and five-year Siberian exile of her aunt Olena Kosach in a wave of persecution of political activists in St. Petersburg. Profoundly shocked, the little girl was motivated to write her first poem, and many of her later works continued to address political themes: the cycle The Songs of the Slaves, for example, is a direct protest against the political subjugation of her fatherland, written around the turn

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4 Bida (1968) 12.
of the century. Indeed, one of the texts she later illegally translated into Ukrainian was to be the *Communist Manifesto* (1902). Ukrainka was herself arrested, although briefly, in 1907, when suffering bitter disappointment at the failure of the 1905 revolution, and all her dramas recall the fervour she had felt during the revolutionary period. Moreover, as an invalid with acute tuberculosis of the bone, she was forced by her health into long periods of convalescence in warmer climates of southern France, Germany, Italy, and Egypt as well as sanatoria in the Caucasus and Crimea. Already well into her thirties, she had not only endured a great deal of pain, but also felt emotionally, linguistically, culturally, and politically isolated.

It is little wonder that she worked so intensely during this period on her ‘dramatic scene’, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which she began in 1903. Her first language was Ukrainian, and much of her work is connected with Ukrainian folklore. But her avant-garde parents had educated her at home, along with her older brother Mykhaylo (she was the second of several children), in Greek and Latin as well as several modern European languages. Her favourite reading included Homer and Ovid (both of whom she translated), Sappho (about whom she wrote a poem), the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, Maeterlinck, Mickiewicz, Ibsen, and Heine. IT is the only ancient play she adapted—as a Ukrainian, who had spent time in ‘Taurida’, it would have been an obvious choice. But she takes Catherine the Great’s triumphant appropriation of the myth of the Greek presence in Tauris, and makes Iphigenia a resistant Ukrainian nationalist and radical, committed to struggling for a better world whatever the personal sacrifice. The oppressive force in Ukrainka’s Tauris is wielded not by the barbarous enemies of Greece and Russia, but by Iphigenia’s captors, by implication the might of Tsarist Russia.

In the reception of Euripides’ tragedy, Ukrainka is singularly important, because she brought to the text an unprecedented fusion of classical scholarship and Ukrainian cultural identity. Her chorus are not Greek, as in Euripides, but local women of the town of Parthenissa; the play is set there, according to the detailed stage direction, ‘in front of the temple of Tauridian Artemis. A place on the seashore.’ The drama takes place in the evening, for Iphigenia calls the libation she pours her ‘evening sacrifice’; it creates a powerful sense of the goddess’ presence, as the protectress of Tauris, and of her power as the moon-goddess. Her ‘shining arrows’ light the sea for sailors and bring radiance into darkened hearts; they do ‘battle with the shades of night-time’, and help Iphigenia and the women to conquer ‘dark spells’.

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5 Bida (1968) 21.
6 Bida (1968) 6, 9–10.
7 Ukrainka (1971) 45.
and subtle level of allegory, Artemis' light can combat the darkness which the yoke of Russian imperialism has cast over all the Ukraine.

After the prayer to Artemis to help alleviate the darkness, the chorus depart into the temple, leaving Iphigenia alone for the rest of the play. After a further prayer to Artemis, she embarks on an 87-line soliloquy which expresses her innermost thoughts, memories, and suicidal anguish. First, her homesickness—she left behind in Argos everything that bestows beauty on human life: family, renown, youth, and love. There is an intense feeling that she is deprived of simple physical contact—the cold marble of her temple is no substitute for laying her head on her mother's breast, to 'listen to the beating of her heart', nor for cuddling her little brother Orestes. Achilles, whom she loved sexually, must be in another woman's arms by now.

The notorious wintry weather of Ukraine, noted in few adaptations of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, is not only stressed by this poet, who had grown up there, but is turned by pathetic fallacy into an emblem of the frozen desolation in her soul:

> How mournfully these cypresses are rustling!  
> The autumn wind...And soon the winter wind  
> Will roar like a wild beast through all the oak grove,  
> The snowstorm sweep swirling across the sea,  
> And sea and sky dissolve again to chaos!  
> And I shall beside a meagre fire,  
> Feeble and sick in body and in soul;  
> While there at home, in distant Argolis,  
> Eternal spring will bloom once more with beauty,  
> And Argive girls will go out to the woods  
> To pick anemones and violets,  
> And maybe...in their songs they will remember  
> Iphigenia the renowned, who early  
> Perished for her native land...  

In the next section the true originality of Ukrainka's interpretation of Iphigenia's plight emerges. Looking for metaphysical answers to the problem of her suffering, she tells herself not to contend against the supreme powers that rule the earth, nor the god who hurls the thunderbolt. But her inner self is in restless dialogue. Another part of her almost immediately objects that the god who had created humans out

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*Ukrainka (1971) 48–9, in the translation by Vera Rich.*
of clay, Prometheus, had stolen fire for humans and bestowed on them a soul. Prometheus, of course, had been the great god of Romantic radicalism, the mythical symbol of the antislavery movement, the father of international communism, and the hero in a play attributed to Karl Marx's own favourite Greek author Aeschylus. Ukrainka had become interested in the political resonances of the Promethean myth when staying with her uncle Mykhaylo Drahomaniv in Bulgaria. Formerly a professor of literature at the University of Kiev, he had lost his job because of accusations of disloyalty to the Tsarist regime. Here Ukrainka opposes the idea that she should meekly accept her god-ordained fate by asserting that Prometheus had given her the courage to offer her life for her country:

You, O Prometheus, great and unforgotten,
Gave us our heritage! The spark you snatched
From the jealous Olympians for us,
I feel the flames of it within my soul,—
And like a conflagration, unsubmissive,
That flame of old dried up my girlish tears
When I went boldly as a sacrifice
For the glory and honour of my Hellas.

The negative inner voice now reasserts itself, and Iphigenia is on the brink of suicide, pressing a sword from the altar to her heart, angrily asking Artemis why she saved her for such a wretched existence. But once again her courageous, enduring self becomes dominant. Suicide would be unworthy, she says, of a descendant of Prometheus: the true sacrifice demanded of her, she now understands, is that she must live in Tauris without people even knowing who she really is: 'Let it be so', she quietly concludes, but 'Bitter is your heritage, O father Prometheus'.

While this 'dramatic scene' is complete as it stands, and concludes with Iphigenia walking resolutely, 'with even steps', back into her temple, we do not know whether Ukrainka intended to incorporate it into a longer piece or not. It would be good to know if she had meant to include an Orestes, since she was deeply attached to her brother Mykhalo, with whom she shared the political and artistic project of translating great works of literature into Ukrainian—the Bible, Gogol, Heine, and Byron. Indeed, in childhood they had been inseparable, and they collaborated on

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10 Hall (2011a).
11 Bida (1968) 14, 17.
12 Ukrainka (1971) 49.
13 Bida (1968) 4.
performing dramatic episodes from Greek mythology, ‘in which Mykhalo always assumed the role of the hero, while Lesya was the virtuous maiden or wife’ (see Fig. XII.2). It is not at all improbable that they enacted the Euripidean play set in their own Ukrainian land, in which brother and sister are reunited.

As a very young girl, Ukrainka had also organized stagings of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with other little girls in Volhynia (a district west of Kiev), and it would be fascinating to know whether it was the women or the men in those ancient epics in whom she was most interested, since in the cases of the Bible and Greek tragedy, her readings were distinctively gendered. In the voices of ancient Greek heroines she found a medium where she could fuse her personal emotional history, her political polemic, and a ‘universalising’ mythical referent that transcended the particularities of her own situation. She was ‘especially moved’ by the heroine of the Sophoclean *Antigone*, and the style of the ancient Greek tragedies ‘strongly’ affected her dramatic writing. In her play *On the Ruins* she tried to inspire her countrymen to great deeds of self-sacrifice through the words of the prophetess Tirsa, who exhorts her

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14 Bida (1968) 9.
15 Bida (1968) 43.
16 Bida (1968) 45.
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fellow Jews to liberate themselves from Babylonian captivity. This strategy is similar to the uses to which she put the Trojan prophetess in her *Cassandra*.

Ukrainka was a communist and a Ukrainian nationalist as well as a feminist. Her *IT* was designed to stand alone, as an independent performed drama. It has been staged in the Ukraine and in 1921 was used as the libretto by the Kiev composer Kyrylo Stetsenko. In Greece there have also been some excellent productions with a strong feminist undertow of Euripides’ original play, notably that of the Thessalian Theatre of Larissa, directed by Kostas Tsianos at the ‘Forest Theatre’ in Thessaloniki in 1990; starring Lydia Koniordou as Iphigenia. This performance placed a heavy emphasis on physical rituals and different traditions of Greek folk music, especially women’s folk song (see Fig. XII.3). But elsewhere there have been very few successful productions of the *IT* alone during the later twentieth century. In the remainder of this chapter I review three exceptions, which are all significant productions by North American women directors or writers. They displayed three different approaches to the problem of making ancient Greek theatre relevant to audiences today. The approaches entailed respectively (1) staging a faithful translation of *IT* in new and imaginative ways, (2) rewriting it entirely, and fusing it with other Greek tragedies to create a new, heavyweight, feminist drama, and (3) subverting it by transforming it into an intelligent but fundamentally light-hearted musical comedy in which gender stereotypes and expectations are comically subverted. It is argued here that these three approaches not only reflect different

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17 I am very grateful to Stavroula Kiritsi for researching this production for me. There is a DVD of the production at the Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama (APGRD) in Oxford.
strands in contemporary feminism, but three possible approaches to the much broader generic question of whether and how Greek tragedy can be made into meaningful theatre today.

The first North American woman director to take Euripides’ own text seriously in a major production was the eminent JoAnne Akalaitis, who directed it in a pair with *Iphigenia in Aulis* in 1997 under the title *The Iphigenia Cycle*. The venue was the Court Theatre of Chicago, and the play was performed in a new, taut but faithful translation by Nicholas Rudall, the theatre’s former Artistic Director.\(^\text{18}\) The feminist perspective in this production came not from the adaptation of the play itself but from directorial decisions. Akalaitis built on her approach to the feminist revision through innovative direction of canonical drama, notably in her productions of John Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1992) and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* (1994). But astute reviewers who had followed her work saw an important difference, and that was in the economy and precision of the design concept: ‘In contrast to the postmodern abundances of such controversial Akalaitis productions as her 1990–91 *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, this latest endeavor by the co-founder of Mabou Mines and former artistic director of New York’s Public Theater was strikingly lean and clean.’\(^\text{19}\)

What struck the Chicago audiences was the strenuous intellectual and emotional effort that had gone into making Euripides’ own plays work as contemporary theatre. As Iphigenia, Akalaitis cast the twenty-two-year-old Anne Dudek, while she was still a student at Northwestern University (she is now a successful TV and film actress). At the end of the first play Dudek ‘strutted off to her presumed death with the self-theatricalizing insouciance of a gangly teenager desperate to, like, mean something. The choice made perfect sense.’\(^\text{20}\) All the more surprise when the second part of the performance opened with Dudek swimming, naked, in a pool used for ritual washing. The faces of slaughtered Greeks looked down upon her from photographs on stakes, reminiscent of images of Middle Eastern cemeteries. The chorus turned up in swimming gear, later adding see-through plastic aprons and rubber gloves to clear up some human sacrificial gore. Dudek exchanged the feminine white frock she had worn in the first play for a gothic black hat and tunic, and rapped her pain-laden soliloquies into a handheld microphone. One strategy for approaching the difficult tone of *IT* was to think hard about the appropriate contemporary vocal idiom for each character. Orestes was a stammerer, who could scarcely express himself because of the damage which had been done to his psyche; Ora Jones, a superb Gospel singer, delivered Athena’s triumphal finale with Pentecostal fervour.

\(^{18}\) Rudall (1997).

\(^{19}\) Jones (1997).

\(^{20}\) Jones (1997).
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Akalaitis’ feminism is a fundamentally materialist and socialist brand, which sees the historical oppression and victimization of women as closely bound up with social and economic structures and the forms taken by political and religious cultures in each era. Her approach to the ancient texts entails a profound act of listening to the words that have been transmitted over time, while using any semiotic means at her disposal to make them communicate and unleash emotional energy in a modern performance. Akalaitis has no doubts that tragedy is still a living art form, nor that the classic repertoire—whether Renaissance, Early Modern, or ancient Greek—can be constantly rediscovered. Her production assumed that classical drama can play a vital role in the struggle against all forms of oppression, patriarchy included.

Two years later, Akalaitis’ Iphigenia Cycle was revived at the American Place Theater in New York City, and the contrast between the narrative tenor of the two Euripidean plays of which it consisted was brought into sharper contrast. The reviewer for The Village Voice described the first play as enacting ‘a terrifying myth of endless violence unleashed by a single act’, and the second rather dismissively as ‘the Taurian appendix’ which ‘gives it a peaceful but patently contrived closure’. But he suggested that Euripides, sardonic and irreligious, is playing out through his bifurcated response to Iphigenia ‘the views of the Sophists, who taught that there were alternative explanations for everything, and that every sentence contained the opposite of its surface meaning.’ This explanation—its rather contrived—reflects the general unhappiness with IT throughout most of the twentieth century. Since the 1930s, on the rare occasions when IT has been performed in the west, it has usually been paired with Iphigenia in Aulis, or staged as part of a sequence of three or more Greek tragedies, for example in the massive series The Greeks by John Barton and Kenneth Cavander with the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre in London (1980). This tendency can already be seen in its incorporation into Henry Lister’s revisionist American Clytemnestra in 1923, performed by supporters of women’s suffrage in California.

The incorporation of individual Greek tragedies into new sequential productions was also a feature of the earliest of the more recent works to be discussed in

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21 Feingold (1999).
22 Tazewell Thompson directed the IA and IT in 1991 as a pair at Boston’s Huntington Theatre Company.
In 1998, Professor Stephen Schrum staged his musical adaptation of the two Iphigenia plays at Penn State Hazleton campus.
23 Groups of plays from The Greeks, including IT, are sometimes revived, for example in a tetralogy Agamemnon and his Daughters at the Arena Stage in Washington in 2001: see Foley (2002).
24 See Lister (1923) 35–40. Lister’s Clytemnestra rewrites parts of Iphigenia in Aulis, Agamemnon, IT, and Sophocles’ Electra, in that order. It was performed and published by ‘La Bohème Club of San Francisco’. There is a striking photograph of Iphigenia, played by Maxine Siebrecht, standing between the columns of the temple in a white robe and a crown of flowers, reproduced opposite p. 12.
this chapter, Ellen McLaughlin’s *Iphigenia and Other Daughters*, which premiered at New York’s Classic Stage Company two years before Akalaitis’ *Iphigenia* double bill, in 1995. McLaughlin’s is a serious work, with a psychological emphasis and a passionately feminist agenda, although with moments of irony and sardonic humour. It does not try to hear fresh voices in ancient texts, but to stand at a certain distance from them and historicize the role that familiar stories have played in the cultural construction of our gendered mental landscapes. It is thus simultaneously both a stage performance deriving from ancient drama and a commentary upon its cultural functions across time. It creates a trilogy out of three plays based on Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Sophocles’ *Electra*, and Euripides’ *IT*, in that order, with added material from *Libation-Bearers* and *Eumenides*. McLaughlin wanted it to be received as a feminist response to the *Oresteia*, which exonerates men and legitimizes their domination of women, since she described it as ‘a sort of *Iphigenia*-ia’, seeing it as a feminist trilogy. Her project was to create a substantial dramatic experience which self-consciously examined the way in which the archetypal Greek heroes and heroines in the iconic tragic family have been made and modelled through different cultural phases over time. Both the original production of McLaughlin’s work and its revivals, including a colourfully designed staging in Boston in 2002, provoked a great deal of controversy, especially from men in the audience. The project, despite its intellectual depth, did not produce theatre as vigorous and engaging as Akalaitis’ realization of Euripides’ own plays.

In McLaughlin’s first play, set in an indeterminate mythical time, Iphigenia is psychologically alienated from her mother, with whom she cannot speak directly. She becomes word-perfect in her socially sanctioned role as submissive and self-sacrificing victim who can only display autonomy in freely accepting death. In the second play, which is the most ‘realistic’ of the three, Electra takes charge of the revenge on her mother, since her brother is mentally crippled by ‘shell shock’ after fighting in World War I. Electra both challenges patriarchy and at the same time buttresses it by accepting male judgements of her mother and of ‘correct’ female behaviour. Orestes is the sole male character in McLaughlin’s trilogy. The third play, the one based on *IT*, stands outside time and offers a detached and ironic commentary on the difficulties of changing social expectations of men and women: Iphigenia and Orestes attempt to escape the modes of thinking that have trapped them both, but find it almost impossible. The struggle becomes one exclusively between Orestes

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26 The Boston production, by the Boston University School of Fine Arts, ran at Boston University Theatre Studio 210, Boston, MA, from 20th to 23rd February 2002. See the puerile review of this revival by Rossi (2002) at http://www.theatermirror.com/i&odbucr.htm. There have been other performances, for example, at The Chautauqua Theatre Company, Chautauqua, New York (1996).

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and Iphigenia over which one must die. Orestes needs to kill Iphigenia in order to acquire the statue and remove the curse from his family; Iphigenia must kill Orestes because, in McLaughlin’s version of the Tauric sacrifices, the women-only cult of Artemis is obliged to kill any man who sets foot on their island. Because the problem of patriarchy has not yet been solved, the play concludes with Iphigenia once again sacrificing herself in the name of male interests. She climbs on a box and turns into the statue which her brother so badly needs. In the 2002 production, the connection of this process of aesthetic objectification was associated with the blonde Barbie dolls which littered her island and with which the five blonde avatars of Artemis, who formed the chorus, toyed intermittently.27

McLaughlin’s Tauris, or rather the place of women in everyday patriarchy, is not a barbarian land; it is ‘just dull’.28 It is less a physical setting than ‘a metaphor for the feminine psyche transported from reality’,29 on the very ‘threshold of consciousness’.30 Iphigenia’s exile represents the silencing of women when they try to find a voice of their own. But the play makes it clear that Orestes is quite as much a victim of cultural stereotyping and indoctrination of gender roles as his sister, having been forced to accept unquestioning obedience to male authority figures and warfare as his vocation. Both siblings are ‘equally gifted in compliance’.31 What is more, they know it. Iphigenia and Orestes are conscious of their role in propping up the action-hero model of male valor if they continue to play out the narrative of the House of Atreus.32 But they recognize, in dialogue with one another, that the ‘stone wall of history’ is not completely impassable.33 By acting out of love for her brother, it is implied, Iphigenia can somehow reshape the inherited legend with its cycles of hatred, violence, and revenge.34 But McLaughlin can’t reshape the myth without making Iphigenia still sacrifice herself, by becoming the statue, and leaving Orestes still mentally disturbed at the conclusion. It is implied that Iphigenia and Orestes are at least comrades now; with the deletion of Athena from the play, through their joint agency they can change the ‘plot’ of human history and man-woman relationships. Yet the play leaves its spectators with a question, ‘in a state of postmodern limbo’.

27 The stage directions stipulate that five women in white dresses inhabit a world that is ‘achingly beautiful and clean’ (McLaughlin [2005] 61).
30 McLaughlin (2005) 64.
33 McLaughlin (2005) 74.
Although McLaughlin’s work has been taken very seriously in feminist circles, it was not enthusiastically received by the general public, unlike the most recent New York *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Michi Barall’s effervescent *Rescue Me (A Postmodern Classic with Snacks)* (2010). This premiered at the Ohio Theatre in a production by the Ma-Yi Theatre Company, ingeniously directed by Loy Arcenas. It shared with McLaughlin’s *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* its self-conscious reflection on the contribution made by ancient Greek stories to our collective psyches. ‘How much are we constituted by ancient characters and don’t even know it?’ Barall asked. ‘To what extent are we created by myths and stories?’ *Rescue Me* is an urbane rewriting which self-consciously aims at eliciting pleasure and laughter in the audience, with its clever, knowing, up-to-date dialogue. Most reactions were similar to those of the influential *Theatermania* online reviewer, who announced that ‘this winningly irreverent and loose adaptation of *Iphigenia in Tauris* is like seeing Euripides’ tale through a funhouse mirror, a humorous, captivating novelty rather than a recognizable reflection of the original.’ Sometimes it bore overtones of ‘Chicklit’ in the manner of *Bridget Jones’ Diary*. Barall’s sassy Iphigenia told her audience, ’I’m 34, I’m single, and I hate my job!’ When her friend Sandra (a sort of chorus-woman) said that the first messenger was ‘cute’, Iphigenia responded, like one of the cute thirty-something bachelor girls in *Sex and the City*, ‘He’s a shepherd from Sevastopol. Don’t even think about it.’ When she was reluctant to see Thoas, she asked the chorus, ‘Can’t you tell him I’m menstruating or something?’ This was a play for ironic, twenty-first-century viewers who diet. A typical stage direction reads ‘Sandra takes a Diet Coke to the goddess.’

More significantly, this Artemis who drank sodas (and watched television) was herself a character in Barall’s play—indeed the goddess delivers the prologue and acts as a kind of master (or mistress) of ceremonies. She was acted by a man, David Greenspan, with a nonchalant elegance. He addressed Iphigenia as ‘sweetie’ and was dressed in the uniform of a powerful New York male—a well-cut business suit (see Fig. XII.4). The opening unspoken theatrical statement therefore reminded the audience that in ancient Greek theatre female roles were played by men. This information complicated their perception of gender roles throughout the rest of the evening’s entertainment.

This performance was created more than a decade after those of Akalaitis and McLaughlin, and its feminism had palpably evolved. Wanting to be a wife and

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56 Quoted in Blankenship (2010).
57 Lee (2010).
58 I am grateful to Michi Barall for providing me with a copy of the rehearsal script, which is as yet unpublished. It and other materials relating to the production can be consulted at the Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama (APGRD) at Oxford University.
mother was acceptable again. Indeed, Iphigenia’s problem was less that she hates her job than that she has no emotional life. Barall’s script did ensure the audience knew that women’s rights were underdeveloped in ancient Greece (Iphigenia, touchingly played by Jennifer Ikeda, said ‘I’m a woman, which means that in Greece, I have the same rights as a slave’), but she also brought out her personal loneliness. There were glancing references to her memories of her baby brother, to the fact that, at the age of thirty-four, her chances of becoming a mother were rapidly diminishing, and to her lack of a special relationship such as her brother enjoyed with Pylades. Indeed, the performance subtly encouraged the audience to ask why on earth she didn’t accept Thoas’ reasoned and unpushy offer of marriage and co-parenthood, except that she was put off by his insensitive references to her age in terms of his yearning for an heir, as well as by his polyester suit and comical resemblance to Elvis Presley. But Thoas was allowed a real dignity when he restated his proposal:

How about I ask you again? I’ll just keep asking you. I’m willing to wait. I can wait. I knew a guy waited eight years for his wife’s husband to die. I’m not saying I want to wait that long, and I don’t think you have another eight years if we’re going to have a baby, but I can give you a little time, to think this over.
Iphigenia rejected the offer out of hand, prompting in her frustrated Taurian admirer, who can’t understand why she wants to return to a country that had authorized her execution, the trenchant retort which is quoted above as the epigraph to this chapter.

Barall’s original training was as a dancer, and the play was studded with danced numbers beautifully choreographed by Julian Barnett, the actor who took the role of Orestes. Accompanied by pop songs, the dances oscillated between the emotionally touching and the parodically witty. The audience was never given the slightest chance to be bored, with the jokes falling thick and fast, puppets representing sheep, and images flickering on screens piled up on either side of the stage—excerpts from melodramatic Hispanic soap operas and newsreel among them. The second messenger speech, delivered by a CNN reporter, was accompanied by no fewer than three screens, including one which played the famous newsreel of the police car chasing O.J. Simpson. But the commitment to providing a pleasurable experience went in tandem with a learning lightly worn—an intense engagement with the history of adaptations of IT. The idea for the lovelorn Thoas came more or less straight from Goethe, although Barall’s Taurian suitor is made far more appealing through his humour. The homoerotic pas-de-deux between Pylades and Orestes was in a sense an embedded homage to the love-dance between the two young men in Pina Bausch’s choreography (see above pp. 00). Barall saw this as an inherent part of her theatrical project: ‘I wanted to explore how these plays become palimpsests. There’s 2,500 years of them being done, and there’s all this history and all these preconceptions that carry forward.’

But the claim made by the subtitle of Rescue Me to be ‘a postmodern classic with snacks’ is the most important clue to the overall theatrical experience. The fragile borderline between the world conjured in the play and New York in 2010 scarcely existed even at the beginning, when Iphigenia informed the audience of the no-cellphones policy which applied in Tauris. By the interval the fourth wall was eroded entirely. Snacks were indeed provided and Artemis stepped directly into New York cultural life to convene a question-and-answer session, introducing one of two women Classics professors from Barnard College, Helene Foley or Nancy Worman. They responded to queries the audience raised about ancient Greece and its dramas. But the whole performance worked. The reviewers were fairly uniform, a typical description praising the precarious balance of ‘a purposefully disjointed narrative, whimsical anachronisms, and over-the-top self-referentialism’, which concluded ‘miraculously with a tremendously enjoyable performance.’

Rescue Me displays the ‘knowingness’ that has been identified as one of the hallmarks of postmodern self-referential culture, with its love of pastiche, humorous

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39 Quoted in Blankenship (2010).
40 Anon. (2010).
revivals, and distrust of grand narratives. Iphigenia’s witty tongue and accurate prediction of how the rather simpler male souls around her will respond to certain stimuli show her to be very much a knowing heroine. She invites the audience to see things from her perspective, to share a joke, and to enjoy their mutual knowledge of ancient Greek as well as popular culture. Knowingness has recently been criticized by the philosopher Richard Rorty, who sees it as counter-progressive and the enemy of utopian thinking and enthusiasm; it is ‘a state of soul which prevents shudders of awe’.

For the psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear, knowingness can have tragic effects. In the personal realm, knowingness—feeling confidently in charge of information both technologically and intellectually—can prevent us all from understanding deeper emotional and psychological currents at work which are obscuring crucial information, often with tragic results. Lear’s classical paradigm for this psychoanalytical definition of knowingness is the figure of Oedipus, who is on one level master of knowledge (he has regularly consulted the Delphic oracle, etc.), but this mastery actually inoculated him against asking really penetrating questions when he should have—for example, who killed the husband of the woman he is about to marry.

But it seems to me that in Rescue Me, Barall is using the tragedy which Aristotle admired nearly as much as Oedipus (see above chapter IV) as a vehicle for a new, feminist knowingness which is both implicitly progressive in its gender politics and insists on looking psychological problems straight in the face. Iphigenia is in no doubt that Orestes’ psychological trauma has made him a mental ‘fuck-up’, as she puts it; she is equally in no doubt that her unhappiness can’t be resolved simply by returning to Greece, since that will not erase what happened to her at Aulis.

Trying to make the sexual politics of ancient Greek tragedy relevant or even acceptable today, without rewriting the texts entirely, presents almost insuperable challenges. Ingenious solutions to the particular problems presented by IT have recently been created by directors of campus productions. In his 1998 musical adaptation at Penn State’s Hazleton campus, Professor Steve Schrum conceived Thoas as a cult figure, like Jim Jones, the leader of the People’s Temple cult. On November 18th, 1978, more than 900 cult members, including Jones, committed mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana. Schrum’s IT ended as Thoas dispensed cyanide to his female followers (the chorus) after greeting Athena with the words ‘I knew you would arrive soon! The heavens proclaimed this great day of Communion! I will do your will!’

In Professor Mary-Kay Gamel’s revival of her Effie and the Barbarians, staged

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43 Unpublished typescript, kindly shown to me by the author.
in November 2010 in the Forum Theater at Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, the events at Tauris were framed by Iphigenia’s sacrifice at Aulis, and constituted her girlish fantasy of escape from the brutal militarism which had condemned her to death.\(^\text{44}\) The perceived need for such re-presentations of the contents of \(\text{IT}\) show just how much courage JoAnne Akalaitis displayed in grappling with the problems of historical and cultural translation ‘hand to hand in her effort to make the plays live’.\(^\text{45}\) Barall’s response was to abandon them or knowingly exploit them in a marked or exaggerated manner. Postmodern burlesque \textit{Rescue Me} may be, but it is one with a serious undercurrent which shows how the recalcitrant conventions of Greek tragic form and performance can be sidestepped by thinking creatively about the tastes and needs of a contemporary audience. As Helene Foley, one of the Classics professors from Barnard who participated in \textit{Rescue Me}, has put it,

Recent productions of Greek tragedy, whether of the Greek originals in translation or new versions, have aimed to revitalize the form for a modern audience, for better or worse, in part by exploiting or introducing generic ambiguity in various ways. The use of metatheatrical devices and other forms of sometimes comic post-Brechtian dramatic distancing invite audiences to be self-conscious about tragic form and its ironies, even while sometimes enabling its representation of suffering in the process. At its best, generic ambiguity and especially comedy can protect and empower a form vulnerable to anachronism.\(^\text{46}\)

Barall is a Japanese Canadian with her own experiences of ethnic stereotypes and narrow-minded nationalism, and in Iphigenia’s clichéd criticisms of aspects of Taurian culture she dissects some aspects of modern racism, although always with a light and humorous touch. Her Thoas, for all his lack of sophistication, offers to the Greeks some important insights into the ignorant and patronizing attitudes with which members of cultures who regard themselves as superior treat other communities far away:

You’re still a little confused. The Barbarians are way up and over. This is just the other end of the Black Sea. This is how you Greeks are. You think anything outside of Athens is the jungle. Look, I know you’re still a little sensitive that the law here asks for Greeks to be sacrificed. Maybe it brings up your ‘childhood trauma.’ But you gotta understand—we only make these sacrifices for Artemis. Also, we have a sacred duty to protect our borders.

\(^{44}\) A script and DVD recording are housed in the APGRD.

\(^{45}\) Feingold (1999).

\(^{46}\) Foley (2010) 141.
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Thoas here reminds Iphigenia that Greeks are poorly informed about non-Greeks, that Greeks themselves have been known to practise human sacrifice, and that the Taurians, like North Americans after Pearl Harbor or 9/11, also feel a ‘sacred duty’ to protect their borders. Barall’s Rescue Me is not only a ‘postmodern classic’, as its subtitle announces, but in its own comic vein shares many features with the more earnest anti- and postcolonial rewritings of this classical drama which are the subject of the next chapter.
Decolonizing Thoas

In 1855, one year into the Crimean War, a North American discussion of the history of the Crimea penetrated straight to the heart of the relationship between *Iphigenia in Tauris* and Athenian colonialism. The journalist suggested that it was the establishment of Black Sea colonies that led the tragedians ‘to make use of a Tauric legend in the plays they offered to Athenian audiences, as Shakespeare made a comedy from the Bermudas, and as a playwright of ours, if we had any, would be glad of a Kanzan tradition.’ He asks his readers to understand the relationship of Euripides’ Taurians to their Athenian audiences in the same terms as Shakespeare’s Caliban in *The Tempest* to the English who had colonized Bermuda in 1609, or the native Kansa Sioux in the (newly created) state of Kansas to the reader of the Boston-based literary journal. The Kansa Sioux had notoriously proved resistant to all the attempts of Methodist missionaries to make them live in permanent housing and convert to Christianity.

The author of the article was correct. Euripides’ *IT* is very nearly a definitive text in the archive of colonial literature. This chapter will explore the radical revisions that twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors and directors have performed upon the text in order to make it speak to a world struggling to recover from centuries of European domination of the planet. For *IT* ticks almost all the boxes in the conceptual repertoire of postcolonial theory associated with the work of the Palestinian Edward Said, and the Indians Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha. Thoas and his Taurians, who blithely call themselves ‘barbarians’, are straightforward projections of the ethnocentric Greek imagination. The individual Taurian characters, the

1 Anon. (1855) 462.
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herdsman, Thoas, and his henchman, who delivers the second 'messenger speech', are little more than ventriloquized, animated puppets designed to make the Greeks' intelligence and emotional range appear to the best advantage. Very little effort has been put into inventing a semblance of an authentic subjectivity or interiority, into imagining events from their perspective, or into seeing them as fully formed individuals with families and pasts. Thoas may be a king but he seems to have no ancestry. The community is scarcely outlined, let alone given social relations, productive working lives, institutions, rituals, or customs beyond human sacrifice, impalement, and cattle farming. Moreover, as this book has shown, the post-Euripidean adaptations of the story until the late eighteenth century became steadily more damning of the population of Tauris. This begins with the development of the trope of the 'admiring barbarian' who praises the loyal friendship of the Greek men, and the first thoroughly dead Taurians of Roman art and literature; it matures with Toante, the megalomaniac bully of Rucellai's Orestes; and is consummated in the Ottomanized tyrant of Gluck's opera.

The first, even if thoroughly compromised, partial, and tentative step towards 'decolonizing' Thoas and his countrymen was taken by Goethe when he allowed them to keep the cult image of Diana. In post-apartheid South Africa, Goethe's Iphigenie auf Tauris has even been used in multiracial attempts to come to terms with the apartheid legacy. But it is not until very much later than Goethe's play, in 1924, that the movement towards challenging the story's Hellenocentric perspective began to make rapid and spectacular progress, with the Ifigenia Cruel of the Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes. For the first time in the entire reception of Euripides' tragedy, Iphigenia—Reyes' Ifigenia—refuses to return to Greece at all, preferring to remain with the community that has adopted her. Perhaps this radical revision could only have come about in the work of a poet whose country was itself the ultimate result of a colonial invasion of an indigenous culture by Europeans—the formerly Aztec territory incorporated into the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century under the name 'New Spain'.

Reyes was part of a group of Mexican writers known as the '1898 generation', who self-consciously attempted to create a national literature in the wake of Spain's loss of its last colonies in Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines. He was deeply influenced by the example of nation-building through literature set by Weimar classicism, especially by Goethe. His choice of theme for his only attempt at a drama based on a Greek tragedy is as much a homage to Goethe as it is to Euripides. Reyes' Ifigenia Cruel certainly became one of the founding texts of Mexican literature as well as

1 Von Wietersheim and Farrelly (2001), 27, 42.
Mexican Modernism, and of appropriations of ancient Greek literature in the Spanish language. Usually regarded as his finest achievement, it has itself acquired the status of a classic work. It was probably first performed in 1934 in the context of celebrations of Mexican theatre by Mexican authors; subsequent performances have taken in several other Latin American theatres and campuses—recently, for example, in Peru. Ifigenia Cruel has been transformed into an opera by Leandro Espinosa (1976). It also reverberates in later Latin American literature on the themes of exile and separation, of which Reyes had bitter personal experience. His father was a prominent politician who was killed in 1913 while attempting a coup d’etat. Reyes fled, abandoning Mexico and its Civil War (1910–17), one of the bloodiest and most terrifying the world has ever seen.

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4 Aponte (1972) 16.
5 In 1932, under the patronage of the Secretary of Public Education, Celestino Gorostiza organized a new group called Teatro de Orientación, which for four seasons offered masterpieces of French, Italian, Russian, English, and Irish theatre to the Mexican public. During the last season, in 1934, Reyes’ Ifigenia Cruel was offered as one of the new Mexican classic dramas.
6 A play entitled Orestes Montaje by the Lima theatre company Cuatrotablillas, closely based on Ifigenia Cruel, was performed at the Peru–North American Cultural Institute in 1989 with the support of the Mexican Embassy of Peru. Pilar Núñez starred as Ifigenia and Fernando Petong as Orestes. Thanks to Katie Billotte for her detective work.
7 The Cuban writer José Lezama Lima used a detailed explication of the letter scene in IT, which he may well have learned about from Reyes’ work, in order to explain what he meant about significant metaphor in an essay he wrote in 1953. See Lima (1966) 227.
After a brief stint as a diplomat in France, Reyes arrived in Spain in 1914. He stayed in Madrid, studying classical literature and working as a literary translator and commentator until 1924 (see Fig. XIII.1). Then he spent time as a diplomat, first in Paris and then in Argentina and Brazil. He did not go back to his Mexican homeland until 1938. He had discovered that ‘home’ and ‘return’ are ambivalent words, especially since he found his intellectual and spiritual home in Spain, the ancient mother country of his New World place of origin. His sense of ethnic and cultural hybridity was however even more complex than this. By the time he wrote *Ifigenia Cruel*, Reyes had embarked on his project to give voice to the ‘Aztec muse’, by according Mexican literature autochthonous roots that ran parallel to, and merged with, those that had grown in Spain. These had already been given powerful articulation in 1917 in his *Visión de Anáhuac*, where Aztecs and conquistadors encounter one another for the first time. Ifigenia’s religion therefore has reverberations of ancient Mesoamerican culture before it was destroyed by Christian imperialism.

As a young man of twenty, supposed to be studying law in Mexico City, Reyes learned Greek in his attic room and began to read the ancient tragedies, beginning with those about Orestes and Electra. One of his more important early critical works is a comparison of the three plays about Electra by each of the Greek tragedians, a study which takes as its starting-point Nietzsche’s explication in *The Birth of Tragedy* of the collective origins of the chorus. Reyes’ other favourite work of ancient literature was the *Aeneid*. He also translated *The Ebb Tide* of Robert Louis Stevenson (*La Resaca*), in which a decrepit old Englishman reads the *Aeneid* on a South Sea island. The idea of the shipwreck, or the journey overseas that ends in crisis, struck him as an important symbol for Mexicans, whose nation had been ‘founded in sorrow and shipwreck’, so it was perhaps inevitable that he would be drawn towards Euripides’ ‘travel tragedy’ about Orestes and Iphigenia in Tauris.

His *Ifigenia Cruel* is a lyrical and partly surrealistic dramatic poem in five acts, of which the first four are short, building up to the climactic fifth act in which Ifigenia makes her decision to stay. It becomes clear in the opening speech, delivered by Reyes’ Freud-influenced heroine, that she has suppressed all memories of her life before her arrival in Tauris, where her eyes were first ‘ripped open’, and she felt herself to be a strange animal ‘between a forest, a temple and the sea’, at the feet of the goddess. The goddess animated her, her divine will pouring through Ifigenia’s mortal joints and limbs; when Ifigenia performs her sacrifices, knife in hand, she becomes one with the body of the goddess. The chorus venerate her, admire her beauty, long

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9 See Trend (1952) 3.
11 Trend (1952) 2.
to touch her but may not: more than anything they admire her strength when she twists her arms in her zeal to strangle a man:

You prefer the enraged victim, overcome in the open space
so that Artemis breaths the breath of the entrails!
O bloody and fierce thing!  

In the brief second act, the Taurian cowherd appears to report the arrival of two men, one of whom is clearly mad. This dialogue is important in that it depicts Taurian society as a semi-idealized pastoral utopia, for all its brutal rituals: Ifi genia asks what the cowherd thought he was doing, substituting oars for staves, slings for nets, curses for songs:

O, you peaceful fathers of quiet agricultural land,
experts in the flute and melody and custodians of the ewe!
What have you to do with terror, anchors and ships,
with fist-fights and shouts of rage?

This evocation of the normally Arcadian atmosphere provides a contrast with the noisy, violent entrance of Orestes at the beginning of Act III. He is raving and deluded. Ifigenia criticizes the Greeks’ impulse to sail all the routes the sea can take them, and asks why their own cities and farmlands are not enough for them. In a voice which invites comparison with the experience of the Mesoamerican cultures invaded by the Spanish conquistadors, she asks why they are surprised to find themselves condemned without pardon after challenging the very limits of nature and coming to a civilization more ancient than they can ever imagine:

You are strong men for the Virgin.
Civilization was established long before your infancy.
History began long ago.

Reyes had certainly studied The Golden Bough, in which there is a good deal of information on the human sacrifices in Mexico which so obsessed the conquistadors. His Orestes is enraged into a furious assault on the defiant priestess: ‘Recognize your master!’ He begins to tell her that Apollo has sent him to find the temple of

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12 Reyes (1924) 17.
13 Reyes (1924) 33–4.
14 Reyes (1924) 41.
16 Reyes (1924) 42.
Artemis, and the names of these two divinities stimulate in Ifigenia a fit of recovered memory. She begs the stranger to stay silent because she thinks she knows a mark on his neck (a detail suggested by the Halai Araphenides ritual that Euripides’ Athena decrees) and his blue eyes: ‘I do now wish to know—O my cowardly heart—who I am’.17

Toas appears opportunely to attend the sacrifice, and Ifigienia tells him that the men have brought with them her forgotten name. He accepts that they should be allowed to speak: the rest of the drama, the long fifth act, stages Reyes’ analysis of the tensions underlying the ancient Greek myth of the reciprocal violence in the house of Atreus. His solution to the problem is a rather mystical fusion of essentialist feminism and Nietzschean anthropology.18 It requires Ifigienia to remain with the Taurians and the violent Orestes, constrained by a family destiny he does not know how to refuse, to return to Greece empty-handed. In resisting the instinct to attribute responsibility to others for one’s circumstances and condition, and to punish them for it, Ifigienia is enacting Nietzsche’s recommendations in *Will to Power*, which argues that the revenge drive has removed all the innocence from human existence and replaced it with resentment, nihilism, and repression.19 In order to effect the final separation of his Nietzschean Ifigienia from the revenge cycle in which her father had forced her to participate, Reyes polarizes the positions which she and Orestes respectively articulate. He introduces two passages of poetry from two other ancient Greek texts in order to articulate these positions.

The first is Orestes’ performance of a revisionist Hesiodic cosmogony, in which the deeds of violence done to Ouranos by Cronos, Tantalus to Pelops, and Thyestes’ children by Atreus, are traced down to the violence done to Agamemnon and then to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.20 These names produce a flood of memories in Ifigienia, and with Orestes prompting her, she relives the nightmarish scene at Aulis and recognizes him as the beloved little boy she left behind there. But she reaches the critical point in her recovered memory as she relives the intense love her mother had offered her. She says that what she flees is not the goddess but memory:

*I flee because I feel that I am impaled to the ground by a hundred crimes.*
*I flee from memory and from my history like a mare who tries to evade her shadow.*21

17 Reyes (1944) 47.
18 Teja (2004).
20 Reyes (1944) 57–61.
21 Reyes (1944) 62.
Orestes constrains her violently as she recalls the details of arriving at the camp in Aulis. Here Reyes introduces a series of several speeches in which Ifigenia uses material from *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In a version of her mother Clytemnestra’s great appeal to Agamemnon at IA (1146–84), Reyes’ Ifigenia says to her brother at the culmination of this sequence:

You snatched me from my first husband and I was torn from his arms;
you smashed my first son against the ground . . .
I was modest and sober in your palace.
Three daughters and one son were given to you.
So you are sent forth from your land and home by foreign aggression:
Do you really want the little boy to weep for the death of Ifigenia?  

Orestes tells Ifigenia that Apollo orders her to return to Mycenae, marry (the husband’s identity is not specified), and produce children, but Ifigenia is adamant that her body is overwhelmingly polluted by the crimes of Mycenae, which continue ‘boiling’ in her entrails; her milk would nurture only snakes and incest. Matters have reached crisis point, but Orestes and Pylades are spared when the chorus ask Toas for clemency, and he allows the Greeks to leave. For the first time in the history of Euripides’ IT, the king of Tauris is allowed to teach the Greeks a moral lesson:

Temperate behavior is the answer. Firm kindness
is the basis of the family and the security of the state:
forgiveness, letting go of resentment.  

The drama ends at sunset, with the chorus celebrating the departure of the Greeks, of whom their venerated Taurian space and landscape are finally free again.

My prosaic account of *Ifigenia Cruel* fails utterly to convey how Reyes uses stress, word order, and punctuation to align the aural effect and the form with the psychological evolution of his dramatic poem. The choral passages use unexpected emphases that are rare in Spanish, suggesting ancient hymn-like chants which help to bring the new, free Ifigenia into being. The colometry is marked by a good deal of end-stopping, which often supports verbs in the imperative, propelling the verses on, in a manner akin to a procession, ‘like a series of steps’. Most of the play is written in a free verse, with lines of anything between seven and thirteen syllables—often eleven, in which it

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22 Reyes (1924) 71–2.
23 Reyes (1924) 78.
24 Carter (1985) 166.
is difficult to produce melodious Spanish phrases, underlining the struggle in which the characters are engaged as they pursue their freedom from destiny. Ifi genia has released herself from her past in an act of profound self-determination which involves rejecting her physical homeland in favour of her spiritual one. The poem’s exceptional formal and emotional power is a result of its grounding, as Reyes fully acknowledged, in his own experience of violence, bereavement, and exile:

Using the scant gift that was conceded to us in the measure of our strength, we tried to free ourselves of the anguish that such an experience left with us, projecting it upon the artistic sky, discharging it in a colloquy of shadows.25

Reyes’ Tauris, where after her struggle his Ifi genia elects to stay, is a remarkable place. Its inhabitants regard themselves as ancient and civilized; they are a pastoral people, expert in music and song. They do not travel away from their own land and do not understand why the Greeks do. They are not violent, and aside from their ritual sacrifices of those who invade their country, are a peaceful and gentle people. Their king even feels pity for the plight of the Greeks—‘I have learned’, he says, ‘to weep for other people’s sufferings’—and listens politely to their case. One of the aspects of life in Spain that Reyes most prized was the relative freedom of speech and respect of privacy that he enjoyed there. Yet, for all the striking rehabilitation of the Taurians in Reyes’ poem, his Toas remains an ill-defined presence, overshadowed in psychological interest by Ifi genia and her brother. Thinking about what twentieth-century writers have done—or not done—with Toas and the Taurians indeed offers the most direct route into understanding how this play has resonated during the period of movements in opposition to European colonialism and its legacy across the planet.

With Yannis Ritsos, the ethnic encounter scarcely features at all in his response to the Euripidean text. Toas and the Taurians disappear from the story almost entirely, and the Black Sea Iphigenia finally comes truly home, to the south-east Peloponnese. A major figure in twentieth-century Greek literature, Ritsos was born into a rich family and reared, like Iphigenia, in the ancient district of Laconia, although a little further south than her, in Monemvasia. The autobiographical element in his response to IT is expressed not through its heroine, as in Reyes’ drama, but through the insertion into her story of a second younger brother.

Since his death in 1990, Ritsos has become a national hero, although during his life he was regarded by many as a dangerous revolutionary. He never did abandon the socialist politics he acquired in his youth—in 1931 he joined the Greek Communist Party and wrote poetry to inspire first the international working-class movement and

then the Greek resistance. After what he felt was the equivalent of incarceration in a hospital with tuberculosis between 1927 and 1931, he endured a great deal of persecution by the dictator Metaxas, and in 1948 was actually imprisoned for four years. If there are Taurian barbarians in his poem, they are the sinister medical or prison bureaucrats who used to supervise Iphigenia and Orestes incessantly, entering their room ‘at any hour, autocratic, unknown men’; they would ‘occupy the settee, placing their large hats on their knees’ and await their captives’ certain deaths. Ritsos’ later poetry turned increasingly to ancient myth and literature, especially ancient Greek tragedy, in order to express a very personal vision of his country’s tragic twentieth-century history. ‘The return of Iphigenia’ was conceived as the last in a series of poetic soliloquies, each framed by ‘scene-setting’ sections of prose narrative, in which he fused the story of the house of Atreus at the time of the Trojan war with the experiences of members of his own family; the physical environment in the poem, with its armchairs, piano, and ice-cream cones, is recognizably that of postwar Greece. For Yannis, world wars and civil war had compounded the private devastation caused by the early deaths of his oldest brother and mother from tuberculosis, his father’s breakdown and commitment to a mental hospital, and the loss of the family fortune. The first poem in this series, ‘The Dead House’, had been published in 1959; the Atridae monologues were published together in *The Fourth Dimension* in 1972.

When the infamous military junta took power in April 1967, Ritsos was soon arrested once again, and imprisoned in a series of island prison camps. Sick with suspected cancer, in 1970 he was allowed to go into ‘internal exile’ on Samos and (under heavy surveillance) travel to and from Athens for treatment. It was during this dark time that he composed ‘The Return of Iphigenia’, which is dated ‘Samos—Athens—Samos November 1971–August 1972.’ His own agonizing experience, while he wrote the poem, of exile, journeys, and returns endured at a time when he faced the fear of imminent death, lends this last monologue in the series a special intensity. Indeed, the significance of this response to Euripides’ tragedy is that it is one of only a very few artworks that have tried to imagine what the longed-for homecoming might actually have looked like, and the answer is bleak:

We have returned, or so we say,
and we hardly know where we have returned from, or to. We are suspended
in-between two unknown points. Don’t droop your head—
we’ll escape, both you and I.  

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16 Ritsos (1972) 121–2.
17 Ritsos (1972) 116.
Iphigenia and her brother have still not broken away from their captivity. They are still stranded, miserably, in a state of limbo. The sense of ineluctable oppression, completely unalleviated by their official ‘escape’ from the Taurians, coaxes the reader into realizing the impossibility of happy endings and identifying the true barbarism as an integral part of contemporary Greek domestic politics and culture. In the narrative section at the end, we are told that ‘the woman’ will take the image to Brauron where ‘the ceremonial rite will take place…. And, in fact, it is Sunday’. The formal language and the passive voice, as well as the Christian resonances, subtly remind the reader of the Junta’s close relationship with the Greek Orthodox Church. The image, in fact, is sinister—a mysterious ‘charred log’, which ‘somewhat resembles the torso of a woman, without arms and legs’. Religion in this socialist/humanist version is not the issue: rather, it is powerlessness in the face of other people’s manipulation of religious ritual.

But the political dimension of *The Fourth Dimension* poems is only one part of a dense, allusive text in which intensely introspective and melancholy first-person subjectivities range through memories, fragments of dialogue, and narration. The overwhelming preoccupations are the vice-like grip of the dead on the present, and the psychological alienation by which trauma estranges individuals from people they once loved. Pylades, Orestes’ former ‘faithful comrade’, has split up with them and disappeared, ‘perhaps because he predicted the alteration in the tone of their relationships’, and because he found ‘the isolated feeling of guilt’ completely unendurable. The guilt and alienation caused by their mutual survival of danger and catastrophe, in Iphigenia’s words, sound as though they symbolize the isolation of every human being:

> How *alone* we are, my god, and what strangers to one another, despite our shared fate.  
> The amount of time I talk just about myself, for all that I know you are much further from any goal, totally cut off from any sense of continuity, there in the place where words disappear …

Ritsos’ introspective monologues of disappointment and alienation were not written for performance by actors, but his popularity has inevitably led to attempts to realize them theatrically. One of the largest Greek communities in the world lives in Australia, and Ritsos’ ‘Return of Iphigenia’ was recently adapted for performance in New South Wales. The Teleia Theatre Company performed it, along with another Ritsos monologue, ‘Orestes’, under the title *The Comeback* at the 2007 Greek Festival of Sydney (see Fig. XIII.2). This Greek/Australian

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28 Ritsos (1972) 115.  
29 Ritsos (1972) 118.  
production is one expression of the special resonance that Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy seems to have held in connection with the Antipodes. Classical scholars, for example, have investigated the Australian native people’s experience of British colonization after Captain James Cook took possession of it as a *terra nullius* in 1770, in attempts to throw light on the way that ancient Greek colonization was experienced by the indigenous people.31

When Robert Browning wrote ‘Waring’ in 1842, a poem regretting the recent emigration to New Zealand of Alfred Domett, a close friend and would-be writer, he muses comically on the various inhospitable places where ‘Waring’ might have ended up. Figuring his friend as Iphigenia, he asks whether s/he has gone, for example,

To Dian’s fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway

31 Williams (1990).
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech  
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach  
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands  
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands  
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry  
Amid their barbarous twitter!  

In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!  

Amongst Australians, one critic has even identified what he has called the ‘Iphigenia complex’ in colonial writing by women. An important female painter, Jean Bellette (1908–91), in 1944 won the Sulman Prize, awarded annually in New South Wales for ‘the best subject painting, genre painting or mural project by an Australian artist’, with her *Iphigenia in Tauris* (see Fig. XIII.3). In a wide, dusty, open landscape, where the horizon is set at an almost infinite distance and it takes concentration to distinguish sea from sky or cliff from cloud, it is the horizontal axis which predominates. Only the upper torsos of the horsemen and two horses’ heads, perhaps suggested by Thoas’ call for horses near the end of *IT* (1423) connect the shadowed earth to the lighter elements of water and air in the upper section. The horsemen are dressed in ways that suggest the Australian present, rather than Greek antiquity; they belong to a tradition of art and literature which represented Australian landscapes and cattle drovers in a mythical idiom. These feature frequently in the atmospheric paintings of John Glover,
Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris

Elioth Gruner, Conrad Martens, and Arthur Streeton, for example, and the poetry of Henry Lawson, notably his much-loved ‘The Horseman on the Skyline’ (1906):

He never rides in starlight
Nor underneath the moon,
But often in the distant
And dazzling haze of noon.
The sad Australian sunset
(Too sad for pen or tongue)
Has often seen him riding
Out where the night was young.\(^{35}\)

In the foreground of Bellette’s landscape sits a solitary, naked, timeless woman—a statuesque Iphigenia partly fused with the image of Artemis, perhaps; the direction of her gaze and the slightly raised arms signal isolation and helplessness. On the left, two women with minimal drapes gesture towards her—perhaps the chorus; on the right two men, one naked and one in a long classical tunic, are engaged in communication with the women, while another group of men behind them are more interested in the horsemen.

The scene is conceived in the quintessentially ‘classical modernist’ terms favoured in Australia between the world wars, although less romantically than in the works of some of the men in the ‘Sydney Group’ with which Bellette is associated and which included her husband Paul Haefliger; at the Westminster School of Art in England, and in France and Italy, Bellette had received a classical art training oriented towards the earlier European tradition, especially Greco-Roman sculpture and Byzantine art as well as Medieval and Renaissance masterpieces. She also studied the French literary symbolism of Stephane Mallarmé and is clearly influenced by the classicism of Cézanne, Maillol, de Chirico, and Picasso. She favoured neoclassical, heroic figures, was repeatedly drawn to ancient Greek myth, and determinedly pursued the goals of compositional balance and order, but her work reflects her responses to the unique spaces and light of Australia and is infused with a distinctive melancholy. The psychological contours of Greek tragedy are monumentalized and fused with traditional Australian landscape painting and her very personal experience of the Australian landscape, creating ‘complex forms of personal and national allegory’.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\) Many examples are to be found amongst the plates in Lansdowne (1982).

\(^{35}\) Quote from Hall (1981) 54–5.

\(^{36}\) Personal correspondence with Connie Tornatore-Loong, a Ph.D. student at the University of Sydney preparing a thesis on Bellette, who was also so kind as to provide me the image reproduced here. I am very grateful to her.
Decolonizing Thoas

It is in Australia, moreover, that *Iphigenia in Tauris* has inspired the first ever ‘iPad Opera,’ *Exile* by Helen Gifford, to a libretto by Richard Meredith, which is available on the Internet as a permanent podcast audio-recording.37 This can be overlaid by an iPad application, launched in December 2010, which sends the libretto flowing in surtitles across generative graphics that are strikingly different each time; touching the screen produces writhing tracks of blood and other random, unsettling, and only half-identifiable images (for example, a temple) and textures.38 Gifford was drawn to the Greek tragedy partly because of the resonances she felt it had for Australia’s particular social history. She had written her ‘one-woman’ opera for soprano and pre-recorded chorus in the early 1980s. In it, she had experimented with the use of unconventional percussion and instrumentation, including a mandolin, sliding chromatic flute solos (which open the piece), and raw clarinet sounds, which she felt conjured up an atmosphere appropriate for the ancient Greek world. It is an atmospheric piece, which explores Iphigenia’s psychological state, her dream, her memories, her fears. There are no Taurians, and no Thoas, just as there is no Orestes, but the music, especially the pre-recorded choral sections, suggests the mysterious voices of the past re-echoing in the alien background, the harsh context of Iphigenia’s exile.

Despite a few private recordings which sat subsequently in archives, *Exile* did not reach the mainstream public until June 2010, when it was brought to life by David Young and his company Chamber Made Opera at the Iwaki Auditorium in Melbourne (see Fig. XIII.4). The recording of that performance was broadcast in November 2010 in instalments on ABC radio.39 This production relocated Tauris to Point Nepean on the Victoria Coast, which was singularly appropriate for several reasons. It was the site of an infamous quarantine station, built in 1852, and in 1999 redeployed to house refugees from Kosovo. The dangerous coastline has seen terrible disasters, including the wreck of the SS Cheviot in 1887, when thirty-five men died; Harold Holt, the incumbent Prime Minister, responsible for expanding Australia’s role in the Vietnam War, drowned there in 1967. Even more importantly for an opera about the ancient goddess who oversaw women’s reproductive processes, these craggy limestone cliffs were also for thousands of years the site of an ancient Aboriginal settlement (there are seventy registered Aboriginal archaeological sites within the Point Nepean National Park), where the women of the Boonerwrung People used to go to give birth.

Remote areas of Australia haunted by the ancient presence of the Aboriginal population has also produced, in Louis Nowra’s play *The Golden Age* (1985), an extremely

38 The visuals were created by the ‘new media artists’ Champagne Valentine of Amsterdam. I am extremely grateful to my omniscient Royal Holloway colleague Nick Lowe for drawing my attention to *Exile*.
39 The production was directed by Margaret Cameron, with Deborah Kayser singing the role of Iphigenia.
important response to *IT* in which the literary descendants of the Taurians, the strange people encountered by the figures equivalent to Orestes and Pylades, have finally and emphatically become the tragic heroes. In this ‘distinctively post-colonial’ vision of national history, ‘tragedy, romance and farce can collide in magic realist mode…where the traumas of the past erupt into the present to be rehearsed, replayed and refuged.’

*The Golden Age* has, deservedly, become a cornerstone of the Australian theatre repertoire (see Fig. XIII.5). Set in 1939–45, it is inspired by the true story of a small community descended from convicts deported to Australia, who got lost in the outback of Tasmania in the mid-nineteenth century. Through the trauma inflicted on their ancestors, lack of cultural roots to hold onto, and inbreeding, they developed a strange dialect and became increasingly prone to hereditary abnormalities. In 1939 they were discovered and put in sanatoria by the Australian government, which was terrified of the ‘evidence’ they might present to Nazi eugenicists. They all died, most of them of tuberculosis. In this play this strange community in part symbolizes the experience of aboriginal Australians after the European colonization of Australia; only a handful are left, including the ‘Iphigenia’ figure Betsheb, and the young autistic boy Stef of whom she takes great sisterly care, although her own brother has recently died.

*The Golden Age* was regarded at the time as an oblique approach to the subject of the extermination of native Australian culture by the Europeans, and led directly to the play which addresses it explicitly, Nowra’s adaptation of Xavier Herbert’s novel *Capricornia*, commissioned for the 1988 bicentenary of the foundation of Sydney and New South Wales. Nowra had for years researched early attempts by British individuals

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to learn the indigenous languages of Australia, especially Lieutenant William Dawes, who around 1790 learned Eora, the language spoken around Sydney Cove, from a teenage girl named Patyegarang, and whose notebooks are the best record of the richness of the language, which died out in the early nineteenth century.

Betsheb’s community in The Golden Age is ‘discovered’ in the Tasmanian outback by two young Australian men, Peter Archer and Francis Morris. Francis and Betsheb form a close bond. The last few members of this ‘lost tribe’ are committed to a sanatorium and only Betsheb survives. Peter and Francis both fight in Europe, but in the end return, and Francis takes Betsheb back to her remote place of origin, where the couple awaits an uncertain future. The action moves between the Tasmanian outback and Hobart, the chief city of Tasmania, with a short section in Berlin. IT and King Lear provide two crucial intertexts, plays embedded within the frame play. Lear has apparently been handed down, in a burlesque form, by memory from a deported actor in the original fugitive community. The savage heath of Shakespeare’s elemental tragedy

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represents the Tasmanian forest as well as the prison-like sanatorium. But these are also associated with the Tauric backwater where Iphigenia is discovered.

To the elite colonial community, Nowra, superficially at least, assigns not Shakespeare but Greek tragedy. Framing the play are two productions of *IT* set outside a ‘Greek’ temple in the neoclassical garden of a prosperous white Hobart family, ‘elite’ performances done for charity by Dr and Mrs Archer. Dr and Mrs Archer were historical figures in Hobart, and Louis Nowra tells me that they really did put on such productions of Greek plays, including *IT*, in their garden.\(^\text{42}\) In the play these performances represent the new Australian immigrant community desperately trying to import ‘old’ European, colonial culture into a frightening new environment. Later in the play, the temple replica is associated with a statue of Frederick the Great in Berlin, riddled with bullet holes during World War II, thus linking the era of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European imperialism directly with the ancient Greek tragedy.\(^\text{43}\) The ‘high’ culture represented by the garden and the Greek plays is also contrasted in social terms with the lower-class Roman Catholic background from which Francis comes; as someone who has risen socially, he feels a different kind of rootlessness and exile—or *outcastin’*, the key word of the play.

The play opens with Elizabeth Archer delivering the part of Iphigenia’s opening monologue which describes her dream, after this stage direction:

\[
\text{Hobart, 1939. A garden. It is a hot Australian night full of the sounds of cicadas and crickets. ELIZABETH ARCHER, a middle-aged woman, stands in front of a small, crumbling Greek temple. She wears a copy of an ancient Greek dress. For a moment it seems we are in ancient Greece, but she is playing Iphigenia from Iphigenia in Tauris.}^{44}\]

After the monologue, Nowra adapts the play so that Orestes (played by Mrs Archer’s husband William) appears immediately, and explains that he is ‘an outcast’ hated by the gods. Elizabeth/Iphigenia, who has not yet identified the new victim she must prepare for sacrifice, responds to William/Orestes: her speech turns out to resonate throughout the play. It allegorically describes the plight of British deportees to Australia in the nineteenth century, of William Archer himself, and symbolically of the aboriginal population of Australia and the victims of World War II:

\[
\text{I too am far from home and live only to perform these dark rites which are so savage as not to be sung….I now have nothing left to lose. Cruelty has}
\]

\(^{42}\) Private correspondence.

\(^{43}\) Tompkins (2006) 50.

\(^{44}\) Nowra (1989) 1.
Decolonizing Thoas

...overtook me, possessed me. You are first to sail here in a long time but you will never return home. You will die in pain and lie in an unmarked grave.45

By the end of the play almost all the lost tribe are dead, World War II is over, a German has been shot to death on stage, and William Archer has died as an indirect result of contact with the lost tribe and his insatiable desire to control them. The audience also has reason to think that Francis and Betsheb have died in a suicide pact, although this will turn out not to be the case.

In the penultimate scene, a second performance of *IT* takes place, with Peter Archer now assuming what seems to be his ‘dynastic duty’,46 playing Orestes to his mother’s Iphigenia. This time it is the recognition scene: ‘Orestes’ says to ‘Iphigenia’ that he has come ‘to steal the statue of Artemis’ and that he is optimistic that they shall escape: ‘I see the strands of fate entwining themselves. Lady, I think we shall reach home!’47 This leads into the final scene, when we discover that Betsheb and Francis have actually not died, but returned to her homeland in the wild part of south-western Tasmania. The play does indeed enact a strange type of escape and homecoming, as Nowra’s uprooted working-class substitute for Orestes accompanies his avatar of the aboriginal Australians, Betsheb/Iphigenia, back to her home territory permanently. Francis acknowledges that he, the Archers, and the Australian government were responsible for destroying her entire tribe. Peter arrives, to say that they are mad and have no hope of survival: he insists that Betsheb’s people could never have survived any longer in the outback, either:

They were pathetic remnants of what was probably an even more pathetic collection of people. They were like those Aboriginal tribes that withered away because their culture wasn’t strong enough. It happens in nature, in human civilizations, one big animal swallows a little one.48

But Francis refuses to leave and the play ends with him and Betsheb, who is delighted, facing an uncertain future. Francis’ eventual ‘recognition’ of the true nature of Betsheb and her inherited culture, along with the power of love, becomes the vital instrument of their psychological survival. Betsheb and Francis represent the sister and brother peoples of Australia and Tasmania who need to unite and work together.49 Different human cultures, it is implied, are just separated siblings, doomed to enact violence on one another until they recognize the closeness of their true natal bond.

47 Nowra (1989) 73.
48 Nowra (1989) 75.
49 Kelly (1998) 148. Turcotte (1987) reads the ending more bleakly, as implying the inevitable downfall of all civilizations, whether indigenous Australian, Greco-Roman, or British imperial.
There are other subtle ways in which Nowra relates the main plot of the play to the ‘inset’ performances of Euripides’ play, besides the obvious resonances of the journey into the interior made by the two young friends, and their encounter with the strange tribe. The central character is the tragic figure of Betsheb, an infertile and emotionally desperate young woman, forced to become the repository of all the memories and language of the tribe when all the others die. In her closeness to the natural world and the spirit world she believes in, she is like an indigenous Australian (which indeed she is, since she was born there). But in her awareness of her family’s tragic history and her isolation she shares much with the Black Sea Iphigenia. She does get released from her enforced duty in the Hobart asylum of presiding over ‘scientific’ rituals of medicalization which ‘sacrifice’ her own kin. In a sense she does ‘escape’ from confinement and imposed barbarism. The Golden Age also shares with IT the background of a cataclysmic international war. Indeed, it uses the ‘other’ world of the lost tribe to critique the violence and horror of the ‘civilized’ world during World War II. Francis becomes addicted to violence and somewhat crazed while fighting in Berlin: that is, he becomes more and more like Orestes.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, there are signs that the Black Sea Iphigenia is about to reassume her ancient and eighteenth-century position at the heart of the world of theatre. On 29th April 2011, near Lublin, south-eastern Poland, the Association of Theatrical Practices ‘Gardzienice’ gave the first public performance of their ‘work in progress’ Ifi  genia w Taurydzie, directed by the centre’s founder and artistic director Wlodzimierz Staniewski. As ever with this experimental theatre company, the pace is frantic, the movement incessant, the performance styles inspired by ongoing ethno-musicological researches and interactions, creating extraordinary vocal effects and physical gestures achieved with passionate commitment and discipline by Staniewski’s remarkable actors. The work will change with every single performance over the years, as the other two Euripidean plays in the company’s repertoire—Iphigenia in Aulis and Electra—are still evolving. But the fundamental theatrical concept melds ancient Greek iconography in striking ways with eastern European—especially Polish and Georgian—Christianity. On the screen above the action on the upper level, photographs of statues of Artemis, including a version of the many-breasted Ephesian Artemis, were at the premiere interspersed with the medieval traditional rites still performed for the ancient ‘Black Madonna of Częstochowa’, who is a national symbol in Poland, and certainly its most revered religious icon. Staniewski made this connection with ancient rites of the Polish Virgin without being aware that Voltaire had suggested the same parallel to Catherine the Great 240 years previously, when encouraging her to conquer and

enlighten a kingdom that covered all the superstitious and backward peoples from Roman Catholic Poland to the Muslim Crimea.\textsuperscript{51}

There was a good deal of duality in Staniewski’s mise-en-scène, centred on the pair of Greek men, who performed much of their dialogue in white masks with heavily pointed sign language accompanying their words. The atmosphere as the audience was welcomed by the actors into the performance space was deceptively serene, as the mellifluous recorded voice of Greek scholar Armand d’Angour resonated around the room, reciting Euripidean verse in its original language. But the play’s opening violently disrupted this serenity, with Iphigenia split into her voice—in an extraordinary vocal expression of pain and terror from Agnieszka Mendel—and her physical presence. The immeasurably vulnerable body of Dorota Kołodziej lay at the front, naked and cowering in a harsh spotlight. The clothes were of medieval shape and in earthy reds and browns, complementing the wooden spinning machines worked with explosive vigour while Iphigenia imagined the festivals in Greece where women weave robes for the statues of goddesses (see FIG XIII.6). The upper level of the set

\textsuperscript{51} Letter of 1st January 1772, in Reddaway (1931) 148.
was reminiscent of the ancient theatre, painted to frame the action which took place there with the temple pillars on the ‘Louvre’ IT vase (see above p. 000 and fig. 000). Thoas was a brooding presence; three repellant skulls dangled from the roof of the lower level, and semi-continuous but ill-defined activities in the recesses of the lower level kept the tension running high. The narrative was aided by eclectic techniques such as the shadow-puppet arrival of the Greeks’ ship (inspired by Odysseus’ ship on ancient vases), and sequences performed in ancient Greek.

The breathtaking ending had Athena take over the upper space, triumphantly performing the splits like a statue on a neoclassical pediment, and bringing together a hammer and a sickle, with her artfully curved arms held aloft, in a bittersweet enactment of the false ‘happy ending’ promised equally by Soviet communism and Euripides’ inorganic dea ex machina. But the show was stolen by the leaping arrival of a troupe of young Georgian sword-dancers of great dynamic energy, signifying the ritual shaping of horrendous violence, their clashing weapons scraping perilously close to their young male bodies, encased in the traditional breeches, bots, and tunics which are emblazoned with the cross of that most martial of Christian heroes, St. George.

Amongst other things, this chapter has argued that Euripides’ IT can serve as an inspirational vehicle for thinking about the violence of colonialism, even though it is almost impossible to stage it without irony or self-conscious critique of its ethnocentric premise in a world struggling to legitimize its claim to being ‘postcolonial’. The difficulties it presents were most clearly illustrated in the case of an IT specifically produced to celebrate the original arrival of Europeans in America. On May 7th 1992, the Greek Theater of New York, which had been established in 1979, opened its new production at LA MAMA theater, billed as ‘the official gift from Greece and the Greek American community to the United States on the occasion of the Christopher Columbus Quincentennial.’ The production was financially disastrous and heralded the demise of the whole Greek Theater of New York enterprise (it has since been relaunched). Directed by Yannis Houvardas, who has since risen to the very top of his profession in Greece as the Artistic Director of the National Theatre, this production failed to please many Greek Americans precisely because it was perceived as highly disrespectful to the very idea of the ‘legacy’ of classical Greek theatre. The text was regarded as being too freely adapted from the translation of Richard Lattimore in order to dramatize Houvardas’ own ‘intriguing ideas about cultural confrontation’. The dazzling white set evoked a mental-hospital ward in which eight separate Iphigenias and no chorus tried to recover their terrifying pasts through working with dreams. Houvardas was accused of losing the ‘best elements’

in the play—the power of the letter scene and 'the excitement of the great escape'.\textsuperscript{54} Greek Americans did not want, apparently, to have their historic contribution to the building of the United States celebrated by a psychotic heroine suffering from a split personality disorder.

This debacle only underlined the impossibility of a non-ironic or non-revisionist staging of IT in a world that has learned better to understand the relationship of narrative fictions to the history of European colonialism. But the future looks brighter for IT now than at any time since the eighteenth century. The poet Anne Carson has translated the play for the newly revised Chicago series of translations of Greek tragedy. Her translation, which will appear in 2012, is likely to make the play an appealing choice for performance. In Britain, Tony Harrison is working on a new play which adapts IT and is set at Sevastopol during the Crimean War. He will undoubtedly tackle the theme of imperialism in his own inimitable manner. It may therefore be that a sequel to my book will be required one day soon, in order to document Iphigenia's continuing adventures in Tauris during the second decade of the third millennium. As one expert on Aristotle's Poetics has eloquently put it,

The plot of the Iphigenia in Tauris surely is, in its Aristotelian essentials, universally tragic and significant. What matters most profoundly and fundamentally for our existence as human beings is whether we, like Iphigenia, will recognize our brothers in time to stop killing them. The rest, as Aristotle puts it, is episode.\textsuperscript{55}

As we arrive at the end our adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris, Euripides' Black Sea tragedy, it has emerged that its relative obscurity in the twentieth century was a most unusual exception to its importance and high profile in many preceding eras. Part of the problem, indeed, may have been the abundance of evidence in some of the files in the play's archive—those marked 'south Italian vases', 'Roman sarcophagi', 'Italian operas', 'Crimean war', or 'performance history of Goethe's Iphigenie', for example. The documentation in some of these cases is so immense that it has perhaps prevented less foolhardy scholars than myself from trying to understand the play's cultural stamina transhistorically. But my approach has at least revealed that the factors contributing to the play's prominence in most or all periods are similar—the attraction of its adventure plot set on a faraway coast, its generic elasticity, the trio of heroic compatriots, the theme of friendship, the brother-sister bond, and the implication that psychological catastrophe can eventually be surmounted.

\textsuperscript{54} Bruckner (1992).

\textsuperscript{55} Belfiore (1992) 375.
Yet in the ancient reception of the play the single most significant factor is without doubt its nature as the play about the early history of the Artemis cult, one of the central pillars of pagan polytheism for many centuries. The most important aspect of its reception since the discovery of the manuscript L 32.2 in Byzantine Thessaloniki, where Artemis was not worshipped, on the other hand, has been rather different: it has been the relationship between the Greeks and the Taurians—the meaning of ethnic and national difference, of colonial and imperial thinking, of superstition and enlightenment, of savagery and civilization. Ultimately, the character who explains the post-Renaissance world’s repeated return to this enigmatic drama is not Artemis, nor Iphigenia, nor Orestes, but Thoas, King of the lost tribe of the Taurians, god-fearing and fleet of foot.
CONCLUSION

Every ancient Greek drama has a different cultural history. This book has argued that the case of Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* is distinctive because its current low profile outside the Classics academy is such a relatively recent development. In antiquity and in the late seventeenth to early twentieth centuries, the myth it staged was famous and familiar. It is one of the most culturally influential of all ancient Greek texts, yet its significance is hardly ever recognized today.

Before embarking on the roughly chronological sequence which opens with chapter II, chapter I introduced the main argument of the book by approaching Euripides’ play through a wide-angle lens to provide an overview of its unique geographical, historical, and archaeological aspects. This perspective showed how the fascination of the setting of the play, on the Crimean coast of the Ukraine in the northern Black Sea, combined with the archetypal ‘quest’ motif in the story of the Greeks’ theft of the ancient statue of Artemis, has brought the play into cultural prominence whenever the Crimea itself has been in the news: during the Crimean war (1853–6) and especially during the period before and after the Russian annexation of the peninsula in 1783. One of the main reasons for the play’s near-disappearance from the cultural radar in the second half of the twentieth century, at least in the west, was the secrecy surrounding the Soviet naval base at Sevastopol, the city Catherine the Great had built on the site of the ancient city of Tauric Chersonesos. But the excavation of an ancient theatre there by Russian archaeologists in the 1950s revealed that the Greeks
of historical ‘Tauris’ had a theatrical culture of their own. The play set in the land of the Taurians may well have been performed there in antiquity.

In ancient times, indeed, it was one of the most influential of the tragedies by the canonical Greek playwrights. Chapter II argued that its dramatized action helped make sense of the cult of Artemis and her bloody sacrifices, not only as practised by Euripides’ contemporary Athenians at Brauron, Halai Araphenides, and on the Acropolis but by Greeks wherever they took their goddess of wild animals, marshlands, hunting, healing, initiation, and the biological aspects of women’s lives—menarche, childbirth, and death. The Tauric Iphigenia was one of their most attractive heroines, a brave, reflective, and intelligent priestess of Artemis who is herself worthy of being celebrated forever, after she dies, in cult alongside the goddess. The play also provided a model of an idealized set of family relationships—a loving and loyal sister and brother, along with their friend and brother-in-law, surviving against the odds through pluck and solidarity, even after traumatic childhoods and family histories that had been anything but ideal.

Chapter III explored the prominence of the themes of travel and the sea in the play, and suggested that it offered Euripides’ audience ways of thinking about the connections between the Black Sea cult of Artemis and the cults of Artemis and her brother Apollo at Delphi, as well as their association with Delos where their mother Leto had given birth to them and Olympia where their father Zeus reigned supreme. It asks who the historical Taurians were, and argues that the play gave the Greeks a picture they found endlessly fascinating of non-Greek life on the shores of the frightening northern Black Sea, a territory full of opportunity but also menace and danger. It bolstered the Greeks’ sense of ethnic identity and superiority, to be sure, but also raised some questions about the right way of conducting inter-ethnic encounters during the process of colonization.

In the fourth century BCE, as we see in chapter IV, Euripides’ Black Sea tragedy helped Aristotle make sense of how to construct the plot of a serious drama in a way that elicited in audiences the strongest emotional responses in terms of pity and fear, and provided for the aspiring playwrights who studied with Aristotle the model of a perfect recognition scene. But in the same period it also provided a cultural touchstone for Greeks and their neighbours living in southern Italy. It assisted them in introducing or enhancing their worship of Artemis and the conduct of funeral rites for family members. By placing vases with the recognition scene from IT in graves and tombs, they built a set of emotional and psychological associations into the rituals—love of family, the strength of the bond between people charged with looking after one another’s obsequies, the need after a funeral for a new configuration of the family and sometimes changes in its leadership, the sorrow of parting and the sweetness of reunions. The images may also have bolstered the sense that the bereaved shared important values with the wider Greek world. The recurring figure
of the priestess Iphigenia at her temple created a miniature sanctuary of Artemis wherever the vases were placed.

Chapter V showed that in the second century BCE, a version of the play by the great Roman Republican author Pacuvius, which has not survived, put the Black Sea adventures of the Atreids on the Latin literary agenda. Iphigenia’s own importance as a heroine seems to have diminished as the relationship between Orestes and Pylades struck a resounding chord in a culture where passionate friendship between young males of elite houses—*amicitia*—was a key constituent of the sociopolitical infrastructure. From Cicero to Martial and St. Augustine, and on numerous frescoes painted on the walls of houses in the Bay of Naples, the bond instantiated in the play became one of the most commonly cited examples of idealized male friendship. Ovid transformed the versions of the story he found in Euripides and almost certainly in Pacuvius to help him write poetic epistles to friends who he hoped would help him to be recalled from his own Black Sea exile at Tomi (now Constanta). His beautiful reading of the myth in his *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 3.2.39–102, addressed to his close friend Cotta, is the finest as well as the longest surviving Latin reception of Euripides’ play.

A second avenue by which *IT* made an impact on the Roman culture was through the broad cultural dissemination of the type of escape plot in which a young Greek woman and man are separated, and face serial dangers at the hands of barbarians before a joyful recognition and homecoming. Chapter VI argued that the ancient Greek ‘romantic’ novels of the imperial period sometimes explicitly acknowledge their debt to Euripides’ escape tragedies, above all *IT*. Moreover, it is this debt which in the Second Sophistic inspired Lucian’s commentary on the relationship between the Euripidean plot and the subject matter of prose fiction constituted by his dialogue on friendship between a Greek and a Scythian, *Toscaris*. The popularity of the escape plot is also revealed in the unique fragmentary performance text of an imperial theatrical burlesque of *IT*, the ‘Chariton’ mime, discovered on a papyrus at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt (POxy 413).

Chapter VII concluded, however, that religion is the third and most important reason why *IT* is so evident in diverse ancient sources. The myth it enacts was used by people in many parts of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds as the aetiological charter for their local cults of Artemis, Diana, or other goddesses such as the Lydian Anaitis. From the straits of Messina between Sicily and Italy, to the cult of Diana of the Nemi in the Alban hills near Rome, to Patmos, Lydia, Pontus, and the hinterlands of Cappadocia, accounts abound of traditions in which Orestes, sometimes with Iphigenia, brought the image of Artemis or a copy of it from the Taurians and founded a local cult of the goddess. Meanwhile, inhabitants of the Roman Empire of the mid-second century BCE, not only in Italy but in France, Austria, and Slovenia,
adorned funeral sculptures with scenes from the life of Orestes, especially the experiences he shared with Iphigenia and Pylades in the Black Sea. The reasons for the popularity of the story of the Taurian Artemis in sarcophagus art are similar to those for its prevalence on south Italian vases, with the added factor of the involvement of Orestes and Diana in Roman foundation myths.

With chapter VIII the argument moves through the Middle Ages, when the Greek text of *IT* went underground in the Byzantine Empire, to be rediscovered by an amazing stroke of good fortune in Thessaloniki in the early fourteenth century. The major feature of the versions and other manifestations of the play in the period between the first printing of the play in 1503 and the mid-eighteenth century is the different strategies adopted, by authors of diverse denominations, to make the play speak to a Christian sensibility. This process was facilitated by the identification of the ancient Taurians with the Muslim Khans who ruled the Crimea as vassals of the Ottoman Empire from 1475 to 1783. The Christian perspective is a feature as much of Giovanni Rucellai’s conspicuously Roman Catholic *Oreste* (c. 1520), the Protestant John Milton’s ode ‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’ (1621), the flexibly spiritual Joost van den Vondel’s Dutch version (1666), and Alain-René Lesage’s harlequinade reading, complete with Sri Lankan Grand Viziers, in *Arlequin roi de Serendib* (1713) as of the Russian Orthodox taste for operas on the *IT* theme at the time of the annexation of the Crimea in 1783.

Chapter IX addresses the extraordinary and lasting cultural impact of Gluck’s French-language opera *Iphigénie en Tauride*, which premiered in Paris in 1783 but has remained alive in the repertoire, having been influentially choreographed in the twentieth century by both Isadora Duncan and Pina Bausch. It argues that Gluck and his librettist Nicolas-François Guillard, who made use of an excellent stage play by Claude Guymond de la Touche (1757), effected the last stage in Gluck’s transformation of opera into a medium in which continuous vocal and instrumental writing is synthesized with psychological register. Euripides’ *IT* enabled Gluck to create an opera which expressed emotion continuously in music, since much of it consists of psychic exploration of subjective consciousness—nightmares, thoughts, and memories—rather than action. The opera also reflects the constitutional crisis and ideological conflict of its era. Its condemnation of cruelty and tyranny is connected with the emergent sensibility of the French revolutionary movement as well as with the Enlightenment distrust of religion.

The most important reception of *IT* in cultural history is undoubtedly Goethe’s verse tragedy *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1786), the topic of chapter X. Goethe makes a crucial ideological shift in the story since his Greeks do not rob the barbarians of their unique statue. The victory won in all earlier versions of the play by guile and force is replaced by persuasion and the achievement of consensus. This shift
Conclusion

has been the source both of the enormous admiration Goethe’s play has elicited, and also, since the 1960s, of correspondingly acrimonious criticism from a post-colonial standpoint. The chapter traces the profound identification with the play of the emerging German state and especially National Socialism, and its impact on Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Iphigenie in Delphi* (1940). But it also argues that in *Iphigenie* Goethe was struggling with the tension between German nationalism and his more progressive urge, a product of the radical Enlightenment, to encourage the global creation of a new literature which could transcend all national and racial categories.

Chapter XI attempts to explain the revival of Euripides’ *IT* as a performance text between the late nineteenth century, when it became a favourite choice for performance in Greek in colleges and universities, and the 1920s. As a result of the anthropological interest awakened in the play by Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890), its depiction of primitive ritual sacrifice and its elements of ‘romance’ made it exceptionally attractive to the sensibility, poetics, and aesthetics of emerging Modernism. This process reached its consummation in the first important modern-language staging of Euripides’ own text, in Gilbert Murray’s translation, under the direction of Harley Granville-Barker with Lillah McCarthy in the leading role. The production was performed in London, other British venues, and the United States in 1912 and 1915. It was probably through the rediscovery of Euripides’ play for staged performance that the plot came to inform a bestselling biographical novel about two white men rescuing a white woman from captivity in Africa, Ethelreda Lewis’s *Trader Horn* (1927). The book was subsequently turned by MGM into a spectacular (although in hindsight viciously racist) Oscar-nominated early talkie (1931).

At the same time as female students began to perform *IT* on college campuses in the late nineteenth century, beginning with a production in Greek at Bedford College, London, in 1887, women’s demands for the vote and equal rights began to be taken seriously. Chapter XII looked at some of the female cultural figures who have been inspired to use Euripides’ Black Sea Iphigenia as a medium for reflecting on their status as women and as civic subjects. When Lesya Ukrainka began her Ukrainian dramatic poem *Iphigenia in Tauris* in 1903, Iphigenia finally began to speak as a victim of Russian imperialism in Ukrainian territory (which includes the Crimea), as a lonely woman, a sister, and a socialist revolutionary. Much more recently, three women in the United States have staged Euripides’ *IT* or written adaptations of it which speak to feminist (among other) concerns: JoAnne Akalaitis’ *Iphigenia Cycle* (1997), Ellen McLaughlin’s *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* (1995), and Michi Barall’s *Rescue Me (A Postmodern Classic with Snacks)* (2010). This chapter asks how successfully these productions addressed the problem of making the sexual politics of an ancient play relevant today.
Chapter XIII concluded Iphigenia’s adventures by looking at the centrality of Thoas and the Taurians to the twentieth- and twenty-first-century reception of IT in the literature and theatre of the world, especially in anti-imperial and postcolonial writers. In 1924, in the verse drama Ifigenia Cruel by the Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes, the culturally hybrid heroine refuses to return to Greece at all, preferring to remain with the community that has adopted her. In Yannis Ritsos’ dramatic monologue ‘The Return of Iphigenia,’ written in 1971–72 when the Greek military dictatorship had forced Ritsos into house arrest on the island of Samos, Iphigenia comes home to the Peloponnese, but cannot escape her memories of persecution by sinister interrogators. The Taurians have here metamorphosed into the ‘internal barbarians’ of the Greek state regime, who have cast the entire population into psychic exile. IT has struck loud chords with the historical experience of native Australians of European descent attempting to come to terms with the legacy of the colonial persecution of the Aboriginal population; the Greek tragedy plays an important role in Louis Nowra’s contemporary classic The Golden Age (1985). And Wlodzimierz Staniewski’s Polish production of Euripides’ tragedy, a work-in-progress which opened in 2010, explores the tensions in the text discovered by using ethnographic traditions and ritual to read the play creatively against a history of the lands and peoples subjected to Russian and German invasion and persecution, in Poland, Georgia, and Thoas’ homeland in the Ukraine.
ABBREVIATIONS

CIRB  Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965)
FgrH  Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker (Leiden, 1954–1964)
IG    Inscriptiones Graecae Berlin (1924–)
LIMC  Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (Zurich and Munich, 1981–1999)
PLF   Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta edited by Edgar Lobel and Denys Page (Oxford, 1955)
IScM  Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae (Bucharest, 1983)
POxy  The Oxyrhynchus Papyri (London, 1898–)
PL    Patrologiae Cursus, series Latina (Paris, 1844–1904)
SEG   Supplementum epigraphicum graecum (Leiden, 1923–)
TgrF  Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta (Göttingen, 1971–2004)
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ABBREVIATIONS

FgrH
IG
KA
LIMC
M-W
IOSPE
CIRB 1040, IScM I 172,
LP
POxy
PL
SEG

and London.


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