‘In ein fernes Land’: The Politics of Translation in Wagner’s Arrangement of Gluck’s Iphigénie en Aulide

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First performed on 24 February 1847 at the Dresden Court Opera, Wagner’s reworked version of Gluck’s 1774 Iphigénie en Aulide represented one of the greatest theatrical successes of his Dresden years.¹ It has had historical consequences for the reception of both Wagner and Gluck respectively, enjoying popularity into the 20th century,² and the arrangement has been used more recently in performances and recordings.³ Overall, however, the reputation of this performing version has dwindled to that of a musicological curiosity. Wagner’s version and the very notion of critical adaptation may be at odds with present-day scholarly desiderata, belonging as it does to the old ‘Kapellmeister’ tradition of changing works to suit performance circumstances or simply to improve upon them with little regard for literalist fidelity to the work or to the composer. It was not until 2010 that

¹ English translations from German or French are my own unless otherwise indicated. This article is excerpted and modified from chapter 3 of my book Richard Wagner in Paris: Translation, Identity, Modernity (Boydell & Brewer, forthcoming 2019). I am grateful to Boydell & Brewer for permission to reuse material in this article. My thanks also to Anna McClure for preparing the musical examples.


the arrangement (identified by catalogue number WWV 77) appeared in the Wagner-Gesamtausgabe edited by Christa Jost, and since then it has remained largely uncharted territory with only sporadic mentions in scholarship. 4

Better known is Wagner’s appraisal of the Overture in his 1841 article ‘Über die Ouvertüre’, first published in French as ‘De L’Ouverture’ (11, 14 and 17 January) in the Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, 5 and the revised ending to the Overture he produced subsequently (in 1854), effectively bookending his critical relationship with Iphigénie. 6 Whereas most previous studies of Wagner’s 1847 arrangement have foregrounded performance considerations in the Overture (such as tempo, expression marks and his revised ending), in this article I argue for a different image of Wagner’s Gluck reception through his Iphigenia arrangement, one concerned with translation as acts of political and cultural rescue. The arrangement may be seen as part of a project to reappropriate Gluck not only in Wagner’s own image, as Simon Goldhill has described it, 7 but for German national culture and the political milieu of the Vormärz.

Against ‘Berlin’ Aesthetics

Wagner first conceived of the project as a reaction against the poor quality of German translations and versions of Gluck’s French-language operas produced during the 1830s and early 1840s. In November 1844, he received Spontini’s now-lost ‘Berlin’ performing score from the elder composer (Spontini had been in Dresden to conduct a production of La Vestale). Wagner later recalled being ‘horrified’ leafing through this score, 8 suggesting more specific objections in Book 3 of ‘Opera and Drama’ (1852):

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7 For Goldhill, Wagner’s arrangement of Iphigénie had less to do with nationalist appropriation than with a notoriously Wagnerian kind of egomania, whereby the composer effectively remoulded Gluck to resemble his own burgeoning idea of music drama. Simon Goldhill, ‘Who Killed Gluck?’, in Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage, ed. Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek (Oxford, 2010), 210–39.

8 SS (note 5), v.115; PW (note 5), iii.159. See also Richard Wagner, My Life, tr. Andrew Gray, ed. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, 1983) [MLE], 337; Mein Leben: Vollständige, kommentierte Ausgabe, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Munich, 1976) [ML], 350.
Whoever has seen a Berlin score of a Gluckian opera, and has convinced himself of the nature of the German textual basis on which these works are set before the public, may gain an inkling of the character of that Berlin school of art-aesthetics which has derived its standard for dramatic declamation from the operas of Gluck. From Paris one had heard so much about this dramatic declamation, through literary channels, and now one has been so astoundingly clever as to recognise it for oneself in performances given in those translations – which cast all proper declamation to the winds. Nothing compares to the imagination of Berlin scholars!9

In addition to Spontini’s ‘Berlin’ score, he referred to the 1839 French-German bilingual piano score of the opera, translated by Friedrich Brissler and published by the Berlin-based C.A. Challier & Co.10 Indeed, he started by annotating and ‘correcting’ his copy of the Brissler piano score which gradually evolved into a first draft of his translation.11

‘The first phase of his work as an arranger’, as Jost noted, consisted of ‘translat[ing] the sung text from French into German as exactly as possible.’12 It was the inadequacies of the existing versions that prompted him to take the task of truly translating and arranging Gluck’s tragédie into his own hands. As well as the 1774 score, Spontini’s conducting score and Brissler’s 1839 bilingual vocal score, Wagner referred to Johann Daniel Sander’s 1809 bilingual editions of the opera’s libretto.13 In some instances, Wagner’s translation closely follows Sander’s, suggesting that he used it as a point of reference, but at least as often he translated directly from the French libretto.

His remark about the ‘Berlin school of […] aesthetics’ referred not only to German scores and translations of Gluck’s French-language operas but also to the so-called ‘Gluck revival’ led by Meyerbeer and ardently supported by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV who had acceded to the Prussian throne in 1840.14 This renewed interest in Gluck’s ‘reform’ operas had been spurred by the personal tastes of Friedrich Wilhelm who dreamed of a ‘renaissance of Greek tragedy in the heart of the Kingdom of Prussia’,15 a project which took the form of theatrical revivals. A prominent example of such efforts was the 1841 production in Potsdam of Sophocles’ Antigone in the German translation by J. J. Donner, directed by Ludwig Tieck and featuring ‘incidental’ music by Felix Mendelssohn (then court composer to the Prussian King).16

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9 PW, ii.360 (tr. modified). Cf. Richard Wagner, Oper und Drama (Leipzig, 1852), 218–19; SS, iv.213. The final sentence ‘Nothing compares to the imagination of Berlin scholars!’ (Nichts geht über Berliner Gelehrtenphantasie!) appeared only in the first edition (1852, 218–19). It was later omitted in the second printing (Leipzig, 1869) and thereafter from both the Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen [GS] and Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen [SS].


11 National Archives of the Richard Wagner Foundation, NA (B I i 2 b).

12 RWSW 20/IV (note 4), 432.


14 Meyerbeer had succeeded Gaspare Spontini as the Prussian ‘Generalmusikdirektor’ in Berlin in 1843.


In a note addressed to Meyerbeer in December 1844, the king referred to his ‘Gluck-addicted desire for *Iphigénie in Aulis*’, a desire he was willing to ‘suppress’ to give precedence to Weber’s *Euryanthe*. Meyerbeer had written to the king the previous day advising that a staged production of *Euryanthe* at the Berlin Royal Opera House would serve as a fitting honour for the return of Weber’s ashes from London to German soil in December 1844.\(^{17}\) The seeming equivalence between Weber’s reburial and a Gluck revival described in the correspondence between Meyerbeer and the king was paralleled in Wagner’s own activities during the same period. He had famously been instrumental in the return of Weber’s bodily remains to Dresden: he wrote occasional music (for male chorus *An Webers Grabe* and for wind ensemble *Trauermusik nach Motiven aus Carl Maria von Webers ‘Euryanthe’*) and delivered an affective eulogy.\(^{18}\) The repatriation of Weber’s bodily remains provided a negative image of Wagner’s plans for a new German translation and arrangement of Gluck’s French-language ‘tragédie lyrique’ *Iphigénie en Aulide*. Contrary to the repatriation of a dead body entombed as a cultural monument, Wagner’s version of *Iphigénie* would be a translation of an ‘exiled’ cultural product into German culture, and of the old-fashioned, 18th-century operatic trappings into the sensuous immediacy of modern music drama.

In his subsequent letter to Breitkopf & Härtel (28 October 1852) in which he pitched his Gluck arrangement to the publishers as a piano score, Wagner once again defined his own arrangement against Meyerbeer’s production (to which he only alluded). He claimed that the manner of the arrangement was:

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not of the sort that [the opera] has been presented to us as an antique curiosity for the sheer enjoyment of classically educated music connoisseurs (as recently in Berlin) […] but with real, popular success, felt and witnessed by all.¹⁹

His critique of the industry of opera translation in ‘Opera and Drama’ (published in the same year) called out the widespread practice in German theatres of performing French and Italian opera in German as the work of hacks, a fundamentally literary practice that not only perpetuated German theatres’ dependence on foreign operatic fare but exacerbated the poor quality of declamation and dramatic representation among German operatic singers as he saw it.²⁰ The value system inscribed in the Goethean ideology of ‘Weltliteratur’ simply failed to apply to opera: whereas Goethe, the Schlegel brothers and Schleiermacher (to name a few) advocated the translation of foreign literature into German which would amplify the German language and at the same time raise it to the level of the universal,²¹ Wagner regarded translations of foreign operatic repertoire as posing a threat to what little tradition of German opera already existed.

Yet his critique of the standard practice of translating French and Italian operatic repertoire into German and the active response to it in the form of his Iphigenia arrangement corresponded to Schleiermacher’s distinction between the commercial ‘interpreter’ (Dolmetscher) and the artistic or scholarly ‘translator’ (Übersetzer), as described in a paper, ‘On the Different Methods of Translating’, delivered to the Royal Academy of Science in Berlin in 1813:

The interpreter [der Dolmetscher] plies his trade in the field of commerce [Geschäftsleben]; the (true) translator [der eigentliche Uebersetzer] operates mainly in the fields of art and scholarship.²²

Schleiermacher associated the true translator with writing and the interpreter with speech:

Writing is appropriate to the fields of art and scholarship, because writing alone gives their works endurance, and to interpret scholarly or artistic products by word of mouth would be as useless as it seems impossible. For commerce, on the other hand, writing is but a mechanical tool. Oral bargaining is the original form here and all

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²⁰ Wagner, ‘Oper und Drama’, in SS (note 5), iv.212ff.; tr. as ‘Opera and Drama’ in PW (note 5), ii.359–63.


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written interpreting should really be considered the notation of oral interpreting.  

Whether or not Wagner was familiar with Schleiermacher’s writings on translation, his approach to translation reversed Schleiermacher’s axes of translation and media. The commercial or bureaucratic ‘interpreter’ (which described the essential function of the German translator of foreign opera in Wagner’s analysis) worked in the medium of script, while the ‘true’ translator’s task was to produce vocal melody of vivid, dramatic presence.

Rhetoric Beyond Nationality

Wagner sought an authoritative text on the basis of which to correct the numerous errors that the ‘Berlin’ editions had introduced, ranging from tempo markings to underlay. To this end, on 15 December 1845 he ordered the full score published by Le Marchand and directly from Paris via his friend G.E. Anders. He consulted the 1774 score in order to refer to the French text for the purposes of translation as well as to the original instrumentation, not to copy it out literally but to retouch and expand it.

‘Gluck’s texts by no means made an exhaustive, extreme demand on the impassionedness of music’, he wrote to Eduard Hanslick, ‘they move more or less in a certain shackled pathos – that of the Racinian tragedy’. The matter of Wagner’s return to Euripides’ drama as an alternative to Gluck’s Racine-derived material will be considered in greater detail below. For now, it is important to note that Wagner’s improved translation was not merely a ‘Germanisation’ of Gluck’s opera but modelled on the declamatory style and rhetorical immediacy that in his view characterised the original French text setting. Brissler’s German translation was usually carried over intact where

Frontispiece to the full score of Christoph Willibald von Gluck’s Iphigénie en Aulide, published in Paris by Le Marchand in 1774. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France

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arias, choruses and other numbers were concerned, whereas it was predominantly the recitatives Wagner sought to enhance.
As late as 1867, Hanslick noted Wagner’s ‘improved translation of the text from the French and, with it, the reinstatement of the recitative in its true meaning and content, which were sometimes entirely lost when the customary, bad translation was used’.26 Agamemnon’s recitative in Act I, Scene 1, selected more or less at random, illustrates some of these ‘improvements’ (see Ex. 1). On the D at the end of the first phrase, ‘Preis’ corresponds to ‘prix’, and in the following bar, where the voice part descends to the tonic of G minor, the participle ‘gerächt’ replicates the French ‘vengée’. Further equivalences include ‘vie’/’Leben’, ‘n’immolera’/’geopfert’, ‘point’/’nicht’, and at the final cadence in the recitative, ‘ma fille Iphigénie’/’mein Kind, Iphigenia’!

Agamemnon’s aria ‘Peuvent ils ordonner’ (‘Kann vom Vater’), Act I, Scene 3 – as Wagner recognised the emotional crux of Agamemnon’s dilemma – offers a still more thorough illustration of Wagner’s recourse to the French libretto and Gluck’s setting. It was only in the E flat major section of this C minor bipartite aria that he altered the text more extensively in line with the original (see Ex. 2).27

26 Quoted in RWSW 20/IV (note 4), vii.
27 English translation of the French libretto: ‘I hear reverberating in my breast plaintive cry of nature; she speaks to my heart and her voice is more assured than the oracles of destiny.’
In this number, Wagner rejected both Sander’s and Brissler’s German versions to translate from the original, in effect re-aligning the semantic meaning of the libretto with the vocal line. Just as the plaintive cry of Iphigenia mimicked in the oboe appoggiaturas and the oracle’s pronouncements resonate conflictingly in Agamemnon’s breast, so Wagner sought to recreate in German the rhetorical immediacy of Gluck’s setting of the French text.

Ex. 2 Gluck, *Iphigénie en Aulide*, Act I, Scene 3, middle section of Agamemnon’s aria ‘Peuvent ils ordonner’: Wagner’s arrangement compared with F. Brissler’s edition

In ‘Opera und Drama’, Wagner would describe Gluck’s aesthetic domain as that of 18th-century rhetoric (*Rede*), meaning a translingual space of Enlightenment affect. This distinguished Gluck above all from Meyerbeer, in whose scores the idiosyncrasies of different languages were allegedly flattened out through absorption into absolute music:

Gluck could be indifferent to any language, because it only came to him through rhetoric [*Rede*]: if music in this transcendental line had been able to penetrate through rhetoric into the very organism of language, then admittedly it must have had to completely transform itself.28

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28 The word ‘*Rede*’ appeared in italics. SS (note 5), iii.293–4. Cf. PW (note 5), ii.87–8. Rehding provided a slightly modified translation in *Music and Monumentality* (note 6), 122–3. Rehding writes: ‘In this conception, Gluck turns in effect into a composer of instrumental music to which words happen to be attached.’ This judgment (‘a composer of instrumental music to which words happen to be attached’) resembles more closely Wagner’s assessment of Meyerbeer than that of Gluck, whose alleged concern with ‘rhetoric’ meant that Wagner could not have regarded him so straightforwardly as a purveyor of the ‘absolute music’ of operatic melody. Rehding’s interpretation was consistent with his translation, with ‘*Rede*’ translated not as ‘rhetoric’ (cf. Ellis and above) but as ‘speech’.
Such remarks betray the intellectual casuistry to which Wagner subsequently resorted in his ambivalent assessment of German composers who had mastered foreign styles of operatic composition. But Wagner also rendered Gluckian ‘rhetoric’ neutrally universal: the 1847 arrangement suggests that the rhetoric he had intended to recapture in German had been that of Classical French operatic aesthetics. Wagner’s affinity with Gluck would be duly noted in the reception of both composers in the 1860s and 1870s, not least in the Parisian press, and generous comparisons between the two as lofty ‘reformers’ of traditional opera via a chastening return to Classical Greek tragedy have been a critical touchstone ever since. Gluck’s influence on Wagner was arguably less important during this time than the ways in which Wagner consciously used Gluck to negotiate his own precarious sense of national identity in relation to French musical culture during the 1840s. Besides this, a more instructive point of comparison lies in the transnational mobilities upon which their respective innovations were launched. Gluck and Wagner each attempted to foster a ‘naturalistic’ style of declamation and dramaturgy, not merely by looking backwards to still more remote historical models, but by transplanting themselves to foreign territory. Gluck’s attempted renewal of the Lullian tragédie en musique began with Iphigénie en Aulide, his first opera for a Parisian audience. Gluck traversed from a German-speaking region to Paris, not unlike his patron and erstwhile music pupil, the Austrian-born Marie Antoinette. The difference with Wagner is that in the 1840s he repatriated Gluck’s French opera in the other direction.

The debates concerning the national inscription of Gluck’s operatic reforms bear precise comparison with Wagner’s arrangement, too. Gluck famously defined his notion of Classically-inspired music drama against Italian opera which, according to his librettist Ranieri de’ Calzabigi in the dedication to the printed score of Alceste (1767), had long been ‘disfigured’ either by ‘the mistaken vanity of singers’ or by ‘the too-great complaisance of composers’. The traditional tragédie lyrique, by contrast, offered a more suitable vehicle for it. Gluck inadvertently threw a paradoxical spanner in the works when he wrote

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29 The implicit national character of ‘Rede’ (rhetoric) suggests a throwback to the circulation of rhetorical literature during the 18th century. As Thomas Conley has noted: ‘the majority of books on rhetoric published in both England and Germany up to 1750 were imports or translations from the French, while no English or German rhetorics were translated into French in that period’. Thomas M. Conley, Rhetoric in the European Tradition (Chicago, 1994), 203.


32 In his arrangement, Wagner sought to condense the opera by means of cuts, elisions and tonal transposition to achieve structural cohesion as well as dramatic coherence and effectiveness.

33 First performed at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal on 19 Apr. 1774.

famously in an open letter to the editor of the Mercure de France about his new opera Iphigénie en Aulide (by this time preparations for the first performance were already underway):

I admit that I would have produced it with pleasure in Paris, because by its effect and with the aid of the famous Mr Rousseau of Geneva, whom I intended to consult, together we would perhaps, by seeking a noble, sensitive and natural melody, with a precise declamation according to the prosody of each language and the character of each people, have succeeded in fixing the means that I envisage of producing a music proper to all nations, and of making the ridiculous distinction between national musics disappear.\footnote{Christoph Willibald Gluck, ‘Lettre de M. le chevalier Gluck, sur la musique’, Mercure de France, 1 Feb. 1773, 183. Tr. by Michael O’Dea, ‘How to Be Modern in Music: Rousseau Between Greece, Italy, and Vienna’, Rousseau and the Dilemmas of Modernity, ed. Mark Hulliung (New York, 2017), 108 n. 61 (tr. slightly modified).}

While paying tribute to Rousseau, Gluck was also implicitly issuing a riposte to the former’s polemic against French opera in favour of Italian. More significantly, Gluck’s vision of ‘a precise declamation according to the prosody of each language and the character of each people’ was seemingly at odds with the notion of ‘a music proper to all nations’. The dominant ideology here is not so much that of ‘transnationalism’ but rather universalism whereby art supposedly transcends the very national and cultural categories which led to the creation of a ‘noble, sensitive and natural melody’ in the first place. For Wagner, Gluck’s achievement was not entirely dissolved in a pan-European space of late 18th-century Enlightenment culture centred in France but beneath the universalist ideology still contained essentially German features which only needed to be salvaged from their original environment.

Rescuing Iphigenia, via Euripides

The work Wagner chose to retranslate and revise was not only Gluck’s first ‘Parisian’ opera but one that dramatised a certain act of rescue. As he later indicated in Mein Leben, besides undertaking ‘a thorough revision of the translation alone, in order to get the vocal stresses right’, he also made some radical changes to the action:

From the poem I tried to eliminate everything redolent of the French taste that turned the relationship of Achilles to Iphigenia into a sentimental love affair, and in particular I completely changed the ending, with its inevitable marriage, to make it more consonant with Euripides’ play of the same name.\footnote{MLE (note 8), 337. Cf. ML (note 8), 350.}

This meant inserting a new solo number for Iphigenia (Act III, Scene 3) and another for Artemis (Act III, Scene 6), which will be considered separately below. As Wagner’s account already hints, he had corrected the German version of Gluck’s opera with reference to two sources: the 1774 score of the opera and German translations of Euripides’ play, each with competing claims of authority.

In the case of Iphigenia’s farewell aria in Act III, Scene 3, Wagner carried over the essential musical form while modifying the poetic content, but for the purposes of returning to the wider import of the ancient Greek source rather than to the detail of the original French libretto. The French text of the aria is as follows (see illustration for the aria as it appeared in Brissler’s edition):
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In place of this, Wagner substituted his own newly composed number to these words:

Leb’ wohl! Auf mich hat Hellas’ Volk die Blicke jetzt gewendet,
Auf mir beruht sein Heil und seiner Schiffe Fahrt.
Durch meinen Tod, Achill, sei Troja zugesendet,
Dem Ruhm, der dort dir blüht, sei deine Kraft gespart.

Farewell! On me the Greek people have now turned to look,
On me their salvation and their ship’s travel depend.

Through my death, may Achilles be sent to Troy,  
May your strength be saved for the fame that you can expect there.

As comparison illustrates, the first two lines (‘Leb’ wohl! Auf mich hat Hellas’ Volk die Blicke jetzt gewendet, / Auf mir beruht sein Heil und seiner Schiffe Fahrt.’) were taken almost verbatim from Johann Jakob Christian Donner’s 1845 German translation of Euripides’ play, a copy of which Wagner owned in his Dresden library: ‘Mir hat Hellas’ ganzes großes Volk die Blicke zugewandt, / Und auf mir ruht seiner Schiffe Fahrt und Troja’s Untergang.’

The musical material too was newly composed but derived from Gluck’s original aria. Both numbers are functionally in E flat major and begin with the incipit ‘Leb’ wohl’ sung to a sighing figure, B flat–A flat–G. In fact, the whole of the opening melodic contour in Gluck’s version (labelled x in Ex. 3) is reproduced in Wagner’s arrangement (Ex. 4).38

Ex. 3 Gluck, Iphigenie in Aulis, Act III, Scene 3, No. 35, Iphigenia’s voice part, opening of ‘Leb’ wohl’,
F. Brissler’s edition (1839)

He changed the time signature from 3/4 to 4/4, removed the passing notes, retaining only the melodic outline which consists in simple, triadic intervals, and added the direction ‘feierlich’ (solemn).

Iphigenia’s ‘farewell’ aria was thereby transformed from an intimate token of romantic love into an altogether more serious musical statement: a public, even ritual pronouncement that affirms the social obligation of the sacrifice as consolation for personal loss. The intention was to make the opera as a whole conform more closely to Euripides’ play after Friedrich Schiller’s advice in the appendix to his translation: ‘compared with Racine’s Achilles he seems too unchivalrous [ungalant], too unfeeling […]; the French Achilles is Iphigenia’s lover, which he is not (in fact) and shouldn’t be; this selfish little passion would not be tolerated by the

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38 In Wagner’s arrangement, this number is flanked by two iterations of the B flat major aria ‘Das Loos, das mir beschieden’ (‘Il faut de mon destin’; Brissler translation: ‘Mein Abend schreckt mich nicht’), transforming it effectively into the (subdominant) middle section of a da capo aria. RWSW 20/IV (note 4), 336–40.
high seriousness and the important interests of the Greek play. Schiller’s translation Iphigenie in Aulis had previously appeared in 1807 in the third volume of his Collected Writings. Wagner owned a copy of the 1838 edition, which served as one of the many sources he consulted in the process of conceiving his arrangement of Gluck’s opera.

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40 Westernhagen, Richard Wagners Dresdener Bibliothek (note 37), 103, no. 126.
As early as 1841 Wagner identified a dialectical conflict in *Iphigénie en Aulide* (contained in the Overture *in nuce*) between the communal and the individual, between the ‘mass united by a single interest’ (‘in einem einzigen Interesse vereinigte Masse’) and the ‘tender suffering individual’ (‘[des] leidenden zarten Individuums’) who ‘arrests our sympathy’. This opposition, conceived already in this early period along Left Hegelian lines, would subsequently be played out with nationalist overtones within the arena of Wagner’s arrangement, i.e., as a conflict between German communality and French individualism. Gluck’s opera still contained something of the communal interest which had been so central to Wagner’s appreciation of it. He had written that the Overture ‘prepares us for a drama whose highest meaning is revealed to us already’. Perhaps his own Paris article foreshadowed another ‘drama’: in the late 1840s, Wagner took measures to underscore a feature of the opera which in 1841 he had regarded as a *fait accompli*. When Wagner arranged the opera for production in Dresden, he took pains to underline sacrifice at the expense of what he saw as the more sentimental motifs of the French opera.

Wagner’s new ending, Act III, Scene 6, in which Artemis appears in person to rescue Iphigenia from the sacrificial altar, is the most obvious revision to Gluck’s opera and was widely acknowledged in the press criticism of the Dresden production. Whereas in Gluck’s opera the seer Calchas is sent on behalf of Diane to proclaim the divine in-

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42 Wagner referred specifically to this scene in MLE (note 8), 337–8: ‘I had to interpose arioso recitatives of my own for Iphigenia as well as for Artemis, whom I had introduced into the action.’ Cf. ML (note 8), 350–51. The new ending is the focus of Syer’s discussion of the arrangement in *Wagner’s Visions* (note 4), 146–8.
A Venetian take on the myth: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo’s fresco *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, 1757, in the Villa Valmarana ai Nani, Vicenza. The deer sent by the goddess descends on a cloud, while Agamemnon stands isolated, on the far right, covering his face.

intervention that will save Iphigénie, Wagner’s arrangement reverted to Euripides’ play in which the act of redemption is not merely related but portrayed on stage. Wagner apparently decided against including the scene in the Greek play where at the last moment Artemis exchanges Iphigenia at the sacrificial altar for the body of the deer previously killed by Agamemnon. Artemis arrives in a dark thundercloud from which she emerges in a blaze of light that floods the altar:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Nicht dürste ich nach Iphigenia’s Blut,} \\
\text{Es ist ihr hoher Geist, den ich erkor. –} \\
\text{Mein Opfer führ’ ich in ein fernes Land,} \\
\text{Als Priesterin dort meine Huld zu lehren!} \\
\text{Dir, Atreus Sohn, erzieh’ ich so die Reine,} \\
\text{Daß einst sie sühne, was dein Stamm verbrach.} \\
\text{Nun seid versöhnt! Versöhnet bin auch ich. –} \\
\text{Die Winde weh’n – – ruhmvoll sei eure Fahrt!}
\end{align*}
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43 Goldhill has noted that ‘Wagner apparently did not know that Gluck had already introduced the goddess [Artemis] into the action for the Paris production [of 1775] (though for Gluck this is precisely to enable the happy marriage to proceed).’ Goldhill, ‘Who Killed Gluck?’ (note 7), 231. On the two different endings to the opera, see Julian Rushton, ‘“Royal Agamemnon”: The Two Versions of Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Aulide*, in *Music and the French Revolution*, ed. Malcolm Boyd (Cambridge, 1992), 15–36.

44 RWSW 20/IV (note 4), 62. For further details of the set design and stage directions in the scene, see 67–88, esp. 87.
I am not thirsty for Iphigenia’s blood;  
it is a higher calling I have chosen.  
I’ll lead my sacrificial offering to a distant land 
to serve me there as a priestess!  
For you, Atreus’ son [i.e. Agamemnon], I will bring us this pure one 
so that she eventually will expiate the wrongdoings of her family.  
Only be contented, as I am: 
the wind is blowing – glorious will be our journey!

This passage of poetic text represents one of the few in the arrangement that is Wagner’s own.45

The musical setting, too, represents some of the most original material of the arrangement.46 Artemis’ arioso is accompanied by sustained chords in B flat major played mostly piano or pianissimo by an ensemble of onstage wind instruments, and the bar of entry for Artemis’ voice part consists in a perfect cadence in B flat with the 5th of the chord uppermost in the texture (see Ex. 5). The effect is a phantasmagoria of sanctified timeless space which Wagner would recreate to greater effect in the use of divisi strings in A major, in the Act I Prelude of Lohengrin, and recapitulated in Lohengrin’s ‘Grail Narration’ in Act III: horizontal landscapes of largely diatonic harmony that glow like a halo around the redemptive agent.47

Like Iphigenia, Gluck’s Paris-conceived opera was to be carried off in the manner of colonial plunder to Germany, ‘to a distant land’ (in ein fernes Land).48 Wagner’s most radical departure from the dramatic content of the original opera – and in turn the most novel musico-dramatic by-product of the whole enterprise of re-translating Gluck’s opera – occurs at the very moment in the work when Artemis, a vestige of the 18th-century dea ex machina, rescues Iphigenia by reclaiming her along the lines of Euripides’ play.49

The Hellenisation of Gluck’s opera was bound up covertly with its Germanisation, reflecting a familiar ideological strand of late 18th- and 19th-century reception of

46 Ibid., 401–03.
47 The use of this technique in Lohengrin has been cited by John Deathridge as one of Wagner’s boldest modernist innovations both in opera and in terms of purely instrumental music. John Deathridge, ‘Wagner the Progressive: Another Look at Lohengrin’, Wagner Beyond Good and Evil (Berkeley, CA, 2008), 42. See also Deathridge’s discussion of the phantasmagoric ‘mirages of eternity’ surrounding Isolde’s transfiguration, ‘Postmortem on Isolde’, 149ff.
48 Syer has drawn parallels between Wagner’s Iphigenia arrangement and Lohengrin, then in progress, especially regarding the return to a ‘distant land’ by means of divine intervention. Syer, Wagner’s Visions (note 4), 46–8. Syer was alluding to the famous opening words of Lohengrin’s ‘Grail Narration’: ‘In fernem Land, unnahbar euren Schritten’.
49 Christa Jost has suggested that Wagner’s new ending to the opera was partly an attempt to forge a link with the ‘rescue scenario’ of Goethe’s verse tragedy Iphigenia in Tauris (1786). RWSW 20/IV (note 4), ix, 433–4. On the various interpretations in Goethe’s play and other versions of the myth in the context of German Classicism, ranging from Enlightenment humanism to crypto-colonial rapacity, see Edith Hall, Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides’ Black Sea Tragedy (Oxford, 2013), especially chapter 10: ‘Goethe’s Iphigenie Between Germany and the World’, 206–30.
Classical antiquity that identified the spirit of modern German art with ancient Greek tragedy.\textsuperscript{50} To attempt this via Euripides was hardly straightforward, and within a few years Wagner had tempered his evaluation of the Greek tragedian in a further refinement of the same ideology. In his ‘Zurich’ essays, he jumped on the German literary bandwagon that condemned Euripides as a decadent departure from the spirit of Greek tragedy best exemplified by Aeschylus and Sophocles, a view that would pro-

foundly influence Nietzsche in the 1860s and 1870s. In the late 1840s, by contrast, Wagner integrated Euripidean material as part of an act of appropriation for German culture, rescuing the Bohemian-born Gluck by translating his operas from the French. Not only was the opera made supposedly more ‘German’ in its integration of Hellenic sources but the impulse towards German nationalist reappropriation from the French in the context of the Vormärz was seemingly allegorised in the revisions themselves.

Despite the scepticism of the Dresden press before the premiere, the production was well received by the public and press alike. The press for its part also followed Wagner in subjecting Gluck to ideological spin. Its leading critic Carl Banck claimed that Gluck had revolted against the ‘bravura’ singing of Italian opera: ‘Rather our singers, careful not to disturb with their own demands, learn not to sing any more at all’ (Unsere Sänger, um mit ihren Ansprüchen nicht zu stören, lernen lieber gar nicht mehr singen) – a description that reads in hindsight as a caricature of mature Wagnerian aesthetics. The possessive ‘unsere’ – meaning Germany’s, if not Dresden’s – suggests that Gluck’s reforms via French opera could be claimed for German culture without reasoned justification or active adaptation. Wagner’s arrangement, which bears many of the dramaturgical hallmarks of his later works, was precisely this: an active response to the same essential challenge of cultural appropriation.

Wagner’s arrangement has a reception history of its own that forms a larger sequence of critical adaptations. It provided a model for Richard Strauss’s arrangement of Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride (begun in 1889), a debt that Strauss acknowledged in a letter to his publisher Adolph Fürstner:

After the example of Richard Wagner’s arrangement of Gluck’s ‘Iphigenie in Aulis’, I have completed a total rearrangement of the same composer’s ‘Iphigenie auf Tauris’, which I want to bring to performance here next season. My rearrangement consists of a completely new translation, in part a new poem (on the basis of some motifs from Goethe).

The title page of the first publication bore the subtitle: ‘für die deutsche Bühne bearbeitet’ (arranged for the German stage). Matthew Werley has written that ‘in the case of Gluck reception’ this phrase ‘was certainly unprecedented before Strauss, who


52 Quoted in RWSW 20/IV (note 4), 21.

53 Berry, After Wagner (note 2), also compares Wagner’s approach to Strauss’s performing edition of Mozart’s Idomeneo.

used [it] to denote the target audience of his new arrangement’. Even if the subtitle is lacking from the printed material of Wagner’s arrangement, the latter nonetheless stands as a notable precedent of a German composer engaged in ‘the task of reclaiming Gluck back from the French’ at least twenty-five years before the unification of Germany after the Franco-Prussian War when for the first time, according to Werley, it ‘increasingly became a matter of national concern for some German authors’.

The philosopher and critic Friedrich Theodor Vischer, whose ‘Vorschlag zu einer Oper’ (1844) has been posited as a model for Wagner’s conception of the Ring, judged Gluck’s French operas as failing to answer the perceived need for a truly German national operatic culture:

The heroic operas of Gluck, his Alceste or Iphigenie, are by no means lacking in great heroic moments. However, these sounds of emotion were part of a foreign world, and we want a native world of our own, a national one in music as well as in poetry.

If the ‘sounds of emotion’ in Gluck’s French-language operas belonged to ‘a foreign world’, Wagner’s response was not to discard Gluck’s works as anathema to the project of new, German national opera, but to translate them.

Wagner’s arrangement of Gluck’s Iphigénie was an attempt to imbue German musical theatre with the rhetorical immediacy of the French tragédie lyrique and at the same time an act of appropriation of a French-language opera for German national culture. Having conceived his own version of Gluck in reaction against the ‘literary’ German versions of foreign operas, his selective re-translation of the libretto is perhaps less important than its mediation via various translations of the opera or of the myth. Wagner consulted German editions, translations and performing versions of the opera (Sander, Spontini, Brissler) as well as German translations of Euripides’ drama (Schiller, Donner, Goethe’s Iphigenia in Tauris). In the role of philologist that Wagner imagined himself to occupy, he was sifting mythic sources and translations in an attempt to arrive at something like a definitive version of the Iphigenia myth that would equally resonate with the hearts and minds of European modernity poised on revolution. After all, Wagner would describe his intention as an attempt to ‘win back Gluck’s almost completely forgotten opera for the modern stage’.

This article on Wagner’s arrangement may not exactly be my own bid to save it from sacrifice on the altar of critical neglect and historical abandonment. Nonetheless, I hope to have suggested that this version deserves to be heard and seen more often than it currently is, and that it offers a timely reminder of the value of contemporary critical revisions to operatic scores in general. The ambiguities in Wagner’s

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56 Ibid., 197.


58 SB (note 19), v.88–9.

59 On the implications of operatic revisions of the past for modern-day productions and discourse, see Roger Parker, Remaking the Song: Operatic Visions and Revisions from Handel to Berio, Ernest Bloch Lectures Series (Berkeley, CA, 2006).
interpretation of *Iphigénie en Aulide* articulated wider aspects of French-German relations in mid-19th-century musical culture, such as vocal expression, dramatic verisimilitude, and competing notions of universalism. The arrangement also illustrates the political nature of translation conceived as an appropriation of cultural objects for domestic consumption and for modern aesthetic sensibilities. The irony is that Wagner seems to have achieved this not by restoring the work to its origins or to an ideal state but by casting it with almost utopian fervour towards a distant land and a glimpsed future.