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THE MEANING OF THE WAVE IN THE FINAL SCENE OF EURIPIDES' *IPHIGENIA TAURICA**

This article offers a new interpretation of the wave which, in the finale of Euripides' *Iphigenia Taurica*, prevents the Greek ship from leaving the Taurian land, thus making it necessary for the goddess Athena to intervene. My contention is that the wave is the predictable consequence of the sacrilege which the Greeks are committing by stealing Artemis' cult statue from the Taurian temple. Therefore, we can detect in *IT* the same religious offence–punishment–compensation structure that can be found in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. However, unlike in Aeschylus' tragedy, in *IT* Athena's final decrees compensate only the goddess Artemis and not the human characters: after deeply suffering as instruments of the divine will, not even in the future will they be allowed to fulfil their desires. Thus, we may say that a supernatural 'wave' prevents humans from leaving in accordance with their will.

Keywords: Euripides, *Iphigenia Taurica*, Aeschylus, Greek tragedy, Greek drama, Greek religion, sacrilege and punishment, *deus ex machina*, *Tyche*

This article provides a new interpretation of a much-debated element of the finale of Euripides' *Iphigenia Taurica* (1391 ff.): the wave which prevents the Greek ship from leaving the Taurian land and pushes it back to the shore. In the first part of the article, I shall explain the origin of the wave. I shall point out that this meteorological phenomenon is

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neither a mere caprice of Chance nor a dramaturgical device, as it has so far been interpreted in secondary literature. Instead, it is the predictable consequence of the sacrilege which the Greeks have committed by stealing Artemis' statue from the Taurian temple. In the second part of the article, I shall demonstrate how the wave is related to the overall intellectual project of the play.

The final part of *Iphigenia Taurica* shows the Greek protagonists' attempt to flee the Taurian land, the reaction of the Taurian king, Thoas, and Athena's final apparition. This marks the acme of a tragedy which has always been considered remarkable for its *coups de théâtre*.¹ The Greeks' escape is narrated to Thoas by a messenger (1327–1419), who begins by explaining that Iphigenia has freed the two prisoners – whom we know to be Orestes and Pylades – and that the three together have boarded the Greek ship which was hidden along the coast. After a brief struggle with the Taurians, the ship sets off to sea; however, a sudden storm pushes it back to the shore (1391–7):

ναῦς δ', ἕως μὲν ἐντὸς ἦν
 λιμένος, ἐχώρει στόμια, διαπερώσα δὲ
 λάβρω κλύδωνι συμπεσοῦσ' ἠπείγετο·
 δεινὸς γὰρ ἐλθὼν ἄνεμος ἐξαιφνης νεῶς
 ὠθεῖ παλίμπρυν' ἰστί'· οἱ δ' ἔκαρτέρου
 πρὸς κύμα λακτίζοντες· ἐς δὲ γῆν ἅλιον
 κλύδων παλίρρους ἤγε ναῦν.

And while the ship was inside the harbour, it made straight for its mouth, but while it was passing through that, it got into difficulties as it crashed into the furious surges of the open sea, for a terrible wind arose and suddenly forced the ship astern. They rowed with steadfast effort as they struggled against the breakers, but the wave's backward surge drove the ship to land again.²

¹ It must be added that, until recent times, most critics regarded the intriguing plot as the only remarkable feature of this play. They argued, as Kitto put it, that 'intellectual profundity is as alien to this tragi-comedy as moral profundity; we look in vain for any serious purpose beyond the serious purpose of creating such elegant drama' (H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy. A Literary Study*, third edition [London, 1961], 316). Beside 'tragi-comedy', several dismissive labels were introduced: among others, 'romance' in M. Platnauer (ed.), *Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford, 1938), i.v; 'romantic tragedy' in D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama. Myth, Theme and Structure* (Toronto, 1967), 14; 'romantic intrigue plays' in B. M. W. Knox, 'Euripides', in B. M. W. Knox and Patricia E. Easterling (eds.), *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1: *Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 1985), 318. Only in fairly recent times has the intellectual profundity of this play been recognized, in works such M. S. Mirto, 'Salvare il γένος e riformare il culto: divinazione e razionalità nell'*Ifigenia Taurica*', *MD* 32 (1994), 55–98; or M. Wright, *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies. A Study of Helen, Andromeda, and Iphigenia Among the Taurians* (Oxford, 2005).

² If not otherwise specified, *IT* text is quoted according to J. Diggle (ed.), *Euripidis Fabulae, tomus II. Supplices, Electra, Hercules, Troades, Iphigenia in Tauris, Ion* (Oxford, 1981).

The messenger urges Thoas to gather his troops in order to assault the Greek ship, but while the king is summoning his warriors, he is stopped by the sudden apparition of Athena. In her speech (1435–75), the goddess orders Thoas to renounce pursuing his enemies, as Orestes has come to the Taurian land following an order from Apollo. The god has commanded Orestes to steal Artemis' cult statue from the Taurian temple and bring it to Attica; thus, he would be freed from the Erinyes, who have been persecuting him since he killed his mother, Clytemnestra. Athena makes clear that, thanks to her entreaty, Poseidon has placated the storm. She then addresses Orestes and Iphigenia, who are already far away, but can nevertheless hear the goddess's supernatural voice. Orestes is ordered to found a new temple in Alae, on the borders of Attica, and to place Artemis' statue there; Iphigenia learns that she will be Artemis' priestess in another Attic temple, Brauron. Finally, Athena dictates that Thoas must set free Iphigenia's handmaidens, who form the chorus.

The wave which prevents the Greeks from fleeing is the most relevant difficulty for the interpretation of this finale: it appears an unpredictable event that thwarts the clever escape plan of the Greeks, which has so far been effective. In trying to find an explanation for the rise of the wave, modern criticism has divided into two interpretative trends. Some scholars contend that it is a mere dramaturgical device aimed at arousing suspense in the audience,³ or at providing a pretext for Athena's intervention, thus enabling the play to end with a focus on cult and religion.⁴ Others have argued for a more 'profound' explanation of the wave: for instance, Strohm regards it as the demonstration of humans' inability to determine their own fate without divine help. Burnett contends that the wave proves the power of Chance (*Tyche*): a power which is superior to that of men, but which can be easily defeated by a goddess, as Athena is.⁵

Translations from *IT* are from J. Morwood (trans.), *Euripides, Iphigenia Among the Taurians, Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus* (Oxford, 1999). My changes to the translation are in italics.

³ For example, K. Matthiessen, *Elektra, Taurische Iphigenie und Helena. Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und zur dramatischen Form im Spätwerk des Euripides* (Göttingen, 1964), 57, n. 4; F. M. Dunn, *Tragedy's End. Closure and Innovation in Euripidean Drama* (New York and Oxford, 1996), 138.

⁴ E.g. A. Spira, *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex machina bei Sophokles und Euripides* (Kallmünz, 1960), 120; A. Lesky, *Greek Tragic Poetry* (New Haven, CT, 1983), 306.

⁵ H. Strohm (ed.), *Euripides, Iphigenie im Taurerlande* (Munich, 1949), 25; A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived. Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal* (Oxford, 1971), 65–9.

Despite the differences, both trends of interpretation agree in attaching no importance to the fact that it is a *wave* that prevents the Greeks from fleeing. In principle, many things could be suitable for arousing suspense or demonstrating the power of *Tyche*, not necessarily a wave. Moreover, this specific ‘pretext’ for Athena’s appearance is not even necessary, as Mastronarde notices, pointing out that Thoas, even before learning of the wave, thinks it possible to pursue the Greeks, because of the long voyage which the latter must make in order to reach Greece (1325–6).⁶ Thoas’ desire to catch the Greeks would alone make it necessary for Athena to intervene.

By confronting *IT* with *Helen* – the two plays are notoriously similar in several respects⁷ – we can add one more reason which would justify Athena’s apparition. In *Helen*, too, a messenger comes and reveals to the barbarian king Theoclymenos that the Greeks have fled (1512–1618). Unlike in *IT*, in *Helen* their escape is not hindered by inclement weather; on the contrary, the messenger says that winds are favourable (1612). Moreover, Theoclymenos excludes the possibility of pursuing the Greeks (1622–3). Thus, the final *deus ex machina* is not necessary for the salvation of the two main characters, Helen and Menelaos; instead, it is needed in order to prevent Theoclymenos from killing his sister, Theonoe, who has helped them. The concern for those who have helped the fugitives can be seen in *IT* too, where Thoas threatens the chorus women with punishment (1431–4), and later Athena does not forget to order him to set them free (1467–9). After the chorus’s generous support of Iphigenia’s salvation plan (1075–7) and Thoas’ menaces, the audience expects the women to be protected, and we can say that this is one of the reasons for Athena’s appearance.

Thus, although both Thoas’ decision to pursue the Greeks and the necessity of saving the chorus women would amply justify Athena’s intervention, the finale is also enriched by the appearance of the wave. We must agree with Mastronarde that ‘a more than minimalist or conventional reading is justified’.⁸ One may still argue that the

⁶ D. J. Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides. Dramatic Technique and Social Context* (Cambridge, 2010), 166.

⁷ *IT* and *Elena* are so similar in structure that Schroeder could summarize them using the same words (F. Schroeder, *De iteratis apud tragicos graecos* [Leipzig, 1882]). The similarities between the two tragedies are discussed in, among others, Platnauer (n. 1), i.xv–xvi; C. M. Pacati, ‘Ifigenia, gli uomini, gli dei: per una lettura dell’*Ifigenia in Tauride* di Euripide’, *Aevum(ant)* 6 (1993), 157–74; Wright (n. 1); C. W. Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides’ Helen* (Cambridge, 2014), 45–9.

⁸ Mastronarde (n. 6), 166.

wave is merely meant to increase suspense; however, we shall see that there is more to it. The wave plays a specific role, *precisely as wave*, in the religious dynamics of this tragedy.

The wave as punishment for the religious offence

The hint which helps us to understand the nature of the wave is contained in Iphigenia's first reaction to it (1398–1402):

᾿Ω Λητοῦς κόρη,
σῶσόν με τὴν σὴν ἱερέαν πρὸς Ἑλλάδα
ἐκ βαρβάρου γῆς καὶ κλοπαῖς σύγγνωθ' ἐμαίς.
φιλεῖς δὲ καὶ σὺ σὸν κασίγνητον, θεά·
φιλεῖν δὲ κάμει τοὺς ὁμαίμονας δόκει.

O daughter of Leto, bring me your priestess safely to Greece from this barbarian land and forgive my theft. You love your brother, goddess. Believe that I also love my kin.

By asking the goddess to forgive the theft of the statue, Iphigenia makes clear that she considers the theft itself as the cause of the wave. Now the link between sacrilege (in our case, the theft of the statue) and inability to sail is not specific to this passage. Several parallels show that this corresponds to a general belief in the Greek world: according to this belief, when a sacrilegious or impious person set off to sea, he was punished either with inability to sail or with shipwreck.⁹ We can refer to episodes which were well known to the mythical and literary memory of the Greeks, starting with the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus' fellows are condemned to death at sea for eating the cows of the sun god. The same poem tells of another famous case, regarding Ajax Oilaeus. His death was caused by Athena's wrath (*Od.* 4.499–510); the same wrath which caused the storm that dispersed the Greek fleet (3.130–6).¹⁰ The *Odyssey* is reticent about the reason for Athena's anger, but it is specified in Arctinos' *Iliupersis*, according to Proclus' reconstruction

⁹ On the gravity of the crime of temple robbery, see R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), 170–5.

¹⁰ The connection between the two events is not made explicit in the *Odyssey*, but in the sch. *Od.* 3.135, which explains that Athena got angry because the Achaeans failed to punish Ajax for raping Cassandra in the goddess's temple. The scholion comments that here the goddess's wrath appears to be directed against all Greeks, whereas thereafter (ἐξῆς, i.e. in 4.502) it will be clear that Ajax's actions are the reason for it. This is not the only example of reticence on the causes of divine anger: see S. West and G. A. Privitera (eds.), *Omero, Odissea, I. Libri I–IV* (Milan, 1981), 289–90 (*ad Od.* 3.135).

(*Chr.* 261–7): Ajax tore away the priestess Cassandra from Athena’s temple and because the priestess had caught hold of Athena’s statue it was removed from its base; therefore the Greeks attempted to stone Ajax, who took refuge at Athena’s altar; because of the violation, the goddess caused the shipwreck of the Greek fleet. This episode is also recounted in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and in Euripides’ *Trojan Women* (Aesch. *Ag.* 338–44; Eur. *Tro.* 48–97). The belief in the connection between sacrilege and shipwreck is likewise witnessed in Hesiod (*Op.* 247), as well as in Euripides’ *Electra* (1355), where the Dioscourai warn pious men not to board ship with the perjurers. Finally, Antiphon and Xenophon report the common belief that the pious could be involved in shipwrecks with the sacrilegious (Antiph. 5.82, Xen. *Cyr.* 8.1.25).

But the most interesting parallel, with regard to the theft of a temple treasure, is the profanation of Persephone’s sanctuary in Locri Epizephyrii. According to Diodorus Siculus (27.4.3) and Livy (29.18), the profaner was Pyrrhus. Having been punished with shipwreck, he quickly gave back the treasure to the temple. Interestingly, in Livy the Locrian ambassador specifies that the storm made the ship smash on the same Locrian coast from which they had set off, so that the treasure was given back to the Locrians (*omnesque naves, quae sacram pecuniam habuerunt, in litora nostra eiectae sunt*). The same happens to the Greek ship in *IT*, which is pushed back toward the shore where the Taurian temple lies. The episode of the profanation in Locri is also reported by Cicero (*Nat. Dr.* 3.83) and Valerius Maximus (1.1.ext. 1), who attribute the theft to Dionysius of Syracuse. Although these sources are later than the *IT*, they witness the same traditional belief in the punishment of sacrilege through shipwreck.

Going back to the *IT* and Iphigenia’s myth, this is not even the first case in which a religious offence has prevented the sinner from sailing. As others have noted, the wave recalls by contrast the absence of wind which, as Iphigenia explains in the tragedy’s prologue (15), prevented the Greek fleet from leaving Aulis.¹¹ The reason for that phenomenon was Agamemnon’s incautious promise of sacrificing the most beautiful product of the year in which Iphigenia was born (ὄτι γὰρ ἐνιαυτὸς τέκοι / κάλλιστον, ἠΰξω φωσφόρω θύσειν θεᾶ, 20–1).¹² Despite the

¹¹ R. Caldwell, ‘Tragedy Romanticized: The *Iphigenia Taurica*’, *CJ* 70 (1974–5), 28; C. Wolff, ‘Euripides’ *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*: Aetiology, Ritual, and Myth’, *CLAnt* 11 (1992), 313.

¹² Platnauer (n. 1), 61, explains that ‘As Iph. was of marriageable age at the time of the prospective start of the expedition from Aulis, we must suppose that Ag.’s vow, the full import

brevity of Euripides' text, we can understand that Agamemnon meant to sacrifice an animal; however, at least according to the seer Calchas, the most beautiful product of that year was Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia. As long as Agamemnon does not somehow fulfil his vow (here is the offence), the fleet will not be allowed to set off.¹³

It appears that the only modern scholar who has understood the link between the sacrilege and the wave is Wolff, who points out that 'the theft of a sacred object, hierosylia, is a very serious crime in the everyday world, on a level with treason and punishable by death, refusal of burial in one's native land, and confiscation of property'.¹⁴ He adds some additional parallel passages for the serious consequences of temple robbery:

For statue stealing involving punishments like those in *IT*, see Hdt. 5.83.2–86 (earthquake and madness); Athen. 672b–d = Menodotus, FGrHist 541 F 1 (attempted statue theft foiled by inability of thieves to row their ship clear of land); Hdt. 7.129.2–3 (tidal irregularities destroy Persians who had desecrated a shrine and its statue).¹⁵

This observation has been ignored by subsequent studies and commentaries on *IT*; and Wolff himself has not understood the importance of the link between sacrilege and the wave for the overall interpretation of this play, devoting only a brief note to the topic. In order to fill this gap in the critical literature, it is necessary to set the place of the events acted in *IT* – the wave included – within the broader context of the Atreidae myth, as it appeared in the Athenian tragic

of which he did not realize at the time of his making it, had remained unfulfilled for at least fifteen years.'

¹³ According to *Cypria*, fr. 23 Bernabé (=sch. *Il.* 1.108–9b), Agamemnon had killed Artemis' sacred goat and had boasted that he was a better hunter than Artemis. In his *Epitome* (3.21a), Apollodorus tells instead that Agamemnon killed a deer, and adds that Atreus promised to sacrifice to Artemis the best animal of his flock (cf. 2.10); however, when a golden lamb was born, he did not keep the promise. Thus, while the Achaean fleet was lying in Aulis, Calchas revealed to Agamemnon that Artemis was enraged with him and demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the most beautiful of his daughters (θυγατέρων ἡ κρατιστεύουσα κάλλει). In Apollodorus' version we see the substitution of the sacrificial victim (Iphigenia instead of the golden lamb), whereas in Euripides we notice the ambiguity of Agamemnon's promise. In *IT*, the king behaves in conformity with the traditional motif of incautious speech (ἀχρεῖος λόγος; see M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* [Oxford, 1997], 441–2); and so he does in *Cypria* and Apollodorus, for different reasons. In these two works there is also the motif of insolence (ὕβρις); see P. Scarpi and M. G. Ciani (eds.), *Apollodoro. I miti greci* (Milan, 1997), 640–1.

¹⁴ Wolff (n. 11), 314.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 314, n. 14.

tradition. The intertextuality of *IT* is then easily detectable at the moment when Athena appears at the end of the tragedy.

The meaning of Athena's apparition

We may wonder why it is precisely Athena who appears as *dea ex machina* in this tragedy. An obvious answer is that she is the *poliad* goddess of the city where the statue is going to be taken, Athens, and therefore she is particularly concerned that Orestes' mission should have a positive result. But there is more to it. Previous scholars have shown that Athena's role in *IT* is similar to that which she plays in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.¹⁶ This is made clear by Athena's words in *IT* (1469–72):

ἐξέσωσα δὲ
καὶ πρὶν σ' Ἀρείοις ἐν πάγοις ψήφους ἴσας
κρίνασ', Ὀρέστα· καὶ νόμισμ' ἔσται τόδε,
νικᾶν ἰσῆρεις ὅστις ἂν ψήφους λάβῃ.

Long ago I saved you, Orestes, when I pronounced upon the equal votes in the hill of Ares. And this will be the established principle – that when the votes are equal the defendant is acquitted.

These lines recall the Areopagus trial, shown in *Eumenides*. There Athena, in casting her vote in favour of Orestes, established the rule according to which the accused would be acquitted in the case of an even number of votes for acquittal and condemnation (741). The purpose of quoting *Eumenides* is the only plausible reason for inserting these lines in the text of *IT*, as they have no connection with the present dramatic situation.

If we compare the two tragedies, we notice that they both begin with a contrast between the order of a deity – Apollo – and the prerogatives of other deities – the Erinyes in Aeschylus, Artemis in Euripides. It

¹⁶ The relation with *Eumenides* has been extensively investigated by Caldwell (n. 11), 25, who argues that 'The Erinyes appear and drive Orestes to Delphi and Athens in his search for purification and release from pursuit. Finally, in the *Eumenides*, he is saved by the intervention of Athena and by the transformation of the Erinyes into Eumenides. In the *IT* it is a mysterious wave which interrupts success and drives Orestes into danger. Once again Athena must appear to rescue him, and a bloodthirsty female divinity, the Tauric Artemis, must be transformed into the benevolent Attic Artemis.' Caldwell points out the parallel between the Erinyes and the primitive goddess Artemis in *IT*, but he does not understand the role played by the wave (which he considers 'mysterious').

must be said that these prerogatives are not merely a matter of power, but correspond to well-recognized religious and ethical principles. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Apollo induces Orestes to matricide, one of the worst possible crimes, which is normally punished by the Erinyes; in *IT*, he prompts the Greeks to commit sacrilege by stealing a temple statue, thus depriving Artemis of her cult. These infractions cause in one case the persecution by the Erinyes, in the other the wave. Thus, the lives of the human protagonists are endangered. However, another deity – in both cases, Athena – intervenes and solves the *aporia*, by compensating the deity who would be damaged. We can therefore detect a tripartite mechanism of religious offence–punishment–compensation. This same mechanism can also be found in the Aulis events, as described at the beginning of *IT* (6–34), as seen in Table 1.

It appears that *IT* combines elements from the two previous parts of the saga, the one (Aulis) regarding Iphigenia, the other (*Eumenides*) regarding Orestes. At the point of punishment, *IT* is similar to Aulis, with punishment being the inability to sail. The fact that in one case this is realized by the absence of wind and in the other by the storm is a secondary detail. Regarding compensation, *IT* recalls both *Eumenides* and Aulis. On the one hand, the creation of new cults in honour of Artemis in Athens recalls the rites which Athena established in order to placate the Erinyes, the injured party in *Eumenides*. On the other hand, Iphigenia's future service in the temple of Artemis in the Attic temple of Brauron, prescribed by Athena at the end of *IT*, is in continuity with her current service in the Taurian temple, which is the result of Agamemnon's unfulfilled vow in Aulis. It must be noted

Table 1. Comparisons of the process of religious offence–punishment–compensation in Euripides and Aeschylus

	Aulis(according to the version adopted in <i>IT</i>)	<i>Eumenides</i>	<i>Iphigenia Taurica</i>
Religious offence	unfulfilled vow	matricide	theft of Artemis' statue
Punishment	inability to sail	persecution by the Erinyes	inability to sail
Compensation	Iphigenia's priestesshood in the Taurian land	new Athenian cults in honour of the Erinyes	new Athenian cults in honour of Artemis; Iphigenia's priestesshood

that in all three cases the moment of compensation not only restores the prerogatives of the goddesses but also potentiates them. In Aulis, instead of having Iphigenia killed, Artemis can benefit from her service as priestess. In *Eumenides* and *IT*, the goddesses will enjoy in Athens more prestigious cults than they have had before.

It is useful to take the analysis of the relation with *Eumenides* further. In Aeschylus' tragedy, the Erinyes react to Orestes' acquittal by lamenting the loss of their rites (τιμή, 780): indeed, the noun τιμή and its correlatives recur frequently in the last part of the tragedy. Thus, they threaten to plague Athens and make it sterile (782–7). Athena replies by inviting them to settle in Attica with her (833) and offering them such power that no family in Attica will be able to prosper without honouring them (895). As pointed out by Di Benedetto, Athena's proposal allows a significant expansion of the power of the Erinyes, which now extends from the private sphere of family to the public sphere of the entire *polis*.¹⁷ In fact, the civil war between the citizens is assimilated to the struggle within a family, so that the culprits will be prosecuted by the Erinyes.

In *IT*, the wave is the consequence of the violation of Artemis' prerogatives. The dire consequences of this act are avoided thanks to Athena, who in founding the new Alae rites clearly states that Artemis will keep her honours (τιμός, 1461) through them. The modalities of the rites make clear their compensatory function: during the feasts for the goddess, a priest will scratch a man's neck with a knife, thus shedding some drops of blood. As Cook has shown, this new Attic rite will be related through metonymy with the old human sacrifices performed by the Taurians.¹⁸ The two main characters of *IT* will contribute to the compensation of Artemis. By order of Athena, Orestes will establish the Alae ceremonies; Iphigenia will be an integral part of the mechanism, as she will go on serving Artemis as priestess, though not among the Taurians, but in Brauron.

Both in *Eumenides* and in *IT*, Athena exceptionally justifies the violation of a religious code which is not only still valid – one should not kill one's mother or deprive a deity of his or her cult – but which will also be better honoured thereby: the Athenians will respect their fellow citizens as if they were relatives; Artemis will enjoy better cults in Attica.

¹⁷ V. Di Benedetto, *L'ideologia del potere e la tragedia greca. Ricerche su Eschilo* (Turin, 1978), 205–23.

¹⁸ A. S. Cook, *Enactment. Greek Tragedy* (Chicago, IL, 1971), 122.

In conclusion, Athena's presence in *IT* is motivated by the literary relation with the illustrious precedent of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Moreover, the literary remembrance carries the patriotic exaltation of Athens. Through its poliadic goddess, not only does this city put an end to Orestes' wanderings, but also – and here is the improvement with respect to Aeschylus' drama – a positive solution is found to a part of the Atreidae story which previously had a negative outcome: Iphigenia's fate. Just as it had civilized the Erinyes, Athens can now boast that it has civilized another primitive goddess, Artemis. However, an accurate analysis of the final scene shows that the exaltation of Athens was not Euripides' purpose for juxtaposing his tragedy with Aeschylus' model. Patriotism may well be the superficial reading of the finale by the ingenuous spectators and Euripides' way to please them; however, the dramatist's intentions are different. But before looking for the profound meaning of the parallel with Aeschylus and thus the overall meaning of *IT*'s final scene, it is necessary to explain the role of another deity who is cited here, Poseidon.

The hostility of Poseidon

The Taurian messenger involves another god in the events of the final scene, mentioning Poseidon's hate of the descendants of Pelops (1414–19):

πόντου δ' ἀνάκτωρ Ἴλιόν τ' ἐπισκοπεῖ
 σεμνὸς Ποσειδῶν, Πελοπίδαις ἐναντίος,
 καὶ νῦν παρέξει τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος γόνον
 σοὶ καὶ πολίταις, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐν χερσὶν
 λαβεῖν ἀδελφὴν θ', ἣ φόνου τοῦ 'ν Αὐλίδι
 ἀμνημόνευτος θεῶν προδοῦσ' ἀλίσκεται.

Revered Poseidon, ruler of the sea and Troy's protector, enemy to the family of Pelops, will now, as I think, give you and the citizens the son of Agamemnon to catch as your prey – his sister too who has forgotten the sacrifice at Aulis and stands convicted of treachery to the goddess.

The messenger argues that Poseidon has sent the wave because of his rage against the Achaeans for the destruction of Troy. According to some interpreters, in these lines the character provides us with a different answer to the question of who has triggered the wave: not Artemis, as Iphigenia believes, but Poseidon. Among them, Mirto argues that the messenger's idea may be confirmed when Athena later explains that, thanks to her intercession, Poseidon has placated the storm: 'already

Poseidon is smoothing the ocean's back to stillness for his ship to cross. This the god does as a favour to me' (ἤδη Ποσειδῶν χάριν ἐμὴν ἀκύμονα / πόντου τίθησι νῶτα πορθμεύειν πλάτην, 1444–5).¹⁹

However, there is in fact no need to choose between Artemis and Poseidon. Pointing out that Iphigenia has betrayed the goddess (θεὸν προδοῦσα), 1419), the messenger implies that Artemis too is interested in punishing her. The Taurians believe they have the goddess's favour, as is demonstrated by Thoas' appeal to his subjects: 'with the goddess' favour hurry to hunt the impious men' (σὺν δὲ τῇ θεῷ / σπεύδοντες ἄνδρας δυσσεβεῖς θηράσατε, 1425–6).²⁰ Thus, we can detect here the same form of collaboration which we see in the above-quoted prologue of *Trojan Women* (48–97), likewise originating from an act of sacrilege. In that tragedy, just as in *IT*, Athena wants to strike the Achaeans with a sea storm, and therefore asks for the support of the god of the sea. Analogously, she has already sought an alliance with Zeus in order to chastise the Greeks from the sky (78–9). The goddess persuades Poseidon by insisting on the common desire to punish the Greeks (54), though for different reasons: Athena wants to avenge the offence to her cult, whereas Poseidon is angered by the fall of Troy. Interestingly, the respective purposes of Athena and Poseidon in *Trojan Women* exactly reflect those which Iphigenia ascribes to Artemis and the messenger to Poseidon.

It is therefore incorrect to argue that Iphigenia and the messenger provide two mutually exclusive identities for the creator of the wave, nor should we choose one of the two. After seeing the wave, Iphigenia addresses Artemis because she regards the goddess as the first cause of this meteorological phenomenon. However, this does not exclude the possibility that Poseidon too is involved; on the contrary, his support is necessary, as Artemis does not have the power to agitate the sea. As far as the Taurians are concerned, they believe that the two deities are allied in punishing the Greeks.

Humans and gods, Chance and Necessity

By regarding the wave as a consequence of the sacrilegious theft, we are able to redefine the place of the wave itself in the chain of events which

¹⁹ Mirto (n. 1), 92.

²⁰ It would suffice to amend τῇ θεῷ to τῷ θεῷ to make Thoas refer not to Artemis but to Poseidon. However, saying that the Greeks are impious (δυσσεβεῖς), the king makes clear that he expects to be helped by the goddess against whom they have been impious, namely Artemis.

leads to the Greeks' flight from the Taurian land and to the accomplishment of Orestes' mission. Several scholars have considered the wave to be a demonstration of the power of Chance in human life. Among them, Burnett sees a 'force...so gratuitously brought to our attention', the last stroke of Chance in a play which then ends by acknowledging the superior power of the gods and, above all, of Necessity (*IT* 1486).²¹ According to her, the wave demonstrates humans' failure to dominate the Chaos of nature, which the gods instead can easily discipline. If Euripides had allowed his characters' escape plot to be easily successful, he would have committed a 'heresy', implying that humans can autonomously overcome the power of Chaos. By making Athena intervene, Euripides proves at least that gods value human enterprise and assist it.

However, if we correctly identify the link between wave and sacrilege, there is no place for Chance in this finale. Moreover, it is not true that the supernatural powers pose limits to a human plan which could in principle be successful. On the contrary, it is only Athena's apparition that allows the human action to be successful *despite its sacrilegious nature*, which would normally cause its failure. It is true, as Burnett writes, that gods reward the human enterprise: however, they do so not by removing the obstacle of Chance, but by allowing a justified exception to the religious norm which condemns the sacrilegious theft.

Thus, the wave is an integral part of that succession of events through which Orestes is finally freed from the persecution of the Erinyes, as the juxtaposition with Aeschylus' *Eumenides* has shown. From the point of view of 'ritual formality', *IT* ends in the best possible way, with Athena's compensation in favour of Artemis: Apollo's oracle is fulfilled and Artemis will be honoured with an appropriate cult in Athens.

However, this is not enough for us to be able to conclude that the play has a happy ending. Besides the ritual dimension, much emphasis has been laid throughout the play on what we may call the 'human' dimension: that is, the sufferings, thoughts, and desires of the main characters. Both Iphigenia and Orestes are characterized firstly as individuals who have been forced to execute the divine will at the cost of unprecedented sufferings and grief. In the parodos, Iphigenia reminds us how she was about to be sacrificed in Aulis by her own father, who had summoned her through the trick of the false marriage

²¹ Burnett (n. 5), 65.

with Achilles (204–17). She then laments that she now lives as a stranger on the coast of a sea which is hostile to strangers, in a barren land (*νῦν δ' ἄξεινου πόντου ξείνα / δυσχόρτους οἴκουσ ναιῶ*, 218–19), deprived of weddings, children, homeland, and friends (*ἄγαμος ἄτεκνος ἄπολις ἄφιλος*, 220). Instead of worshipping Argos' goddess Hera by her chant or weaving, as a well-born Greek maiden would do, she is obliged to minister as a priestess of gruesome human sacrifices (221–8).

With regard to Orestes, from the beginning of the play he gives vent to his resentment against Apollo for prescribing him a new labour after his mother's murder (77–103). His persecution by the Erinyes, which is the consequence of matricide, causes the attack of madness which assails him before he is captured by the Taurians (in the Taurian herdsman's account, 285–300). After the recognition scene, Orestes recounts to his newly found sister the reason for his presence in the Taurian land: he was sent by Apollo, after some among the Erinyes refused to consent to his acquittal by the Areopagus court in Athens. The details of Orestes' investiture in the new mission are interesting (970–8):

ὄσαι δ' Ἐρινύων οὐκ ἐπέισθησαν νόμῳ
 δρόμοις ἀνιδρύτοισιν ἠλάστρουν μ' αἰεί,
 ἕως ἐς ἀγνὸν ἦλθον αὐτὸ Φοῖβου πέδον
 καὶ πρόσθεν ἀδύτων ἐκταθείς, νῆστις βορᾶς,
 ἐπάμοσ' αὐτοῦ βίον ἀπορρήξειν θανῶν,
 εἰ μὴ με σώσει Φοῖβος, ὅς μ' ἀπάλεσεν.
 ἐντεῦθεν αὐδὴν τρίποδος ἐκ χρυσοῦ λακῶν
 Φοῖβός μ' ἔπεμψε δεῦρο, διοπετὲς λαβεῖν
 ἄγαλμ' Ἀθηνῶν τ' ἐγκαθιδρῶσαι χθονί.

But those *Erinyes* who were not persuaded by the verdict ran after me in unrelenting, unremitting pursuit until I came in turn to Phoebus' holy ground, lay down fasting before his shrine, and swore that I would break my life's thread in that very place unless Phoebus, he who had destroyed me, should save me. Then Phoebus echoed forth his oracle from the golden tripod and sent me here to take the image of Artemis which fell from the sky, and set it up in the land of Athens.

Such is the level of Orestes' prostration that he threatens Apollo with his own death if the god does not take care of him. Orestes does not trust Apollo any more, because the solution which the god had indicated for his protégé – the trial in front of the Areopagus – was inadequate: some of the Erinyes have refused the acquittal verdict and still persecute Orestes. However, the Argive prince is helpless and has no other option than that of blackmailing the god. Orestes'

attitude toward the divine powers changes after he re-encounters and recognizes his sister, as he regains hope of a positive outcome to his changes of fortune. Thus, he asserts that Chance (τύχη) is on his side and it is now necessary to be brave, because 'when a man shows eagerness, it is fitting that the gods should help him more' (ἦν δέ τις πρόθυμος ἦ, / σθένειν τὸ θεῖον μᾶλλον εἰκότως ἔχει, 910–11).

Compared with her brother, Iphigenia is able to develop a more profound and original conception of the divine world. She expresses it in her soliloquy after the herdsman has exhorted her to prepare for the sacrifice of the two young men who have been captured near to the coast (386–91):

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν
τὰ Ταντάλου θεοῖσιν ἐστιάματα
ἄπιστα κρίνω, παιδὸς ἡσθῆναι βορᾶ,
τοὺς δ' ἐνθάδ', αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἀνθρωποκτόνους,
ἐς τὴν θεὸν τὸ φαῦλον ἀναφέρειν δοκῶ·
οὐδένα γὰρ οἶμαι δαιμόνων εἶναι κακόν.

This reasoning leads me to regard the feast which Tantalus gave to the gods as incredible – as though the gods could delight in a boy's flesh! My view is that the people here, murderers of men themselves, impute their own bad deeds to the goddess. For I think that none of the gods is evil.

Iphigenia believes in the moral perfection of the gods and therefore accuses the Taurians of using the sacrifices as a pretext for their own bloodthirstiness. This is a bold position, which rejects even the Greek mythological tradition (Tantalus' banquet). It is the result of Iphigenia's interior revolt against the cruelty of human sacrifices and her forced inclusion in them.

Both Orestes' laments against Apollo and Iphigenia's new thought on the gods convey with different tones their desire for divine justice. This focus on the subjective distinguishes *IT* from *Eumenides*. In that play, too, Orestes hoped for liberation from the Erinyes; however, his utterances did not express that grief and despair which we hear from the Euripidean characters. This lack of emphasis on the character's emotionality prepares the spectator for the end of the tragedy, which is eminently collective, religious, and political. Orestes' vicissitudes soon lose importance in favour of the foundation of the Athenian political order through the integration of the Erinyes among the gods of the city.

A different mood can be found in Euripides' *IT*. Here the insistence on the characters' thoughts and feelings prompts us to wonder whether

the finale can be considered positive from this point of view too – in other words, whether it meets the characters’ longing for divine justice and relief from suffering. On the one hand, some elements may suggest a positive answer. One of them has been indicated in the 1994 seminal article by Maria Serena Mirto: that is, the value of love between siblings. If we look back to Iphigenia’s prayer to Artemis when the wave hits the ship, we notice the repetition of the verb φιλεῖν in polyptoton: ‘You love your brother, goddess. Believe that I also love my kin’ (φιλεῖς δὲ καὶ σὺ σὸν κασίγνητον, θεά· / φιλεῖν δὲ κάμῃ τοὺς ὁμαίμονας δόκει, 1401–2). In Iphigenia’s words, familial love should unify the human and the divine world, thus prompting the goddess to rescue the human siblings. Now, as Mirto points out, Athena’s final speech indeed contains references to familial love: the goddess reminds Thoas that she is Artemis’ sister (ἀδελφῆς τῆς ἐμῆς, 1489) and thus justifies her concern for the transfer of her sister’s statue to Athens.²² She also repeatedly refers to the relationship between Orestes and Iphigenia (ἀδελφῆς, 1440; σύγγονον, 1448; καισιγνήτην, 1473). This seems to indicate that the gods share the value of familial love and affection. A positive change in the divine world can also be found in the evolution of Artemis’ cult, from human sacrifice to the civilized Attic ceremonies. One may conclude that the divine world has responded to the impulse toward ethical purity which came especially from Iphigenia: if the old Taurian rites were not compatible with her idea of the divine, the new ones will be.

However, other elements induce us to suspect that this evolution of the divine world is incomplete and cannot meet human expectations. The Attic rite itself will still imply bloodshed, even though this is just the shedding of a few drops of blood, not murder: this proves how difficult it is to convert a primitive goddess like Artemis to a purer religion. The enigma of Artemis’ position is made all the more obscure by her absence from the stage. Although she has been at the centre of everyone’s attention, the goddess does not appear; nor do Athena’s words help us to reconstruct her sister’s intentions. Athena reveals that she has persuaded Poseidon to stop the storm, but she does not utter a single word which implies a dialogue with Artemis. This marks a substantial difference with Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*: in that play, all those involved in the tripartite mechanism of sacrilege–punishment–compensation were

²² Mirto (n. 1), 93.

on stage, each one presenting his or her own view of the events. It was reassuring to see all the parties debate on stage, and to finally listen to the Erinyes singing a blessing chant for Athens (*Eum.* 916–1020). Here in *IT* we can detect the mechanism, but we do not see or hear the divine power whose hostility should be overcome by that mechanism.

Regarding Artemis' agency, it is necessary to correct Parker's statement according to which the exoneration of the goddess made by Iphigenia in her soliloquy (in the above-quoted lines 386–91) 'presents no problem', as 'nowhere in the play is it ever suggested that Artemis demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia'.²³ On the one hand, it is true that 'Agamemnon had vowed to sacrifice the most beautiful thing that the year had produced, but it was Calchas who 'awarded the prize for beauty' to Iphigenia', whereas 'it was Artemis who saved her' (*ibid.*). On the other hand, Parker neglects that, in Iphigenia's account, it was Artemis who moved her into the Taurian temple: 'she made me her priestess in this temple' (ναοῖσι δ' ἐν τοῖσδ' ἱερέαν τίθησί με, 34). This action leaves an open question on the morality of the goddess: why has she installed Iphigenia in a place where human sacrifices are performed? Does she relish in human blood?

In fact, it is important to notice that, as in the case of Iphigenia's sacrifice, Artemis' agency in Iphigenia's transfer to the Taurian land is not certain: it is Iphigenia who posits it, as Calchas has done before. Surely only a supernatural power would be able to replace Iphigenia with a deer and move her from Aulis to the Taurian land; however, we do not know how far we can trust Iphigenia when she confidently attributes these actions to Artemis. There is simply no cogent reason why we should consider her, so to say, a more reliable witness than Calchas. In both cases, the supernatural agency is surrounded by obscurity and ambiguity, and it would not be correct to try to solve this riddle, as Parker does. Instead, we must recognize that we are spectators of supernatural actions whose exact origin eludes the mortals' capacity to understand it. If it was actually Artemis who installed Iphigenia in the Taurian temple, we can surmise a precise purpose: by sparing the destined victim and making her sacrifice in her turn, the goddess will have several victims instead of one. However, it is also possible that the changes in Iphigenia's life were

²³ L. P. E. Parker (ed.), *Euripides. Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford, 2016), 140.

determined by a general supernatural force, regardless of Artemis' consent.

The absence of Artemis' voice is so discomfoting that in a modern adaptation of *IT*, namely Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), the goddess is made to appear instead of Athena, and reproach the Taurians for sullyng her cult with human sacrifices (*Vous avez trop longtemps, dans ces climats sauvages, / Déshonoré mes lois et mes autels*). The author of the libretto, Nicolas François Guillard, makes Artemis implicitly confirm that the Euripidean Iphigenia was right when she argued that no god can be evil; thus he reassures his eighteenth-century audience, who can still believe in the Enlightenment concept of a pure divinity. All moral bias is shifted onto the superstitious practices of barbaric people, who are still not illuminated by the light of rational religion. In Euripides, Iphigenia yearns for a confirmation from the goddess whom she serves; however, she is disappointed and Artemis remains silent.

In addition to Artemis' silence, another puzzling aspect of this final scene is Iphigenia's future life after coming back to Greece. In this regard, Emanuela Masaracchia has pointed out that Iphigenia's future office of priestess in Attica contrasts with the desire which she has repeatedly expressed in the course of the play (see, for instance, the above-quoted line 220): that is, to come back to Argos and live the normal life of an aristocratic princess, consisting of weddings and children. Therefore, Masaracchia concludes:

Dietro la conclusione gratificante per i meno avveduti si nasconde una concatenazione di elementi che porta alla conclusione che i 'prediletti' della divinità sono in realtà sue vittime; che, come le sofferenze di Oreste sono nate dall'obbedienza all'oracolo del dio, così Ifigenia, entrata nella sfera di Artemide con il sacrificio di Aulide, non ne può uscire di sua volontà se gli dei non lo vogliono.²⁴

Behind the gratifying conclusion for the less alert spectators, there is a chain of events that leads to the conclusion that the 'protégés' of the goddess are in fact her victims. As Orestes' sufferings originated from the obedience to the god's oracle, so Iphigenia, after entering Artemis' sphere through the Aulis sacrifice, cannot exit it voluntarily if the gods do not wish it.

We can add that Iphigenia's final destination also contrasts with Athena's words at the beginning of her speech, where the goddess

²⁴ E. Masaracchia, 'Ifigenia Taurica: un dramma a lieto fine?', *QUCC* 47.3 (1984), 122. The translation is my own.

said that Orestes had come to Tauris in order to bring his sister back to Argos (1440). Kyriakou tries to explain this contradiction by surmising that Athena's first statement 'may reflect the point of view of the Greek characters who still think that Iphigenia will return to Argos'.²⁵ Alternatively, 'it cannot be entirely excluded that Apollo wanted Orestes to take Iphigenia back to Argos and that Athena reports here the god's original plan'. It is impossible to choose between the alternative explanations; what matters is that this contradiction further proves the opacity of the supernatural plans and their remoteness from the mortals' desires.²⁶

In this respect, it is useful to further compare the three stories in which we have detected the same mechanism of sacrilege–punishment–compensation: *Eumenides*, *Aulis*, and *IT*. As a premise to *IT*, Euripides makes the compensatory moment of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* ineffective, in that some Erinyes do not consent to the transformation in *Eumenides* and continue to persecute Orestes. In order to rescue his suppliant, Apollo orders him to perform an action which endangers Artemis' prerogatives, as it may lead to the loss of her Taurian cults *and of her priestess*. We can now understand that the wave was originated not only by the theft of the statue but also by Iphigenia's attempt to escape her duties. In the end, Artemis must be compensated for the Taurian rites, and indeed we learn that she will receive new rites in Attica. However, this compensation would hardly be sufficient if the goddess lost her priestess. In the previous parts of the saga, the compensation was also a potentiation of the deity's prerogatives. By keeping Iphigenia, Artemis obtains this result in *IT* too: she will both keep her priestess and receive better cults in Attica than she had among the Taurians.

It is interesting to notice that in this tragedy we do not know how the main characters will react to Athena's orders, since they are no longer on stage while Athena is speaking. In *Electra*, Euripides chooses instead to have Orestes and Electra on stage, hearing the words of the Dioscuroi. As in *IT*, in *Electra* too the two siblings will be separated.

²⁵ P. Kyriakou, *A Commentary on Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris* (Berlin and New York, 2006), 453.

²⁶ Mary Lefkowitz (in *Euripides and the Gods* [Oxford, 2016], 92) regards Iphigenia's future position as priestess in Brauron as a substantial improvement of her condition, since 'she will be honoured by the Athenians after her death, and thus no longer be isolated'. It is true that being freed from the Taurian human sacrifices is a relief for the heroine; however, Lefkowitz overlooks the fact that this interruption of Iphigenia's isolation is not of the kind she had wished for herself.

However, while this is clearly stated in *Electra*, in *IT* we must surmise it from the fact that Iphigenia will become a priestess in Brauron, where Orestes is surely not going to settle. In *Electra*, the separation causes the siblings' lamentation (*El.* 1308–41) while saying their last farewell to each other. We may wonder how we should interpret the absence of a similar scene in *IT*: is it the proof that this tragedy has a more positive ending than *Electra*? Or is it instead a way to increase the ambiguity on the actual positivity of this finale? As I have said, the human characters are already off stage, as their ship is sailing toward Greece: therefore, it would be technically difficult to bring them back to the stage in order to learn what their reactions might be. However, the silence of the main characters allows an explanation beyond mere dramaturgical feasibility. Indeed, we can regard this absence as the choice of avoiding having the main witnesses of the biases in the divine action on stage, as the absence of Apollo and Artemis also deprives the finale of the accused. In the end, we only see Thoas: rather than the king of the Taurians, he now represents the general human being, who bends to the supernatural powers, acknowledging that 'it is a perverse man who hears the words of the gods and disobeys them' (τοῖσι τῶν θεῶν λόγοις / ὅστις κλύων ἄπιστος, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖ, 1475–6). The specific story of the Atreidae family loses importance as we learn the general fate of the human race.

However, one has the impression that this final pronouncement on the hierarchies which rule the world does away with the troubled story of Orestes and Iphigenia instead of inserting it in the frame of a satisfying theodicy. Artemis' silence proves that the behaviour of the gods is obscure, whereas the failure of Apollo's first attempt to save Orestes through the Areopagus process casts doubt on the effectiveness of divine actions. Moreover, the two siblings receive but a meagre indemnity for the enormous amount of suffering which they have been forced to endure. Not only (as I have already pointed out) will Iphigenia not come back to her hometown and the two siblings will be separated, but it is also not clear whether Orestes will be able to retrieve his paternal kingdom and his properties in Argos. We know that Menelaos is currently ruling the city (929), and Athena does not say whether Orestes will replace him; she concentrates solely on the foundation of the Alae temple in Attica.²⁷ Athena is concerned about

²⁷ On this point too, *Electra* is more explicit, as Castor forbids Orestes to come back to Argos (1250–1) and assigns him a new city in Arcadia (1273–5), whereas his sister, Electra, will become

the compensation of her sister Artemis; the compensation of the two human siblings appears to have little relevance. From this point of view, we may cast doubt on the actual sense of solidarity of the divine family towards the human siblings: the gods are primarily focused on their own interests, and leave what remains to mortals.

By disregarding Orestes' kingship and property, *IT* contrasts with Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where Orestes thanks Athena for allowing him to retake possession of his house and paternal goods (754–61). In exchange, he swears that no ruler of Argos will ever wage war against Athens, or otherwise they will be cursed and damaged by Orestes himself from his heroic tomb (762–77). It is true that the story of Orestes is concluded shortly after his acquittal, as he rapidly leaves the stage, because the poet's attention is focused on the creation of the Athenian political order through the inclusion of the former Erinyes. Nevertheless, the hero is fully satisfied in his dynastic claims and there is no contradiction between his wishes and the collective goals. In contrast, in *IT* the exclusive concern for the religious rites overshadows any personal desires or rights which the mortals may have.

From this point of view, *IT* appears to be very different from another Euripidean tragedy, *Ion*, in the finale of which the title character learns that he will rule over Attica: a fate which, being a humble temple servant, he had never dared to desire. However, a closer consideration shows that the two tragedies have many similarities with respect to divine agency in the human world. An important analogy lies in the fact that, as in *IT*, in *Ion* the god who is most involved in the play's plot, namely Apollo, does not show up on stage in the end; in his place the goddess Athena once again takes upon herself the task of instructing the mortals on their duties and their fate. But, unlike in *IT*, in *Ion* Athena explains the reason of Apollo's absence, saying that the god has sent her because he feared that 'reproof about past action be brought forth' (μη τῶν παροισθε μέμψις ἐς μέσον μόλη, *Ion* 1558). Despite some scholars' perplexity, it is hard to see how Athena could not be referring to Apollo here, saying that he would be reproached by the mortal characters if he dared appear to them.²⁸ Indeed, the

Pylades' wife in Phocis (1249–50). Therefore, in the end the two siblings lament their separation not only from each other but also from their motherland (1308–41).

²⁸ See G. Martin (ed.), *Euripides. Ion* (Berlin and Boston, MA, 2018), 530–1, for the discussion on the translation of this line.

absent Apollo has already been blamed in the play by both Ion and Creusa (436–51, 881–922).

One may wonder why in *Ion* Euripides chooses to make Athena expose how divine actions can be controversial and cause mortals' reproach, whereas she glosses over this aspect in the finale of *IT*. A possible answer lies in the partly different focus of the two plays. On the one hand, *IT* reveals the obscurity and ambiguity of the divine world, which is split between the inhuman cult of the Taurians and a new possible model of religion; since Artemis embodies this contradiction, it makes sense that no clarification is made of her behaviour. The same may be said about Apollo's behaviour towards Orestes. On the other hand, *Ion* places more emphasis on the shortcomings and fallibility of Apollo's plans, which are put forth by his refusal to appear. It is again Athena who points out that Apollo's initial project has failed: he planned to reveal to Ion that Creusa was his mother after he came back to Athens, but Creusa's plan to kill Ion has invalidated the god's design (1563–5).

This difference in focus should not prevent us from understanding that the two plays come to analogous conclusions on the interaction between humans and gods. In both, the final act is a late and insufficient compensation after several years of suffering and deprivation of family affection. As Mary Lefkowitz puts it, 'such last-minute shifts of fortune, although they serve as brilliant demonstrations of divine power, are not in any way designed to spare the feelings of the mortals in whose lives a god has intervened'.²⁹ Ion's complaint that, in his childhood, he was deprived of his mother's nurture, and she was deprived of her child (1374–9), reminds us of Iphigenia's complaint about being without a homeland or a family.

Moreover, in both tragedies the future destiny of the human characters will be less positive than a superficial reading may suggest. We have seen that Iphigenia's future condition contradicts her wishes; this may also be true in the case of Orestes. In *Ion*, it is necessary not to reveal to Xuthus that Ion is Apollo's son, not his own, in order to avoid Ion's condition as an illegitimate child preventing him from becoming king of Athens. More importantly in the gods' perspective, thanks to this deceit, Apollo's misbehaviour in raping Creusa will remain concealed.

²⁹ Lefkowitz (n. 25), 104.

In sum, in both tragedies – as well as in the entire theatre of Euripides – what comes to the fore is the incompatibility between the gods' and humans' perspective on events and their significance.³⁰ The gods pursue their plans, with little regard to the consequences that these may have on mortals' feelings. However, in *IT* we are made aware that the gods are neither the only actors nor the most powerful ones in the supernatural world. When, at the end of Athena's speech, Thoas declares that he will obey the goddess and let the Greeks sail away, Athena replies that he is wise, because Necessity (τὸ χρεῶν) rules humans and gods alike (1475–6, 1486):

Θο. ἄνασσ' Ἀθάννα, τοῖσι τῶν θεῶν λόγοις
ὅστις κλύων ἄπιστος, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖ.

...

Αθ. αἰνῶ· τὸ γὰρ χρεῶν σοῦ τε καὶ θεῶν κρατεῖ.

THOAS. Athena, queen, it is a perverse man who hears the words of the gods and disobeys them.

...

ATHENA. It is well. Necessity is too strong for the gods, too strong for you.

In conclusion, the chain of events included between Orestes' investiture in the Taurian mission and its accomplishment in Attica are dictated by Necessity; likewise, the wave cannot be considered as an element of Chance.³¹ While the human characters express their needs and desires, Athena's emphasis on Necessity makes clear that the world in which they are inserted leaves little space for them: they are but the last link in the chain. Instead, this world is primarily centred on the improvement of the divine cult, as the final focus on the Attic ceremonies in honour of Artemis demonstrates. Humans are at the service of this purpose and must resign themselves to the trouble and upset which this causes in their lives. From this point of view, the

³⁰ H. Strohm, 'Epikritisches zur Erklärung von Euripides' *Ion*', *WS* 10 (1976), 68–79, reflects on the different conception of time in the humans' view and in the gods' view: whereas for the gods only the final outcome matters, and the in-between time has no importance, that same time means suffering and despair for the humans.

³¹ The best explanation of the role of *Tyche* in this tragedy is provided by M. J. Cropp (ed.), *Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris* (Warminster, 2000), 37. He points out that '*Tuchê* is not here a self-willed and capricious deity, but rather the aspect of unexpectedness in a more complex pattern of events, including divine forces, which humans must handle with flexibility and initiative. . . In other words, what happens to us is so variable and unpredictable that we can never know what to expect next, nor why what happens happens – not because there are no gods' designs and no pattern, but because the designs and the pattern are obscure and complicated.'

question whether the gods are good, as Iphigenia asserted in her soliloquy, loses importance: it is not their morality but the course of an inscrutable Fate that determines what humans are allowed to have or do. Thus, the desires of both Orestes and Iphigenia can only be fulfilled inasmuch as they are compatible with the plans of Fate. In this respect, we may say that an invincible supernatural 'wave' prevents the mortals from living in conformity with their hopes and will.

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