

Iphigeneia Changes Her Mind

DAVID SANSONE

Already in antiquity readers of Euripides' *IA* found Iphigeneia's change of mind problematic.¹ Notoriously, Aristotle (*Poet.* 1454a26–33) cited Euripides' heroine as the example of a tragic character who displays the defect of inconsistency. And since that time readers have debated Aristotle's judgment, some agreeing with the philosopher that Iphigeneia is indeed inconsistently portrayed,² others seeking to show in various ways that Iphigeneia's change of mind is properly motivated in dramatic terms. Gudrun Mellert-Hoffmann, for example, in a detailed study tried to show that the Panhellenic ideal that is voiced by Agamemnon and echoed by his daughter is not a pretense, as Funke had argued, but a motif that runs through the play and provides the genuine motivation for Iphigeneia's decision.³ According to Bernard Knox, the audience is well prepared for Iphigeneia's change of mind, inasmuch as "it comes as the climax of a series of swift and sudden changes of decision which is unparalleled in ancient drama."⁴ Wesley Smith, on the other hand, considers that Iphigeneia's decision is motivated by the fact that she has fallen in love with Achilles.⁵ Erotic motivation of a different sort is perceived by the psychoanalyst André Green, who speaks of "the female masochistic movement of turning aggressive and erotic drives back upon the subject," and of "the desire for the father's penis" as being

¹ I should like to record here my gratitude to John C. Gibert and Walter Stockert, both of whom read an earlier version of this paper and supplied valuable criticisms and suggestions. In addition, Dr. Gibert kindly provided me with a copy of his splendid dissertation, *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy* (Harvard 1991) and Dr. Stockert with portions of his forthcoming commentary on *IA*.

² See in particular H. Funke, "Aristoteles zu Euripides' Iphigeneia in Aulis," *Hermes* 92 (1964) 284–99.

³ *Untersuchungen zur "Iphigenie in Aulis" des Euripides* (Heidelberg 1969) 9–90.

⁴ "Second Thoughts in Greek Tragedy," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 229 (= *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater* [Baltimore 1979] 243–44). See also J. Griffin, "Characterization in Euripides: *Hippolytus* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis*," in C. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford 1990) 128–49, esp. 148.

⁵ "Iphigenia in Love," in *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to B. M. W. Knox* (Berlin 1979) 173–80; cf. also V. Castellani, "Warlords and Women in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*," in *Drama, Sex and Politics*, *Themes in Drama* 7 (Cambridge 1985) 1–10. Erotic motivation had already been stressed by W. E. J. Kuiper, "Aristoteles en Euripides' Aulische Iphigenia," *Hermeneus* 3 (1931) 3–6.

“realized through a renunciation demanded by the ego-ideal.”⁶ More recently, and more sensibly, Helene Foley has seen in the outcome of the play a resolution in ritual terms, namely in terms of the convergence of the themes of marriage and sacrifice.⁷

While I have profited greatly from these and a number of other suggestive studies,⁸ I should like to concentrate here on an aspect of Iphigeneia’s decision that has until now received insufficient attention. The novelty of this last play of Euripides consists not only in the *frequency* with which characters change their mind,⁹ but also in the nature of the mechanism that brings the change about. For unlike Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, for example, who is persuaded to trample precious fabric, and unlike Euripides’ own Creon, who is persuaded to allow Medea to remain in Corinth for one more day, no one persuades Iphigeneia to become a sacrificial victim. (On the contrary, Iphigeneia and her mother are advised by Achilles to employ persuasion against Agamemnon, who remains adamant in his conviction that his daughter must be sacrificed.) Rather, Iphigeneia’s change of mind, the suddenness of which is underlined by the *antilabe*,¹⁰ occurs just as Achilles and Clytaemestra are discussing their plans to resist the forcible sacrifice of Iphigeneia. Let us, then, once again examine this problematic scene, this time concentrating on the *kind* of motivation that Euripides represents as causing Iphigeneia’s change of mind.

In the previous scene, first Clytaemestra (1146–1208) and then Iphigeneia (1211–52) had pleaded with Agamemnon to spare his daughter’s life. The concluding lines (1250–52) of Iphigeneia’s speech leave no doubt in Agamemnon’s—or the audience’s—mind about the young girl’s attitude at this point in the action:

τὸ φῶς τὸδ’ ἀνθρώποισιν ἥδιστον βλέπειν,
τὰ νέρθε δ’ οὐδέν· μαίνεται δ’ ὃς εὔχεται
θανεῖν. κακῶς ζῆν κρεῖσσον ἢ καλῶς θανεῖν.

⁶ *The Tragic Effect: The Oedipus Complex in Tragedy* (Engl. tr., Cambridge 1979) 179.

⁷ *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca 1985) 65–105; cf. A. Borghini, “Consacrazione alla morte e ritualità matrimoniale,” *SCO* 36 (1986) 113–16.

⁸ In particular, B. Snell, “Euripides’ aulische Iphigenie,” in *Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama*, Philol. Suppl. 20.1 (Berlin 1928) 148–60; H. Siegel, “Self-Delusion and the Volte-Face of Iphigenia in Euripides’ ‘Iphigenia at Aulis,’” *Hermes* 108 (1980) 300–21.

⁹ See the important article by Knox (above, note 4) 213–32 (= 231–49).

¹⁰ It is rare in tragedy for a speech of more than twelve lines to begin in mid-line, the only instances being *Hipp.* 1325, *Suppl.* 513, *Phoen.* 985, *IA* 414, 1368 and *Soph. Phil.* 54. This instance is unique in being the only such speech in tetrameters and the only one in which the speaker interrupts two other characters engaged in *antilabe*. This phenomenon is inadequately treated in W. Köhler, *Die Versbrechung bei den griechischen Tragikern* (Darmstadt 1913).

She wishes to stay alive at any cost. But Agamemnon remains unmoved.¹¹ Saying that he is powerless to resist the compulsion of Calchas and the entire Greek army (1255–75) Agamemnon leaves the stage, not to return. Iphigeneia sings an emotional lyric monody (1283–1335) in which she laments that she has been abandoned by her father¹² and wishes that the Judgment of Paris had never taken place. She recognizes that all hope is lost now that her father refuses to help, and she sees that her death is inevitable (1281–82, 1308–09, 1317). But there is nothing in the text of her monody to suggest that her attitude toward life and toward the sacrifice has changed. It is an “unholy” sacrifice sought by an “unholy” father (1318). By the end of her song Iphigeneia is an object of pity to both the chorus (1336–37) and the audience.

At this point the meter changes to trochaic tetrameters as Iphigeneia sees Achilles and his attendants rushing onto the scene. Out of shame and a sense of modesty Iphigeneia wishes to retire within. We are reminded of Achilles’ own uneasiness, in an earlier scene, at conversing with Clytaemestra (compare αἰδώς 821 and αἰδῶ 1342, αἰσχρὸν 830 and αἰσχύνομαι 1341). But Clytaemestra urges her daughter to remain (μίμν’ 1344, τί . . . φεύγεις; 1341), as she had earlier urged Achilles (compare μείνον· τί φεύγεις; 831). The purpose of these echoes is to enhance the point, made in the following lines, that Achilles and Iphigeneia are now in similar positions. For, as Achilles tells Clytaemestra, the entire Greek army is now demanding that he too be killed. But there is one crucial difference between the situation of Achilles and that of Iphigeneia. For, whereas the latter’s death is not contingent upon anything she has done or will do, the former is being pursued with murderous intent by the Greek army because of an action he has freely chosen to take. This is emphasized for the benefit of the audience in the conversation (1354–65) between Achilles and Clytaemestra. He is in trouble now because he spoke up against the proposed sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and he will continue to oppose the sacrifice even if it means a single-handed fight against the rest of the army. It is clear that he can avoid certain death at the hands of his fellow-soldiers simply by acceding to their demand that Iphigeneia be sacrificed. But Achilles would not be Achilles if he agreed to change his mind for no reason other than for the purpose of saving his life. Now, it is true that some readers of this play have found Achilles to be a distasteful *miles gloriosus*,¹³ but they are unable to sub-

¹¹ There is, of course, great and deliberate irony involved in the fact that Agamemnon, whose irresoluteness has been emphasized throughout the play, steadfastly refuses to change his mind in the face of the entreaties of Clytaemestra and Iphigeneia.

¹² 1314 προδοῦς; cf. 1278 παραδοῦς (spoken by Clytaemestra). For Iphigeneia’s monody, see T. C. W. Stinton, *Euripides and the Judgement of Paris*, Soc. for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, Suppl. Paper 11 (London 1965) 29–34.

¹³ Pyrgopolynices is explicitly compared to Achilles (Plaut. *Mil.* 61, 1054) and, within the context of that comparison, *Mil.* 58 (*amant ted omnes mulieres*; cf. 1040) perhaps recalls *IA* 959–60, but this has no implications for the character of Achilles either

stantiate their views without introducing subjective arguments that have no basis in the text. Philip Vellacott, for instance, who calls the Achilles of this play "uncouth, tasteless, rude, and above all totally self-centered," is convinced that Achilles has no intention of fulfilling his promise to protect Iphigeneia.¹⁴ But we cannot speak of the unexpressed intentions of literary characters without incurring the risk of perpetrating the "documentary fallacy."¹⁵ When Achilles says that he is prepared to risk his life to protect Iphigeneia, we are, I think, obliged to believe him.¹⁶ Nor are we justified in condemning Achilles' action as "ludicrous," as George E. Dimock, Jr. does,¹⁷ on the grounds that he cannot possibly succeed in saving Iphigeneia's life. Inasmuch as the other characters in the play take Achilles seriously, we are, I think, obliged to take him seriously as well.

In particular, Clytaemestra, in the scene under discussion, takes Achilles seriously enough to praise his action (1359) and to ask his advice (1366). It is, indeed, at this point that Iphigeneia interrupts the conversation between her mother and Achilles with the speech in which she announces her change of mind. It is a stunning *coup de théâtre*. The girl who had earlier asserted her resolve to live at any cost now (1375) consents to die. The audience waits with bated breath to hear Iphigeneia's reasons for her change of mind. But what the audience hears, and what has frustrated critics from the time of Aristotle, is a speech that contains a series of points, virtually all of which could equally well have been made by Iphigeneia fifty lines earlier. She says, in England's translation, "It is hard to bear up against impossible odds" (1370); but that was just as true before she changed her mind as after. She claims (1378-84) that all of Greece depends upon her for success in its mission to punish Troy and to free itself from the threat of abuse at the hands of the barbarians; but, when these same sentiments were earlier expressed by her father (1271-75), she condemned him for his betrayal of her and for his impious behavior (1312-18). She observes (1395-97) that it is the will of Artemis that she be sacrificed, and that it is impossible for her, a mortal, to oppose the will of the goddess; but the relentlessness of the divine machinery seems to be acknowledged already in her monody, in which she refers to the sacrifice as "unholy." Finally, she concludes her speech (1400-01) by insisting that it is contrary to reason that the Greeks should be enslaved by barbarians, when the Greeks are by nature free and the barbarians by nature slaves. This is, of course, merely a

in Euripides or in Homer. In any case, the Euripidean Achilles at *IA* 959-60 says essentially what his Homeric counterpart had said at *Il.* 9. 395-97.

¹⁴ *Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning* (Cambridge 1975) 43-45.

¹⁵ See A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) 11-24.

¹⁶ Again (see above, note 13), the model is the Homeric Achilles who, in the first book of the *Iliad*, is prepared to risk his life to protect the seer Calchas; compare *IA* 1361 ἐμοῦ γε ζῶντος with *Il.* 1. 88 ἐμεῦ ζῶντος.

¹⁷ In his and W. S. Merwin's translation of the play (New York 1978) 15-16.

more pointed version of what Agamemnon had said in the conclusion (1273–75) to his own speech.

But there is one element in Iphigeneia's speech that is new, and we will not be surprised if it turns out to be the most valuable clue to the understanding of Iphigeneia's motivation. She says (1385–91) that she and her mother ought not to seek to save her life when there are thousands of young men who are willing to die for Greece and whose death will be in vain unless she, too, is willing to die. This is not the same point that her father had made, when he emphasized the helplessness of one person standing in opposition to the wishes of all Greece (1259–72). Rather, Iphigeneia implies, it would be unreasonably selfish, under the circumstances, for one person to consider his own life of more value than the lives of all the rest.¹⁸ Where has this element come from? The following lines make it clear. Iphigeneia points to Achilles and continues, saying that this man should not have to fight against all the Greeks and die for her sake. We cannot help but be reminded that the only thing that has happened on stage that can have caused Iphigeneia to change her mind is the dialogue between Achilles and Clytaemestra, in which Achilles offered to fight the entire Greek army in order to protect Iphigeneia. In other words, what has happened is that one character on stage is represented as having an emotional reaction to an action on stage involving another character. Iphigeneia, witnessing the willingness of Achilles (who is in a situation similar to her own) to die for her sake, is emotionally transformed.

Before we examine the implications of this emotional transformation, let us briefly consider a question that has divided scholars in recent years, namely the question of how the audience is expected to react to Iphigeneia's decision. There are those who are convinced that Euripides has portrayed Iphigeneia's willingness to be sacrificed in an "ironic" light and that the audience is expected to view Iphigeneia as a pathetic creature who is deluded by the deplorable mass-hysteria that is afflicting the army in general.¹⁹ It is difficult to argue against the view that Euripides' "meaning" is the opposite of what is in the text. Perhaps the best argument is merely to restate what is in the text. Immediately after her speech Iphigeneia is praised in extravagant terms by the chorus, who elsewhere have the task of pointing out to the audience the delusions of the characters on stage,²⁰ and by Achilles, whose name is synonymous in Greek tragedy with nobility.²¹

¹⁸ Similar sentiments are expressed in the fragments of Euripides' *Erechtheus*. With *IA* 1386 compare *NFE* 50. 38 Austin; with *IA* 1390 compare *NFE* 50. 34–35.

¹⁹ See Vellacott (above, note 14) 174–77, 203–04, Dimock (above, note 17) 11–12, 16 and especially Siegel (above, note 8).

²⁰ *Med.* 811 ff., *Hipp.* 891 f.; *Aesch. Sept.* 677 ff., 686 ff., *Ag.* 1407 ff., 1426 ff.

²¹ Even E. M. Blaiklock (*The Male Characters of Euripides* [Wellington 1952] 117–18) recognizes that Euripides would have had absolutely no precedent for depicting Achilles as the "spoilt and braggart boy" that Blaiklock sees in this play. There is greater support in the text for C. E. Hajistephanou's view (*The Use of ΦΥΣΙΣ and its Cognates in Greek*

The chorus (1403–04) speak of Iphigeneia's nobility of character, contrasting it with the "sickness" of the fate imposed on her by the goddess. Achilles also praises her nobility (γενναία γὰρ εἶ 1412), and indicates that he considers her worthy to be his wife. The only irony that we are justified in seeing here proceeds from the fact that the Homeric Achilles had said (*Il.* 9. 388) that he would under no circumstances marry a daughter of Agamemnon. But the irony consists in Euripides' portrayal of a couple whose character ideally suits them to one another,²² but whose very character makes it impossible for them to be united: Iphigeneia's nobility constrains her to give up her life before she can be married, just as Achilles' nobility provokes his quarrel in the *Iliad* with Iphigeneia's father. Achilles continues to sing the praises of Iphigeneia's character, referring again to her nobility in 1422–23 (γενναία γὰρ / φρονεῖς) and, most notably, reacting to Iphigeneia's repeated assertion that he must not die for her sake by saying ὦ λῆμ' ἄριστον (1421). Now, the significance of this expression is that it is a quotation from Euripides' earlier Iphigeneia-play. At *IT* 609 Iphigeneia had reacted to the Greek stranger's willingness to die in his friend's stead by exclaiming, ὦ λῆμ' ἄριστον, after which she had gone on to praise the nobility of the young man (who would later turn out to be her brother Orestes). If, then, Euripides is indulging in "irony" in *IA*, that is to say, if he is presenting Achilles' praise of Iphigeneia as something that is to be held up to ridicule, then he is also indulging in self-parody, for which no possible explanation can be imagined.

It will be seen, then, that my view of Iphigeneia's decision is that it is something that Euripides intends his audience genuinely to admire. And, I think, this view finds support in Euripides' portrayal of self-sacrifice, a subject that has recently been admirably treated by E. A. M. O'Connor-Visser.²³ The reader is referred to O'Connor-Visser's account for details of

Tragedy [Nicosia 1975] 99–102) that the presentation of Achilles' character has much in common with that of Theonoe's in *Helen*. We should keep in mind that Euripides' model for the Achilles of *IA* was the Achilles of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*, whose nobility cannot be doubted (B. Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964] 1–22). Specifically, Euripides derived from Aeschylus the motif of stoning (compare *IA* 1350 with Aesch. fr. 132c. 1–2 Radt), as was first noticed by E. Loewy, *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles* 2 (1934) 973 n. 2. Note also that the Aeschylean Achilles, like the Homeric, does not hesitate to praise his own character (fr. 132c. 13–14 Radt), so that we cannot read lines like *IA* 926–27 as evidence of the Euripidean Achilles' baseness.

²² Note 930 ἐλευθέραν φύσιν (of Ach.) and 994 ὄμ' . . . ἐλεύθερον (of Iph.); 1063 Θεσσαλία μέγα φῶς (of Ach.) and 1502 Ἑλλάδι με φάος (of Iph.).

²³ *Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides* (Amsterdam 1987). Cf. also J. Schmitt, *Freiwilliger Opfertod bei Euripides*, *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 17.2 (Giessen 1921), J. Wilkins, "The State and the Individual: Euripides' Plays of Voluntary Self-Sacrifice," in A. Powell (ed.), *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (London 1990) 177–94.

the numerous similarities between the treatment of Iphigeneia here and the treatment of Macaria in *Heraclidae*, of Polyxena in *Hecuba*, of Menoeceus in *Phoenissae* and of Praxithea's daughter in *Erechtheus*. These similarities require us to assume, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, that the dramatic function of the sacrifice is the same in all these tragedies, which span a period of approximately a quarter of a century. In the *Hecuba*, for instance, the virtue of Polyxena and the purity of her act present a stark contrast to the sordid circumstances that surround her.²⁴ Likewise, in *Phoenissae*, Menoeceus is the embodiment of the courage and selflessness that are conspicuously lacking in Eteocles and Creon.²⁵ Just so, the nobility and resoluteness of Iphigeneia are presented in a way that allows for the strongest possible contrast with the characters of Agamemnon and Menelaus. The effect on the audience of these various sacrificial victims is a combination of admiration for their nobility and pity at their plight.²⁶

This view of Iphigeneia's willingness to be sacrificed is, I think, supported by what we have noticed above concerning the dramatic circumstances of her change of mind. But, at the same time, what we see in *IA* represents an interesting and important innovation. We may speculate that this innovation arose from Euripides' long experience of composing tragedies that included the theme of human sacrifice and from his continuing concern with what we might be inclined to call the "theory of drama." Throughout his career, Euripides produced dramas that were designed to create striking intellectual and emotional effects in their audience. Among those effects, provoked particularly but not exclusively by those plays that contained scenes of human sacrifice, is the transformation of the audience by the arousal of feelings of pity and admiration. Euripides was undoubtedly as fully aware as Aristotle that pity is one of the prime emotions which tragedy aims to arouse, and that pity can best be aroused by admirable characters, that is, by characters who are morally upright and who are, at the same time, enough like us that we are able to relate to them.²⁷ We might almost say that this scene in *IA* represents a working-out in dramatic terms of problems regarding the relationship between drama and its audience that had preoccupied Euripides for decades and were to concern Aristotle as well in the following century. Iphigeneia's response is dictated by two circumstances: the pity that is aroused in her by witnessing Achilles' situation and the fact that she is herself in a similar situation. As far as the first of these circumstances is

²⁴ O'Connor-Visser (previous note) 67. Cf. D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama* (Toronto 1967) 165.

²⁵ O'Connor-Visser (above, note 23) 183, C. Mueller-Goldingen, *Untersuchungen zu den Phönissen des Euripides*, Palingenesia 22 (Stuttgart 1985) 161.

²⁶ P. Decharme, *Euripides and the Spirit of his Dramas* (Engl. tr., New York 1906) 203-11, O'Connor-Visser (above, note 23) 43.

²⁷ I have formulated these last remarks in such a way as to show that, while Decharme (previous note) 204 is correct to say that Aristotle in the *Poetics* does not mention it, admiration for the tragic character is implicit in Aristotle's discussion.

concerned, it is perhaps true that we might not use the English word "pity" to describe Iphigeneia's feelings toward Achilles at this point, but Euripides' contemporaries would surely have used the Greek word ἔλεος—the word used in Aristotle's famous definition of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b27)—in this case. Indeed, Iphigeneia's situation seems almost designed to illustrate Aristotle's definition of that term: ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ . . . τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν, ὃ κἂν αὐτὸς προσδοκῆσειεν ἂν παθεῖν (*Rhet.* 1385b13–15, with the following discussion). As far as the second of these circumstances is concerned, we have seen above that Euripides emphasizes the similarities between the situations of Iphigeneia and Achilles. But not only are their situations similar; Euripides has given these two characters other similarities as well. Both are young, both are of noble birth and upright character; indeed, as is emphasized throughout the play, they would be ideally suited as partners in marriage. The reason Euripides has depicted Iphigeneia and Achilles in such similar terms is surely to make the strength of this feeling of pity as intelligible as possible. For, as Aristotle was to recognize, closeness in age, character and station encourages the feeling of pity.²⁸ And, just as the tragic poet must be careful to delineate his characters in such a way that he best arouses feelings of pity in his audience, so Euripides has here matched his characters in such a way that he most convincingly arouses in one feelings of pity for the other.

What Euripides has done here, in projecting onto Iphigeneia the emotional response that is proper to the audience, is novel, but not entirely unprecedented. In fact, there is an anticipation of this device earlier in this play. In the first episode there is a remarkable scene between Agamemnon and Menelaus that has certain affinities with the scene we have been considering. Circumstances appear to have made it inevitable that Iphigeneia is to be sacrificed, and Agamemnon laments the situation in terms similar to those used later by Iphigeneia herself in her monody.²⁹ Surprisingly, the effect that this speech has on Menelaus is to cause him to change his mind. Menelaus had previously reproached Agamemnon for his weakness of character but now, seeing his brother's tears (477–78) and witnessing his distress first-hand (489–90), he pities (ᾄκτιρα 478, ἔλεος 491) both him and Iphigeneia. The reaction of the chorus to Menelaus' change of mind is the same as that to Iphigeneia's: They praise his nobility of character (γενναῖ' ἔλεξας 504) just as they praise hers (τὸ μὲν σόν, ᾧ νεᾶνι, γενναίως ἔχει 1403). We may see Menelaus' change of mind as, in a sense, prepara-

²⁸ *Rhet.* 1386a24–25 τοὺς ὁμοίους ἐλεοῦσι κατὰ ἡλικίας, κατὰ ἥθη, κατὰ ἔξεις, κατὰ ἀξιώματα, κατὰ γένη.

²⁹ Both Agamemnon (467–68) and Iphigeneia (1284 ff.) blame Helen and Paris for causing their woes. Agamemnon (463) envisions Iphigeneia calling him her murderer, and she later does just that (1318). At the conclusion of Agamemnon's speech the two-line comment of the chorus (469–70) begins κἀγὼ κατ᾽ ἄκτιρ'; after Iphigeneia's monody the chorus' two-line comment (1336–37) begins ἐγὼ μὲν οἰκτῶ σε.

tion for that of Iphigeneia.³⁰ But hers is more to be admired than his for two reasons. In the first place, while Menelaus' pity is aroused primarily by his brother's tears and laments, Iphigeneia's is aroused more by what Aristotle might call "the structure of the situation itself."³¹ In the second place, the feelings that Menelaus has for Agamemnon and Iphigeneia are readily understood as arising from the fact that they are close relatives,³² whereas she had never so much as met Achilles before this scene began.

There is, as far as I am aware, only one other scene in surviving Greek tragedy that is comparable to what we find in *IA*.³³ It is in *Prometheus Bound*, a play written by a dramatist no less concerned than Euripides about the workings of pity as it affects both characters and audience.³⁴ As we noted just above, the play begins with a scene in which Hephaestus expresses his feelings of pity for his kinsman Prometheus. And, as the play continues, first the chorus, then Ocean and Io come on stage and repeat the sentiments that Hephaestus had expressed and the audience shares. But the most striking expression of sympathy for the Titan comes at the very end of the play. For the daughters of Ocean not only express their pity verbally; they act on their feelings. And that act takes the form of a remarkable change of mind. In the final trimeters of the play, before the meter changes to anapaests, the chorus, appropriately to their watery nature, urge Prometheus to yield and to put aside his stubbornness (1036–39). But, in the course of the brief anapaestic scene that closes the play, the chorus so far change their mind that they willingly suffer along with Prometheus, although they were given every opportunity to depart unharmed. The author has even gone out of his way to underline the chorus' decision by placing their defiant speech (1063–70) at the very center of a strictly symmetrical construction: Their speech is preceded and followed by speeches of equal length by Hermes, whose speeches are themselves framed by speeches of Prometheus that come within one metron of being equal to one another in length. The chorus' change of mind has taken place within the space of

³⁰ Gibert (above, note 1) 278–80 is particularly good on this.

³¹ *Poet.* 1453b2–3 ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πρότερον καὶ ποιητοῦ ἀμείνονος.

³² At 491–92 Menelaus says that pity (ἔλεος) came over him συγγένειαν ἐννοουμένῳ. This is reminiscent of *PV* 39, where Hephaestus, in response to Kratos' inquiry into his reasons for pitying Prometheus, says τὸ συγγενές τοι δεινόν.

³³ John Gibert reminds me of the scene in *Soph. Ant.* (526 ff.) in which Ismene tries to share in Antigone's responsibility for the burial of Polyneices, after having earlier advised her sister against such action, and in his dissertation (above, note 1) 83 he well compares that scene with the scene in *IA* in which Menelaus changes his mind. But, from the perspective here adopted, Ismene's decision is not strictly comparable, as she has been off stage since the end of the prologue, and it appears that her change of mind took place while she was off stage, and did not result from witnessing and reacting to events on stage.

³⁴ Among the "Eigenwörter" found in this play but not in the genuine plays of Aeschylus are ἐλεϊνός, συγκάμνω, συναλέω and συνασχαλάω; cf. W. Burkert, *Zum altgriechischen Mitleidsbegriff* (diss. Erlangen 1955) 59–60.

twenty-two lines, and all that has happened on stage that can have caused the change are the two brief speeches, the defiant speech of Prometheus and the threatening speech of Hermes. The change is sudden and surprising, but it has been prepared—whether successfully or not is a matter for individual judgment—by the constant emphasis throughout the play on pity and sympathy. The author seems to expect his audience to accept the chorus' change of mind on the basis of his own confidence that he has successfully aroused in the audience the same sort of feelings that apparently lie behind the chorus' action.

Whether Euripides was influenced in this particular by the author of *Prometheus Bound* is difficult to say. If we had available to us all the evidence of fifth-century tragedy we would be in a better position to judge. In any event, there is one way in which Euripides has gone beyond his predecessor: In the earlier play it is the chorus who change their mind as a result of an emotional reaction to what has occurred on stage; in Euripides it is an individual character. It had long been customary for the chorus to react to and comment on what was taking place on stage, the chorus serving in a sort of mediatory capacity between the characters on stage and the audience.³⁵ In a perhaps more interesting way (because the psychology of the character is of more interest than that of the chorus), Euripides has chosen to present Iphigeneia as reacting to Achilles' noble display of selflessness in the same way that the chorus of *Prometheus Bound* react to Prometheus' admirable fortitude. And, as with so many of Euripides' innovations, we find this device becoming a standard element in the subsequent development of Western drama.

I conclude by mentioning briefly just two later occurrences of this device in the work of two very different dramatists. The first is to be found in Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1643), which dramatizes the conversion and martyrdom of St. Polyeuctes during the persecutions of the Emperor Decius. Polyeucte had been a worshipper of pagan gods, but has now converted and, with the excessive zeal of the new convert, openly smashes pagan idols and disrupts pagan worship. He is arrested by his father-in-law Félix, the governor of Armenia. Félix and his daughter Pauline entreat Polyeucte to renounce his evil Christian ways in an effort to forestall his arrest and execution. But Polyeucte merely enrages Félix with his stubborn adherence to the strange cult and with his repeated insistence that Félix and Pauline themselves convert, and ultimately Félix himself orders his son-in-law's execution. At the end of the play, Pauline appears before Félix and declares that she too is now a Christian. Her eyes have been opened while witnessing the martyrdom of her husband, by whose blood she is baptized.³⁶ Now, the

³⁵ W. B. Stanford, *Greek Tragedy and the Emotions* (London 1983) 46–47.

³⁶ Pauline actually states (1725–28) that Félix can see the blood with which she has been spattered, but the conventions of the Parisian stage in the 17th century would surely

conversion of Pauline, which takes place off stage, is not entirely unexpected, and is explicable in terms of her frequently-expressed devotion and obedience to her husband Polyeucte. What interests us here is the reaction of Félix. Before our very eyes, and within a very short space of time, he is transformed on stage from persecutor to believer. Witnessing his daughter's willingness to share the fate of Polyeucte has converted him from one who inflicts punishment on Christians to one who would gladly suffer martyrdom himself. This conversion of Félix was not in Corneille's source (Surius' *Vitae Sanctorum*), so there was no requirement that he include it. Further, as a strict adherent to the principles of Aristotle, who had condemned Iphigeneia's change of mind, Corneille was aware that he was risking censure with this bit of dramaturgy. But he felt that he was nevertheless dramatically justified. Apart from his appeal, in the "Examen" prefixed to the published text of the play, to the "miraculous" character of conversion, he has effectively prepared his audience for this development. In the first place, Corneille stresses Félix's nobility and, especially, his feeling of pity for Polyeucte.³⁷ In the second place, in a cunningly devised scene (Act 5, scene 2) reminiscent of the confrontations between Pentheus and Dionysus in *Bacchae*, Félix actually pretends that he wishes Polyeucte to initiate him into the secrets of Christianity.³⁸ Finally, emphasis has been placed throughout the play on the ways in which one person's behavior can serve as an example for others. For instance,³⁹ Polyeucte declares (672) that the example of his own death will do more to strengthen the Christians than his continuing to live. Félix also shows himself to be a believer in the value of example: He resolves to force Polyeucte to witness the martyrdom of his friend Néarque, on the grounds that example has greater effect than threats (885). Félix is right, but he does not recognize that the effect of Néarque's martyrdom will be to strengthen the faith of Polyeucte, rather than to change his mind. Félix's own mind will finally change only when he has witnessed the effect that the example of Polyeucte has had on his own daughter.

From the time of Louis XIV we move to that of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Our second instance of this device comes from the nineteenth century's greatest interpreter of Greek drama, Richard Wagner.⁴⁰ In the second act of

not have tolerated this touch of realism. Rather, the audience must be expected to imagine the blood, as Euripides' audience was expected to imagine the "palace miracle" in *Bacchae*.

³⁷ See 804, 870, 1010. For pity as a theme in this play, see 85, 573, 577, 1443.

³⁸ Although, unlike Pentheus, Félix does this in hopes of buying time for Polyeucte, rather than in hopes of obtaining further evidence of his crime.

³⁹ See also 684, 707-08, 1378.

⁴⁰ For Wagner's relationship with Greek drama, see W. Schadewaldt, *Hellas und Hesperien*² II (Zurich 1970) 341-405; H. Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts* (London 1982) 126-42; M. Ewans, *Wagner and Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1982); N. O'Sullivan, "Aristophanes and Wagner," *Antike und Abendland* 36 (1990) 67-81.

Die Walküre, Brünnhilde appears before Siegmund. Wotan has decided that Siegmund must be killed by Hunding, and Brünnhilde, who earlier in the act had identified herself with Wotan's will, has come to lead Siegmund away to Walhall. Siegmund's death is inevitable for, as Brünnhilde explains to him, "wer mich erschaut, der scheidet vom Lebenslicht." In response to his inquiries she tells him that he will be reunited in Walhall with his father Wälse and that there await him in this hero's paradise *Wunschmädchen* to minister to his needs. So far, Siegmund finds nothing to object to, but he has one further question of the Valkyrie, namely whether he can bring along Sieglinde, his sister and bride, who is at the moment asleep with her head in his lap. Brünnhilde replies that he will not see Sieglinde once he arrives in Walhall. Siegmund refuses to go on this condition, and he threatens to kill himself and his bride, choosing to be united in death with Sieglinde in preference to the everlasting bliss ("ewige Wonne") promised by Brünnhilde. At this point, as Wagner's stage-directions⁴¹ tell us, Brünnhilde is transformed by an overwhelming sense of sympathy ("im heftigsten Sturme des Mitgeföhls"). Because she has witnessed Siegmund's undying devotion to his mortal bride (which devotion echoes the affection that Wotan has taught the maiden Brünnhilde herself to feel toward Siegmund), and because she has seen the extent of this hero's bravery in the face of death, she changes her mind. No longer is she determined to carry off to Walhall Siegmund's lifeless body after his inevitable defeat; instead, she has resolved to alter fate itself ("Beschlossen ist's: Das Schlachtlos wend ich.") and to grant victory to Siegmund. Brünnhilde's change of mind is remarkably similar to Iphigeneia's: In both instances young maidens (who have been betrayed by their fathers) are confronted by heroes whose situations arouse feelings of pity and admiration which, enhanced by erotic undertones, inspire the one maiden to change from bitter laments to glorious acceptance and the other to change from dutiful compliance to heroic defiance. There is, however, one striking dramaturgic difference between the two scenes. For, while Iphigeneia's change of mind has taken audiences by surprise, Brünnhilde's has been so skillfully prepared that it seems natural, even inevitable. Indeed, this scene in *Die Walküre* is in effect a dramatization of the division within the will of Wotan, whose passionate desire for Siegmund's survival was earlier in the act thwarted by the indignant protests of Fricka. We need not see this as an indication of Wagner's superiority to Euripides as a dramatist. Rather, it serves to underline the novelty in the use of this device by the earlier dramatist, who (like the author of *Prometheus Bound*) had not yet made it the established and familiar element of dramatic technique that it was to become in subsequent centuries.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

⁴¹ And his music: The score here indicates changes of tempo, dynamics and key.