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**Secular Dreams, Bloody Oracles: Staging State and Religion in
Classical Athens and Enlightenment Paris**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Greek and Roman Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

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Iphigenia in Tauris (1893) by Valentin Serov [public domain]

ORESTES

We are fortunate in our noble birth, but in the turnings of fate, (850)
O sister, our unlucky life has unfolded.

IPHIGENEIA

In my pain I realized that; I remember the sword laid
on my throat by my despairing father.

ORESTES

Oimoi— I can see you there, as if I was present.

I.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Friedman for her compassionate guidance as I attempted multiple times to complete this thesis at this difficult time, and for her wisdom throughout my time at Vassar. I cannot begin to quantify the impact Professor Friedman and her courses have had on my life. I encountered the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus in my first class with her, and it was the subject of the first messy paper I submitted to her. I hope my writing has improved since then, but I do know that over the course of writing this thesis, I've come to recognize the wisdom in the *Oresteia*. "In the heart is no sleep; there drips instead / pain that remembers wounds. And to unwilling / minds circumspection comes." (*Agamemnon* 179-181) I would like to acknowledge the pain that sparked the creation of this thesis. A pain that has touched and twisted everything I have tried to accomplish at Vassar, including this thesis. Yet, the timeless lesson for the Athenian democracy in the *Oresteia* contains an ancient cure, not unlike the ancestral cure so sublimely described in the boundless Caribbean of Derek Walcott's *Omeros*. Thus, I acknowledge Aeschylus as well, for authoring the *Oresteia*, a trio of plays whose vision of divine and civic justice only Euripides could subvert on the same stage with his *Iphigeneia Among the Taurians*, a play which became, as it were, one drop in the great yet faltering march of human progress through the singular power of Iphigeneia's questions.

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II.

Introduction

But the goddess is too subtle. I do not approve.

[...]

I myself think

*The tale of how Tantalos entertained the gods
by feeding them his son is not to be believed.*

*I also think these people, being murderous,
put off all blame for their own vice upon the gods.*

I do not think any divinity is bad. (372, 378-83)

Iphigeneia uttered these words after she had been deceived by her father, promised a hero for a husband, sacrificed for a war, spirited across the seas by Artemis, forced to be a priestess, and traumatized by her sacrificial duties. Her open disbelief and her use of reason show how she began to reclaim her agency. When she faced actions from divine or mortal figures, Iphigeneia exhibited a probing moral compass. Her musings on the divine nature later found a welcome reception under the quill of a French Enlightenment playwright, Claude Guimond de La Touche (1729-1760), who faithfully adapted some of her most outstanding qualities in his own reworking of the tragedy by Euripides. From the Athenian Theater of Dionysus to the Parisian Comédie-Française, Iphigeneia's musings have moved audiences far and wide in their shared human quest for freedom, be it from oppressive governments or even from religious tyrants.

My analysis of the convoluted topic of state and religion in this thesis is confined to the following approaches. I am chiefly concerned with the relationship between the state and religion, and how both playwrights respond to religious and state power in their respective Athenian and French contexts as they portray religious and civic problems in their tragedies, namely human sacrifice and to a lesser degree, the violation of one's conscience. I will arrive to my conclusions by a close reading of both plays, and I will ultimately read some of my conclusions onto contemporary understandings of the secular as it relates to state and religion to

make some observations in line with my readings. Ultimately, I hope to show how Euripides began a conversation about the significance of the role of religion and religious beliefs in the polis governance, and how La Touche took up this conversation and expanded it for his own time. I dedicate separate sections for each play, then dedicate one section for my comparative synthesis and connections to contemporary claims about the nature of the secular.

Iphigeneia Among the Taurians (IT) by Euripides begins with Iphigeneia's opening monologue, where she describes her present circumstances among the Taurians, her role as priestess, her arrival to that land through Artemis's divine intervention. She describes a dream which she interprets as a harbinger of Orestes's death. Then, Orestes and Pylades arrive on Apollo's orders to seize Artemis's statue, but they decide to try at another time. The opening song involves mourning and libations for Orestes by Iphigeneia and her companion priestesses. A Taurian herdsman communicates the capture of Orestes and Pylades, and Iphigeneia prepares for the sacrifice. The chorus sing a song about the arrival of the Greeks and of their longing towards home, then the two Greeks enter the temple precinct. Iphigeneia discovers their homeland, and Pylades agrees to convey her letter to Argos after arguing with Orestes. When she speaks her letter in case it is lost in the voyage, Orestes recognizes her. They then plot their escape. The chorus sing a song about their longing for home. Iphigeneia successfully deceives Thoas, ruler of the Taurians, by claiming that the statue must be cleansed from the pollution of the strangers in the sea, along with the strangers. The priestesses help Iphigeneia in her ruse, and they sing a song of praise to Apollo and Artemis. A messenger then arrives to Thoas and tells him of the attempts to flee by the Iphigeneia, Orestes and Pylades, who are trapped by Poseidon's waves against their ship on the Taurian shore. Before Thoas causes carnage, Athena

intervenes. The priestesses are saved as well as the other Greeks, and Athena establishes new religious and civic rites, and condemns the anger of Thoas.

Performed in Paris in 1757 to high praise and great success, *Iphigénie en Tauride* (IET) reflects the Enlightenment themes of its time. It is written in five acts and entirely in verse, with an AABB rhyme scheme. The adaptation follows closely the Euripidean text, with the greatest deviation in the plot being the play's dénouement. There is no chorus; instead, individual priestesses aid Iphigénie and play a minor role as her confidants and assistants (Isménie and Eumene). Instead of messengers, Thoas has an officer (Arbas) and unnamed guards. Act one features five scenes with Iphigénie, Thoas, and her priestesses. Iphigénie describes her horrifying dream of sacrificing her brother, and she is perplexed by the dream and the gods' wills because of the the inhuman sacrifices she must perform. Thoas responds to her equivocations about the sacrifice by claiming divine certainty through an oracle he had received. The act closes with Iphigénie speaking with her attendants about the nature of the gods, and she declares that nature speaks to her, and that it is the first law of both gods and men (with the presumption that human sacrifice is not sanctified by the heavens). Act two opens with Oreste and follows his encounters with Iphigénie and her priestesses over six scenes. Oreste expresses his skepticism and distrust of the gods, and he later meets Pylade in scene three, where the two joyously meet again. Pylade had traveled to the Taurian land in search of his friend, and both present a touching picture of friendship. Scenes four through six, Iphigénie questions Oreste and Pylade, and then confers with her priestesses. She decides to deceive Thoas so that one of them can deliver her message back to her sister Electre since she believes Oreste is dead. In act three, Oreste begins to question Iphigénie's identity. She says that she feels the gods in her heart oppose themselves to the sacrifice, and that she chose Oreste to be saved from the sacrifice since only one of them could

be saved. Oreste and Pylade then argue about who should escape, with Oreste deciding to reveal his crime to Iphigénie and be sacrificed. She respects his wishes and hands her letter to Pylade, and denies his request for any more information from her. Act four opens with Iphigénie disparaging the heavens for their cruel treatment of her, and she affirms the primacy of self-knowledge as the sure oracle of her heart. A slave informs her and her priestesses that Pylade disappeared from meeting with her father who would send him off in a ship to Greece, and Iphigénie is hopeless, railing against the gods. She struggles between her religious duty and humanist impulses. In scene four, the two recognize each other after she reveals her trauma at Aulis. Act five begins with a monologue by Thoas, who has become paranoid after the escape of Pylade. Thoas refuses to hear Iphigénie's arguments and orders her to kill Oreste, who reveals his identity. Thoas still orders the sacrifice to fulfill the mandates of his oracle, and Iphigénie tries to protect Oreste. Pylade intervenes and strikes down Thoas, who dies at the altar. Then, Iphigénie, Pylade and Oreste gather as they prepare to leave. Iphigénie says they must fetch the statue from the temple because then Oreste would be relieved of his burdens, but Oreste already says he feels better and declares that he takes on a new being in a new world. Iphigénie declares that she recognizes the gods: the law of nature is their law and Pylade utters the last lines about returning to Greece.

In terms of technical choices, all translations of IT are taken from Lattimore's translation in *The Complete Euripides* Volume II except for my quote in page two, which is my own. I keep the spellings of the character's names the same as they are in each respective play in each section, and I do not romanize Iphigeneia's name as in "Iphigenia." All translations of IET are my own. In-text citations to the French play are formatted with act and scene numbers in parentheses (such as V, v).

III.

Reading νόμος in *Iphigeneia Among the Taurians*

Iphigeneia Among the Taurians (IT) contains the most ritual etiologies of any play in the extant corpus of Greek tragedy (Torrance 2019, 80). It is also a very religious play in terms of its focus on ritual: “the entire play is indeed eminently concerned with gods and religion,” standing out from the other tragedies that survive by Euripides (Kyriakou 2006, 13-4). In a world where the gods were understood to manifest themselves as forces present in every aspect of life, contemporary understandings of religion fail to grasp the complexity of ancient Greek polytheism in the polis. Without the dialectic between the religious and the secular, however, questions about religion and the polis can still be raised. Instead of looking at these terms separately, we will consider them as they are synergized in nomos. This play provides several opportunities to consider the reasons behind the nomoi of rituals and customs. More precisely, the transformation of Artemis’s nomos from Taurian human sacrifice to Athenian rite of passage provides an important window into the working of nomos as manifested through aspects of the state and religion. By showing the barbarian roots of an Athenian ritual that involved human blood and by closing the distances between Athenians and Taurians, the tragedy seeks to bring awareness to its audience about religion and its civic functions in the nomoi of the polis.

Nomos and the plot of IT

Aristotle praised IT and *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles in his *Poetics* for provoking the deepest catharsis through *περιπέτεια* and *ἀναγνώρισις* (reversals and recognition, 1455a). The plot of IT and its moments most full of pathos revolve around the Taurian civic ritual of human sacrifice and the siblings’ deliverance from that custom. The theatrical qualities of IT that make it so striking owe in some sense to the backdrop of nomos, which undergirds and moves the action of the play. We shall see how various customs beyond the human sacrifice are both

legitimized and problematized in several thought-provoking ways, but this section posits that *nomos* in IT is key to understand the meanings of the play beyond that of the catharsis of an exciting escape tragedy.

As recounted in the plot summary of the thesis introduction, the appearance of Athena *dea ex machina* at the end is strange, including the significance of her edict which transfers Artemis's customs to Attica. In ensuing analysis, we shall see how Athena's presence and edicts are the conclusions to a deep and probing consideration of religion, *nomos* and the polis. Scholars have contributed to a multi-faceted discussion concerning her appearance, including whether the etiologies Euripides created through Athena's edicts could contribute to Athenian polis civic discourse. While I include some of these discussions in ensuing analysis, I mention them to point to the potential readings that meaningfully expand the interpretation of this play within the Aristophanic assumption that the poet is the educator of the city. *Nomos* is a serious point of inquiry to the tragedy's multiple readings whether for the city's instruction or as religious exploration and questioning. From the beginning of the play to its resolution, *nomos* is a central and insightful way of understanding this play.

Nomos and Iphigeneia, Orestes, and Thoas

Fated to become the icon of failed transitions, Iphigeneia is nevertheless one of the most remarkable female protagonists in Greek tragedy who wields legitimate power as a priestess, unlike Medea or Antigone (Torrance 2019, 30, 89). Iphigeneia's complicated relationship with the gods and *nomos* show how the play unpacks and questions both before the finale's resolution. Orestes, fleeing the furies because it seems that the justice of the *Oresteia* has failed, and Thoas, pious king of the Taurians, are also significant characters that help us to see how

nomos is deconstructed. Ultimately, these character's voices and journeys will be important to fully understand the play's finale regarding the transformation of nomos.

Iphigeneia's name means "strong in birth," but she grows to despise the day of her birth, because the strong start to her lifecycle became forever stunted at the sands of Aulis (Torrance 2019, 73, IT 203-207). At once grateful for the divine deliverance from her father's sacrificial blade, she chafes under Artemis's moral ambiguity because of the heinous nomos she now leads.

τὰ τῆς θεοῦ δὲ μέφομαι σοφίσματα, (380)
 ἥτις βροτῶν μὲν ἦν τις ἄψηται φόνου,
 ἢ καὶ λοχείας ἢ νεκροῦ θίγη χεροῖν,
 βωμῶν ἀπείργει, μυσαρὸν ὡς ἡγουμένη,
 αὐτὴ δὲ θυσίαις ἤδεται βροτοκτόνοις.
 οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως ἔτεκεν ἂν ἡ Διὸς δάμαρ
 Λητῶ τοςαύτην ἀμαθίαν. 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. (392)

But the goddess is too subtle. I do not approve. (372)
 When she considers any mortal stained with blood,
 if only from childbirth or from contact with a corpse,
 she keeps him from her altars, thinking him unclean,
 while she herself is pleased with human sacrifice.
 It is impossible that Leto, bride of Zeus,
 produced so unfeeling a child. I myself think
 The tale of how Tantalos entertained the gods
 by feeding them his son is not to be believed.
 I also think these people, being murderous,
 put off all blame for their own vice upon the gods.
 I do not think any divinity is bad. (383)

Iphigeneia introduces the audience to the nomos in the beginning of the play; she briefly describes the goddess' pleasure in the sacrificial rites and its horrifying nature, as well as her own fear of the goddess (35-7). Before uttering the statement above, she steels herself to perform the rites, recalling the trauma she suffered as she was about to be sacrificed with thoughts of

revenge. The significance of her final words before the first choral stasimon cannot be understated: the questions and musings which she expresses will be invoked for the rest of the play. While the next section will focus on the religious aspects of this statement and in the play, this section finds this statement as the beginning of the play's questioning of *nomos* as it relates to the political order of the Taurian polis. Discarding religious confusion aside for the moment, Iphigeneia moves on to declare the barbarian other as the cause for the sacrifice, specifically the murderous nature of the Taurians (*ἀνθρωποκτόνους*: human-killing). Although some scholars take this statement as the section in the play where Artemis begins to become disconnected from the rites and thus exonerated, they do this at the peril of ignoring the significant theological questions within the play that I will examine later, and the theological significance of the finale (Parker 2016, 140, Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 34). Furthermore, they do not comment on another significant aspect of this statement, which is the deconstruction of *nomos*, a recurrent theme once we consider other characters. In Iphigeneia's eyes, if the goddess does not approve the ritual, then it is a religiously invalid custom carried out under the guise of religion to satisfy the bloodthirsty Taurians.

The choir repeats her musings in the following stasimon, and Euripides places these words in the last lines of the stasimon, which is also the best place for emphasis.

ὦ πότνι', εἴ σοι τάδ' ἀρεσκόντως (463)
 πόλις ἦδε τελεῖ,
 δέξαι θυσίας, ἃς ὁ παρ' ἡμῶν
 νόμος οὐχ ὀσίας ἀναφαίνει.

Goddess, if you are pleased with the way (453)
 of this city, accept the sacrifice;
 but our custom in Greece
 declares that it is not holy.

While this section has theological significance for analysis, the chorus as minor characters still contribute to the way that *nomos* is deconstructed. Here, they augment Iphigeneia's musing on the Taurian *nomos* by adding ethnic differences and sharpening the vocabulary around the ensuing discussion of *nomos* by the characters (*νόμος* – custom, *πόλις* – city and *θυσία* – sacrifice).

At this point, I must discuss word definitions. Reading from La Touche to Euripides helps us to see how the legal language is well-developed and clear in the adaptation. La Touche uses different terms for laws and for the sacrificial custom, whereas Euripides deploys *νόμος* in scenarios where there could be a conceivable difference (such as the quotation above). By contrast, *νόμος* is an ambiguous term, and heretofore we have discussed it as “custom,” which encompasses its religious, ritualistic, and political aspects. *Nomos* was already the subject of a vibrant intellectual discussion during the original production of the play (and some of that discussion can be seen in the play as Torrance points out [2019, 64]). I mention this discussion to highlight the variable meanings of *nomos* and its use to describe a power that ordered human lives in the ancient Greek perspective, whose source came from either nature or society. As various translators have shown, there is an unmistakable legal aspect to the *nomos* mentioned by the choir (Carson, Cropp, Lattimore). It is not enough to say that the Taurian custom is unlike the one in Greece; it is *legally* unholy. In addition, the terms of the discussion are expanded: *νόμος* (custom with legal connotations), *πόλις* (the political actor), and *θυσία* (the problem of human sacrifice). “It is significant that the difference between Greek and Taurian cult is expressed in terms of custom, presumably established by humans: the women are careful not to claim that only the Greek custom is welcome to the gods.” (Kyriakou 2006, 160)

While I focus on ethnic differences in another section, it is important to note the chorus' cautious musing about the human establishment of *nomos*, their role in the play and their ultimate destiny. Reading backwards from IET, we note how the chorus is eliminated in the adaptation in favor of individual characters. This choice helps us to see the importance and resonance of the captive Greek women in Euripides, because they mirror Iphigeneia in many ways. In the first choral stasimon, they describe their geographic and cultural isolation from Greece in an inhospitable land. Just before the quotation above, they express their longing for home, which becomes a motif associated with their presence (Torrance 2019, 50). Their longing for home highlights the significance of their mention of an unholy *nomos*; in other words, what happens among the Taurians (the *nomos*) relates to how they understand and (eventually) return home. In IET, the longing for home isn't as developed as it is in IT, which gives us another indicator of why the ending of the IT might be so focalized on Athens. These captive Greek women help Iphigeneia at the risk of their lives and without the certainty of escape, and they long to participate in initiation rituals back in Greece. They reflect Iphigeneia's journey, but instead of her stunted end as a priestess, they presumably integrate into Athens.

In IET, legal language is well-developed, but the sacrificial custom itself is simply referred to in religious terms. Reading IT with this comparison helps us to see how Iphigeneia continues to question the sacrificial *nomos*. Iphigeneia deconstructs the *nomos* as she speaks with Pylades and Orestes when she describes a Greek man who believed Iphigeneia was acting on behalf of a legitimate (goddess-sanctioned) *nomos*. He wrote her letter before his sacrifice, and he took pity on her (584-87). Then, she abruptly declares that the city, not the goddess, demands the sacrifice, despite the Greek man's religious beliefs she had just mentioned.

οὔτος δ', ἐπεὶ περ πόλις ἀναγκάζει τάδε, (595)
θεῶν γενέσθω θυμὰ χωρισθεὶς σέθεν.

But this man, since the state enforces it, must be (585)
kept back and sacrificed to the divinity.

Iphigeneia's statement that only one person could be saved reflects her religious beliefs and the custom's Taurian idiosyncrasies, for it is not θεά, but πόλις that demands and enforces the sacrifice in her perspective. The context indicates not only the communal aspects of πόλις but the political and urban aspects as well, since the source of power in demanding this sacrifice is not the goddess (Kyriakou 2006, 202). In this way, we can see how beginning with her musing before the stasimon followed by the chorus' musing, the political meanings of nomos are now being emphasized.

Nomos is once again questioned but in cultural ways when Orestes and Iphigeneia discuss their plans for escape. Iphigeneia strongly rejects Orestes's proposal to simply kill Thoas: δεινὸν τόδ' εἶπας, ξενοφονεῖν ἐπήλυδας (1021). Even in the hour of her greatest need and hope, Iphigeneia cannot be led to violate her Greek customs regarding hosts and guests by committing a ghastly crime. Her vocabulary choices are significant, because ἐπήλυδας is rarer than ξένος and more precisely means an alien stranger (Parker 2016, 67, 266). At this point in the play, Iphigeneia has exhibited a probing yet faulty moral compass. She finds the Taurian custom theologically wrong and morally depraved, but she also wishes to slit Helen's throat by creating another Aulis as revenge, although the mention of Aulis triggers her deep trauma of being tied as an animal before the slaughter (358). The justice she proposes is following in the footsteps of her cursed ancestors, and thus it is forever unsatisfactory. Orestes, on the other hand, has had a complicated relation to nomos as well: he arrives to the Taurians on Apollo's orders because of the failure of the civic, divine justice Athena instituted in the *Oresteia*, (968-9) and he expresses persistent unbelief in and disdain for Apollo and the gods (570-1, 711-5, 937). For Orestes, it

seems that this history of the failure of Athena's new civic *nomos* and divine justice has allowed him to propose to violate one of the most important Greek cultural *nomoi* of *xenia* (Torrance 2019, 65)

In IET, Thoas is more of a major character than in IT, and although Euripides emphasizes the barbarian-ness of Thoas in the play's beginning and defines him as the personification of the state, his lines begin in line 1152. Euripides places another reading of *nomos* in his lines:

ΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑ. τὸν νόμον ἀνάγκη τὸν προκείμενον σέβειν. (1189)
ΘΟΑΣ. οὐκ οὖν ἐν ἔργῳ χέρνιβες ξίφος τε σόν;

Iphigeneia. We must respect the law as it has been laid down. (1167)
Thoas. We use your lustral waters, then? We use your sword?

At this stage in the play, we have seen how *nomos* has already been deconstructed and questioned by Iphigeneia, Orestes, and the chorus. When Iphigeneia deceives Thoas, contested versions of *nomos* appear, invoking its relationship with the polis, citizens, and goddess. Thoas (τύραννος) responds to the νόμος in line 1189 by giving it an entirely religious meaning. The verb προκείμενον (prescribed, appointed, to be set forth) indicates that the sacrifices are an established custom. Thoas interprets the line as a “reference to the Taurian custom of sacrificing strangers.” (Kyriakou 2006, 379) He defines νόμος to be the religious duty of human sacrifice, goddess-given, that Iphigeneia must complete for the Taurian polis. This definition clashes with the Greek chorus' understanding of it as potentially human construct as well. Although the two definitions are not exclusionary or deeply contradicting, the differences matter in terms of power and agency: to Iphigeneia and her religious beliefs, to the state's (Thoas) enforcement of religious rites, and to the careless disregard of Orestes. As Torrance notes, scholars disagree on how to read Thoas, either as pious individual adhering to custom or as a savage brute (2019, 44). If we read back onto IT the maniacal, disturbed and religious tyrant of IET, we begin to see how

Thoas's eagerness to complete the *nomos* in 1190 is a marker for a dangerous polis governance, and why it is addressed in the finale of the play as new *nomoi* are established by a divinity.

Bringing these storylines together and this section's literary analysis on *nomos*, we begin to see how a deep theme in this play is the questioning, deconstruction and instability of *nomos*. This observation becomes even more salient by cross-reading IET, whose own consideration of state and religion takes on a completely different path than in IT by means of legal language, religion and philosophy. In these beginning stages of civilization, *nomos* provided the multivalent and complex substrate to analyze how power was legitimized and questioned in the polis along religious and political lines. Indeed, the instability of *nomos* is highlighted by the finale of the play, which is a vision of divine certainty and the renewal of religious and civic/legal *nomoi*, akin to the *Oresteia* but which shall be analyzed later more closely.

Gods, Rituals, Beliefs and *Nomos*

The gods are silent in IET, known only through unclear oracles and dreams. Returning to IT with this reading, we note both silent and loud divine voices and theological questions that have significant implications for how we will read *nomos*. Apart from the *deus ex machina* presence of Athena, Artemis is silent despite multiple prayers from Iphigeneia, and Orestes can only rely on the oracles of Apollo. We shall see how the selective and confusing revelation of the divine will in the play reflects traditional Greek religious beliefs and questions the relation of the gods to the polis through *nomos*.

One of the questions both IET and IT ask is whether Artemis desires human sacrifice. In IET, the answer is much more positive because the definition and experience of religion and the gods changes, whereas in IT Athena provides a grim reminder of the gods' unknowable natures with the new *nomoi* she institutes. In the opening monologue, Iphigeneia clarifies that she was

saved after all by Artemis from her father's sacrificial blade. Yet she finds herself officiating human sacrifices on Artemis's behalf, in violation of Greek cultural norms by sacrificing strangers. She asks whether Artemis truly desires the human sacrifices. Iphigeneia answers her own question by proposing a theology where the wickedness of the Taurians is the cause of the human sacrifices, not the demands of the goddess, who must not be evil (*κακός*) (380-91).

Iphigeneia's dissent from the belief that Artemis requires human sacrifice stems from her opening monologue, which casts doubt on the claim that Artemis demanded her as a sacrifice at Aulis. Iphigeneia uses "*ὡς δοκεῖ*" (so it seemed, line 8) to describe the conditions surrounding her sacrifice. As aptly expressed by Kyriakou, "nowhere in the play does Iphigeneia attribute responsibility for the sacrifice to Artemis." (2006, 55) Instead, Artemis demanded religious obedience; therefore, Iphigeneia was not ultimately sacrificed (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 33). Such a claim would contradict with the goddess' revealed delight in sacrifices at first glance. However, Iphigeneia is a devout believer in the goodness of the goddess (and the wickedness of humanity, like her father's choice). When Iphigeneia herself faces imminent death, she cries out to Artemis, and urges her to save herself and her brother (1398-1400). She compares her love for her sibling to the fact that Artemis has a brother as well (Apollo, Orestes's guardian), believing that the goddess will act on her behalf because she has compassion. However, Athena immediately intervenes, not Artemis.

Euripides pairs the twin gods Apollo and Artemis with Orestes and Iphigeneia, telling a story about the unknowable will of the gods, unbelief, and theological uncertainty. Iphigeneia prays to Artemis several times, and she never loses her belief, even if Iphigeneia expresses fear of her (995). Orestes, however, expresses a persistent unbelief in and disdain for Apollo and the gods, although he received a clear oracle from Apollo at Delphi (570-1, 711-5, 937). Ultimately,

Apollo's oracle is justified and his hand is shown to be guiding Orestes, which contrasts significantly with the silence Artemis deals to her priestess. After the recognition scene, Orestes tries to explain the will of Artemis, after having regained his belief in Apollo (1012-4):

But hear my thought. If all this were against the will
of Artemis, how could Apollo have ordained
that I should take her image to Athena's ship?

His reasoning is not contested by Iphigeneia. However, it is not related to the question of whether Artemis desires human sacrifice, again implying no clear resolution on that question.

Throughout the play, there are no signs from Artemis or communication about her desire for human sacrifice, nor does the goddess deliver her priestess from imminent death after her daring escape, a strange turn of events because of her previous intervention at Aulis (Kyriakou 2006, 15). When Athena delivers the trio, she describes the rites that will be established in Halae:

νόμον τε θεῶν τόνδ' ὅταν ἑορτάζῃ λεώς, (1458)
τῆς σῆς σφαγῆς ἄποιν' ἐπισχέτω ξίφος
δέρη πρὸς ἀνδρὸς αἷμά τ' ἐξανιέτω,
ὀσίᾳς ἕκατι θεά θ' ὅπως τιμᾶς ἔχη.

Establish there this custom: at the festival, (1432)
To atone for your uncompleted sacrifice,
let a sword be held to a man's throat, and blood be drawn,
for religion's sake, so that the goddess may have her rights.

The vocabulary choice of *τιμή* concerns the rites which were performed among the Taurians. Artemis's worship and honor is at stake (*τιμή*), for those rites were in accordance with the divine law she laid for the Taurians (*ὀσία* is closely related to "sanctioned" and "lawful," which is related to the principal meaning of "rites" here). Kyriakou states that Athena does not imply that Artemis condoned the human sacrifices (2006, 457), but a reading based on the strength of the vocabulary and the care that Athena takes to transmute her sister's rites to Attica indicates strongly that Artemis did condone them. This reading would agree with line 35, where

Iphigeneia states that Artemis delights in the unspeakable sacrifices (ἡδέεται), which Kyriakou glosses as stressing the “intense pleasure of the goddess in the human sacrifices.” (2006, 62, 144)

Despite this clear answer, scholars have endeavored to argue that Artemis is in fact distanced from the custom beginning in 380-91 because of the strength of Iphigeneia’s theodicy, especially with the presumable impact it would have on an ancient audience who would be eager to welcome Artemis’s image to Athens (Parker 2016, xxxiv, 140, Kyriakou 2006, 14). Alas, Artemis may have saved Iphigeneia at Aulis, and Apollo may have ordained her image to be taken to Athens, but such plot points do not provide any answer on the divine will regarding the questionable morality of the Taurian nomos. As Kyriakou states, the question of knowing the “opaque” divine will is a recurrent theme in the play (2006, 15-16). Instead, the play “suggests that the nature of the gods and of divine design is implacable and inscrutable.” (Torrance 2019, 90). IT repeats a theme that is common in Greek tragedy and which is found in Greek religious belief: the unknowability of the gods and of their wills (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 292). What makes this restatement of a common belief remarkable is how the divine will is clearly displayed yet obscured within the plot, indicating that other interconnected issues are also at stake in the absence of the divine will, or, once we read IT with the elaborate characters of IET, the human pretense of knowing it, such as the enforcement of religious rites by the state (Thoas) or by a priestess (Iphigeneia). Iphigeneia’s internal struggle with her questioning of Artemis is the poet’s expression of her tragic journey in this play, because her questions are ultimately misguided in the greater context of the Greek divine cosmos (Torrance 2019, 98). The gods are brutal, and they are also just. What seemed like a contradiction in her divine deliverance from sacrifice to her officiation of human sacrifices is an example of the shifting will and unknowable nature of

the divine. Although delivered from barbarian lands, she is fated to serve Artemis for the rest of her life; in some sense, this is the tragedy of the divine for the naïve Greek believer.

Reading this perspective on Greek religion with the absolute silence of the divine in IET, we begin to see what is at stake for the polis in the power of *nomos*. Divine uncertainty can be lethal. Consider line 620, where Iphigeneia repeats how she is compelled to obey (φυλακτέον) the law/necessity (ἀνάγκη): ἀλλ' εἰς ἀνάγκην κείμεθ', ἦν φυλακτέον. Using ἀνάγκη instead of πόλις or νόμος is fascinating, and it reflects Iphigeneia's forced priesthood and religious questioning up to this point in the play. She is compelled by a higher power, coming from either πόλις or θεά. Instead of challenging the state's edicts like Antigone does in the *Antigone* by Sophocles, she simply submits to her confusion until she finds out the identity of the Greek prisoners. This vocabulary choice is another moment to highlight the kind of questions that can arise about the political order. As Torrance notes, Iphigeneia has extraordinary power in this play, specifically as priestess of Artemis; the gender roles are reversed as she orders men around and has a significant source of legitimate authority as priestess (2019, 31, 70). For an audience to see someone in such a high level of authority and connection to the gods express doubt on their nature and will is noteworthy, more so than the usual skepticism of characters who do not occupy sacred offices (like Orestes in 570-5). If the sacrificial ritual is indeed a veneer of legitimacy for Taurian cruelty, what role do religious beliefs and ritual play in this political reckoning? What consequences do the inherently unpredictable and unknowable natures of the gods have for the political functioning of the polis if its customs are built upon these religious beliefs? These questions and more will come to the fore in the play's finale.

Nomos and Distance(s) between Taurians and Athenians

The line between the barbarian other and civilized Greek becomes a wide chasm in IET if we go back to IT and see how delicate and “transparently deceptive” it becomes (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 34). If IET does not probe this line because it favors philosophy and character development to address its own questions of state and religion, how then does Euripides destabilize this divide to deepen our reading of the sacrificial nomos? The difference depends on the finales of the respective plays, both examples of either human or divine intervention. We have already seen how the longing for home is well-developed in IT, and this theme reaches a spectacular conclusion with the establishment and transformation of a barbarian religious nomos to Attica, which will inspire deeper readings about religion and the polis.

Although Euripides uses the word βάρβαρος frequently in IT, his treatment of cultural and religious differences is less about the Taurians’ “barbarian” foreignness than about their primitiveness (Bacon 1961, 150). Although the “world of the barbaric other [was] contrasted to the self,” the distance between Taurians and Athenians was “unstable” and “transparently deceptive.” (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 34). In line 31 Iphigeneia defines the state in the land of the Taurians, which is the rule of Thoas, whose barbarian aspects are stressed by Euripides with a polyptoton (βαρβάροισι βάρβαρος), “barbarian among barbarians.” (Parker 2016, 61) The use of the verb ἀνάσσω (to lord over) to describe his rule is an insight into the undemocratic Taurian settlement governed primarily by a τύραννος (absolute ruler). It is then fascinating to see how the barbarian emphasis is picked away by the political language of the play: “More paradox abounds in Thoas’ kingdom, not only in the area of religion but also in its politics. The place where the Taurians live is repeatedly described as a *polis*, and, although they have a king, they are nonetheless peculiarly referred to as ‘citizens’. But such political structures were supposed to be

characteristically Greek.” (Wright 2006, 190-1) Indeed, “[j]ust as Euripides’ [sic] Taurians worship Greek gods, their king has a Greek name.” (Parker 2016, 61) The barbarian aspects of the play help the Athenian audience to explore a problem (human sacrifice and the worship of Artemis) at a safe distance (among the Taurians) (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 39).

To return to my discussion about barbarian differences, the stylistic choices to make the barbarian other “familiar” are not remarkable; they form part of the contemporary conventions of the stage to not make the characters so foreign as to be unintelligible to the audience (Parker 2016, xxxiii). It is also important to note that Thoas is presented as a “devotee of a horrible cult [who is] a man of impeccable piety and religious correctitude, in his way.” (Parker 2016, xxxiii) The Taurians are also portrayed in a manner that is not condescending or as stupid, inviting a closer look by the audience. On the other hand, the distances are closed at the end of the play when the barbarian *nomos* is integrated into the religious rites of Athens. As Sourvinou-Inwood details, IT explores the problem of human sacrifice in complicated ways by “zooming” into the distances between the contemporary Athenian worship of Artemis and the mythological/historical worship of Artemis (2003, 25-40). While I do not detail the multiple ways the play both reminds the audience of contemporary religious rites and provokes discomfort with fearful foreign rites, this “zooming” technique is key to my argument about the significance of the etiology and why the destabilization of ethnic differences matters.

As I detail in the conclusion to this chapter, the establishment of the barbarian religious *nomos* in Halae serves to remind the audience of the barbarian roots of their religious traditions. The new rite of drawing blood from a man’s neck instead of human sacrifice demonstrates that “the Athenians are ethically superior to barbarians like Thoas.” (Lefkowitz 2016, 92). However, the ethical transformation of *nomos* is not clean-cut, as Sourvinou-Inwood details:

The fact that *Iphigeneia in Tauris* shows Athena instituting a cult that was a mild transformation of human sacrifice creates the notion that those savage practices really were remote and located in the geographical and chronological other. [...] So the explorations in this tragedy conclude with the presentation of Artemis as a superior version of the heroic past. Nevertheless, in these perceptions is articulated the notion that the Attic cult of Artemis Tauropolos includes aspects that are not unrelated to savage rites [...] which express the dark side of Artemis in particular and Greek divinities in general.” (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 38)

By blurring the lines between barbarian and civilized, Euripides invites the audience to consider the Taurians more seriously, especially because “the arbitrary actions of the gods [...] prompt further audience reflection on these issues [human sacrifice and the gods’ wills].” (Torrance 2019, 82) To consider the full implications of the play in the Athenian context, some of which are civic in nature, the Taurian and Greek divide must be bridged.

Reading Nomos in Athens

One scholar stated that IT “consistently invites audience interpretation in a number of different ways.” (Torrance 2019, 95) By contrast, we shall see how IET closely weaves together the themes it addresses with the interpretation it prefers by means of the character arcs.

Returning to IT, we will see how the establishment of the new nomoi leaves open several strands of thought that extend our reading of polis and religion in the play to Athens. Bringing together how nomos is treated through religious exploration, the main characters and the barbarian/Greek divide, we shall see how the play stimulates civic discussion about the influence of religion in the polis governance through its etiology.

The appearance of Athena is at once comforting yet confusing because she is not the goddess concerned directly with Iphigeneia (Artemis) or with Orestes (Apollo). Most scholars agree that the establishment of the barbarian nomos in Halae indicates that Artemis desired human blood and that it was her proper rite in the Taurian land (Torrance 2019, Kyriakou 2006, Sourvinou-Inwood 2003), but one scholar sees the rite as just an existing one that Euripides had

to consider as he created his etiology because Artemis was already exonerated in the play (Parker 2016). My thesis encompasses both readings by arguing that Euripides educates the polis by bringing awareness about Greek religious belief and its potential influence in the polis. We have already seen how Euripides takes great pains to show how the interplay between polis, goddess and sacrifice is questioned in the play through the instability of *nomos*. In other words, it matters if citizens believe the goddess does not approve of the sacrifices, because religious rhetoric is powerful, especially if we consider how the state enforces those rites. Hence, my reading of the etiology takes on civic aspects in democratic Athens. One scholar argues against reading any civic ideology or problematization of Athenian religion into the etiology because the poet's choices are more likely influenced by stylistic considerations for the stage (Kyriakou 2006, 27). I respectfully disagree and include historical and social context in ensuing paragraphs as I work under the Aristophanic assumption that the poet is the educator of the city.

Reading from the absolute divine silence in IET to IT helps us to see how Athena's presence is more about Athens than the goddess herself. The *deus ex machina* that Euripides so often uses in his plays "seems to have been introduced [in this play] by Euripides for one and only one reason, to glorify the city of Athens by showing the introduction of certain features of the worship of Artemis and customs of Athens as having been established by Athena in prehistoric times." (Butts 1947, 128) Butts continues to describe several references to Attica and Athenian practices throughout the play, and the great patriotic excitement of the audience to see their patron deity's appearance. Athena would clarify that a contemporary ritual known to them was not practiced by their ancestors but was brought from foreign lands (128-130). Yet, it is important to note that "Athena at the end of the play does not even mention the Aulis sacrifice and does not chastise the Taurians for their savage cult or admonish them to change their ways

but prescribes a symbolic sacrifice at Halae so that Artemis may preserve her presumably cherished Taurian honors.” (Kyriakou 2006, 15) By reading IT and IET together, we can see how the question is still asked of how does civilization stay civilized- what is the difference between Taurian and Athenian beyond gods? In other words, what is the true civilizing influence?

One answer we receive from both plays is that piety is not a true civilizing influence because of the way Euripides highlights the moral ambiguity and potential danger it can pose for the polis. Consider the last words of Athena to Thoas: καὶ σὺ μὴ θυμοῦ, Θόας. (1474) “And you, Thoas, cease to rage.” Thoas presents a critical reading of a deranged religious fanatic, to such an extent that the Athena reprimands him and his fervor. We begin to see the irony in how an extraordinarily religious man who decries the escaping Greeks as ungodly and profane (δυσσεβής) is criticized by the goddess herself. Consider also how Iphigeneia has so deftly manipulated the entire Taurian polis and state throughout the play. Iphigeneia’s manipulation of Thoas is comical, especially with her use of religious rites: “I spit it out. Hear me, O spirit of religion!” (1138) Iphigeneia plays remarkably well her role as priestess, thoroughly deceiving him and the townspeople through her immense, legitimate power. It just so happens that the religious rites she prescribes (to hide oneself from the pollution) are also exactly what she needs to escape. The Taurians are powerless before religion, as glossed by one translation when Iphigeneia makes plans with Orestes: “I’ll make piety serve their fear.” (1015) One scholar finds all the cleansing rites are religiously valid; they are not phony inventions, and thinking of the Taurians as hapless fools detracts from the reality of Greek religious practice as described on the stage (Parker 2016, xxxiii). Nomos as custom established by gods or humans may be a strong force ordering human lives, but what is the role of religion in this reckoning? If the barbarians aren’t so different from us Athenians- we worship the same goddess after all- why do we

“civilize” her worship by meeting her needs through a mildly different way? Given how powerful religion was in the civic context among the Taurians, what kind of anxieties are reflected in Athenian civic contexts? I posit that such a portrayal of religion in the polis serves as a moment for audience reflection on the role of religion in the Athenian democratic setting.

I provide some background to the questions above through Athenian historical and social context. The openness of the play to individual interpretation is very important here as I develop my points. Consider Herodotus’ account of the deception of the Athenians by Peisistratus (608-527 BCE) in *The Persian Wars*. Peisistratus successfully deceived the Athenian polis and ascended to power by dressing up a tall woman with armor and by having heralds run before her, announcing her as Athena who was returning Peisistratus with honor to her city (he had been previously driven out of the city). The townspeople worshipped her and welcomed him (1.60). The parallel is clear with Iphigeneia’s deception of the Taurian state and polis, and I posit that the Athenian democracy could draw a similar lesson from this play as in the account by Herodotus. One scholar also connects Iphigeneia’s role as priestess to the highest position of public office an Athenian woman could hold as a priestess (Torrance 2019, 70). This position was so prestigious that Athenian priestesses had privileged rights in the law courts of Athens. This connection informs the argument that even if the play’s treatment of barbarian piety may be laughable at times, it reveals a real power that has many possibilities in the polis, as shown by the human sacrifice and by the fact that only a vision of divine certainty could change the *nomos* as we saw in the etiology. If the polis served unpredictable gods with dark natures and if it enforced their orders, what were the implications for its citizens and the city’s navigation around these uncertainties? IET will take up the question of managing these religious uncertainties through Iphigeneia’s questions and by religious and philosophical discourses.

IV.

Towards New Religious Horizons in *Iphigénie en Tauride*

Iphigénie en Tauride portrays the transformation of religion and the individual's religious beliefs from the authoritarian and inflexible to the open-minded and humanistic. Instead of the transformation of *nomos* as we saw in Euripides, the key insight to this play's political commentary and tragic pathos will be its gradual movement towards new religious beliefs. This movement is evident and significant on multiple levels, from the arcs of the major characters to the philosophical ideas and political language in the play. Historical context will inform my literary analysis insofar as the back and forth reading may require to contextualize civic and religious power as well as intellectual currents the play responds to in Enlightenment Paris. The tragedy does not renounce theism completely, but it does portend the destruction of political systems that enforce religious rites. Reading IT and IET together helps us to see how IET goes further by taking a deep look at how morality, philosophy, and the individual play a role in the transformation of religious beliefs.

Iphigénie, Thoas and Character Development

Reading IET with the lens of IT helps us to see how elaborate the characters have become in the adaptation, and how their narrative arcs show the religious changes in the play. From the beginning of the first act in scene IV, Thoas is an ominous and complicated presence. One scholar remarks that « [s]i La Touche présente Thoas dès le premier acte, c'est pour mieux mettre en valeur une Iphigénie qui commence à prendre conscience de la cruauté de la religion taurienne, une Iphigénie dont la remise en question de la religion affronte le fanatisme aveugle de Thoas. » (Bonnell 1997, 70) The appearance of Thoas so early on in the play begins the extended showdown between Iphigénie and Thoas as she tries to change his mind about the sacrifice multiple times with brilliant rhetoric, and how he responds with steadfast closed-

mindedness as his character stagnates. “This version [of Euripides’s tragedy] features perhaps the most superstitious and violent Thoas ever to have taken stage. Through the characterization of Thoas, his play (the only one he ever wrote) makes an ardent argument against fanaticism.” (Hall 2012, 197) If Thoas is the exploration of the psychology of fanaticism, Iphigénie is the counterpart heroine of reason and interior reflection that leads to productive change (Bonnell 1997, 71). As we shall see, Iphigénie will undergo a complicated religious journey that will include philosophical and theological elements. Thoas, however, will be struck down.

Iphigénie’s religious growth is difficult to analyze because she is disorganized and incoherent at times, which demonstrates why La Touche’s tragedy is known as second-rate. She and other characters seem to go off script in the ferocity of their opinions, as when one scholar found repackaged quotes (or something very similar) from Voltaire, the Bible, and Deistic beliefs in their remarks (Pelckmans 1996, 83-4). Indeed, because characters express far-ranging beliefs beyond the norm of what a tragic character would do, contemporary critics criticized the play for reflecting the playwright’s agenda too transparently (Brillaud 2004, 123-4). This play is the only one La Touche wrote, and the stagecraft in terms of dialogue and consistency is not masterful. For example, in act 1 scene 5, Iphigénie declares that nature speaks to her, and that it rules both men and gods in all places. In the last few lines of the play, Iphigénie concedes that she has finally recognized the gods, for the law of nature is the law of the heavens (V: ix, 17-8). Both remarks are very similar, and the only real difference between them is that in the final scene Iphigénie says that she can now recognize the gods. In between, Iphigénie constantly doubts the gods, rails against the heavens, and wallows in uncertainty. My approach to interpreting her growth acknowledges the difficulty of working with this play and the fact that her growth—as well as others such as Thoas—is closely related to the play’s concern with philosophy and state

and religion. I address the aspects of her growth that will tie into my succeeding analysis on religion, philosophy, and the political in this tragedy.

Iphigénie opens the play with a plea for clarity from gods regarding a recent dream, setting the stage for a major theme about the unknowability of the divine will. At first, Iphigénie declares her faith, alluding that it was a law established in Diane's name (Artemis) that ordained the human sacrifice, not the goddess herself (I: ii, 18-23). She affirms her belief that Diane saved her from the sacrifice and spirited her away from Aulis under the inhuman sky to Tauris.

Iphigénie then doubts whether the gods demand sacrifice when she characterizes her role of sacrificing priestess as hateful (ii, 43-4): "Victime à chaque instant d'un devoir odieux, / L'horreur de la nature, et peut-être des dieux ?" (Victim at every moment to this hateful duty, / a horror of nature, and maybe even of the gods?) We find here a repetition of Iphigeneia's musings in IT- she doubts the nature of the gods, the revelation of their will, and the morality of her religious duty. Iphigénie will continue to repeat these musings with some variation throughout the play. Both Iphigénie and Thoas seek to fulfill a religious duty and please the gods, and both demonstrate confusion at the gods' wills. It is only Iphigénie that ultimately chooses to follow the dictates of her heart (compassion) that lead her to make her ethical choices and beliefs, whereas Thoas remains stubbornly attached to his fears and to the oracle he received.

Questioning and internal growth make the key difference between them.

Iphigénie also displays an extraordinary range of emotions and beliefs towards the gods. In one scholar's reading, her character breaks from the French classical model of a stable, steadfast tragic character which has roots in a Christian and Aristotelian reading of tragedy (Brillaud 2004, 129). Indeed, precisely because of her indecision and lack of stability in her character development, "la prêtresse de Diane montre son humanité dans l'inconstance de ses

actions et de ses choix.” (Brillaud 2004, 130) In other words, her humanity is expressed on the stage because of her questioning and wavering, which highlights her individuality. For example, she not only expresses her belief in the goodness of the gods, but also attacks religion (iii, 14-6):

Que peut-on sur un cœur en proie à l'imposture,
Que sa religion et la crédulité
Remplissent d'épouvante et de férocité ?

What can be done with a heart imprisoned by deception,
Which religion and gullibility have
Filled with horror and terror?

Immediately after this withering critique on religion, she appeals to the gods, reasoning that their glory and compassion must oppose the false zeal of Thoas, and that they find horror in the blood of the unfortunate spilled on the altars (17-9). However, like Iphigeneia in IT, she is complicit in the sacrifices and has carried them out until the play's action. This vacillating on the gods and religious rites is reflected throughout the tragedy until the very end, with occasional, piercing diatribes. Her companion priestesses also reflect her thinking in contradictory ways. I include the scholarly critique and a general overview of her character to point out that the only time we see Iphigénie make choices that demonstrate character and religious development are in the last scenes of the play.

Iphigénie's choices at the end of the play demonstrate internal growth that we did not see directly in the play. She shows courageous resolve and theological certitude whereas before she expressed confusion and wavered. She commands her priestesses to obey the gods and to protect her brother from the impending sacrifice as Thoas approaches the siblings. While Iphigénie showed herself to be an able and highly intelligent orator in the play, the changes we see in the final scenes are not so related to character growth as they are to the change in her religious beliefs. In IT, we never see an indication that Iphigeneia's religious beliefs have changed

because the only answer on religious matters comes from Athena. She condemns the anger of Thoas, and he agrees to obey her, which helps us to see his downward spiral in IET.

La Touche takes pains to illuminate the inner life of Thoas, which is not at all the case in IT. In his character, we see how religious beliefs factor into the play's concern with state and religion, because he sees himself as the enforcer of the divine, civic order (V, v). Hence, the terms in which he is characterized as the state, and his enforcement of the religious law, matter (both will be covered in more depth in another section). Thoas is certain of the gods' demands. As he responds to Iphigénie's moral equivocations in the first act when he is introduced, he condemns the illusions of a compassionate heart (I: iv). In fact, he relies on a recent oracle and voices that both warned of his ultimate demise (I: iv). However, he is also portrayed as a powerless victim of his own beliefs (Bonnell 1997, 74). Ultimately, Thoas is characterized as institutional religion: organized religion that also has power over the state (74). He is a tyrant who also knows the sacred and supreme « ordre des dieux » despite privately expressing his own fear against a recent oracle and of being abandoned by Diane (V: iv-vi). He presents an air of moral superiority, professing to know the will of the gods, even as his façade breaks down throughout the play as he doubts himself and his beliefs. The character progression we see is one of self-torture, private doubt, moral superiority, and ultimate downfall because of his unchanging beliefs, despite Iphigénie's multiple attempts to change his mind. The tortured inner reflection we witness does not lead to compassion because he chooses to remain angry and be guided by his anger (V, i). His enforcers (the soldier Arbas and priestesses) are also characterized as religious tyrants in a similar manner as their tyrant (73).

Analyzing the character arcs of Thoas and Iphigénie helps us to see how the changes they experience are the starting point to consider other interrelated factors in the play, such as

Iphigénie's philosophical discourses and the complexities of religion in the play. I now turn to these other factors, which will ultimately lead to a political reading of state and religion.

Divine Confusion(s), Humanism and Philosophy

It is not an understatement to say that *La Touche* problematizes organized religion (Christianity) in many ways in this play. Iphigénie's questions and reasoning have taken firm root in the adaptation. It is important to note that he embarked on his own religious and philosophical journey from Catholic fanaticism, which informed his writing (Lancaster 1950, 394). However, the play is not atheistic, and it seeks to counteract the fanatical religious certainty of Thoas by positing different kinds of moral certitude through philosophy and by changing religious beliefs. Understanding these themes in the play will be important to articulate my political reading of state and religion in the play.

As scholars note, *La Touche*'s portrayal of Greek polytheism is not sophisticated, and the play's religious elements should be read in the Christian, monotheistic context of Enlightenment Paris and the intellectual current of Deism at the time (Pelckmans 1996, 83, 84, 88). Iphigénie opens the play with the following lines, pleading for divine clarity on a dream she had received:

Grands dieux, dont en tremblant j'implore l'assistance,
Daignez en l'éprouvant soutenir ma constance !
Du songe qui m'accable éclairez l'horreur ;
De vos profonds décrets est-il l'avant-coureur ?

She never receives an answer. Throughout the entire play, the gods never communicate their will, and their nature (as in whether they harbor good will or evil towards humankind) is also inscrutable. One scholar characterized them by stating that « Les dieux ne sont pas morts: ils sont muets. » (Bonnell 1997, 73) Oracles and dreams play a role in the plot, either as communications from god or from the human heart, but their veracity is doubted and ultimately discarded in favor of the oracle of the compassionate heart. However, the divine is still present, albeit under a

different, Enlightenment-style garb. The unknown will of the gods connects with two significant points about the historical context of the tragedy and the message it contains. The first is that although religion and religious rites are presented as polytheistic, the playwright is concerned with criticizing monotheistic religion. This is not a reading on polytheism; it is an attack on Christianity (Pelckmans 1996, 88). Second, the tragedy is anti-clerical, which is most clearly seen through the figure of Thoas, the deranged religious and political leader (Pelckmans 1996, 89). Nearly every scene contains despairing remarks about the gods and their absence or presumed ill-will towards humanity. The figure of the oracle merits a closer inspection in the play because it possesses an ambiguity in the various ways it is used.

Iphigénie, Thoas, and Oreste each receive oracles. In the second scene of the first act, Iphigénie describes the dream that troubled her, in which she was forced to sacrifice her own brother. Her companion priestess, Isménie, condemns this dream as a false oracle. Although it does not prove to be true, it is a prescient warning. Isménie is also fearful of the gods, but she warns Iphigénie of hubris because of her ungratefulness for her divine deliverance. Then, she also condemns the dream as a false object that terrorizes Iphigénie. This bewildering display of inconsistent claims from her companion priestess occurs throughout the tragedy in different circumstances, further highlighting the problems of knowing the divine will, including from an oracle.¹ Iphigénie also criticizes oracles with her sound condemnation of Thoas: « Ah, cet oracle obscure, autant qu'épouvantable, / Pour le malheur du monde est-il si véritable? » (V: v) His argument for the sacrifice centered around another oracle he received, which he must obey to spare his own life. She argues for the doubtful origin of the oracle and implies that the oracle itself was misunderstood. However, the figure of the oracle is important to understand how La

¹ Brillaud 2004 further develops this reading on dreams, showing how another dream she has about Aulis is questioning received 18th century Augustinian ideas on dreams and divine uncertainty (125-6).

Touche develops moral and religious certitudes that disavow human sacrifice. Indeed, Iphigénie is certain that « Le trouble de mon cœur m'est un fidèle oracle. » (IV: i) Her heart and her reasoning, along with the deployment of words like *ciel*, *humanité* and *nature*, become interpretive guides to reveal the tragedy's concern with humanism and humanistic religion, which is its moral response to clericalism and the state's enforcement of religious rites.

Iphigénie's refusal to perform the sacrifices revolves around three humanistic concepts in the words *humanité*, *ciel*, and *nature*, which become philosophical discourses according to one scholar (Bonnell 1997, 73). The strategic deployment of the word "ciel" subverts appeals to the gods by replacing them through mimicry. In other words, when *ciel* is used in a similar rhetorical fashion as god, either as a desperate appeal for help or in philosophical speculation, it reveals a different perspective on divinity, one aligned with humanistic religious thinking where reason is more valid than divine revelation (Bonnell 1997, 74). This shift is easily tracked throughout the tragedy, as *ciel* is used in more significant ways towards the end of the play, in some cases replacing the idea and function of the gods (III: iv, vi, IV: i, iv, vi-viii, V: v, vi, ix). These are not rhetorical flourishes but indications of the tragedy's ideological movement to a different conception of the divine through Iphigénie's internal growth, which allows the audience to interpret Thoas and his actions as *unnatural*. Thus, Iphigénie can finally declare that she sees the unity between the gods, heavens (*cieux*), and the law of nature (V: ix).

Humanité, then, informs the "law of nature" so clearly expressed by Iphigénie. This can be seen through the progression of "nature" and "humanité" in the tragedy. In the first act, scene v, Iphigénie describes her horror at fulfilling the strict law with a remarkable description with pathos and tragic clarity: « Tout mon sang se souleve, et tout mon corps frémit ; / Dans mon cœur palpitant l'humanité gémit. » Fated to fulfill the law, Iphigénie's response embodies her

blood, body, and heart, images that coalesce around the invocation of a weeping humanity. Soon after, she clarifies her moral stance, mirroring her final statement:

La nature me parle, et ne peut me tromper :
 C'est la première loi... c'est la seule peut-être...
 C'est la seule, du moins, qui se fasse connoître
 Qui soit de tous les temps, qui soit de tous les lieux,
 Et qui règle à la fois les hommes et les dieux.

Nature speaks to me, and it cannot lie.
 It's the first law... maybe the only one...
 It's the only one, at least, which makes itself known
 Which is for all time, for all places,
 And which rules both humankind and the gods.

Although she seems sure of her convictions, the plot shows that she is still confused about the dictates of Diane and of obedience to her law. The important theme here is that *humanité* and *nature* are counter voices to Thoas's theological certitudes. Nature rules both humans and gods, and it seems that nature also does not ask for human sacrifices because of the compassionate human heart. These philosophical discourses are responses to the problems that arise when the state enforces religious rites. Instead of theological certainty, *humanité* is the embodiment of human reason, as expressed in one of the final scenes of the tragedy: « Et ce cœur innocent, que noircit l'imposture, / Ecoute seulement la voix de la nature. » (And this innocent heart, which disdains deception / Listens only to the voice of nature) (V: v) Contrary to the revealed will of the gods, *humanité*, as evidenced by the oracle of the heart (*cœur*), is also certain of horror whenever it is encountered, and thus Thoas's position is invalidated. He does not have a reasonable claim to theological correctness nor to a moral high ground, as the knowledge he claims, that of being the voice and enforcer of an oracle from the goddess, has become invalidated because of the play's movement toward new religious beliefs.

Gods, Laws, and the State

In addition to my discussion of religious change in the play, I highlight the civic aspects the adaptation emphasizes in its portrayal of state and religion. Making these observations will allow me to perform my political reading of state and religion in this play. IET probes the interplay between state and religion through the ways it characterizes this relationship through the language of law and religious devotion. When Thoas argues with a rebellious and skeptical Iphigénie in the fourth scene of the first act, he sums up his argument: « En un mot, c'est ma loi, c'est ma religion, / Et votre seul devoir est la soumission. » In terms of style, pairing religion and law together immediately draws attention to the tragedy's concern with the state's enforcement of religious rites. In the context of this scene, the statement is also a summary of Thoas's previous argument with Iphigénie about why the claim of authority is important in terms of state and religion, because religion appeals to a higher power than the state:

Mais vous, de leurs décrets l'instrument et l'organe,
 Quel tribunal en vous les juge et les condamne ?
 De quelle autorité, bornant ici leurs droits,
 Aux maîtres du tonnerre imposez-vous des lois ?
 Tremblez de vos discours : qu'un prompt retour expie
 Les murmures secrets de votre cœur impie.
 Malgré les mouvements dont il est combattu,
 Adorer et frapper, voilà votre vertu.

But you, the instrument and voice of their decrees [the gods]
 What court in you judges and condemns them?
 By which authority, limiting here their rights,
 Do you impose your laws on the masters of thunder?
 Tremble from your speech: may a quick return cleanse
 The secret murmuring of your impious heart.
 Despite the movements on which it is fought,
 To worship and to strike, that is your virtue.

Thoas argues for the insignificance of Iphigénie; before the gods, her ungodly heart is nothing. Her questioning has no authority before the masters of thunder, nor can she impose her laws on

them. Instead, her new virtue (vertu) is to worship and to strike (the sacrifice). Thoas gives religious commands to Iphigénie, but he is supposed to be subservient to her authority as a priestess who can clarify to him the mysterious dealings of the gods, because she alone can approach the gods in her holy office (« saint ministère »). Iphigénie refers to him as one of those capricious tyrants. His argument is that his religion and his law must be enforced, but he clearly relies on a religious claim to assert his authority over a priestess.

Iphigénie operates on this understanding of law and religion when she interrogates the Greek strangers upon meeting them. « Quels sont vos dieux, vos lois ? Quelle est votre patrie ? » (II: iv) Her first questions are fascinating; Iphigénie understands the strangers insofar as she knows who they worship, what laws they follow, and the identity of their home country. After her questions, she clarifies that she is fulfilling the harsh demands of an illegitimate cult: « Mon bras est l'instrument, mon cœur est la victime. » The tragedy indicates again that markers of laws, gods, and country are very important. Furthermore, this is a strange greeting, one that isn't even found in the tragedy by Euripides. The questions reflect Iphigénie's oppression under the laws and gods of the Taurians and their tyrant.

IET also highlights the problems it is addressing when it combines terms in its final denunciation of Thoas, when Pilades strikes him down (V: viii):

Arrête, et meurs, barbare, au pied de ces autels.
Fuyez, tyrans sacrés des malheureux mortels.

Cease, and die, barbarian, at the bottom of these altars.
Flee all of you, sacred tyrants of miserable mortals.

The stage directions indicate that the actor for Pilades must direct the first line to Thoas, and the second to the guards and priestesses surrounding Iphigénie and Orestes. Three significant points can be derived from these lines. The first is that the barbarian (Thoas) dies at the foot of the

altars. It is a poignant end for a “sacred tyrant,” an important plot point which will be addressed in the next section. It is important to note, however, that the tyrant will die beside his altars, which is a symbolic act of destruction. The second is the idea of the sacred tyrant; heretofore, Thoas has only been addressed as a tyrant, and his actions have been framed along the lines of his law and religion. Indeed, he is not addressed as a sacred tyrant; he has already been struck down when Pylade turns to the guards and priestesses. However, only Thoas has been characterized as a tyrant throughout the play; by association, the audience will think of him as Pylade speaks to the others. By combining the terms, *La Touche* can point again to the tragedy’s concern with the state’s enforcement of religious rites. Combining civic and religious aspects of the tyrant emphasizes this point. The third is that not only is Thoas condemned, but also his priestesses and guards are framed as sacred tyrants, too. As enforcers and the religious, ideological purveyors of his reign, they are every bit as culpable as their tyrant.

The language of rights and the law is also an important insight into the play’s concern with state and religion. Indeed, when Orestes is about to be sacrificed, he retorts to Thoas that fulfilling the law would mean Thoas’s destruction (V: vi). Although this seems to be an awkward remark because Iphigeneia has not yet reached her final declaration, it reflects a moral certitude that has already developed in the audience’s mind and which reflects Iphigénie’s opening remarks about the law of nature. Given that the law of nature is religiously framed (because the heavens and the gods obey it), Orestes’s claim is illuminating, for the destruction of Thoas is also religiously and morally correct. In fact, the death of this human being is justified by a religious, moral law, and it can thus be interpreted as an act of religious devotion.

A Political Reading of State and Religion

Bringing together the different strands of thought concerning the shift in religious beliefs and the significance of the legal language, we begin to read the political in the play. In fact, my reading hinges on the statement that the religious is political. By striking down Thoas through human intervention, La Touche shows how the oppressive religious tyrant cannot continue in power, especially because Thoas comes to represent institutionalized religion. However, we come to see how the superseding order as manifested in Iphigénie's religious transformation is not atheistic. She can now harmonize her divine beliefs with her humanity, elevating herself to a new level of consciousness that is rationalistic (Bonnell 1997, 75). It is indeed the beginning of a new religious experience that is liberated from the state, one where Oreste can take on a new being in a new world (« Dans un nouveau monde je prends un nouvel être. » V, ix). The oracles of the gods are in disrepute, and they are replaced by the sure oracle of the compassionate human heart. As I shall detail in the following chapter, the state has changed because the nature and experience of religion has changed absent the dangers of fanaticism.

Within the context of mid 18th century Paris and the complicated history of French reception of Greek tragedy, the connections become even more apparent. Several scholars find parallels between Thoas and King Louis XV (1710-1774), who was deeply distrusted and hated by his people for many reasons, one of them being a barbaric execution in Paris only a few months before the premiere of La Touche's play (Hall 2012, 198, Pelckmans 1996, 83, 84). The execution represented the might of the *ancien régime*, which was the divine and civic order that gave the French monarch absolute power for centuries. His play's "condemnation of cruelty and tyranny is undoubtedly connected with the emergent sensibility of the antimonarchical movement as well as with the Enlightenment distrust of religion." (Hall 2012, 199) Seen in this

light, Pylade's intervention is a prescient glimpse into the future of the French monarchy. If we consider the French stage from the 17th century and onwards, a long history of censorship and conflict emerges from Catholic institutionalized power. La Touche's play was not the only revival of Iphigeneia at the time—there were other plays and operas that continued addressing many of the themes in his adaptation. Iphigeneia revived as the *ancien régime* began to meet its end, evoking her first appearance on the Athenian stage when another divine, civic order was subverted.

V.

Bloody Oracles and Staging the Secular

In this chapter I will synthesize my comparative readings of both plays and posit my reading of the secular as I see it articulated by Euripides and expanded by La Touche. I define the secular in this thesis as the removal of authoritarian religious power from the state.² I will expand my reading on religion in both plays to show the role religion plays in the formation of the secular as I define it in this thesis, and then I will turn to contemporary American perspectives on the nature of the secular regarding state and religion to expand my comparative reading. The playwrights' biographies and historical contexts will inform my analysis as I construct the historical forces that created the secular in this play and which prompted the playwrights to articulate their own vision of a better society.

While both plays portray the transformation of religious beliefs and rituals so that human sacrifice is averted, each of their contexts is different, which informs my reading of the secular in each play. Reading from the significant religious and philosophical reflection against human sacrifice in IET to the etiology of IT helps us to see contextual differences in the problem of human sacrifice. In the world of Euripides, preventing human sacrifice took on an entirely different meaning than the condemnation against inhumanity in mid 18th century Paris. Consider the following description of the role of sacrifice in Greek tragedy:

In sum, sacrificial procedure offers to the poet a kind of grammar of procedural terms by which to articulate in a compressed and symbolic form the nature of the relations of men in the community and of men to the larger world of animals and gods around them. Participation in sacrifice binds the worshiper to his community, organizes his place in that community, and implicitly obtains his consent to the violence upon which this organization is in part predicated.

² I use the word secular because Merriam-Webster defines it as “not ecclesiastical or clerical” and “not overtly or specifically religious.” (Merriam-Webster) While I show in this section how the “secular” is religiously-informed, it is the management of authoritarian religion that I find interesting, and it is not an accurate statement to say that this power dynamic is entirely religious.

Through ritual a kind of equilibrium or justice is reached between man and his larger environment. (Foley 1985, 39)

Athena does not condemn the human sacrifices in IT precisely because they reflected the nature of the relations of the Taurian community to themselves and to their world. Euripides does not offer any moral or religious condemnation of the sacrifice, except as we witness in the tragic pathos of Iphigeneia and Orestes on stage and their moral equivocations. We come to see why the Greek foreigner submits to the Taurian sacrifice to fulfill the goddess' rites (584-7). With this understanding, we begin to see the significance of Athens in the transformation of the rites of Artemis, because the city's existence and culture was predicated on a different kind of relations between themselves and their world. Hence, one scholar's statement that Athena's intervention and establishment of the new cult celebrates the values of Athenian civilization (Lefkowitz 2016, 98). The secular in Euripides, then, becomes articulated through the people of Athens. Thoas remains with the Taurians, and the transplanted rites of Artemis are adapted to the people of Athens, while still pacifying the goddess' desire for human blood. The new nomoi in Brauron and Halae became rites of initiation that marked the life cycles of young Athenians (Torrance 2019, 89).

What role do religious beliefs play in the etiology of IT? Much can be said about religious beliefs in the Greek context, for unlike the monotheistic religions of Enlightenment Paris, "[t]he Greeks had no sacred texts, no fixed religious dogma and no priestly class or hierarchy that claimed exclusive, authoritative sacred knowledge and access to it [...]." (Kyriakou 2006, 25) Thoas urges Iphigeneia to fulfill the goddess' rites not only because of tradition (custom), but also because of his religious beliefs, which become even more salient when he labels the fleeing Greeks as ungodly. Iphigeneia is ordered to perform a sacrifice that is against her Greek cultural norms and religious beliefs. For the audience, the sacrifice becomes a

grotesque abomination through fratricide, not unlike the ancestral spilling of blood within the household of Atreus that opens the play. Even with this horrifying possibility, Artemis's rites must be completed. Athena orders the new nomos at Halae to compensate for the fact that Artemis never received her honors through his sacrifice. Thus, the Athenians are reminded of the barbarian roots of a strange ritual, and that religious belief served as a link between both Athenian and Taurian worlds, as evidenced by Thoas's piety. This link and the many possibilities it contains informs my reading of the civic lesson Euripides provided the Athenian audience by showing the political significance of religion in the polis and why they should be aware.

However, we cannot read religion in the plays of Euripides and La Touche without an acknowledgement of the complicated role it played in their lives and art. Making this observation will help us to see how the religious influences the creation of the secular. Euripides has a complicated and disputed biographical record on his atheism, but the content of his plays demonstrates a deep understanding and examination of Greek religion. IT contains beautiful choral odes to Apollo and Artemis, full of religious longing and celebration of the divine. Euripides also authored the *Bacchae*, a play that describes the ecstasy of religious experiences and the goodness of submission to the divine. The extensive academic work on his plays shows that he saw religion as an unavoidable part of human life which he rigorously examined, problematized, and explored in the ostensibly religious setting of the Theater of Dionysus for the edification of the Athenians. Guimond de La Touche was religiously minded in his youth, and he spent years in a Jesuit monastery (Lancaster 1950, 393-4). He later reacted strongly against the fanaticism he witnessed. "When his Greek studies introduced him to Iphigeneia, he felt that she had been made to offer similar sacrifices and that he was equipped by personal experience to

make the subject his own.” (394) However, his adaptation reflects a shift in religious beliefs, not complete abandonment of them.

If we consider these elements in the playwrights’ lives in our political reading, we begin to see how the secular is religiously informed, because the religious is political. Reading from *IT* to *IET*, we see how the complicated *nomos* with religious, cultural and political implications is replicated in the French adaptation through the multiple times the playwright emphasizes state and religion, showing how both are connected. We see it in the way that Athena provides a vision of divine certainty when she orders the establishment of the *nomoi* in Attica, and how the corresponding human intervention in the finale of *IT* is exactly in line with the play’s development of humanistic and Deistic discourses on the absent divine and the necessity of human action. The secular, insofar as it is the removal of authoritarian religion from the state’s enforcement, is always accompanied by religious change in both plays. Whether that impulse for religious change comes from religiously inspired feelings or beliefs is another matter, because both playwrights emphasize the human capacity of compassion and empathy for the other through Iphigeneia’s questions. Focusing on the human instead of religious beliefs in the divine is shared by both plays as they ponder the problem of human sacrifice, and it is here that I locate the source of my reading of the secular, because both tragedies assert that humans can be compassionate without recourse to (or in spite of) gods and religious beliefs.

To deepen my reading of the significance of religion behind the development of the secular, I turn to the American secular as it is expressed in the claim of separating church and state. The dominant narrative surrounding the development of this secular begins with Enlightenment political thought that became codified into the American Constitution, with the ultimate result that the separation of church and state protects the religious freedom of all

American religious groups, including religious minorities such as Judaism (Feldman 1997, 4). However, legal scholar Stephen Feldman debunks this dominant narrative by showing how the separation of church and state is “a political and religious development that manifests and reinforces Christian domination in American society.” (5) Feldman goes on to show how Christian definitions of religion have guided American courts as they have fashioned the jurisprudence around the Establishment clause to favor Christianity or forms of religion that align with Christianity (280-1). Consequently, religious minorities such as American Jews have had to translate their religious liberty claims into terms that are legible to ostensibly Christian legal interpretations of religion, sometimes with success. Feldman shows how the promise of religious liberty has rung hollow for religious minorities in the courts. This contemporary example helps us to see how religion is a factor in the development of the secular, and how the claim of government neutrality is deceptive because the religious is political.

I return to the stage to consider the religious and political forces that surrounded the staging of these plays to make a final statement about religion in both plays. Both playwrights are unflinching in their portrayal of religion’s ability to harm people, from Artemis’s thirst for human blood to Thoas’s bloody oracles that demanded a life for a life. In both plays, the power of oracles is ultimately denied. In *IT*, dreams from the gods are discarded as untrustworthy, and in *IET*, the only sure oracle is the guidance of the compassionate human heart (Mikalson 1991, 110). We cannot forget that Euripides staged his plays at a time when citizens could be prosecuted for their religious beliefs (Wright 2019, 164). He was mercilessly lampooned by Aristophanes as an atheist and criticized for debasing the morals of the Athenians by the lewd and impious content of his plays (145). While Aristophanes should not be taken as an authority on Euripides, his parodies do indicate the political and religious environment in which Euripides

produced his art. La Touche also operated in only slightly better circumstances because the French stage was only beginning to emerge from centuries of censure and oppression by religious control over the content of the theater through royal power. The two playwrights were limited in how they could produce their art and express their religious and political ideas. If anything, we should consider it a testament to their artistic prowess that we can draw subversive readings from their plays.

In the final analysis, we begin to understand how Euripides began a conversation on the significance of Greek religion in the polis through the political aspects of religious belief, and how he articulated the secular through the citizens of Athens. Religious rhetoric is powerful precisely because it appeals to a higher power than the state, which means that the state and religion will always be in conflict because the religious is political. We then see how La Touche takes up where Euripides left off by expanding the terms of the discussion with precise legal language and by choosing to portray a human intervention because religious beliefs have changed in the play. The unknowable nature and will of the divine is no longer tolerable for the characters nor an option for deliverance as the focus of the adaptation shifts to the human and human choices. The tragedy in the adaptation lies in the inflexible beliefs of Thoas, which ultimately secure his downfall. Above all, we see a continuity of Iphigeneia's questions, whose significance has urgently increased during the Enlightenment. Authoritarian religion may be controlled in both plays, but religion *per se* is never effaced. Each divine, civic order is followed by another divine, civic order, as we saw in the questioning of the outcome of the *Oresteia* in IT followed by the establishment of new *nomoi*, and the downfall of a religious tyrant followed by reshaped religious beliefs in IET.

VI.

Conclusion

This thesis has several limitations that are important to my conclusions. I have not included a discussion of Iphigeneia's gender and the sexist remarks in the play, which would have addressed Iphigeneia's gender, a subject which is often overlooked in academic studies on this play but which needs more analysis. I have also not shown how IT is also very interested in showing how barbarian the Greeks could be; after all, Thoas reacts with horror that the Greeks could commit so ghastly a crime as to kill their mother when Iphigeneia deceives him. Furthermore, the significance of Iphigeneia's trauma at the hands of her Greek father is continually impressed on the audience through the play's deep look at Iphigeneia's living, inner pain, which would have informed my reading of the genre of tragedy in both plays. I did not address genre but it is an open question because of the "happy endings" to the tragedies. My analysis of Greek religion and its links to barbarism in this play should be tempered with the knowledge that the same Athenian democracy ordered the genocide of the Melians in 416 BCE, only two years before scholar's best estimation of the premiere of IT in 414 BCE (Parker 2016, lxxvi). My reading of Greek religion is limited to the cult of Artemis, and I recognize how complicated and varied Greek religious practices, beliefs and rituals could be.

In addition to further research on Iphigeneia's gender, a fascinating inquiry my thesis has uncovered is the meaning of sacrifice as it relates to the reception history of the play and the development of modernity. I posit that IT and IET should be considered as the first significant articulation of the French plays that subvert sacrifice and which seek to end them, as there are clear links with the avant-garde of the modern French stage in the 20th century. As my reading of the sacrifice showed in the Greek context, it is a perversion of sacrifice but it is still an expression of the relations between humans and their world in equilibrium with limits. Scholars

should consider the development of the secular as it influenced this artistic and philosophical trend to subvert sacrifice that established new relations between humans and their world, the consequences of which humanity has begun to feel after the onset of the seemingly unlimited capitalistic growth in the contemporary period. Finally, new readings await to be made in the Athenian democracy along the lines of religion and state that I have tenuously outlined in this thesis, which is another limitation of this thesis because my reading of the civic lesson on religion is not firmly established.

In my final remarks, I turn to the class of 2020. Against all odds and temporary disregard from the gods, Iphigeneia saved her brother and escaped from the land of the Taurians. However, she was fated to remain priestess of Artemis at the new nomos in Brauron, and she was commemorated at her death with the clothes of women who had died in childbirth. Iphigeneia never escaped her liminal status of being unable to complete her life cycle after her marriage of blood on the sands of Aulis—as priestess of Artemis she would remain unmarried (Torrance 2019, 89). I would not be remiss to say that I feel some part of Iphigeneia’s pain as I will never be able to complete my commencement rites as they were intended in the living tradition of an educational institution with a privileged position in the American landscape of higher education. I am among the few who were given a chance to experience the beauty, agency and liberation of a liberal arts education which has historically been reserved for the rich and elite. The class of 2020 can find comfort with an Iphigeneia for our own time. As long as her story is told on the stage, the memory of all those who did not complete their transition rites will remain alive and honored. Iphigeneia may not have completed her transition, but her questions live on, as I imaginatively conclude in my final paragraph.

I have not delved into the aspects of performance on the theater's stage in this thesis, but among the most moving aspects of these plays is the vivid portrayal of Iphigeneia's trauma, courageous resolve and intelligence that made her so favored by ancient audiences and so enthusiastically received by Parisian audiences. Set against the backdrop of the Greek cosmos in *IT*, Iphigeneia's questions seemed naïve and tragic. But her musings were the portents of a better world to come—a dream, as it were, where the individual's agency and conscience is honored. One scholar declares that *IT* has influenced the “formation of the western mind.” (Hall 2013, 1) While I do not endorse such a sweeping and grandiloquent statement, it is one reading of the play's impact, which leads me to articulate my final observation. Soon after Iphigeneia's revival on the French Enlightenment stage, we can begin to imagine how her questions and struggle against tyrannical religious power would merge into the rallying cries of a mighty Revolution that proclaimed the beginning of a new order.

VII.

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