

IPHIGENEIA AND THE BEARS OF BRAURON

Lys. 641–7 ἐπτά μὲν ἔτη γεγῶσ' εὐθύς ἡρρηφόρου·
 εἴτ' ἀλετρὶς ἡ δεκέτις οὔσα τὰρχηγέτι·
 κᾶτ' ἔχουσα τὸν κρόκωτον ἄρκτος ἡ Βραυρωνίους·
 κἀκαρηφόρου ποτ' οὔσα παῖς καλὴ 'χουσι' ἰσχάδων
 ὀρμαθόν.

κᾶτ' ἔχουσα Bentley: κατέχουσα ΓBC: καταχέουσα R

In her masterly article on this passage,¹ Dr. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood goes most of the way towards solving two serious problems: the text of *Lys.* 645, where the vulgate κᾶτ' ἔχουσα makes the 'bears' more than ten years old, contrary to all other evidence; and the meaning of A. *Ag.* 239 κρόκου βαφὰς ἐς πέδον χέουσα. She argues cogently that χέουσα in Aeschylus means 'shedding' the saffron robe, as most editors including Fraenkel have thought, and not 'letting her robes fall to the ground' as Lloyd-Jones,² followed by Page, has argued. Lloyd-Jones remarks: 'no one has yet produced a convincing motive for what seems an unnecessary piece of exhibitionism, characteristic neither of Iphigeneia nor of Aeschylus'. Her explanation is that Iphigeneia's shedding of her clothes is a ritual act performed by the 'bears' of Brauronian Artemis, whose ritual ancestor Iphigeneia is. This is confirmed by a series of vases found at Brauron, depicting the 'bears', some of whom are naked:³ they have shed their robes, an act which perhaps 'marked the successful fulfilment of a "bear's" career'. What we need in *Lys.* 645, then, is not ἔχουσα 'wearing', but -χέουσα, 'shedding', and the parallel is complete: what the 'bears' are doing is to shed their saffron robe, their badge of bearhood, as Iphigeneia, the original sacrifice, sheds hers.

So far I am wholly convinced by Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood's argument; it cannot be accident that the two passages have so much in common. But I am not entirely happy about how she meets Lloyd-Jones's second point, that if Iphigeneia has been seized by the attendants it is physically impossible for her to shed her robes. 'It might be possible', Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, 'that what seems inexplicable in terms of everyday reality could be seen in a different light if considered in a ritual context.' Perhaps; but the dramatic picture requires some degree of reality, if it is to be effective. One might perhaps resolve the difficulty by supposing that Aeschylus is deliberately using the language of the ritual, 'shedding the robes', to mean something different here, that is, what Lloyd-Jones makes him mean. But the audience could hardly have understood him if he did.⁴ The difficulty is, however, illusory. Aeschylus does not say in this stanza that the attendants seized Iphigeneia and held her aloft; he says that Agamemnon, as she fell

¹ *CQ* 65 (1971), 339–42. I am indebted to Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood, and to Mr. W. G. Forrest and Professor H. Lloyd-Jones, for valuable advice and criticism.

² *CR* 66 (1952), 135. Cf. J. T. Hooker, *Agon* 1 (2) (1968), 59–65.

³ See L. Ghali-Kahil, *Antike Kunst* 8 (1965), 20–33.

⁴ I do not mean to rule out the sinister

overtones of κρόκου βαφὰς, that it suggests the blood soon to be shed (cf. 1121 κροκοβαφῆς σταγῶν). This is not of course what the words primarily mean, but their ambiguity is characteristically Aeschylean. (Cf. Anne Lebeck, *The Oresteia*, xxxx, 85, 191; on the kind of ambiguity which should and should not be looked for in Aeschylus, see *PCPS* n.s. 21, 1975, *ad fin.*)

suppliant about his robes (Lloyd-Jones's own admirable interpretation)⁵, ordered them to do so, and to prevent ill-omened cries by gagging her.⁶ This last we may suppose they do, when 'with a quick movement of her back and shoulders she lets her robe slip to the ground' (Fraenkel), and tries, naked and innocent—the ritual act becomes a gesture of deep pathos—to win the pity of the chieftains by her wordless glance.⁷ Then the other orders are carried out, and she is laid on the altar like Polyxena in the painting;⁸ but in Aeschylus the rest is silence.

My main reservation concerns the final step in Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood's argument. Adopting the reading of R in *Lys.* 645, *καταχέουσα*, she punctuates:

εἴτ' ἄλετρις ἤ• δεκέτις οὔσα τὰρχηγέτι
καταχέουσα τὸν κρόκωτον ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίους.

She is evidently uneasy about the abrupt short sentence and following asyndeton, but the apparent awkwardness is explained, she feels, by a positive advantage in her arrangement: it brings out the balance and contrast between two pairs of time-indications. The precise ages specified (*ἑπτὰ μὲν ἔτη*, *δεκέτις*), each at the beginning of its clause, apply, as they should, to initiation rituals, for which exact timing is important: being an *ἀρρηφόρος* and being a 'bear'; the vaguer indications mark the more general sacral service of being *ἄλετρις* and *κανηφόρος*. I do not doubt the premisses of this ingenious argument, but I do doubt whether, even in a ritual context, such precision is to be looked for in a comic poet. Aristophanes would have put rhetorical balance before ritual correctness.

The real objection to her arrangement, however, is that it gives Athena's title *ἀρχηγέτις* to Artemis. The word has indeed several uses. Its primary meaning seems to be 'founder', then more generally 'patron', whether divine or human, of a city or colony.⁹ So Heracles is *ἀρχηγέτης* of Lacedaemon, Apollo of Cyrene and elsewhere.¹⁰ The foundress and patroness, *ἀρχηγέτις*, of Athens is, as we should expect, Athena. This is explicit in Plutarch and Aristides¹¹ and apparent from inscriptions; most of these date from the Roman era, but one is mid-fifth century¹². Artemis too had her cities, and so Artemis Leucophryene is also called *ἀρχηγέτις τῆς πόλεως* in Magnesian inscriptions.¹³ It is not inconceivable that a

⁵ *Pace* Hooker, *op.cit.*, there is nothing wrong with the resulting sequence of thought: the position of *πέπλοις* . . . *θυμῶ* simply emphasizes the pathetic suppliant act. (That verbal adj. in *-τος* are sometimes active does not favour the passive interpretation of *περιπετής* here; *καταβάτης* in *E. Ba.* 1361 is surely active; on *S.Aj.* 907 see Stanford.)

⁶ Perhaps not only her cries, but the words of supplication which together with her gesture would make her formally a suppliant, and the murder more impious still (cf. J.P. Gould, 'Hiketeia', *JHS* 93, 1973, 74 ff., esp. 82–7).

⁷ Hooker complains that Iphigeneia's escape from her captors requires an imaginary stage direction. But this is not a stage-event; in the allusive style of lyric narrative, *χέουσα*, 'shedding', is enough to show what is meant.

⁸ *ABV* 97, 27; cf. P. Maas, *CQ* 45 (1951), 94.

⁹ Cf. L.H. Jeffery, *Historia* 10 (1961), 144.

¹⁰ *Xen. Hell.* 6. 36; *P. P.* 5. 60; *Th.* 6. 3. Apollo's connection with Cyrene is a peculiarly intimate one, cf. *P. P.* 9. 26 ff.

¹¹ *Plut. Vit. Alc.* 2 *ἡμῶν δὲ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, ὡς οἱ πατέρες λέγουσιν, ἀρχηγέτις Ἀθηνᾶ καὶ πατρῶος Ἀπόλλωνος*. *Aristid.* 1. 605 *Dind.* Cf. *Σ Ar. Av.* 515 *τῆς δὲ ἀρχηγεΐδος Ἀθηνᾶς τὸ ἄγαλμα γλαῦκα εἶχεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ*.

¹² *IG*² i. 1. 38. The name and the suffix in the key phrase *Ἀθηνᾶ] ἀρχηγέτις(ιδι)* is due to editorial supplement, but as the document deals with the Panathenaea and was found on the south slope of the Acropolis, there is not much room for error: the *ἀρχηγέτις* is Athena Polias.

¹³ *Dittenberger*³, 695. 15; 557. 20; 560. 15.

'bear' in the service of Artemis Brauronia could speak of her as 'the foundress'. But it seems to me more likely that in this unambiguously Athenian context¹⁴ the title refers to the patron goddess of Athens.¹⁵ It is true that the scholiast glosses: τῇ δεσποίνῃ Ἀρτέμιδι, ἣ Δήμητρι, and that other notes on this passage are evidently derived from well-informed sources. But here he is clearly guessing, since Demeter is out of the question,¹⁶ while Artemis is indicated by the text he read. This scholium has no value as evidence. ἀρχηγέτις, then, is most unlikely to be Artemis, and must surely be the complement of ἀλετρίς. But we cannot simply keep καταχέουσα and punctuate after τὰρχηγέτι, since there will then be no excuse for the asyndeton, and the 'bear' will be the only stage in a girl's career without an indication of time. I suggest that all these difficulties are met, and Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood's main conclusions reinforced, if we read with slight change:

εἶτ' ἀλετρίς ἥ δεκέτις οὐσα τὰρχηγέτι,
καὶ χέουσα τὸν κρόκωτον ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίους,

with the simple verb as in *Ag.* 239. καὶ → κα(κ)- → κατα- is an easy corruption. Athena then has her own title, balancing Βραυρωνίους; the lines run smoothly; and the 'bears' are still the right age, ten years old.

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¹⁴ These are the stages in the career of an Athenian girl, and two ceremonies in the service of Athena have been mentioned. (ἀλετρίδες are not explicitly connected anywhere with Athena, but the phrase τῇ θεᾷ in *Σ Lys.* 643—almost the only evidence we have—must be intended to refer to her.)

¹⁵ Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood points out to me that if the state cult of Brauronian

Artemis started with the Peisistratids, as is likely (cf. *JHS* 91, 1971, 175; L. Ghali-Kahil, *op.cit.*), ἀρχηγέτις would be familiar in Athens as a title of Artemis. But the presumption that the title refers to Athena here is none the less strong.

¹⁶ He intends her, presumably, as a suitable goddess to be served by ἀλετρίδες; but his note is not evidence on this point either.