

A Note on *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1050–52

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These few lines have been a source of difficulty for editors and, after them, commentators, who have either proposed alterations in the attributions, or supposed a lacuna after 1051 (e.g. Weil), which, however, would still involve changing the attributions. Professor Platnauer, in his commentary¹ on the lines, objects: "There seems to me no need to tamper with the MSS. attributions, or to suspect the text." Instead, he offers a reading of the lines as they stand and produces an English rendering which rather improves the original. No doubt Professor Platnauer is right in asserting that the necessary sense may be had from the passage as it stands. Nevertheless, the text must, I feel, remain suspect. The fact that the lines, even for one who does not suspect them, require a note of some length merely to render their sense is ground enough for question; the question becomes more urgent when one considers that the Greek of each line offers no peculiar difficulties. If the text is sound and the Greek no more problematic than usual, why should there be any difficulty at all? If a revision of the text could eliminate the present difficulty, it seems that the effort would be worthwhile.

Professor Platnauer renders the lines as follows: "Or. (1050) 'my ship is ready.' Iph. answers 'yes, indeed (*dé*), the rest (i.e. everything that has to be done after I have got you and the image on board) *you* must look after.' Or. then remarks 'there is one thing we must do: secure the silence of the chorus (*tasde*).' He then turns to Iph. and asks her to see to this."

If we consider the whole of the relevant passage, the difficulty with Professor Platnauer's interpretation, which strikes me as the best so far offered, will become apparent. First, the passage as it stands:

¹ M. Platnauer, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford 1938) 149–50.

- 1948 *Ορ.* λάθρα δ' ἄνακτος ἢ εἰδότος δράσεις τάδε;
 1049 *Ιφ.* πείσασα μύθοις· οὐ γὰρ ἂν λάθοιμί γε.
 1050 *Ορ.* καὶ μὴν νεώς γε πίτυλος εὐήρης πάρα.
 1051 *Ιφ.* σοὶ δὴ μέλειν χρή τᾷλλ' ὅπως ἔξει καλῶς.
 1052 *Ορ.* ἐνὸς μόνου δεῖ, τάσδε συγκρῆναι τάδε.

As the lines stand, *neōs* makes no clear sense. *Kai mēn*, a strongly asseverative motif, makes no sense either, following, as it does, immediately upon *lathoimi ge*, for why should an asseverative mention of the ship have anything to do with whether Iphigenia could act out her role secretly or openly? *T'all'*, which must refer to the getaway as a complex event, makes more sense if it precedes *neōs*, which would then specify, as *t'all'* does not, just what is concretely involved in the getaway. *Soi dē* is also difficult under the present arrangement; why emphasize *soi* after Orestes has so strongly assented (*kai mēn*) to his role in Iphigenia's scheme? The emphatic *soi*, indeed, were appropriate only if Orestes had some reservation about what he is to do. Yet he seems, apart from this one suggestion, to have had none.

From the above, it seems clear that the crux of the problem lies in the order of 1050 and 1051. Let us, then, reverse the order:

- 1049 *Ιφ.* πείσασα μύθοις· οὐ γὰρ ἂν λάθοιμί γε
 1051 σοὶ δὴ μέλειν χρή τᾷλλ' ὅπως ἔξει καλῶς.
 1050 *Ορ.* καὶ μὴν νεώς γε πίτυλος εὐήρης πάρα·
 1052 ἐνὸς μόνου δεῖ, τάσδε συγκρῆναι τάδε.

Soi dē is now a transitional motif, shifting attention from Iphigenia's role, which has been described and will occupy the stage shortly, to Orestes', which, while crucial, will occur off-stage and so needs little mention, but has received none at all. *Kai mēn* is Orestes' swift asseveration of what Iphigenia has only mentioned (in *t'all'*), and *neōs* is expegetical of *t'all'* (which it cannot reasonably be, yet must be in any event, if *t'all'* follows *neōs*). *T'all'*, then, has been specified, whereas on the received reading it has been left hanging. *Henos monou déi* then goes on, as before, to turn their attention to the one remaining doubt, the chorus; an asyndeton, it is a sharp transition, just as in the received reading, but now, it is a more logical one, for it moves attention from a specific asseveration, whereas formerly the focus had been vague (*t'all'*).

With this change, the basic sense of the passage remains unaltered, nor has the Greek been tampered with. But it now reads smoothly, as the drama, a melodrama of suspense and even high comedy, demands, whereas the received reading is disjointed and diverts the reader's attention from what is being said by forcing him to pause. This, it seems to me, ought to be a decisive consideration in a passage where clarity and movement are dramatically at a premium; further, this revision, while it supplies the passage with the order the drama requires, does not question the MSS. in any fundamental fashion.