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'Accidental creativity': scribes, scholars, translators and the Iphigenia dramas of 17th-century France.
Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University, 2013.

Available at: http://eprint.ncl.ac.uk/pub_details2.aspx?pub_id=162756.

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This is a pre-print of an article due to be published in the Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement, volume 126-2, Dialogues with the Past 2, edited by A. Bakogianni.

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)2041-5370

Date deposited: 25th November 2013

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ACCIDENTAL CREATIVITY: SCRIBES, SCHOLARS, TRANSLATORS AND THE IPHIGENIA DRAMAS OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

SUSANNA PHILLIPPO

Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 354-55

ὡς δ’ ἄνολβον εἶχες ὄνομα, σύγχυσίν τε, μὴ νεῶν χιλίων ἄρχων, Πριάμου τε πεδίον ἐμπλήσας δορὸς

(Aldine edition: 1503)

What an unhappy reputation you [would] have, and what confusion, if you didn’t command a thousand ships, and had not filled Priam’s plain with the spear.1 ὄνομα ms. P; ὄμμα ms. L

ὡς δ’ ἄνολβον εἶχες ὄμμα, σύγχυσίν τ’ εἰ μὴ νεῶν χιλίων ἄρχων τὸ Πριάμου πεδίον ἐμπλήσεις δορὸς

(OCT)

What an unhappy countenance you had, and what confusion, if you weren’t, as commander of a thousand ships, to fill Priam’s plain with the spear.

We do not know his name, or where he lived. If the present scholarly consensus on the manuscripts involved is correct, he was a scribe of the fourteenth century, although even this has been disputed.3 Whoever he was, he could not have expected that what he did that day would, a few hundred years later, shape words that were delivered on a glittering theatre stage in seventeenth-century Paris. But one day, no later than the fourteenth century, someone of his kind looked at his exemplar text of Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis, saw, in a scornful line delivered by Menelaus to his brother Agamemnon, the Greek word ὄμμα (eye or face), but wrote down in his own copy the word ὄνομα (name or reputation).4 And, whether through weary inattention or a trick of the light - or even because he thought that ὄνομα was what actually should be there5 - a small but significant chain of events was set in motion, which led to words being written by the dramatists of a later generation that might otherwise never have been written in the way that they were.

1 This and all subsequent translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.
3 According to R. Garland, Surviving Greek tragedy (London 2004) 93: ‘Zuntz (1965, 1-15) demonstrated to the satisfaction of most scholars that P [Vaticanus Palatinus graecus 287] was a direct copy of L [Mediceus Laurentianus 3.2.2]’ (cf. J. Diggle, Euripidea (Oxford 1994) 298-304), since L is dated to c. 1310 (ibid. 91) and P also to the fourteenth century, in that case whoever copied ‘ὄνομα’ in P from ‘ὀμμα’ in L would have had to have done so in the fourteenth century. Garland admits, however, that ‘The relationship between the Euripidean text transmitted in L and that in P has been a subject of intense scholarly debate’; others have argued that the close similarity between the two manuscripts is to be accounted for by their derivation from the same ultimate archetype (ibid. 93).
4 This is to assume, as most modern editions do, that ὄμμα should be the correct reading. See further n. 21, below.
5 Cf. Garland, Surviving Greek tragedy (n. 3, above) 82 and 86-87, who notes that deliberate ‘editorial’ intervention at the transcribing stage could be a feature of the process in various periods: of the ninth century he says, ‘Some scribes were instructed to copy a codex faithfully, whereas others were free to correct it where necessary. This is indicated by the formulae that are occasionally preserved on manuscripts - that ’it has been copied as accurately as possible from the prototype’, or that the scribe’s task was ’first to correct, then to copy’ (82). In the era of the so-called ‘Palaeologan’ scholars (later thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries), extensive, even over-zealous ’correction’ of manuscripts while copying was common practice (86).
The ‘accidental creativity’ of the title is not often as accidental as in this story of scribal error. Even this story involves the deliberate input of textual editors, scholars and translators, keeping the initial spark alive until it eventually lit up a new perspective for the dramatists of early modern Europe. The example does, though, introduce the key ideas explored here: that the work of those who saw themselves primarily as simply passing on classical texts for other readers and future generations, could have an impact beyond the simple fact of transmission; and that the work of those who saw their task primarily as establishing or clarifying or rendering more accessible a text for its readers and interpreters could itself act as a catalyst for particular developments in the full-blown creative tradition. Creative decisions are complex and to a degree mysterious things; but one form which they can assume is an interaction between the intellectual, imaginative and poetic capabilities and designs of writers like Jean Racine on the one hand, and, on the other, the cues offered by contingent features in textual transmission, or by sober textual and interpretational decisions made by scholars and translators.

This article will look at some examples of this phenomenon in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iphigenia in Aulis plays, considering, among other things, how our ‘accidental creativity’ interacts with other factors involved in the reception and recreation process. It may be wise at the outset to do some theoretical ‘ground-clearing’. There are some points of contact between the perspective explored in this article and recent discussions, such as that by Sean Gurd in his Iphigenias at Aulis. Textual multiplicity, radical philology, of the essential fluidity of classical literary texts in the forms of these through which we now have access to ‘the original’. There are also, however, key distinctions.

Gurd’s argument starts from the consideration that we do not, and cannot, have a single authoritative version of the text of Iphigenia in Aulis, or of any other classical literary text, because each edition presents a different text to some extent, and therefore each edition both constitutes an interpretation of the work and provides the basis for literary interpretations built on the text supplied. Gurd points out that the process of variation widely acknowledged as a condition of generations of manuscript copying did not stop with the invention of printing, but merely entered a different phase. There is, though, a key difference involved which is relevant to the subject of this article, and to which Gurd does not make explicit reference: after the invention of printing, variations and changes to the text can almost always be assumed to be the product of deliberate editorial decision and interpretation; in the era of manuscript transmission, simple error in copying was naturally much more common, and it can be difficult to tell what may have been the result of text-critical judgement and what the outcome of scribal error (indeed at times the two may have interacted).

Like Gurd, in this article I recognise that textual variation, whatever its cause, can be a significant factor in the variant interpretation and presentation of a literary work.

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7 Gurd, Iphigenias at Aulis (n. 6, above) e.g. 9 and 12.
8 ‘Plurality survived the printing press and the technologization of the word. Gutenberg, Aldus, and Erasmus did not end the variation usually blamed on scribes, monks and interpolators; they merely restructured the millennia-old process of compositional, scribal, and scholarly alteration that begins moments after an author puts down the pen.’ Gurd, Iphigenias at Aulis (n. 6, above) 10-11, with references to E. L. Eisenstein, The printing press as an agent of change: Communications and cultural transformations in early modern Europe (Cambridge 1979) and ibid., The printing revolution in early modern Europe (Cambridge 1993).
9 See for example p. 8 and n.30, below.
10 The point is effectively demonstrated by Gurd with regard to a passage from Aeschylus’ Agamemnon in his opening chapter: Gurd, Iphigenias at Aulis (n. 6, above) 12-20.
Here, though, this is applied to the eventual reactions to such variation by those who were creating their own self-confessedly new versions of Euripides’ work, and not to the issues and theoretical concerns surrounding the mission of those seeking to establish, as nearly as possible, ‘what Euripides wrote’, or a critical interpretation of the Greek author’s work based on this. At the same time, I shall in this discussion assume that, when talking of classical texts, there is or was a work which we can call ‘what Euripides (or Sophocles, or Aeschylus) originally wrote’ against which subsequent variation can (and should) at least in theory be assessed, even if it may never in practice be possible to be confident that the version of a text we are using has fully and finally ‘worked back’ to this.¹¹

This question is particularly acute with regard to Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis, given the established consensus that the extant text cannot all have been written by Euripides, and given the various consequent stances taken on the degree of re-writing and editing (and possibly completion) by subsequent playwrights in antiquity.¹² As far as the early-modern editors, translators and adapters of Euripides were concerned, however, the position regarding Iphigenia in Aulis was no different to that with any other Greek tragedy: doubts about the larger-scale integrity of the text appear not to have surfaced until the eighteenth century.¹³ That the textual and interpretative reactions of Erasmus and company were to a text which they believed to represent the integrated conception of a single Greek author is clear, and important to bear in mind. For the purposes of this discussion, though, it is also necessary to concede at the outset that some elements of the Greek text referred to may have been (and in some cases very probably were) subject to ‘deliberate creativity’ in the interval between Euripides’ composition of his Iphigenia in Aulis and the manuscript texts passed down to early modern scholars.¹⁴ For the sake of simplicity, this is stated as an overall consideration here, rather than being explicitly acknowledged at every point where it might be relevant in what follows.

The central catalyst texts in our story are the scholarly Latin translation-cum-edition of the Euripidean play by Erasmus, published in 1506,¹⁵ and its less scholarly but closely

¹¹ Contrast Joseph Grigely as cited by Gurd: ‘A literary work... is an assemblage of texts, a polytext [...] the work [...] is an ongoing - and infinite - manifestation of textual appearances, whether those texts are authorized or not’ (Gurd, Iphigénies an Aulis (n. 6, above) 10, citing from J. Grigely, ‘The textual event’, in Devils and angels. Textual editing and literary theory, ed. P. Cohen (Charlottesville 1991) 176). While recognising the foundations on which such views are based, and their legitimacy in one sphere of literary study, I should own to a natural resistance to the view that this is a sufficient definition of what a literary work is. In fairness, Gurd himself acknowledges a great deal of this: ‘all the successive texts [of the Oresteia] have something in common with each other: the idea of an origin - of a version once approved by Aeschylus - and the knowledge that there are a plurality of versions of that origin’ (Gurd, Iphigénies an Aulis 20); although the approach he is proposing to establish (ibid. 21) would be rather different from mine.


¹³ As is apparent from Diggle’s rather appealingly-titled appendix to the play, ‘Quem quis quando versum primus damnaverit’ in his OCT edition. J. Diggle (ed.), Euripidis fabulae III (Oxford 1994) 423-25. See also Gurd, Iphigénies an Aulis (n. 6, above) 63-64.

¹⁴ Of the passages discussed in this article, we may regard 905-6 as fairly secure, since not even Kovacs (who takes rather an extreme view on the degree of rewriting involved in the extant text) questions their authenticity and Diggle’s appendix (see previous footnote) leaves them unscathed; on Diggle’s own scale of dubiety they rank in the highest category: ‘fortasse Euripidei’ [Diggle, Euripidis fabulae (n. 13, above) 358]. Agamemnon’s speech at 1255-75 is also passed by both Kovacs and (with the same ‘accolade’) by Diggle; although Diggle’s appendix records that W. Dindorf [‘Die Interpolatio der Iphigenia in Aulis des Euripides zusammengestellt’, Zeitschrift für die Alterthums-wissenschaft 131–33 (1839)] suspected 1264-75, and L. Dindorf [‘Über einiges Untergeschobene bei Sophokles und Euripides’, Jahrbücher für classische Philologie 117 (1878) 321-30] 1255-62.

The passages from Clytemnestra’s speech to Agamemnon (1173-75, 1177-79 and 1183-84) again come in a section which qualifies for Diggle’s highest standard of ‘fortasse Euripidei’; it is fair to note, though, that Kovacs’s extreme revisionist position attributes the first half of this speech (1148-84) to his ‘Reviser’ and the Dindorfs between them suspected 1173-1205 [W. Dindorf 1178-1208, L. Dindorf 1173-77]. Of the two examples from Menelaus’ speech to Agamemnon at 334-75, 354-55 qualify for Diggle as ‘fortasse Euripidei’, but he regards 371-72 as ‘vix Euripidei’; W. Dindorf deleted the first and L. Dindorf the second; Kovacs attributes the whole speech to his Reviser. The case where the weight of opinion is most strongly against the Greek text being by Euripides concerns 1559. These lines come just before that section of the messenger speech whose attribution to Euripides is agreed on linguistic grounds to be impossible [for examples of this view see: Kovacs, Euripides VI (n. 12, above) 161 and M. West, RCS 28 (1981) 73-76, cited by Diggle, Euripidis Fabulae (n. 13, above) 419 ad loc. I.4. 1578-1629], but both Diggle and Kovacs (as indeed many others) would regard the whole speech as being by another hand or hands.

related French successor by Thomas Sébillet published in 1549.\(^{16}\) Behind both of these works lies the 1503 *editio princeps* of Euripides’ complete plays published by Aldus Manutius: the editorial decisions represented in this text\(^{17}\) were often key to Erasmus’ - and thus Sébillet’s - renditions of the Greek.\(^{18}\) It is worth noting Erasmus’ own assertion of his intentions and approach in the *Iphigenia* translation. His *Iphigenia in Aulis* was published along with his version of *Hecuba*, the earlier of the two translations. In his preface, Erasmus states:

\[
\text{Proinde Iphigeniam paulo tum fusius tum copiosus traduximus, at ita rursum, ut ab interpretis fide neutiquam recedoremus.}
\]

Consequently, I have translated *Iphigenia* to a small degree in a more expansive and rich manner [than *Hecuba*], but, on the other hand, [also] so that I did not retreat in any way from fidelity of interpretation. (Erasmus, *Iphigenia in Aulide* 272)

Erasmus’ translation is certainly ‘fusius’ - he takes 2,346 lines to translate the 1629 lines of the extant Greek original; it is clear from this statement that elegance of style and interpretative exposition were important goals for him alongside accurate transmission of the sense. To that extent, there may be said to be a *deliberate* creative element to Erasmus’ transmission of the Euripidean play through the more widely accessible medium of Latin. This is true also of Sébillet’s version, which follows the common translational procedure of its time in filling out and elaborating on the Greek sense.\(^{19}\) All the same, it is also clear that Erasmus did regard his role as centred on faithful transmission and scholarly exposition (*interpretis fide*).

With regard to our opening example of *Iphigenia in Aulis* 354-55, it was the Aldine editors of Euripides who supplied the next crucial link onwards from our hypothetical scribe. They elected to print the ὄνομα of manuscript P instead of the ὀμμα of manuscript L, presumably taking έιξες in that line as if it were potential: ‘What an unhappy reputation you would have, if...’ \(^{21}\) Consequently, this was the Greek text available to Erasmus, who duly translated this reading, with characteristic expansiveness:


\[^{17}\] More than one editor was probably involved, but ‘The principal editor of both the Aldine Euripides and Sophocles is believed to have been John Gregoropoulos’. Garland, *Surviving Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 107. Garland goes on to note, ‘In both cases Gregoropoulos collated at least two different manuscripts, though he did so very unsystematically’ (ibid.).

\[^{18}\] As can be seen in various places, Erasmus’ translation follows the reading of this edition in the vast majority of cases. Cf. Garland, *Surviving Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 110: ‘It is thought that Erasmus may have checked his manuscript against a copy of the Aldine *editio princeps* which is preserved in the Library at Lincoln College’, citing N. G. Wilson, ‘Erasmus as a translator of Euripides. Supplementary notes’, *Antike und Abendland* 18 (1973) 88.


\[^{20}\] Garland *Surviving Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 110-11 cites one of Erasmus’ letters to Archbishop William Warham (*Letters* 188): ‘Erasmus concludes by declaring that he has attempted a line-for-line and almost word-for-word translation, since he would prefer to be criticised for lack of brilliance and beauty than lack of fidelity to the original’ (111). Sébillet took a slightly different line: ‘Si au reste je n’ay traduit vers pour vers, ça été pour quoi que je ne l’ay peu, et que je croy qu’il ne se peut faire’. Sébillet, *L’Iphigénie d’Euripide* (n. 16, above) preface.

\[^{21}\] Cf. J. G. C. Höpfner’s comment on *Iphigenia in Aulis* 354-55 from his 1795 edition. J. G. C. Höpfner (ed.), *Euripidis Iphigenia in Aulide* (Halle 1795). This is reproduced in *Euripidis, Opera Omnia, ex editionibus praeantissimis fideliter recusa*, IV, eds. A. & J. M. Duncan (Glasgow 1821) 446, ad loc.: ‘Barnesius atque Stibilinus reddunt: quam nomen miserum habuisses, nisi impelevissem’. All the principal modern editions assume ὀμμα to be the correct reading, however, and it would seem that this has held good since J. J. Reiske first preferred the reading of L in his *Animadversiones in Euripidem et Aristophanem* (Leipzig 1754), cited in Höpfner’s note; S. Musgrave *Exercitacionum in Euripidem libri duo* (Leiden 1762), T. Tyrwhitt *Emendationes in Euripidem* (Appendix in Musgrave) and J. Markland *Euripidis Dramata. Iphigenia in Aulide et Iphigenia in Tauris*, 2nd
Fama porro quam fuisset foeda et infelix tibi,
Quanta item perplexitas animique consternatio,
(\textit{Erasmus} 452-55; my italics)

What a foul and unhappy reputation would have been yours,
How much perplexity and consternation of soul.

Earlier in this same speech Menelaus has accused Agamemnon of being motivated primarily by ambition (\textit{Iphigenia in Aulis} 337-38), and this implication is there in 354-55 on either reading. Following the reading ‘ὄνομα’, however, alters the thrust of Menelaus’ recollections from indirect accusation, expressing his contempt of his brother’s past state of disarray when faced with losing the glory he had hoped for, to indirect \textit{argument} in favour of Menelaus’ cause. In this reading, Menelaus stresses the shame of the Trojan enterprise being aborted, as Agamemnon currently proposes, and plays up the risk to Agamemnon’s future reputation. Sébillet followed Erasmus’ (and the Aldine editors’) interpretation, a little less forcefully:

\begin{quote}
Dittes par vottre foy quel honneur eût été
Et quel contentement, si ayant excité
La Gréce universelle [...] \\
Tell me, on your faith, what honour would there have been,
And what happiness [...] \\
(Sébillet 22a;\textsuperscript{22} my italics).
\end{quote}

These readings then had their impact on the work of writers whose reworking of Euripides was more fully directed towards recreation. The Italian translator-cum-adaptor Lodovico Dolce in his rendition of the passage in his \textit{Ifigenia}, produced between 1545 and 1551,\textsuperscript{23} is also influenced by Erasmus’ version. This time, though, he introduces a subtle shift so that the pressure point is Agamemnon’s duty to protect the reputation of all the Greeks he commands:

\begin{quote}
A la città, laqual restando in piede,
I Greci sempre \textit{vituperio} havranno \\
(Dolce 12b;\textsuperscript{24} my italics)
\end{quote}

To the city, by whose remaining standing [lit. ‘which remaining standing,’]
The Greeks will incur insult.

If we jump to the next century, we meet the French dramatist Jean de Rotrou, a man who read Greek literature mainly through Latin and vernacular translations, and used both Erasmus’ and Sébillet’s versions of Iphigenia in Aulis as primary sources for his play Iphygénie (1639/40). As a result, his adaptation of Menelaus’ speech was also shaped by the scribal error and editorial decisions discussed above. As in Erasmus, Sébillet and Dolce, Rotrou has the thought serve as a persuasive tactic aimed at Agamemnon’s concern for his reputation:

Et certes le débris de vostre authorité
Importe assez aussi pour estre redouté.
L’entreprise avortée eut laissé la memoire
D’une si méprisable et ridicule histoire,
Que vous n’ignorez pas que Troye eut eu longtemps
D’agreeables sujets de rire à vos despens
(Rotrou, Iphygénie II.2, 425-30)

And certainly the ruin of your authority
Is of enough importance to be a subject for fear.
This enterprise, if aborted, would have left the memory
Of such a contemptible and ridiculous history,
That you must know that Troy would long have had
Pleasant causes for laughing at your expense.

Probably Rotrou was also influenced here by the slightly later lines in the Greek play which he renders in his final couplet:

[Ἐλλάδος ἢ, θέλουσα δρᾶν τι κεδνόν, βαρβάρους τοὺς οὐδένας καταγελῶντας ἔξανησε διὰ σὲ καὶ τὴν σὴν κόρην
(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 371-72)

[Greece] which, wishing to do some famous thing, will let worthless barbarians go their way laughing [her] to scorn, because of you and your daughter.

The emphasis here is nonetheless on the risk to Agamemnon’s own position which reflects the textual tradition transmitted through Erasmus and his successors. In Rotrou, this fits in

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25 It may well be that Rotrou did not read the original Greek at all, although there are some possible correspondences which suggest that he at least consulted the faithful parallel Latin versions available in e.g. the 1602 Stephanus edition of Euripides.
27 ‘débris’ was used in this sense in the seventeenth century: e.g. Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704) ‘de cette séparation, de ce renversement, de ce débris subit et si général’, cited by Jean-François Féraud in his Dictionnaire critique de la langue française, 3 vols. (Marseille 1787–88). Cf. also Jean Nicot, Thresor de la langue francaise tant ancienne que moderne (Paris 1606), giving the following synonyms in Latin of the word: ‘confractis, conquassatio, naufragium’: cited from http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17 (accessed 15/05/09).
with a portrayal of Agamemnon which has the king himself admitting, in the opening act, his concern for glory:

Par ce même refus je me prive moi-même
D’un honneur qui m’élève en un degré suprême
(Rotrou, Iphigénie 1.6, 307-8)

By this refusal I myself deprive myself
Of an honour which lifts me to the highest rank.

Consequently, Menelaus’ rhetoric here appears to the audience not only calculated but well-calculated. This matches Rotrou’s overall approach to the character of Menelaus, who is explicitly portrayed as a more devious and sharp-witted character than in Euripides.28

Sometimes, the impact of scribes and editors can turn on minute details, such as decisions about punctuation. Once again, the Iphigenia in Aulis textual tradition supplies a nice example of this. In the extant version of the messenger speech, the heroine is reported as heroically making the following request of her father:

πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ ψαύσῃ τις Άργείων ἐμοῦ·
σιγῇ παρέξω γὰρ δέρην εὐκάρδιως
(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 1559-60).

With regard to this, let no-one of the Argives lay hand on me;
For in silence I shall proffer my neck, and with stout heart.

The Aldine edition, however, punctuates differently, with a semi-colon after ‘σιγῇ’ in line 1560 rather than at the end of line 1559: thus, ‘let no-one of the Argives lay hand on me/ unawares [lit. ‘in silence, in secret’]’. This appears also to be the reading in both manuscripts.29 It being more natural to assume a stop at the end of a line, the error (assuming it to be an error) may have arisen from the conscious decision of a copyist or editor to adjust the punctuation, based perhaps on the belief that having both the

28 Demonstrated by another example of Erasmus’ influence on Rotrou, this time through his interpretation of the play. In his prefatorial ‘argument’ to the play, Erasmus makes it clear that he regards Menelaus’ apparent change of heart later in the scene as a piece of insincerity: ‘At which point, as soon as Menelaus realises that it is now not safe [integrum] for [Agamemnon] to send away his daughter, he begins a pretence of persuading his brother [ficte fratri coepit sua dere] that he cannot suffer the maiden to be killed on his account’. Erasmus, Iphigenia in Aulide (n. 15, above) 270 and 15-17. Sébillet had faithfully reproduced this: ‘Ménélaë present et entendant qu’il n’éttoit plus entier a Agamemnon de renvoyer sa filhe, fait semblant d’estre marry de l’aventure, et luy conseilhe de ne tuer sa filhe pour luy’ (Sébillet 7b). Rotrou adopts this interpretation explicitly in his portrayal of Menelaus at this point of the action, with the following aside:

Couvrons notre dessein, il faut qu’il s’accomplisse,
Puisque j’ay pour second l’éloquence d’Ulysse:
Mais puisque nous voyons qu’il ne nous peut manquer,
Feignons que la pitié nous le fait revoquer
[II.3, 603-06 (p. 39].

Let us conceal our intention, it is bound to succeed,
Since I have Ulysses’ eloquence to second me;
But since we see that he cannot fail us,
Let us pretend that pity causes us to revoke [our intent].

29 I have not had the opportunity to check the originals (and modern editions record nothing about the position of the semi-colon mark in the manuscripts), but in the compendium of early editions and commentaries reproduced in Duncan & Duncan, Euripidis Opera Omnia (n. 21, above), all seem to assume ‘σιγῇ’ as the manuscript reading, discussing the necessity for correction: e.g. Markland, Euripidis Dramata (n. 21, above): ‘Si auferas distinccionem post ‘σιγῇ’, et ponas post ‘ἐμοῦ’, versu praecedenti, sensus tolerabils effici potest. et ita multi distinguunt’ [Duncan & Duncan, Euripidis Opera Omnia (n. 21, above) 632].
adverbial phrase ‘σιγῇ’ and ‘εὐκαρδίως’ apply to ‘παρέξω γὰρ δέρην’ is superfluous. It is also possible that this was a two-stage corruption: various editors have suggested either that ‘σιγῇ’ was a misreading of ‘σφαγῇ’ (‘to slaughter’), or that ‘παρέξω γὰρ δέρην εὐκαρδίως’ in line 560 was an interpolation arising from the close similarity of these lines to Euripides’ Hecuba 548-49, with ‘σιγῇ’ then added to complete the line. If either view were correct, we would have an interesting example of a two-stage ‘accidental creativity’ process, involving first scribal error (in miscopying ‘σιγῇ’ for ‘σφαγῇ’, or in inserting the extra line) and then (probably) editorial intervention to deal with the subsequent perceived textual problem.

In any case, the reading with the punctuation mark after ‘σιγῇ’ was accepted in the later Stephanus edition as well. This, therefore, was the reading that came down to the seventeenth-century dramatists through both editions and translations and affected their presentation of Iphigenia. Erasmus followed the Aldine reading, translating thus:

Proinde illud precor, ne clanculum
Mihi Pelasgum admoveat manum:
Nihil reluctans colla porrigam ac volens
(Erasmus 2243-45)

Wherefore I pray [you] this, let no Greek hand
approach me covertly;
in no way reluctantly, but willingly, shall I proffer my neck.

Sébillet faithfully followed suit:

ains Grégeois je vous prie,
Qu’aucun de vous ne me frappe en cachette:
Car franchement je léveray ma téste
(Sébillet 37b)

thus, Greeks, I pray you
That none of you strikes me by a hidden [blow]:
For freely will I hold up my head.

Jean Rotrou thus took his cue from these versions for an elaborated passage in his final act, where the heroine, in line with the austere pride that characterises Rotrou’s portrayal of her throughout, expatiates on the theme thus suggested of meeting death face-to-face:

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30 The first possibility was raised by Friedrich Jacobs (Animadversiones in Euripidis tragedias, (Gotha 1790): Duncan & Duncan, Euripidis Opera Omnia (n. 21, above) 632, and the reading ‘σφαγῇ’ for ‘σιγῇ’, punctuating at the end of 1559, is adopted by Kovacs in his Loeb edition (n. 1 above). The second possibility was also canvassed by Jacobs (and is his preferred solution) and by Markland; Höpfner discusses this view but finds the grounds for it insufficient: ‘Non male putat Jacobsius, verba ‘παρέξω-εὐκαρδίως’ margini forte ex Hecubae loco adscripta temere in textum invecta, et, ne versus imperfectus relinqueretur, a sciolo quodam voce ‘σιγῇ’, aucta esse. Neque vero existimem, verissimam hanc esse suspicionem, cum Poëta facile, forsan invitus, potuerit versum eundem, quem iam alibi conscripsisset, e simili scena repetere, quod saepe fieri ab eodem, alisque poëtis, nemo nescit’ (Duncan & Duncan 632; for all references involved here, see n. 21, above).

31 There with a full-stop after σιγῇ; the parallel Latin version renders: Quamobrem ne quis Graecorum me tangat/ Clam [P. Stephanus (ed.), Euripidis tragediae (n. 2, above) ad loc. Iphigenia in Aulis 1559-60].
Qu’aucun donc en ma mort ne m’ôte par surprise
La gloire de montrer combien je la méprise:
J’aurai pour sa venue un visage serein,
Mes yeux la recevront aussi bien que mon sein.
Je veux, et je le puis, pour mourir avec joie,
Voir ce coup glorieux […]
Pour prix de mon trépas, je ne veux que le voir
(Rotrou, Iphygénie, V.2, 1615-20 and 1622; my italics)

Let no-one, then, in my death deprive me by surprise
Of the glory of showing how much I despise [death]:
I shall have for its onset a serene face,
My eyes shall welcome it as well as my breast.
I wish to, and I can, in order to die with joy,
See this glorious blow […]
For reward of my death, I wish only to see it.

It is possible that, in its turn, Rotrou’s expansion on this theme coloured the words which
Jean Racine gives his Iphigénie to say to her father, in his rendition of the confrontation
between father, mother and daughter in his Iphigénie (1674).32 In Iphigénie’s speech in this
scene, Racine adapts Euripides 1560 (and the context) thus:

D’un œil aussi content, d’un cœur aussi soumis […]
Je saurai, s’il le faut, victime obéissante,
Tendre au fer de Calchas une tête innocente
(Racine, Iphigénie 1179-82)

With an eye just as content, with a heart just as submissive, […]
I shall be able, if necessary, [as] obedient victim
To offer to Calchas’ steel [my] innocent head.

Racine, as usual, is creating a subtler and more complex effect. His Iphigénie, in the gentle
bravery of her apparent submission to her father, is actually planting a number of
rhetorical shafts aimed at changing his resolve if possible (‘s’il le faut’, ‘victime’, ‘une tête
innocente’).

In his role as textual editor-cum-translator, Erasmus played a key part in shaping
the way Euripides’ text was later received. It is often his decisions in the face of the text
presented to him by the manuscript tradition and the Aldine editors which provide the
springboard for developments in the dramatic tradition. Sometimes, Erasmus’ decisions
were in response to difficulties presented by the transmitted text. In Clytemnestra’s long
speech denouncing and dissuading her husband, at one point she vividly articulates the
thoughts that will occupy her in her bereft house, if Agamemnon proceeds with the
sacrifice of their daughter:

32 J. Racine, Iphigénie in Oeuvres complètes, eds. P. Clarac & L. Estang (Paris 1962). The scene referred to here is IV sc. 4.
Ἀπώλεσέ σ’, ὦ τέκνον, ὁ φυτεύσας πατήρ,
αὐτὸς κτανών, οὐκ ἄλλος οὐδ’ ἄλλῃ χερί,
τοιόνδε μισθὸν καταλιπὼν πρὸς τοὺς δόμους

Your father, the one who gave you birth, killed you, child,
slaying you himself, he and no other, nor with another’s hand,
leaving behind payment of such a kind for [his] house
(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 1177-79)

The last line of this is still regarded as problematic by modern editors. Diggle obelises, noting that some previous editors had posited a lacuna either before or after this line. Apparently Erasmus either assumed the same, or felt that the difficult word ‘μισθὸν’ needed critical exposition. He adds an extra line to his translation to ‘unpack’ the sense:

Eiusmodi linquens familiae praemium
Atque in suos exempla talia statuens
(Erasmus 1658-9)

Leaving for your family a reward of this kind
and establishing for your own [kin] such examples.

Presumably, Erasmus took ‘μισθὸν’ as implying ‘if this is how you unjustly repay your family’s goodwill, expect evil repayment of a similar kind yourself’.

Assuming that the extant Greek text of 1179 cannot represent what was originally there, here again an unknown copyist (or copyists) has initiated the transformation process, either through accidentally skipping the subsequent line, or through miscopying the line itself. Erasmus, however, in resolving to his own satisfaction the difficulty thus initiated, provided the key spark for what follows in the tradition. The effect of his textual interpretation and expansive translation is to render the sense of threat from Clytemnestra more prominent, probably influenced by the strong implicit hints of a reciprocal crime elsewhere in her speech, notably in 1183-84: ‘By the gods, don’t force me to become evil towards you, nor be so yourself’. Sébillet picked up Erasmus’ cue and rendered the threat now attached to line 1179 more explicit still:

luy-méme sans autre
Fait tant de bien a la familhe nottre,
En luy donnant un familier exemple
De faire ainsi
(Sébillet 56a; my italics).

33 Murray, for example, emended μισθὸν to νόστον. G. Murray, Euripides fabulae III (Oxford 1909). Kovacs takes up Musgrave’s [1778 (n. 21, above)] conjecture of μῖσος for μισθὸν, and posits a lacuna after καταλιπὼν (for which he supplies τοῖς φιλτάτοις/ νόστου θελήσεις τυχάνειν [Kovacs, Euripides VI (see n. 12, above)]).
34 See Waszink [Erasmus, Iphigenia in Aulis ed. Waszink (n. 15, above)] ad loc. 1658-59.
he himself, without any other,  
Does so much good to our family,  
By giving it a familiar example  
To act likewise.

And dramatic adapters followed suit. Lodovico Dolce pushed the threat even further:

rivolgete
Il pensiero a qual premio, che lasciato  
A la famiglia vostra, et a l’essempio  
Che porgete a figliuoli: e siete certo  
Che et essi, et io (ne rimarrò di dirlo)  
Aspettaremo il tempo, che n’apporti  
Debita occasione a la vendetta  
(Dolce 36b)

consider well
the thought of what prize it is, that you are leaving  
for your family, and of the example  
that you are providing for your children; and be certain  
that both they, and I (I do not hold back from saying it)  
will look out for the time, which may bring  
a due occasion for revenge.

Rotrou, with a keen eye for a dramatic moment, used the passage thus transmitted,  
with its motif of reciprocal crime, as the basis for a new scene for Clytemnestra (IV.4).  
After Agamemnon has left the stage at the end of their confrontation scene, she darkly conjures the future, taking on the role of avenging fury as she identifies her cause with the Atreid family curse:

Va père indigne d’elle, et digne fils d’Atrée […]  
Mais garde de m’en faire une leçon pour toi,  
Cette main peut pécher contre la même loi,  
Et par ton propre exemple à toi-même funeste,  
Venger sur toi mon sang et celui de Thyeste  
(Rotrou, Iphygénie IV.4 1259 and 1265-68)

Go, father unworthy of her and worthy son of Atreus […]  
But beware of making of this a lesson for me regarding yourself,  
This hand can sin against the same law,  
And, by your own example, fatal to yourself,  
Avenge on you my blood and that of Thyestes.
Notice how, as Rotrou here places Clytemnestre in an individual spotlight, he turns ‘an example which your family might follow’ into ‘an example which I may follow’ - a shift to which Dolce’s version probably contributed (see above). Rotrou combines here the expanded and explanatory versions of Euripides’ line 1179 offered in the translations which he used, with their renditions of 1183-84, where, again, Erasmus and Sébillet successively heightened the threatening tone. Euripides’ ‘Do not, by the gods, force me...’ etc. is altered to the direct warning ‘Sed per deos caveto, neu me adegeris...’ (Erasmus 1665) and then to ‘mais je vous prie en l’honneur des haus dieus,/ Gardéz-vous bien pour voz fais odieûs/ De me contraindre...’ (Sébillet 56a).

A different kind of creative spark struck by Erasmus concerns the translator’s habit of elaboration in rendering the sense of the original Greek (see above). Once or twice this habit, over time, reacted fruitfully with the more naturally poetic creativity of writers such as Jean Racine. In the latter’s powerful version of Clytemnestre’s climactic speech to Agamemnon, Racine characterises the queen by lending her speech a distinctive, concretely visual imagery unusual in French seventeenth-century neo-classical idiom. In pursuit of this he adopts Euripides’ idea of Clytemnestra’s furious grief being fuelled by the sight of the places where her daughter once was and no longer will be, but changes the image from a domestic context (Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 1173-75) to the journey home:

Et moi, qui l’amenai triomphante, adorée,  
Je m’en retournerai seule et désesperée!  
Je verrai les chemins encor tout parfumés  
Des fleurs dont sous ses pas on les avait semés!  
Non; je ne l’aurai point amenée au supplice

And I, who led her here triumphant, adored,  
I shall return alone and in despair!  
I shall see the roads still all perfumed  
With the flowers which were cast down beneath her feet!  
No; I shall not have led her to execution  
(Racine, Iphigénie 1305-9).

Racine’s precise choice of image, however, was probably given a push along the way by Erasmus’ and then Sébillet’s successive expansions of a line in an earlier speech by Clytemnestra, to Achilles. In the Greek, the queen says:

σοί καταστέψας ἐγὼ νῦν ἥγον ως γαμουμένην,  
νῦν δ’ ἐπὶ σφαγὰς κομίζω  
(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 905-6)

Having crowned her for you, I led her to marry you,  
but now I am conveying her to ritual slaughter.
Erasmus thought this could do with a little extra expository detail, and expanded
‘καταστέψασ’ to:

*attamen* hanc ego *sertis revinctam frondeis*
Arbitrata tibi futuram coniugem adduxi domo,
Caeterum ad caedem necemque virginem nunc adveho
(Erasmus 1238-40)

Nonetheless I have led her, [her head] *bound with woven leaves,*
thinking that she would be your wife at home,
but now I am conveying the maiden to slaughter and death.

Sébillet further romanticised the picture:

*Si vous l’ay-je amenée*
*De verdoyans rameaus et de fleurs couronnée*
*Comme a son vray mary: mais cette tromperie*
*Me l’a fait amener droit a la boucherie*
(Sébillet 43b-44a)

*Thus I have led her to you,*
*Crowned with lush green branches and flowers*
*As to her true husband: but this deception*
*Has made me lead her straight to butchery.*

Despite Racine’s shift, in his final line, from exclamation at present cruelly ironic reality, to
defiant refusal to accept the current state of play, the link between Sébillet’s version and
Racine’s line 1309 seems secure (note especially the parallel double use of ‘amener’, in
Racine’s lines 1305 and 1309 and the first and last lines of Sébillet’s passage). Moreover
this strongly suggests that Racine got the first inkling of his scattered flower imagery also
from the French translator’s specification of what kind of materials went into Iphigenia’s
festal crown.

Sometimes, Erasmus’ and Sébillet’s expansions may themselves be coloured by
wider trends in the reception of the myth. At least from Ovid onwards, there had been a
gradual tendency in the tradition to accord Agamemnon a greater share of sympathy in
his dilemma than Euripides’ play seems to invite, and to highlight his dilemma as a
genuine one between irreconcilable imperatives. The imperative of divine will, as a force
to which obedience is *properly* owed even in the extremity of child sacrifice, came to be
presented by many writers as a key factor in this dilemma, particularly when Judaeo-
Christian parallels began to be drawn between Iphigenia’s story and the biblical episodes
of Abraham and Isaac, Jephthah and his daughter, and even God the Father and Christ.35
This increasing emphasis on the religious issues within Agamemnon’s role seems to have
had an impact on Erasmus’ and Sébillet’s renditions of Agamemnon’s response to the

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35 See Gliksohn, *Iphigénie de la Grèce antique* (n. 19, above), 62-63, and compare 54-60 on religious interpretations of the myth more generally.
pleas of his wife and daughter, explaining why he must proceed with the sacrifice. In the Greek, Agamemnon scarcely mentions respect for the gods’ over-riding power as a decisive factor: references to the priest Calchas and to the oracle are set within his articulation of his fears of what the thwarted Greek army might do to him and his. They will kill our daughters and you and me, he says, ‘θέσφατον εἰ λύσω θεᾶς’ (if I dismiss/do not perform the oracle of the goddess: 1267-68, Aldine text). Erasmus’ rendition gives slight but telling extra emphasis to the idea that this is something Agamemnon owes to the gods:

si quidem fraudavero
Oracula divae postulantis virginem
(Erasmus 1804-5)

If I defraud/cheat the oracles of the goddess who asks for the maiden,

and Sébillet makes this slant absolutely explicit:

Or si je veuil maintenant faire fraude
Au saint Oracle, et Artémis je fraude
Qui justement me demande la vierge
(Sébillet, 60a)

So if I wish now to defraud
the holy oracle, and cheat Artemis
Who justly demands the maiden from me.

Again, in the Greek, the ‘divine force’ motivating the Greek army is described in negative terms of irrational passion:

μέμηνε δ’ Ἀφροδίτη τις Ἑλλήνων στρατῷ
πλείν
(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 1264-65)

Some vehement desire ['Aphrodite'] rages madly in the army of the Greeks, to set sail.

Erasmus, however, elides the negative language into something expressing a purer religious motive:

Porro tenet divinus ardor quispiam
Omneis Achivum copias
(Erasmus 1797–98)

Besides, some kind of divine ardour holds [in sway]
all the troops of the Achaeans;

and, once again, Sébillet takes this further still:

Et qui plus est toutes les Gréques bandes
D’instinct divin ont devotions grandes
De voiles tendre
(Sébillet, 60a)

And what is more, all the Greek bands,
From divine instinct have a great devotion
To setting sail.

Almost certainly, it was these shifts in Rotrou’s two principal source translations that helped push the French dramatist’s rendition of this speech so firmly towards prioritising Agamemnon’s duty to heaven as his primary motivation. It is with this consideration that Rotrou opens and closes his version of Agamemnon’s speech:

Mais où le Ciel est juge, il n’est point de puissance
Qui ne doive à clos yeux souscrire à sa sentence [...] 
Après l’arrêt des Dieux l’innocence est coupable,
Autant qu’ils sont puissants il est irrévocable:
Quelle que soit la perte il s’y faut preparer
(Rotrou, Iphygénie IV.3, 1235-36 and 1255-57)

But where Heaven is the judge, there is no power
Which is not obliged to subscribe blindly to its sentence [...] 
After the decision of the Gods, [even] innocence is guilty,
As much as they are powerful, [their decision] is irrevocable:
Whatever the loss may be, one must prepare oneself for it.

Rotrou also inserts the demands of heaven into various statements of motivation derived more closely from the Greek, for example Euripides’ 1269-72:

οὐ Μενέλαως με καταδεδούλωται, τέκνον, [...] 
ἀλλ’ Ἑλλάς, ᾗ δεῖ, κἂν θέλω κἂν μὴ θέλω, 
θύσαί σε

It is not Menelaus, child, who has enslaved me [...] 
but Greece, to whom I must sacrifice you, whether or not I want to

becomes:

Ce n’est point Ménélas dont l’interêt me presse,
It is not Menelaus whose interest presses upon me,
It is Heaven, it is the army, and all of Greece.

Indeed, in his play overall, Rotrou accords a much enhanced authority and prestige to the divine will in his retelling of the story. This is in part, no doubt, his response to the general Christianised pro-religious interpretation of the myth already mentioned; but that was only one of two divergent approaches to the issue discernible in the tradition. Another strand presented the oracle as the voice of false demons or as the product of misguided or manipulated superstition; and Rotrou’s decision to privilege Agamemnon’s religious motives was taken in the face of a dramatic tradition in which sceptical attitudes towards the divine will had been prominent. This was the case in Dolce’s play, which Rotrou clearly consulted, in the 1617 Dutch version by Samuel Coster,36 and to a degree in the Iphigenia episode in François Berthrand’s Tragédie de Pryam Roï de Troie (1605).37 Given these competing trends, it is reasonable to suppose that the emphasis lent to passages such as Euripides Iphigenia in Aulis 1255-75 by the translations which Rotrou used helped to point the way he ultimately chose to take.

In its turn, Rotrou’s account of Agamemnon’s motives here may have helped to colour the Racinian Agamemnon’s explanation of the influences leading him to his fatal decision, in the opening scene of Racine’s play. In addition to the impact of Ulyssè’s calculated appeal to Agamemnon’s sense of duty and ambition for glory, Racine’s king describes how heaven itself seems to have hounded him to his decision:

Pour comble de malheur, les dieux, toutes les nuits, [...]
Vengeant de leurs autels le sanglant privilège,
Me venaient reprocher ma pitié sacrilège;
Et, présentant la foudre à mon esprit confus,
Le bras déjà levé, menaçaient mes refus
(Racine, Iphigénie 83-88)

For crowning misfortune, the gods, every night, [...]
Avenging the bloody privilege of their altars,
Came to reproach me for my sacrilegious pity;
And, presenting the lightning-bolt to my confused spirit,
With arm already raised, threatened [me for] my refusal.

This would seem to pick up Rotrou’s elaboration of the ‘duty to the gods’ motif, in the speech in his IV.3 which, as we have seen, was coloured by Erasmus and Sébillet. Rotrou stresses the divine vengeance that awaits disobedience:

37 François Berthrand (Berthrand d’Orléans), Tragédie de Pryam Roï de Troie (Rouen 1605).
Si nous nous révoltons contre ses jugements,
Son pouvoir contre nous arme les éléments:
Un orage en la mer, un abîme en la terre,
Un air contagieux, un foudre, ou un tonnerre;
Des funestes arrêts dont les Dieux sont auteurs,
Au défaut des mortels sont les exécuteurs
(Rotrou, *Iphygénie* 1237-42)

If we rebel against [Heaven’s] judgements,
Its power arms the elements against us:
A storm at sea, an abyss [opening] in the earth,
A pestilential air, a lightning-bolt, or thunderclap;
Of the fatal decisions of which the Gods are the authors,
These are the executors, when mortals fail them.

So here we see an intricate series of chain reactions, in which firstly a background of the ‘religious’ reception of the myth coloured the way in which translators rendered a key passage in Euripides’ text, then those translations helped to shape Rotrou’s recreation of Agamemnon’s speech, and finally Racine redeployed some of the material thus created by Rotrou in a new context, where the gods, as it turns out, have a complex and ambivalent role. In Racine, Agamemnon’s reluctance to sacrifice his daughter is not, in fact, contrary to the gods’ will at all, since, as we learn in the final scene, the deeply misleading oracle is actually demanding a different Iphigenia. Retrospectively, this casts a very dark and disturbing shadow on the apparent hounding of Agamemnon for refusing to do something he was never actually required to do in the first place. Rotrou’s creative input, in part at least sparked off by Erasmus’ and Sébillet’s translations, has provided material on which Racine’s more complex dramatic imagination could set to work.

The varied shapes which the Iphigenia story takes in the hands of Racine, Rotrou and Dolce are, fundamentally, the product of these writers’ own creative capacities. But they, and we, are also indebted for details of their dramatic and poetic design to seeds sown by individuals of lesser creative pretensions, or indeed in some cases of no such pretensions at all. Sometimes, accidents in transmission turned out to be happy accidents, creatively speaking; and sometimes, the flutter of a butterfly wing in a translator’s mind, as he set out to interpret and transmit his chosen text, could set off, if not a cyclone, at least a significant lightning-flash of inspiration in a creative reader’s mind.

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