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*IPHIGÉNIE EN AULIDE* (1774/5) BY DU ROULLET  
AND GLUCK IN THE LIGHT OF ITS RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE PLAYS BY EURIPIDES AND RACINE



ABSTRACT: This article provides a comprehensive study and analysis of the opera. It refers back to the source plays by Euripides and Racine, discusses the structure and form of the opera, and provides an interpretation, drawing at times on the insights of Pierre Audi in his pioneering modern-dress production for De Nederlandse Opera, released on DVD in 2013. The principal aims of this study are to establish that the libretto is very far from being an inferior adaptation of Racine's *Iphigénie* (as has often been claimed); and to argue a view of the opera's central concerns and of Gluck's setting which does justice to the intensity and dramatic power of his music.

INTRODUCTION

A RISTOTLE remarks that 'when acts of violence occur between relatives (*philoï*), such as when brother kills brother (or is on the point of doing so, or does something else of that kind), or son father, or mother son, or son mother, that is what [the tragedian] should aim at'.<sup>1</sup> The philosopher might well have added father killing daughter, since he knew the play in which Euripides had seen the dramatic potential of the intense conflicting emotions unleashed at Aulis by the goddess' demand for the sacrifice of Iphigenia.<sup>2</sup>

Euripides made one important choice, in which both Racine and Gluck followed him. All three dramatists suppress any motive for Artemis/Diane's demand.<sup>3</sup> This places the principal focus on the questions whether

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1. *Poetics* 14.1453b 19–22.

2. *Poetics* 15.1454a 31–33. On human sacrifice in Greek tragedy cf. Foley (1985), which includes a chapter devoted to Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

3. In the *Cypria* Agamemnon had made a boast after shooting a deer that he had shot better

Agamemnon will agree to the death of his daughter or seek to abandon the expedition, and later on whether Iphigenia —once she has heard about the oracle— will resist her death or consent to it. And in all three dramas much is made of the two main characters' changes between these opposite reactions to the goddess' command.

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (228 ff.) Iphigenia dies struggling helplessly against the servants who execute Agamemnon's orders; the Elders' sung narrative is cut short as Iphigenia, her mouth gagged to avoid an ill-omened curse by the victim, appeals piteously with her eyes to the 'ministers of sacrifice'; 'What happened after that I did not see, nor will I speak of it'.<sup>4</sup> As far as Clytemnestra is concerned ten years later, her husband has murdered her daughter.<sup>5</sup> Agamemnon's complete culpability is essential in this tragedy, since it gives his wife a powerful justification for murdering him. But Aeschylus' reluctance to let his Elders say what happened as the knife descended towards Iphigenia's throat or breast was clearly necessitated by the fact that in both myth and cult she had a life after Aulis. In the epic version of the myth, Artemis seized Iphigenia from the altar, substituted a deer, transported her to the land of the Taurians and made her immortal.<sup>6</sup> Not only was Iphigenia worshipped there in Scythia,<sup>7</sup> but the Athenians also believed that when she returned to Greece with Orestes, she brought a statue of Artemis back to Brauron in Attica, where she was buried.<sup>8</sup> Myth and cult therefore both exerted strong pressure for Artemis to save Iphigenia at the last moment in any dramatization of the myth.

That happens in the final scene of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, in the form in which the play survives to us. A messenger reports to Clytemnestra

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than Artemis (Proclus' summary, OCT *Homeri Opera* V, p. 104); in Aeschylus (*Agamemnon* 105 ff.) Artemis demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia from Agamemnon as payback in advance for the lives of innocents, which will be lost in the sack of Troy. There is yet another version in Euripides' own earlier drama *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (16 ff.); Agamemnon made a foolish vow that he would sacrifice to Artemis the most beautiful creature born in a particular year.

4. *Agamemnon* 248.
5. *Agamemnon* 1412 ff., 1555 ff. In Aeschylus' version of the story Clytemnestra is clearly imagined not to have been present at Aulis.
6. See Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* (note 3).
7. Herodotus IV.103. Euripides had of course dramatized her rescue from Scythia in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (which became the subject of another great opera by Gluck; Ewans 2007, 31–54).
8. The sources for the rituals at Brauron (and Halai) are Euripides *IT* 1449 ff., Strabo IX.1.22, Pausanias I.23.1, and the scholiast on Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 645. On the cults of Iphigenia, and her association with Achilles, see Dowden 1989, 9–48 and 67–8.

that Artemis magically replaced Iphigenia with a deer, and Calchas interprets this as meaning that the goddess did not want her altar to be polluted 'by the slaughter of one of noble birth' (*eugenei phonōi*, 1595).

However, the incompetence of the versification in this speech clearly dates it to the Christian era, and most scholars agree that somehow during transmission Euripides' own ending was lost, and a new ending was composed to fill the gap. Thanks to a three-line fragment quoted by Aelian,<sup>9</sup> we can be tolerably certain that in Euripides' original play Artemis appeared as *dea ex machina* to Clytemnestra and announced that she would substitute a hind for Iphigenia, though the Achaeans would believe that they had sacrificed Clytemnestra's daughter.<sup>10</sup>

#### GLUCK'S OPERA

This paper studies the *Iphigénie en Aulide* created by Christoph Ritter von Gluck and his librettist, François Louis Gand Leblanc du Roullet. Euripides' posthumously performed play was almost certainly much better than the transmitted text, which is weakened by cuts and interpolations;<sup>11</sup> by contrast Racine scholars have in my view overrated his *Iphigénie*, which is often

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9. *De Natura Animalium* 7.39.

10. Kovacs (2003, 98 ff.) casts doubt on this fragment, and argues that in the first performance at Athens Euripides' play ended when the chorus farewell Iphigenia as she goes off to be sacrificed (1510–31). He cites the voluntary self-sacrifices on behalf of their *polis* of two young women in other Euripidean tragedies —Macaria in *Children of Heracles*, Erechtheus' anonymous daughter— and one young man, Menoeceus in *Phoenissae*. However, none of these characters was central to an important Attic cult, nor had they been divinely rescued from death, like Iphigenia in all the previous versions of her legend except Aeschylus' and Pindar's. Euripides made startling innovations in many of his plots; but when he did this he always used a *deus ex machina* to bring the play back at the end to congruence with the received versions of the myth and relevant cults (cf. e.g. *Suppliants*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Helen* and *Orestes*). I therefore firmly believe that Artemis rescued Iphigenia at the end of Euripides' original text, so that the outcome harmonized with myth, cult, and his own first Iphigenia play.

11. On the cuts and interpolations cf. Kovacs (2003) and more recently Collard and Morwood 2017. As already noted, I disagree with Kovacs' view that Euripides' drama ended at line 1531. I also believe that the prologue as transmitted is genuine, despite its unusual form. In my view Kovacs (2003, 80 ff.) has not answered Knox's arguments in its favour (1972, republished 1979); however, Collard and Morwood (2017, II, 246) believe that: 'it is most likely that two forms of the prologue have become conflated, probably in the hands of a theatre director'.

referred to in reverential terms.<sup>12</sup> Du Roulet's libretto has in consequence been wrongly condemned as being merely an operatic adaptation of Racine's drama, with the sonorous rhymed alexandrines replaced by inferior verse and the subtleties of Racine weakened in a quest for *le pathétique*.<sup>13</sup> I shall argue by contrast that the opera is a different, more convincing version of the story, with no less psychological depth than Racine's. Du Roulet's libretto is largely independent in plot and dramatic focus from Racine, running in parallel to his play only in a few scenes; and Gluck's music illuminates the characters and dramatizes their predicaments in ways not available to a spoken play. They eliminated Racine's implausible subplot and resolution, involving Ériphile, a second woman originally named Iphigénie, who was the daughter of Helen and Theseus, and plotted to cause Iphigénie's death because of her own love for Achille; her identity is not revealed until the final scene, but she then accepts the sacrifice voluntarily. Racine created this new character and subplot because he had to meet the criterion for French seventeenth-century spoken tragedy of *vraisemblance*, before an audience of Catholics who did not believe in the Greek gods.<sup>14</sup> By contrast Gluck had the good fortune to work, a century later, in the medium of opera, in which *le merveilleux*, far from being avoided, was positively welcomed. So he could resolve the situation with a divine intervention to save Iphigénie.

#### THE LIBRETTO

The myth that Gluck's opera was simply a version of Racine's play in a different medium was propagated before it was even staged, by none other than the librettist Du Roulet himself. Soon after Gluck had completed the composition Du Roulet wrote a long letter from his diplomatic post at the

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12. Cf. e.g. Cairncross' conclusion, at the end of the Introduction to his English translation of three plays by Racine (1963) 47. After praising 'the brilliance and balance of the characterization' as 'superb', the structure as 'masterly' and the verse as 'incomparable', he concludes that *Iphigénie* 'is surely entitled to rank with the sister work of Euripides as one of the most moving and searching plays of all time'. Glicksohn (1985) devotes a fifth of his book to Racine's *Iphigénie*, and dismisses Gluck's in a few pages (see next note and note 42). For a searching critique of Racine's *Iphigénie* see Mueller (1980) 38–45.

13. Cf. e.g. Glicksohn (1985) 180.

14. Cf. Racine's Preface to *Iphigénie*; "...how could I possibly have succeeded in bringing my tragedy to an end with the help of a goddess and stage machinery, and by a metamorphosis which might have found some credence in Euripides' days but which would be too absurd and too incredible in ours?" (Transl. Cairncross 1963, 50).

French embassy in Vienna to a director of the Opéra in Paris, hoping to persuade him to produce it there; he described Gluck's past successes at length, and when he came to introduce the new opera he concealed his own role as the librettist. This letter was published in the *Mercur de France*:

The author, or more correctly the editor of this poem seems to me to have followed Racine with the most scrupulous accuracy. It is his very own *Iphigénie* made into an opera. To attain this end, it was necessary to shorten the text and to cut the episode (*sic!*) of Ériphile. In the first Act, Calchas has been introduced in place of the confidant Arcas; by this means, the plot is set in motion, the subject matter simplified, and the tauter action progresses quickly towards its end. These alterations have in no way diminished the interest; it seems to me to be as complete as in Racine's tragedy.<sup>15</sup>

Du Roulet clearly sensed that the only way to sell to a Parisian management the idea of staging an opera composed in French by a foreigner was by insisting on its close relationship with a play by the revered Racine; indeed, when the libretto was published, and it was obvious that the relationship was far less close than would appear from this letter, du Roulet claimed that Gluck had forced him to sacrifice lines taken over from Racine, and substitute words which the composer thought more musical. In the preface to the published libretto he attempted, as Patricia Howard notes, 'both to anticipate and to deflect criticism':

It will doubtless seem surprising that in adapting one of Racine's immortal masterpieces for our lyric theatre, more of its beauties have not been retained and particularly that in preserving several of the great poet's thoughts and images, these have been expressed in other words than his. But we were working under orders; it was necessary either to submit or to abstain from making known in France a new type of music never before heard there.<sup>16</sup>

It is wrong to claim that the libretto is closely related to Racine's play. There are only a few points of affinity, which will all be discussed in my analysis below, and the three-act opera has a plot and structure which are completely different from, and much more straightforward than, Racine's complex five-act play. The confidants present in Racine's *Iphigénie* as in

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15. Translated by P. Howard (1995) 103.

16. Translated in Howard (1995) 109.

other French classical spoken tragedies are gone, and Euripides' Menelaus and Racine's Ulysse are also eliminated from the *dramatis personae*. They consist only of the four core characters — Iphigénie, Agamemnon, Clytemnestre and Achille— together with the servant Arcas, Patrocle,<sup>17</sup> the prophet Calchas (who had not been present on stage in Euripides or Racine), and at the end the goddess Diane.<sup>18</sup> The chorus, which of course Racine could not employ, plays numerous small but important roles in the opera; these include the Greek army, Achille's Thessalian warriors, women from Aulis and Iphigénie's female attendants. Du Roulet and Gluck concentrated on the central aspects of the dramatic situation as they saw it — the dilemma of Agamemnon, the relationship between Iphigénie and Achille, Iphigénie's change from horror to acceptance of her role as sacrificial victim, and the anguish of Clytemnestre. Gluck builds up a compelling picture of four human beings suffering intolerable strain because of the goddess' barbaric demand.

#### STRUCTURE

Each Act of *Iphigénie en Aulide* divides structurally into two parts, which in the third Act are followed by the *dea ex machina* Finale. Each section before the Finale is concerned with the situation of between one and three of the principals.

#### ACT I

1. (I.1–4) Agamemnon's dilemma. He finally resolves under pressure that if Iphigénie arrives in Aulis he will sacrifice her. In 1.5, she does arrive.
2. (I.6–8) Iphigénie and Achille. Achille repairs the breach between them caused by Agamemnon's letter, which falsely stated that he had broken off their engagement.

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17. Achille's friend Patrocle is a minor character, but he is essential musically to allow Gluck to compose a quartet with Iphigénie, Clytemnestre and Achille in II.3.

18. Diane did not appear in the 1774 version; Calchas relayed the fact that she no longer demanded the sacrifice of Iphigénie to the astonished other characters. Gluck rightly felt that this was unsatisfactory, and in 1775 the goddess appeared in person to pronounce her mercy.

## ACT II

1. (II.1–3) Iphigénie and Achille. From Iphigénie's fears to celebrations by Achille's Thesalians of their new queen.
2. The sacrifice discovered. Arcas reveals Agamemnon's true intentions. Reaction:
  - (II.4) Iphigénie, Clytemnestre and Achille.
  - (II.5–6) Achille confronts Agamemnon.
  - (II.7) Agamemnon alone. Tormented, he finally resolves to try to save Iphigénie.

## ACT III

1. Iphigénie's resolve to die.
  - (III.1–2) Iphigénie decides.
  - (III.3–4) Iphigénie and Achille.
  - (III.5–7) Iphigénie and Clytemnestre.

*Change of scene to the seashore*
2. The sacrifice
  - (III.7 continued) Iphigénie is kneeling on the altar step, Calchas is praying with the sacred knife in his hand.
  - (III.8) Achille and his men attack.
3. *Dea ex machina and finale.*
  - (III.9) Calchas restrains Achille. Diane states that Iphigénie's sense of duty, her virtues and Clytemnestre's tears have removed the anger of the gods. The opera closes with a quartet for the four principals, joined subsequently by the chorus. They celebrate their happiness, thank the gods and acclaim the imminent marriage of Achille and Iphigénie.

## PERFORMING GLUCK'S REFORM OPERAS

Opera is a living medium, and *Iphigénie en Aulide* needs to be studied in performance. Unlike the plays of Euripides and Racine, it can now be widely viewed in a production. For a long time there was no performance of the opera on DVD; but that situation was remedied in 2013 by the release of Gluck's two Iphigénie operas in a double album from productions which De Nederlandse Opera had staged together in 2011.<sup>19</sup> The music was performed under the direction of Marc Minkowski, working from the Urtext editions, using period instruments and performing at classical pitch, well below the modern A = 440. And Pierre Audi directed both operas on the same stage set, in modern dress and with extremely strong casts. His intense production of *Iphigénie en Aulide* sheds light on the work of du Roulet and Gluck, and I shall analyze the opera with the aid of insights which I have gained from studying the choices made by Audi and his singing actors.

*Iphigénie en Aulide* is one of the late operas in which Gluck sought to reform the medium.<sup>20</sup> He detested the triviality of much that was currently being performed, the complex action and subplots of *opera seria* libretti, and the focus on singers and their vocal display rather than on the drama.<sup>21</sup> In *Iphigénie* he reformed almost every aspect of French opera, seeking in particular to develop a new style whose virtues would be simplicity, clarity, directness and intensity.<sup>22</sup> This involved him in strenuous conflicts with Parisian singers and instrumentalists used to performing in their own style, and *Iphigénie* underwent an unprecedented rehearsal period of six months.<sup>23</sup> In Gluck's score, arias are no longer lengthy, static display pieces for the singers, but short *airs*, which simply crystallize what a character is feeling at a particular moment.<sup>24</sup> And recitative is fully accompanied by the orchestra, rather than being the traditional *recitativo secco* supported only by harpsichord chords.<sup>25</sup> These two innovations together made the music

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19. Opus Arte 1099 D. For a full discussion of Audi's productions cf. Ewans (2015).

20. Howard's classic study (1963) remains the best exposition of Gluck's reforms. Loppert 1992 provides an excellent summary.

21. Cf. the Preface to his *Alceste*, written under Gluck's name by his librettist Ranieri de' Calzabigi; Strunk (1950) 673-75.

22. Cf. Ewans (2007) 32.

23. An eyewitness account of these rehearsals is translated in Howard (1995) 110-12.

24. Cf. Howard (1963) 41-53.

25. Cf. Howard (1963) 62-68.



more homogeneous throughout the opera, by virtually eliminating the usual strong contrast between aria and recitative, and making them both parts of a more unified whole; this music could illuminate situations continuously as they developed. The chorus was similarly reformed, to achieve greater dramatic effect — for example, they interject in I.2 to assail Calchas and demand that he must reveal to them what the gods desire.<sup>26</sup>

Gluck did however retain the ballets and *divertissements* which were then obligatory in French opera. But as early as the second, packed performance in 1774 the author of the official *Mémoires Secretes* showed insight into both the nature of the opera's new style and the redundancy of these features:

The opera seemed to have been much better received [than at the première]. The ear, still unused to this type of sung declamation, begins to be accustomed to it and to distinguish its qualities. It is incontestably to the credit of the composer that although the scenes are sometimes very long, the recitative is not tedious, because one is constantly moved by the passions which stir the actors; and in contrast to some other operas in the same vein, it is the dances and the *divertissements* which have become the wearisome part, because they are quite insignificant, they do not relate to the plot, and they express nothing.<sup>27</sup>

Pierre Audi agreed in 2011 with this perceptive contemporary judgment; he cut all but one of the dances and *divertissements*, and kept the chorus behind the playing space until the final scene. And of course he also cut the *divertissements* that Gluck wrote to be performed after the end of the opera. By removing the scenes of spectacle which the eighteenth century expected, he was able to concentrate on bringing out in production for modern audiences the distinctive excellence of Gluck's two *Iphigénie* operas, which is the composer's powerful realization through music of the four principal characters' emotions.

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26. Cf. Howard (1963) 79–80 on Gluck's 'active choruses'.

27. Trans. Howard (1995) 115. Gluck himself felt the same way about *divertissements*, and omitted them altogether from *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), except for a short dance by the Scythian warriors which is essential to the plot.

## ANALYSIS

## ACT I

## (1) 1–5 Agamemnon's dilemma

I.1 *Overture and air (Agamemnon)*

In Euripides Menelaus criticizes Agamemnon's character mercilessly.<sup>28</sup> He says that his brother at first curried favour with anyone, of any rank — but after being selected as leader of the expedition he became an aloof autocrat. And he accuses Agamemnon of weakness; he was at first firmly resolved to sacrifice his daughter, and has now been caught attempting to prevent Iphigenia from coming to Aulis. Agamemnon vacillates again, and finally decides (538 ff.) that he agrees to the sacrifice as long as Clytemnestra does not hear about it. As for Racine's Agamemnon, he doesn't need to be told that he is weak; he confesses it (78 ff.).

Du Roulet and Gluck present by contrast a far nobler and more sympathetic Agamemnon. The opera plunges *in medias res* with an anguished monologue for the king. Gluck prefaced this with a powerful overture. There are a few initial moments of beautiful calm, which seem to foreshadow a gentle vision of ancient Greece; but then this is broken up (bar 19); the rest of the overture is a dialogue between an *allegro maestoso* of aggressive, martial themes and softer passages, first heard from bar 35, during which the oboe sounds an upward minor second cry. This oboe motif recurs in I.3.35 ff.,<sup>29</sup> now drooping downward, when Agamemnon sings of the *cri plaintif de la nature* which is calling him to reject Diane's inhuman command. But both in the prelude and in the *air* this plaintive cry is heard against an undercurrent of pulsing strings, signifying the pressure under which Agamemnon's human feelings will be placed. So the music foreshadows the dramatic tension between the need to obey the goddess and Agamemnon's natural love for his daughter before a note is sung.

28. 334 ff. Diggle (1994) accepts most of Menelaus' speech as probably written by Euripides; Kovacs attributes it to a fourth century 'Reviser' (2003) 84 ff. Collard and Morwood (2017) II.339–41 delete only part of the last few lines, 368–75.

29. References to Gluck's score are by Act, scene and bar numbers in the Bärenreiter Urtext vocal score, BA05849–90.

The overture is followed without pause by an *air* for Agamemnon alone. In his productions of both *Iphigénie* operas Pierre Audi introduced Salomé Heller as Diane on stage long before her final singing appearance as *dea ex machina*, so Nicolas Testé as Agamemnon addressed his first words, *Diane impitoyable...* directly to the goddess as she looked on, ice-cold, from a platform above him. In text and music this is the appeal of a passionate but dignified Agamemnon — in marked contrast to those of Euripides and (to a lesser extent) Racine; and Testé reflected in his demeanour the strength and nobility implied by Agamemnon's music. The opening scene concludes with a prayer to Phoebus that Arcas may succeed in turning back Clytemnestre and Iphigénie with the (false) news that Achille now fancies another woman.<sup>30</sup>

## I.2 Agamemnon, Calchas and the Greeks

Calchas is a better choice of character to join Agamemnon in the early scenes than Euripides' Menelaus or Racine's Ulisse. In the second scene we see on stage the pressure of the mob on the leaders;<sup>31</sup> the Greeks appear *en masse*, and demand in an agitated chorus that Calchas should tell them the name of the victim. This dramatizes vividly the strength of the army's desire to sack Troy, and Calchas only gets them to depart by promising that the sacrifice will occur that very day. Then we see a sympathetic Calchas, who describes how the goddess's angry demand has tormented him, and implores Diane to 'soften your severity'. This leads directly into a short duet, when Agamemnon joins Calchas in prayer — in Audi's production, Agamemnon pulls Calchas to his knees beside him to pray, and Diane cruelly turns away as they begin to sing together.

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30. This plot device is taken from Racine, *Iphigénie* I.1.

31. Euripides and Racine both have characters mention the 'frenzied mob' (Agamemnon in Euripides, 513 ff., Ulisse at *Iphigénie* I.3, 295). Otherwise, we do not hear about them in the earlier treatments until the sacrifice is imminent. The opera's ability to unleash the Greek army on stage conveys the pressure on Agamemnon and Calchas far more dramatically. Cacoyannis was to make the clamour for sacrifice of the army — the 'thousand-headed monster that I govern', as his Agamemnon describes the — central to his 1977 film *Iphigenia*.

### I.3 Calchas and Agamemnon

Now the prophet warns Agamemnon of the dangers of not submitting to the commands of the gods. This is the springboard for a second *air*, which further illuminates the character of Agamemnon; he declares bluntly that he will not obey *cet ordre inhumain*. The *air* begins (I.3, 16 ff.) with a lyrical line which elicits pity for his sufferings. The conflict in Agamemnon's heart and mind is now defined. In the opera it is neither between Agamemnon and the other Greeks (Euripides), nor between his duty to the State and to his daughter (Racine, 76–7); in the middle section (I.3, 36 ff.) the oboe cry from the overture returns, now drooping to express Agamemnon's despair as he sings that he hears within his breast *le cri plaintif de la nature*. This is an Enlightenment treatment of the myth, following Rousseau's much discussed view, expressed in the *Discourse on Inequality* (1753), that pity was fundamental to primitive man;<sup>32</sup> the conflict for Gluck's Agamemnon is between the inhuman command of the goddess and his natural human instinct towards compassion.<sup>33</sup> Once again, as in the opening scene, Testé's performance gives us an Agamemnon who is both noble and suffering.

### I.4 Agamemnon, Calchas and the Greeks

At the end of I.3, Agamemnon offered the gods a compromise; *if* Iphigénie arrives in Aulis, he will consent to her being sacrificed. Calchas —again the right character to be on stage with Agamemnon at this point in the story— now uses his priestly authority to remind the king that the gods will not be deceived by his subterfuge; 'already, they are dragging her footsteps here' (I.3.87–89). The moment he has sung this, the chorus of Greeks is heard crossing the stage; they are acclaiming the arrival of Clytemnestre and her daughter, and going to meet them.<sup>34</sup> This prompts Calchas to sing an *air* in which he tells Agamemnon how Iphigénie's arrival proves the frailty of human beings —even the mightiest of kings— in the face of the gods. It is short but powerful, and it leaves Agamemnon crushed, unable to resist the

32. Rousseau (1984) 99 ff.

33. Du Roulet's Enlightenment Agamemnon even asks 'Can [the gods] order such a thing?' (I.3, 27–9).

34. The announcement of Iphigénie's arrival also thwarts Agamemnon's hope that she will not come to Aulis as soon as he has voiced it in Racine (I.3–4). In Euripides, Collard and Morwood (2017, II.351–3) retain the messenger speech announcing Iphigenia's arrival,

gods' will any further. That completes the opera's opening picture of an Agamemnon who resists the divine command nobly but is overcome by Diane's superior power.

### I.5 Clytemnestre, Iphigénie, Chorus

This lengthy scene of welcome does little more than establish the nobility and beauty of the queen and princess. Iphigénie does not sing until the end, where she worries why Achille has not come to meet her (I.5, 276 ff.); but before this she needs to radiate happiness, and on the DVD Véronique Gens in the title role does this admirably. Audi and Minkowski reduced the length of the welcoming choruses, since a modern audience will want to move forward to the next stage of the plot.

## (2) 6–8 Iphigénie and Achille

### I.6 Clytemnestre, Iphigénie, Chorus<sup>35</sup>

Clytemnestre has now read Agamemnon's letter, which Arcas gave to her too late.<sup>36</sup> Iphigénie is shocked by the news of Achille's alleged infidelity, and Clytemnestra admonishes her —queen to princess, very much in the manner which would be expected at the French court— that she must arm herself with the courage of a noblewoman, stifling sighs which are *trop indignes de vous* (I.6.33 ff.).<sup>37</sup> In a vigorous but regal *air*, she demands instead that Iphigénie should be righteously angry with Achille. Gens as Iphigénie does not receive this advice with as much joy as Clytemnestre doubtless expects.

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which some earlier scholars had thought to be interpolated; if they are right, this *coup de théâtre* goes back to Euripides.

35. In Audi's production the Chorus are not present for this scene.

36. This also happens in Racine (II.4). In Euripides (303 ff.) Menelaus intercepts the Old Man before he can deliver Agamemnon's letter; but of course in the Greek play Achilles has not loved Iphigenia, and therefore can't be unfaithful to her, so the letter simply says the wedding must be postponed and the queen and princess should turn back (115 ff.).

37. Cf. Racine II.4, 637, *Il faut d'un noble orgueil armer votre courage*. But the text for the *air* is very different from the speech in Racine.

I.7 Iphigénie alone<sup>38</sup>

Unlike Racine's Iphigénie (II.4–5), Gluck's is given a chance to assess her situation, in a recitative and *air*. This solo scene begins the exploration of the love between Iphigénie and Achille, which is the central focus of the rest of this Act and the first half of Act II.

Love is a predominant theme in many of the operas most often performed today, doubtless because music can express it in ways unavailable to the spoken play. Love was not a theme in Euripides' play — though Achilles wishes he could marry Iphigenia when he has heard her speech accepting the sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> It was of course important in Racine, but the lovers only have one scene alone together (III.6). In the opera, by contrast, the depth of their love, presented now and at the start of Act II, will motivate Achille's fury in II.4 and 6, when it has been revealed that Iphigénie is to be sacrificed.

There is a striking contrast in Gluck's presentation of his lovers both with the excesses of *opera seria* before him and with those of many Romantic operas after him in the nineteenth century. In both text and music, Iphigénie is portrayed throughout the next sequence of scenes as a mature young woman who is capable of self-knowledge. She sings now in her first *air* that she cannot believe Achille would disgrace his honour, scorn his love for her and betray his oath to her (and of course she later finds out that she is right). Every inch a princess, she describes how *gloire* and *devoir* — the imperatives of the French aristocratic code— ordered her to love him, and then her love surprised her. But now she has to force her heart to hate him. The opening music, which is gentle as she describes the feelings of her 'tender and sensitive heart' (I.7, 10 ff.), is very different from the subsequent vigorous *allegro*, in which Iphigénie tries to summon up hatred for Achille. When the gentle opening music returns (I.7, 40), it is clear both from the music and from the singer's expression that Iphigénie has been deeply hurt — for in Audi's production Véronique Gens provides an outstanding realization of the evolution of Iphigénie's feelings. Her performance, together with that of Frédéric Antoun as Achille, illuminates the ways in which Gluck's music explores the emotions of these two noble young people.

38. In Audi's production Clytemnestre stays to hear this scene.

39. 1404 ff.; however 1407–9 and most of 1421–32 are not genuine Euripides (Collard and Morwood [2017] II. 596 and 600).

### I.8 Iphigénie, Achille

In a nice touch, Audi has his Achille enter earlier than the score demands — in time to hear, and be astonished by, the repeat of Iphigénie’s angry *allegro* denouncing him as a traitor. Gens’ Iphigénie is a spirited princess; she seizes Achille angrily, and then pushes him away.<sup>40</sup> However, when he tells her that because he is ‘captured by your charms’ he can bear the injustice she is doing him (I.8, 36 ff.), in this production Achille touches Iphigénie; and as she sings that she has been more influenced than she should be by her ‘esteem and perhaps love’ for him (44 ff.), Iphigénie allows him to embrace her. In this way Audi and Gens signal that she still loves him, preparing for the reconciliation which ends the Act.

Achille’s *air* in response, a plea to Iphigénie not to afflict in this way a heart which adores her, is calm and dignified. Gens’ Iphigénie is vulnerable to this appeal; at 124 ff., as he sings ‘if you loved me as much as I love you, you would not doubt my fidelity’, she crosses to him and clasps him tenderly from behind. He turns to deliver the end of the *air* facing her; Iphigénie confesses her *faiblesse*; and the final duo, in which Achille converts her to believing again in his passion for her, begins as a stately *andante*. In Audi’s production the two characters are initially apart from each other. After Achille’s first line of text, Iphigénie’s words, the music and Gens’ expression show that she is starting to be convinced. Then the *allegro* begins at 188 with the couple singing the same text in harmony — and continues with that musical symbol of their complete unity sounding out over an ever more excited orchestral accompaniment.

In Audi’s production the change of tempo and mood at 188 is marked by the couple standing close together, facing each other as they sing in harmony. However, the exultant fast music stops twice, and both times the lovers sing the word *Hymen!* slowly and gravely. On stage, Iphigénie and Achille exchange rings during these solemn, tender moments; so the text, music and production mark the union between these lovers, which will make it a far harder task for anyone, goddess or human, to separate them than in either Euripides or Racine.

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40. When Racine’s Achille greets her (II.6) Iphigénie simply leaves the stage in disdain, so the tension between them remains unresolved until they meet again in III.4, where she seems to have quite forgotten his alleged infidelity!

## ACT II

## (1) 1–3 Iphigénie and Achille

## II.1 Iphigénie, Chorus of Serving Women

The opera continues to explore the love of Iphigénie and Achille, independently of Euripides and Racine. The opening sequence of three scenes builds up to a large ensemble in praise of Hyménée at the end of II.3, which creates a strong dramatic contrast when Arcas intervenes, just as the happy couple is about to leave for the altar. In this first scene her women fail to cheer Iphigénie, who is fearful that since Agamemnon's accusation of infidelity has wounded Achille's sense of honour, there will be a conflict between them—a fear which will of course be fully realized towards the end of the Act. She sings that her heart is violently tormented by both fear and hope—and her *air* expresses this in very disturbed music.

## II.2 Clytemnestre, Iphigénie

Clytemnestre reassures Iphigénie, telling her that the King himself is ordaining the celebration of her marriage.

## II.3 Clytemnestre, Iphigénie, Achille, Patrocle, Thessalians

Achille confirms this, and presents Patrocle, his *compagnon de gloire*, to Iphigénie. In the original scenario—but not in Audi's production—this was a scene of spectacle, in which slaves bearing the armour captured on Lesbos followed the Thessalians onto the stage; this tableau is the only allusion in the opera to the sack of Lesbos, which played a prominent role in Racine's *Iphigénie* because of the Ériphile subplot.<sup>41</sup> It is superfluous in the opera. Achille commands the Thessalians to celebrate their new Queen, and then expresses his happiness by soaring in sustained solo high notes over the chorus. In the production Audi and Gens emphasize the fears which Iphigénie expressed in scene 1; the heroine looks anxious, rather than pleased with this celebration of her impending marriage.

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41. In an early example of Stockholm syndrome Racine's Ériphile, princess of Lesbos, fell in love with Achille against her will when he took her captive.



This powerful chorus is followed in the original score by lengthy ballets and another chorus; Audi cut these down to one instrumental *chaconne*, and used this music to stage an expressive dumb show. Agamemnon makes a solemn entrance, and Achille and Iphigénie greet him together. Agamemnon confronts Achille coldly, then receives a low bow from Clytemnestra, embraces Iphigénie, and leaves solemnly.<sup>42</sup> More dances are then cut, so the *chaconne* leads straight into the quartet with chorus addressed to Hyménéé; the dramatic purpose of this is to express the happiness of these ‘happy spouses’ and ‘tender lovers’ just before it is destroyed. When the ensemble ends Achille takes Iphigénie’s hand, and begins to lead her offstage; but suddenly Arcas moves fast to stand between them and the way to the altar.

## (2) 4–7 The sacrifice discovered

### II.4 Arcas, Clytemnestre, Iphigénie, Achille, Patrocle, Thessalians

Arcas can keep silent no longer; he reveals Agamemnon’s true intentions. The scene parallels Racine III.5, but the words are different and more incisive. The immediate reactions of Clytemnestre, Iphigénie and Achille are short outcries of disbelief; the Thessalians, in an explosion of fury, declare that they will never permit this outrage to their Queen; and the stage is set for Clytemnestre to sing a very expressive slow *air* with solo oboe *obligato*, in which she implores Achille to protect Iphigénie. It begins like this:

Par un père cruel à la mort condamnée,	Condemned to death by a cruel father,
Et par les Dieux abandonnée,	And abandoned by the Gods,
Elle n’a que vous seul;	She has only you;
Vous êtes dans ses lieux	In this place you are
Son père, son époux, son asile,	Her father, her husband, her refuge
et ses Dieux.	and her Gods.

(47 ff.)

42. Du Roullet and Gluck do not stage the scene where Iphigénie greets Agamemnon and he uncomfortably avoids her eager questions (Euripides 634 ff., Racine II.2) — a scene which is more suited to the spoken theatre than to opera. So if it were not for this invention in Audi’s production, father would not meet daughter before the final scene! Glicksohn (1985, 180) claims that Du Roullet omitted this and other ‘scenes of more subtle emotion’ because of ‘a taste for a highly spectacular *pathétique*’. It is true that Gluck’s opera includes moments of intense emotion (and of spectacle) that were not available to French spoken tragedy. But *pace* Glicksohn p.184, the opera is full of subtleties of its own, and offers to spectators a wide range of emotions — not simply *le pathétique*.

The last three lines are borrowed from Racine (III.5, 939 ff.); but the outcome is stronger. As in Racine, Clytemnestre reads an emotion in Achille's eyes—but in the opera, far from being *douleur* (Racine 941) it is *corroux éclatan*—sparkling anger (78–80).<sup>43</sup> This prepares better for the confrontation between Achille and Agamemnon, which is imminent.<sup>44</sup>

Racine's Clytemnestre leaves the couple alone; she goes immediately to expend her fury on Agamemnon. The opera takes a very different course. The *air* dies out with a desolate sentiment from Clytemnestre — 'we will both lose her', followed by a plaintive concluding eight-bar solo for the oboe. Anne Sofie von Otter, singing Clytemnestre, brings out the full emotion of these moments; she kneels as she finishes singing, and collapses during the oboe solo. Iphigénie, who herself collapsed when she first heard that she is to be killed, has recovered enough by now to join Achille in lifting her mother up. Clytemnestre then leans on her daughter's shoulder.

Achille now proposes to confront Agamemnon alone; but Iphigénie refuses to leave. As she anticipated, Achille sings that he will not spare Agamemnon his 'righteous anger' against this 'perfidious assassin' (134, 153–6). And now there is another nod towards Racine; Iphigénie tells Achille to remember that Agamemnon is her father, a father whom she loves (135 ff., 139–43; Racine III.6, 998 and 1001–2). But the continuing presence of Clytemnestre allows the powerful emotions of this moment to be developed in an operatic form, rather than in Racine's set of alternating speeches for the lovers. Gluck constructs an exciting trio in which the divergent emotions of the three characters are united in a prayer to heaven; Iphigénie begs the gods to turn away 'this storm', Clytemnestre for them to uphold her courage, and Achille for them to deliver up to his fury Agamemnon, the *inhumain sans foi*. As the music comes to a moving conclusion, in Audi's production Iphigénie tears herself angrily away from Achille and leaves, followed by her mother. This is a just reaction to his last words, but it is notable that du Roulet's Achille is much more focused on Agamemnon's barbarous treatment of his daughter than Racine's self-centered hero, who is primarily affronted by the insult to his own *gloire* (III.6, 973 ff.).

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43. On the DVD you can see this emotion in Frédéric Antoun's eyes, as the video editor cuts for a moment to a shot of him.

44. In Racine's play it does not happen until five scenes into the next Act.

## II.5 Achille, Patrocle

Racine's Achille needed the combined efforts of Iphigénie and Clytemnestre (who returns to the stage in III.7 — Agamemnon has refused to see her) to make him simmer down. Gluck's Achille by contrast repents of his anger almost as soon as Iphigénie has left. He orders Patrocle to go and tell her that she has nothing to fear; his love for her will enable him to restrain himself with Agamemnon. This is sung to music which expresses the tenderness of his love for Iphigénie — but the question remains, of course, whether he *will* be able to restrain himself when he confronts Agamemnon in person.

## II.6 Achille, Agamemnon, Arcas, Guards

The creators of the opera answer that question at once, since at this point they take one of their most startling decisions — to omit what in Euripides and Racine was almost a *scène à faire*, in which Clytemnestre and Iphigénie plead unsuccessfully for Agamemnon to save his daughter in substantial speeches (Euripides 1147–1273, Racine IV.4). Du Roullet and Gluck omit that scene because they wish to return the focus as soon as possible to Agamemnon himself. The king has not been seen since I.4, and the opera needs to close this Act with a focus on his torment, which is best achieved by a solo scene. In Act III the focus will return immediately to Iphigénie, and her relationship with Achille and Clytemnestre after she has decided to sacrifice herself.

II.6 is parallel to Racine's IV.6, but the scenes have little in common apart from a few verbal echoes, and the quarrel with Achille is shorter and more intense than in Racine. Agamemnon enters to solemn music, and after that the scene is structured to escalate the intensity. First there is an exchange of angry rebukes, three by each character, and then the tension created in this recitative precipitates a duo, in which a short but intense *stichomythia* culminates in 'Insolent youth!'/ 'Barbarous father!' and precipitates a climax in which they simultaneously threaten each other with the effects of their anger.

Achille has the last word. He threatens, over *tremolandi* strings, that the king will have to take his own life before he can take Iphigénie's. This threat is taken from Racine (1417 ff.), but like his declarations in II.4 it is recast to remove a reference to Achille defending his own *gloire*; instead Du Roullet's Achille reminds Agamemnon that the king's *fureur* threatens to immolate his own beloved.

## II.7 Agamemnon, Arcas

The Act ends with a great monologue in eight stages for Agamemnon. There are highly contrasted musical moods and tempi, and Gluck scores most of the music as intense accompanied recitative, only moving forward into an *air* in the seventh section.

II.7 is significantly different from the parallel scenes in Racine (IV.7–9), where Agamemnon is concerned predominantly with the probable reactions of Clytemnestre, the soldiers and in particular Achille to his decision to sacrifice Iphigénie. In the opera, the focus is on Agamemnon's own conflicting emotions.

- (1) (Bar 1) The point of departure is the same as in Racine (1425 ff.); reaction against Achille's threats. Agamemnon summons his soldiers, apparently about to order Iphigénie's immediate death.
- (2) (8) He abruptly reminds himself that he intends nothing less than to kill his beloved daughter, and changes his mind. 'No, she must live!'<sup>45</sup>
- (3) (22) He changes again. This is *faiblesse*; she must die for the interest of Greece.
- (4) (33) The music has become agitated towards the end of section 3, as Agamemnon realizes once again that the victim is his daughter, and in this powerful new section he imagines her with her breast cut open and her blood flowing. At this point (40–41), four fierce chords for full orchestra punctuate his thoughts, and these keep recurring, in fours or threes, separated by orchestral silence, when in a highly original addition to the story du Roulet's Agamemnon hears the Euménides already surrounding him. He pleads with them that it is the gods who have made him a criminal. But the fierce chords attack him again and build to a climax, as he realizes that even this excuse will not divert the Furies.<sup>46</sup>

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45. The three words *qu'elle vive* are taken from Racine, 1453; but du Roulet does not then reintroduce Agamemnon's fear of being seen as yielding to Achille, which is what Racine's less noble king thinks of next.

46. Rushton (1992) 27 prefers the 'sharply-etched' semiquavers with which Gluck in 1774 expressed the approach of the Furies to these 'crude punctuating chords' in the 1775 revision. Far from crude, I find them intensely dramatic. And Gluck was so satisfied with them that he used similar powerful punctuating chords (this time always three of them) in

- (5) (64) Once again (cf. I.3) the voice of human compassion is heard in drooping semitones in the orchestra, as Agamemnon sings that his remorse tears his heart more than anything the Furies can do.
- (6) This music dies down, and Agamemnon is resolved. (85) He orders Arcas to tell Clytemnestre to leave Aulis and take Iphigénie back to Mycenae.<sup>47</sup>
- (7) (93) At last the music blossoms into an *air*. Agamemnon addresses *in absentia* his beloved daughter, his firstborn, and asks her forgiveness, since he has now repented of his decision to sacrifice her. The music is heartfelt, but utterly devoid of sentimentality. Audi intensifies the moment, by once again (cf. I.1) making the person addressed visible; Iphigénie appears above him, veiled and with plastic explosives wired around her waist, as a symbol that she is now prepared to die. She remains in this costume until she has been saved in the Finale.
- (8) After a short *presto* section (146–54), Agamemnon again asks Iphigénie’s forgiveness (now going down on his knees, in Audi’s production), and then in a closing *allegro* (177 ff.) addresses the *Déesse impitoyable* (reusing the adjective for Diane with which he began the opera); ‘if you want blood, then shed mine!’

No other treatment of the Aulis story dramatizes Agamemnon’s sufferings in this way. The vacillations of his much less noble and far more calculating predecessors in Euripides and Racine are considerably inferior to this remarkable closing scene, which ranks amongst the most powerful tortured monologues in all opera.

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the two scenes in *Iphigénie en Tauride* where Oreste sees his mother’s Furies surrounding him (II.4, III.4).

47. Note that the intensity of the scene is not impaired, as it is in Racine IV.10, by having Clytemnestre and Iphigénie return at this point so he can tell them that himself.

## ACT III

(1) 1–6 *Iphigénie's resolve to die*

## III.1–2 Greeks, Guards, Iphigénie, her serving women, Arcas

Iphigenia's change of mind in Euripides' play has unsettled critics from Aristotle onwards. For the philosopher, she was an example of inconsistency; 'the girl who pleads for her life is nothing like the later Iphigenia'.<sup>48</sup> Some of the arguments with which Euripides' Iphigenia justifies her decision to die (1375 ff.) would hardly be tenable if offered to either a Renaissance or a modern audience, and Racine opted to give Iphigénie a speech (IV.4, 1174ff.) in which she simply asserts her obedience to her father, and after dwelling on her past joys as his daughter gives as her motive for accepting death that she is concerned for his honour and will not cause him to be ashamed (1207–8).

Du Roullet and Gluck decided that there would be no equivalent to these speeches in their opera. Instead, they save Iphigénie's disclosure of her motives until the scene with Achille, where it adds to the dramatic impact of the conflict with her lover; that confrontation is prefaced with two scenes of startling brevity. III.1 begins with a vigorous chorus calling for the sacrifice; Iphigénie tries to dissuade Arcas from opposing the rest of the Greeks, and in III.2 tells her serving women to go to Clytemnestre and shield her from seeing her daughter's last moments. As for herself, she must assuage the anger of the gods; '*mourons, obéissons*' (III.2. 7–8; from Racine V.1, 1514).

## III.3 Iphigénie, Achille

Now the opera runs for two scenes in parallel with Racine (V.3–4) — but most of the words are very different. Achille asks Iphigénie to follow him — but naturally, she resists. At once she tells Achille why she wants to die: *Ô devoir rigoureux!* (8–9) — and *devoir* will become a key word later in their quarrel. Now, after acknowledging that her life has belonged to him since he

48. *Poetics* 15.1454a31–33. Modern responses to Iphigenia's speech include Luschnig (1988) 91–110 and Sansone (1991); there is a short but very good discussion of the various views in Michelakis (2006) 38–40.

gave her his love, she sings that she must submit to ‘the supreme law of my destiny’ (26–30) — but will love him right up to her dying breath. All this is sung first in a beautiful recitative over sustained string chords, and then in a short but no less beautiful *air* (26–42). During the *air* Gens stands with her hands away from her body, and her gestures make real her acceptance of her destiny. The powerful text of this *air* owes nothing to Racine.

Antoun as Achille seizes Iphigénie’s hands as she sings that she loves him, but the tenderness of her last words reduces him to kneeling at her feet. Then Achille reacts; how can she say she loves him? *Ingrat*, I adore you — and you want to die! This argument generates a second *air* — Iphigénie’s farewell— which again has a powerful text, without any parallel in Racine. Gluck responds with noble, tender and indeed sublime music; and on stage Audi devises a subtle interaction, showing how hard it is for each of the lovers to depart from the other.

Achille now commands Iphigénie to leave with him, even against her will. But she rebuts him forcibly. In Racine (1585 ff.) when Iphigénie thinks he is threatening to force her to leave, she counters by saying that if he tries she will kill herself (1594). In the opera Iphigénie is equally firm, but less melodramatic; she convinces Achille that her mind cannot be changed by singing that her *gloire* and her *devoir* —her honour and her sense of duty— are dearer to her than life itself (93–5).

Now Achille explodes. In words closely modeled on Racine 1601 ff., but expressed more vividly and bluntly, he delivers a fierce and stormy *air* in which he commits himself to trying to save his fiancée; he will kill Calchas, overthrow the altar, and if in the heat of battle he kills Agamemnon, she must blame no one else but herself. When he sings this threat in Audi’s production Gens as Iphigénie rejects him, pushing him away firmly and for the last time. Patrocle tries and fails to stop Achille’s furious exit.

### III.4

Left alone, Iphigénie in the opera, as in Racine (1613), accuses Achille of cruelty to her, and prays for death. But unlike Racine’s, Gluck’s heroine is thinking of others; she wants to die to ward off *le carnage et le crime* (3–6). The Greeks are heard behind the scenes repeating their call for sacrificial blood.

## III.5 Iphigénie, her serving women, Clytemnestre

Clytemnestre now enters, angrily defying these ‘barbarians’, and there is a tender embrace between mother and daughter. In this scene as in Racine (V.3), Iphigénie seeks to persuade her mother not to die with her; she argues that in trying to do this the queen will risk losing her rank and her dignity. Clytemnestre says she cares nothing for these, and Iphigénie begins an *air*, marked *lent et gracieux*, which is full of dramatic irony; ‘Farewell, live for Oreste’:

Puisse-t-il être plus heureux	...May he be more fortunate,
Puisse-t-il être, hélas!	And may he be, Alas!
Moins funeste à sa mere! <sup>49</sup>	Less fatal to his mother
Du sort qui me poursuit	Do <i>not</i> <sup>50</sup> accuse my father
N'accusez point mon père.	Of the fate which pursues me.

(III.5, 41 ff.)

Surprisingly, given that the baby Orestes is present at Aulis in Euripides’ play,<sup>51</sup> this ironic pointer to the bloodstained future of the House of Atreus did not enter the tradition until Racine’s *Iphigénie* (1653 ff.). As in Racine, Gluck’s Clytemnestre disputes Iphigénie’s claim that Agamemnon has done everything he could to try to save her — but in the opera the pressure on them is now increased by yet another recurrence of the Greeks’ angry outcry behind the scenes. Iphigénie calls on her mother to be courageous (as in Racine, 1665) — but then adds a new, Enlightenment-inspired thought:

Ah! Faisons les du moins	Ah! Let us at least
Rougir de leur ouvrage.	Make them blush for what they are doing.

(III.5, 77–9)

49. This phrase is taken *verbatim* from Racine (V.3, 1661)

50. Iphigénie uses the stronger negative *point* to reinforce this prohibition, in place of the weaker *pas*. Its origin is Euripides 1454, ‘Don’t hate my father, your husband’ – to which Clytemnestra gives the sinister reply that ‘he must undergo terrible ordeals because of you’.

51. Kovacs (2003), following Wecklein, argues that the baby Orestes is present and alluded to only in parts of *Iphigenia at Aulis* which were added by a fourth-century reviser. However, Collard and Morwood (2017 II. 353–4) are confident that the baby Orestes was part of Euripides’ original play.



Clytemnestre collapses under the strain; Iphigénie begs her women to look after her mother, and see that she does not follow her.

### III.6 Clytemnestre, women

In the opera's stage directions, as in Racine and Euripides, Iphigénie leaves Clytemnestre at the end of this scene; but Audi, taking advantage of modern staging conventions, shows us the heroine being surrounded by soldiers and blindfolded, while on another part of the stage Clytemnestre recovers from her faint and begins her bitter denunciation of the gods, demanding that they kill her too at the altar. Then she imagines the sacrifice of Iphigénie 'beneath the heartless steel/sharpened by the hand/of her barbarous father.' (35–7). She sees Calchas tearing open Iphigénie's breast and seeking the will of the gods in her still quivering heart, and calls on the 'bloodthirsty monsters' to tremble before they stain the ground with the pure blood of a descendant of Zeus. All this is far more vivid than the corresponding speech in Racine 1679 ff. — and then comes the powerful *allegro air* in which Clytemnestre calls on Jupiter to let loose his thunderbolts to destroy the Greek fleet, and the Sun to go back in his course.<sup>52</sup> Assisted by Du Rouillet's new text, Gluck presents in this scene a comprehensive image of the furious and vengeful Clytemnestra. 'Gluck's music gives us a glimpse of the dangerous, Euripidean Clytemnestra lurking behind her adaptation-descendants'.<sup>53</sup> As soon as she has finished, we hear the chorus singing a solemn prayer to the gods that in return for the blood they are about to shed they may be allowed to go to Troy.

#### (2) 7–9 *The sacrifice*

III. 7 The seashore. Iphigénie is kneeling on the altar step. Calchas, behind her, holds the sacred knife and extends his hands to heaven. The crowd of Greeks is assembled on either side of the stage.

52. Here as in Racine (1690) Clytemnestre describes Agamemnon as a true descendant of Atreus, who killed the children of his brother Thyestes and served them up as meat for him to eat, in revenge for Thyestes' adultery with his wife.

53. R. Wolfe (2016) 270.

The opera now moves swiftly to its *dénouement*. The change of scene has to be accomplished seamlessly while the solemn choral prayer continues, gradually becoming louder.<sup>54</sup>

### III.8 Achille and his Thessalians enter

Achille enters, bloodstained from combat, to save Iphigénie. Mayhem erupts on stage.

### III.9 Clytemnestre and Agamemnon enter

Fighting continues. The Greeks demand the sacrifice. Iphigénie and Achille pray for the gods to help. Calchas intervenes; the goddess is coming.

#### (3) III.9 continued *Dea ex machina and Finale*

To lustrous violin arpeggios, Diane appears. In Audi's production Iphigénie kneels before her, followed by Achille, Clytemnestre and Agamemnon. The goddess' first words are crucial to the opera's resolution:

Votre zèle des Dieux	Your sense of duty has turned aside
A fléchie la colère.	The anger of the gods.
Les vertus de la fille	The virtues of the daughter
Et les pleurs de la mère	And the tears of the mother
Ont trouvé grâce devant eux.	Have found favour with them.

(III.9, 30 ff.)

As the goddess ascends, Calchas offers a prayer of thanks for the mercy and the bounties of the gods, which is taken up by the chorus. But Iphigénie has been emotionally bruised by the sequence of events:

Ah! Qu'il est doux,	Ah! It is sweet,
Mais qu'il est difficile	But it is difficult
De passer si subitement	To pass so suddenly

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54. Euripides and Racine, by the conventions of their respective theatres, could only convey the climactic events at the altar by a *dea ex machina* or a messenger-speech. However, in a 1769 revival of Racine's play there was a change of scene, and the scene at the altar was enacted, as in the opera, rather than narrated (Glicksohn [1985] 151–4; Rushton [1992] 22).

Du plus cruel tourment  
A la félicité supreme!

From the most cruel torment  
To supreme happiness!

(III.9. 82–9)

Nonetheless, she then finds the strength to lead off the quartet in which the four main characters express their overwhelming happiness and their gratitude to the gods. The Greeks echo this latter sentiment, and then sing that they desire to celebrate the marriage of ‘these illustrious lovers/ whose happiness is the first witness / of the just favour of the gods’ (161 ff.). The music becomes ever more joyful and exciting right up to the final bars.

In Audi’s production, however, two clouds are lowered over this happiness. Agamemnon and Clytemnestre leave the stage slowly in opposite directions, prefiguring their future estrangement. And following up on the words of her shell-shocked four-line solo Iphigénie, now looking very vulnerable because she is clothed only in a white shift, has left the stage in another direction. While the Greeks celebrate, she is seen standing alone, detached from all the others and with no trace of happiness in her expression. Maybe the chorus’ optimism is misplaced?

#### THE ENDING

Unlike Euripides, Gluck did not need to have Diane replace Iphigénie with a hind (which would have been rather difficult to stage!), since when he composed this opera he had no intention of following it with an *Iphigénie en Tauride*.<sup>55</sup> Racine’s Ériphile solution rightly did not appeal to du Roullet and Gluck; and *Iphigénie en Aulide* has focused so intently on the relationship between Iphigénie and Achille (far more closely, and more convincingly, than Racine) that a solution which sees the lovers united, and indeed specifically blest by Diane (III.9, 45 ff.), is the right outcome. In the 1774 version the goddess’ change of heart was simply declared by Calchas, who was suddenly inspired with a new vision, just as he was in Racine. But contemporary critics found this ending weak;<sup>56</sup> and an opera, unlike Racine’s spoken tragedy, has room for *le merveilleux*, so there is no reason why the goddess

55. He did include an *Iphigénie en Tauride* among the operas which he undertook in October 1774 to write for Paris over the next few years; but he did not begin working on it with his new librettist François Guillard until 1778. Howard (1995) 126 and 147.

56. Cumming (1995) 224.

should not appear from on high and sing for herself, as she does in Gluck's 1775 revision.<sup>57</sup> And this is not only the natural but the best outcome; like Diane's subsequent appearance at the end of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, it shows that Gluck's enlightened humanist gods approve goodness in humans, as she saves Iphigénie from death because of her *zèle* and her virtues — both of which have been very evident throughout the heroine's part in the opera.<sup>58</sup>

There are obvious implausible elements surrounding Gluck's version of the story. It is not clear how and when Iphigénie and Achille had the opportunity to fall in love; she states clearly in I.7 that theirs was an arranged engagement which subsequently flowered into love, but there is no back-story about a visit by Achille from Thessaly to Mycenae when that could have happened. And although Diane in her last words exhorts the lovers to live and be happy (III.9. 45–51), they presumably had one night at most to consummate their marriage before Achille sailed to Troy, where he died after nine years, never having seen Iphigénie again. At this point it is well to remember Aristotle's sage advice, which many great dramatists have taken, that it is best to have no illogical elements in your story; but if you must, make sure that they occur outside of the plot that we actually see on stage.<sup>59</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Du Roullet and Gluck created a new and powerful version of the story of Iphigenia at Aulis, suffused by an Enlightenment tension between the inhuman demand of a pitiless goddess and a humane response to the *cri plaintif de la nature*. Their opera focuses consistently on the dilemmas of the four principal characters, and the performances in Pierre Audi's production of Véronique Gens in the title role, Nicolas Testé as Agamemnon, Anne Sophie von Otter as Clytemnestre and Frédéric Antoun as Achille prove be-

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57. This second version is rightly printed in the main score of the Bärenreiter Urtext edition, with the 1774 original relegated to the appendix. Rushton (1992) 22 ff. and 35–6 prefers the original version, which he sees as showing up Calchas as a self-serving representative of the Church who in both I.1–4 and here is actively manipulating the king, at this moment because he fears Achille's onset. I cannot see Calchas in this light. *Pace* Rushton, Calchas does not manipulate Agamemnon in I.1–4; and when he claims in the 1774 text of the finale that the gods have changed their mind, he cites solid external evidence that Diane has relented; the altar has been destroyed and the winds have begun to blow.

58. On the appearance of Diane *ex machina* to similar effect in *Iphigénie en Tauride* cf. Ewans (2007) 51–53.

59. *Poetics* 15.1454b 6–8 and 24.1460a 27–33.

yond any doubt the depth of characterization which is to be found in Du Roullet's libretto and more especially in Gluck's music. Iphigénie is not merely Racine's 'virtuous and lovable' heroine,<sup>60</sup> but a spirited young princess who is capable of great self-knowledge, as well as tender feeling; Agamemnon, unlike his predecessors in Euripides and Racine, is presented as a noble king who is impossibly torn between the command of the goddess and his love for his daughter (cf. especially II.7). There is a full portrait of Clytemnestre's love for her daughter, her suffering and her anger; and even Achille, in the conventional operatic role of the tenor as lover, is an interesting character. He has been largely stripped of the excessive concern for his own glory, which is a flaw in his predecessors in both Euripides and Racine, and he becomes a worthy equal in his interactions with Iphigénie, which are a central focus of the action. Gluck's achievement in this work, and indeed in both of his Iphigénie operas, was to give to opera a seriousness and a level of dramatic intensity which it had never known before; it is not surprising that Wagner not only translated, edited and performed *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1847), but celebrated Gluck as almost his only predecessor in the composition of music drama.<sup>61</sup>

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60. Racine, Preface to *Iphigénie*, trans. Cairncross (1963) 50.

61. Cf. e.g., Wagner (2013) 46–7.

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## DISCOGRAPHY

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