

Sacred Violence: Woman and Sacrifice in Euripidean Drama

Alexander Grant

1501417

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Abstract

This paper concerns itself with the similarities and differences that present themselves in regards to sacrificial victims in a selection of Euripides' works; *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Alcestis*, *Hecabe*, *The Phoenician Women* and *The Children of Heracles*. Five of these plays present a sacrificial victim offering themselves up to the knife in order for some kind of righting to take place - while the *IT* instead draws the attention to what happens after, the sacrificial victim becoming the bearer of the sacrificial knife. As Euripides often does they feature a struggle between the public and private, and the roles of the masculine and feminine. Through consideration of each of these plays and their victims - and a few of the other figures too - a pattern of some sort can start to be configured, and Euripides can be seen returning back to ritual, again and again.

Introduction

This thesis concerns itself with Euripides's portrayal of human ritual sacrifice within the ancient Greek mythological canon. Concentration largely will be upon his *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Hekabe*, *Alcestis*, and *Children of Herakles*, with contrasting analysis of his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Phoenician Woman*. Naturally this will concern his portrayal of those sacrificed, with a significant leaning towards the women and girls that often take centre stage within these retellings of myth.

Principally, sacrifice in this context is taken as something where the life is given in return for something - whether it has been asked for by the gods or by divinatory practices, and will include a necessary ritual element.

Before analysis, there must be a placing, both within the context and the scholarship. Much of what is known is widely disputed, and these disputes feature in many an introduction. Women and their place within ancient Greek society, their place within ritual, their presence at festival and theatre alike, have been discussed widely, and with little respite. There is, of course, the prevailing notion that women in Attica in the fifth-century BC were sequestered, confined to the *oikos*.¹ As Osborne points out - women were not permitted to participate within public and political life, and the sources that are extant to us are largely concentrated within this arena, narrowing our sense of women generally.² This provides obvious issues when attempting to gather any sense of a woman's place within classical Athens, and when attempting to discuss any portrayals of these mythological figures.

¹ Zaidman 1992:339

² Osborne 1993:404

Athenian women could not be citizens, and were passed from one *kurios* to another - Rabinowitz likens this to them never reaching majority, and this seems correct.³ Women in Athens simply lived their lives being born to citizens, then being married to them, and birthing them themselves.⁴ Euripides himself can be cited in regards to what was seen to be best for young girls - that they are silent and kept inside, such as Macaria states as she makes her way out of the temple to speak to those gathered outside.⁵ Visser counters this by pointing out that Macaria is one of the few women within his plays that actually fulfils this role, and two examples just from the plays that have been chosen here would be that of Hekabe and Jocasta, who both do not act as they are “supposed” to.⁶

Zaidman argues that as women were excluded from public life, so must they have been from sacrifice.⁷ Osborne argues against this, returning that sacrifice reached sections of life that politics could and did not, and that women’s involvement was very much cult specific.⁸ Women were given a place within ritual that journeyed further than their relationship with public life, and this often led to their involvement in that which was, in fact, public.⁹ Foley argues that in fact one of the main contributions of women within the Greek *polis* was through ritual, both public and private.¹⁰ This is shown through the existence of rituals where the *parthenos* was chosen to carry the sacrificial dagger, hidden in a basket of barley.¹¹ These rituals involved young girls participating, and sharing in the sacrificial meat, but Zaidman

³ Rabinowitz 1993:5

⁴ Loraux 1991:2

⁵ Eur. Heraclid. 476-7

⁶ O’Connor-Visser 1987:28

⁷ Zaidman 1992:338

⁸ Osborne 1993:403, 405

⁹ Rabinowitz 1993:2

¹⁰ Foley 2019:91

¹¹ Zaidman 1992:344-5

does also counteract this by stating that the conditions within Attica were especially harsh for women, but ritual continued to be one of the ways that they were allowed to experience a social life outside of the *oikos*.¹² Rabinowitz also touches upon the presence of women within the theatre audience, something which has been much discussed within scholarly circles, and they argue that yes, there is evidence for the appearance of women in audiences, and I'm inclined to agree.¹³ She does continue to say that all the actors were men and that it was an exclusively male space, as men wrote and acted and there was no known female influence upon production.

This presents a view of women within Attica in the fifth century BC in a slightly confusing way; they were unable to leave the *oikos*, although they were, for ritual and for festivals, and Athens notably had a rather large festival calendar.¹⁴ They could attend the theatre, and there is evidence as such that they did. Yes, everything that they could see no women were consulted within the process of production, but they were able to participate within this and within a ritual context, even as they were represented as sequestered. They could not participate in public or political life, but many others couldn't either - position within Athenian democracy was dependent on different factors, such as a man's wealth, location outside the city, or his rhetorical skills.¹⁵

Situated within the context as much as possible, there still remains textual problems with the plays themselves - I'm working purely from texts that have been translated, though many of the scholars cited within were working from their own translations,

¹² Zaidman 1992: 339

¹³ Rabinowitz 1993: 2

¹⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:6

¹⁵ Blondell et al. 1999:7

and I try to follow their line references as much as possible. For example there are disputed or missing final scenes to *Iphigenia at Aulis*,¹⁶ textual corruptions within *The Phoenician Women*,¹⁷ and I have not included *Erechtheus* due to the fragmentary state of the text, although I think it would have been illuminating.¹⁸ Regardless of only a portion of his corpus remaining to us, Euripides shows himself to have had a particular preoccupation with sacrifice, simply through the sheer amount of his plays that concern it.¹⁹

Tragedy itself can be said to function rather like sacrifice. Devoted to Dionysius at the Dionysia every year, they were performed for the community and devoted to a god, something that could be said to be analogous to the act of sacrificing a beast for the community to consume, an act which could be argued to be one of the foundational elements of civilisation.²⁰ It's a ritual, such as the ritual of sacrifice was one of the main religious activities that the *polis* participated in.²¹ Rabinowitz states that tragedy served the *polis* by ratifying and preserving gender, while Foley argues that the ritual of tragedy has similar therapeutic effects upon the society, and the usage of sacrificial metaphor by Euripides throughout his work is an emotional bloodletting.²² Festivals in honour of the gods allow for the suspension of usual day to day life, and as tragedies themselves are like sacrifices, they allow for the release of tensions.²³ It's an interesting hypothesis, but not what this work is concerned with - I simply want to hold up a magnifying glass to some areas of similarity (and difference) within Euripides's work.

¹⁶ Foley 2019:101

¹⁷ Foley 2019:111

¹⁸ Tsagalis 2007:11

¹⁹ Foley 2019:103

²⁰ Smith and Doniger 1989:189

²¹ Foley 2019:24

²² Rabinowitz 1993: 12, Foley 2019:61

²³ Foley 2019:148, Rabinowitz 1993:36

Foley, Rabinowitz and Loraux's works have made the biggest impression, and I fear that will be evident as we go on - this is something of a combining, as I attempt to reconcile their works with each other and with the texts themselves, while also battling with our limited knowledge and resources. I believe that Rabinowitz's view of demoting tragedy to male fantasy rather leaves very little space for actually interesting dialogue.²⁴ There's been some debate on the ironic in Euripides's work, as you can see from how Foley debates Vellacott in her book,²⁵ but I wish to stay away from this - I think there is an inherent religiosity to Euripides's work that is sometimes ignored, which I feel is telling as to the internal biases of those who have been writing about him. Foley and Rabinowitz approach this from structuralist and feminist/Freudian approaches respectively,²⁶ and my approach trends less upon theoretical lines, although there is a natural leaning towards examining the differing treatments of men and women, and public and private, and how they interact, within this work. My research started with Iphigenia and then steadily expanded, and I think that will be evident.

Beginning there, then, this work starts with the parallels drawn between marriage and sacrifice in the cases of Iphigenia, Polyxena and Macaria, and then moves forward into more generalised discussion of the three sacrificial virgins, drawing upon the presentation of Menoeceus where relevant. Analysis moves into the relationship between choice and *kleos*, and whether there was a real choice at all for any of the girls mentioned. That cascades into an examination of Alcestis, the sacrificial wife, and the other relationships that are shown within *The Phoenician*

²⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:26

²⁵ Foley 2019:107 notes

²⁶ Foley 2019:10, Rabinowitz 1993:5

Women, ending on the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the sacrificed turned slaughterer. The primary aim of this thesis is to draw comparisons between the similarities and differences shown within these presentations of the sacrificial ritual, though conclusions where fifth century BC Greece are concerned are often hard to come by.

Sacrifice as marriage, marriage as death

Iphigenia in *Iphigenia at Aulis* and Polyxena in the *Hecabe* are easy to draw comparisons between. Both are unwedded virgins sacrificed so that winds may take the army where they wish to go.²⁷ They are counterpoints to the beginning and the end of the Trojan War, both having to be sacrificed so that the Greek army can begin and end their ten year siege. One of the ways in which they echo each other so clearly originates in the ritual of marriage and how it was presented within Greek society.

Marriage, for the Greek girl, was a huge transition.²⁸ They would be taken from their homes and the lives that they had always known, and delivered to their new *kurios*, where they would then become a part of his household.²⁹ Marriage, then, is a form of death, at least to girlhood and to the life they would have previously known, and Foley refers to this as a form of “voluntary sacrifice”.³⁰ Marriage and sacrifice echo and emulate each other; sacrifice is itself an offering to the gods, and a feast for the community, while marriage sees girls presented with gifts to new households, preserving and organising community within the *polis*.³¹ Both activities are ritualised and take on important functions within Greek society. As these actions ensure social survival, so too do they hinge upon the sacrifice of something; for girls, the giving up of their girlhood and their previous lives, and for the sacrificial animal, so too is this a sacrifice, while the meat given will nourish the community.³²

²⁷ Eur. Hec. 900, Eur. IA. 1600

²⁸ Seaford 1987:106

²⁹ Seaford 1987:109

³⁰ Foley 2019:85

³¹ Rabinowitz 1993:34

³² Foley 2019:85

Within the texts of *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the *Hekabe*, this can be seen through language. Much has been made of the ways in which the imagery within these works likens the sacrificial girl to the sacrificial animal.³³ Both are likened to a mountain heifer, although in this case that is not an animal that is usually chosen for a sacrifice; the rules dictate it should be a domesticated animal that is chosen.³⁴ But as the animal metaphor is consistently used this is because it emphasises the passivity of the victim that is to be given and led away - which once again links back into marriage.³⁵ In contrast, Menoeceus is likened to a horse, something which Loraux points out has its place within military sacrifices.³⁶ Via the usage of the animal metaphor we see how the sacrificial victims are likened to those of sacrificial animals, but the military link for Menoeceus shows that while they are all of marrying age, and this is an essential part of their place within the sacrificial motif, Menoeceus is viewed with a different slant. As girls are readied for the ritual of marriage, so are boys readied for the rituals of war.³⁷ Though not Euripides's language, Aeschylus does make use of horses in his animal imagery - Iphigenia described as "the bridle chokes her voice" as she is wrestled to the altar.³⁸ This imagery - it calls forth something closer to the military idea, and previous to this she is likened to a yearling being hoisted.³⁹ This can only express the move that she has made into the warlike sphere of men, how she has been moved from her previous area, and is used in this play that treats the sacrifice as a murder, while Euripides very much presents it as a ritual sacrifice, as shown by her consenting to it. Scodel very much compares to Aeschylus because it is portrayed as a murder.⁴⁰ This use of military language is not

³³ Loraux 1991:35

³⁴ Loraux 1991:35

³⁵ Loraux 1991:36

³⁶ Loraux 1991:36

³⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:3

³⁸ Aesch. Ag. 237

³⁹ Aesch. Ag. 232

⁴⁰ Scodel 1996: 117

an accident on Aeschylus's part, and emphasises how Euripides purposefully changed the narrative in order to present Iphigenia's death (or not death) as a ritual, instead of a murder.

In contrast to this, Iphigenia is then replaced by a deer at the very last moment by the goddess Artemis. This is a correction, a righting, of the sacrificial ritual. While she starts as an animal inappropriate for sacrifice, but one appropriate for marriage, she is then replaced by a deer.⁴¹ Foley argues that this is a correction of the ritual, that this, which is also a change from Aeschylus' representation, shows that the culture has been righted, that the Greek army who were on the edge of some kind of rebellion or culturally fragile moment had been corrected through this ritual. But, while maybe usual for Artemis, a deer is still not a domesticated animal, and though Iphigenia is "free" in this context, what are her next steps? Is this how she finds herself at Tauris?

Girls were forced to throw away everything that had previously been familiar to them, and in this it is often likened to either a rite of abduction, or that of some kind of death.⁴² Part of the ceremony as it was in the fifth century BC Attic tradition has been considered to be interpreted as emulating abduction, and Seaford draws attention to vase paintings that illustrate how Persephone's abduction resembles wedding scenes.⁴³ This, then, draws the attention back to our sacrificial brides - just as they may have been led to journey into the unknown in marriage and a new life, after having renounced their previous ones, these girls are led into a marriage with

⁴¹ Foley 2019:85

⁴² Seaford 1987:112

⁴³ Seaford 1987:112

Hades.⁴⁴ The sacrifice that precedes the marriage under usual circumstances, seems to take place so as to replace the life of the girl with an animal dedicated to the deity as a substitution.⁴⁵ This usual procedure emphasises how marriage was a sacrifice for the young girl; the animal must take her place within the underworld, where she, if unmarried, would become a bride of Hades.

Again, the language that Euripides uses is telling; Polyxena explicitly speaks of becoming the bride of Hades.⁴⁶ She sees this as the end to her journey - rather than ending in marriage and children as she would have wished, she instead visualises her future as that of having marriage with Hades. This is like how Seaford envisions the burials of unmarried girls.⁴⁷ Epitaphs of unmarried girls consistently imagined the death as a form of marriage to Hades, and this is echoed within the way that Polyxena speaks of her sacrifice. Surely this shows how marriage and sacrifice can be conflated by the young girl; she is still giving something up, still moving into an unknown future, though this one underground, and perhaps resembling further the future that Persephone herself was burdened with.

Foley speaks of how the myth of Hades and Persephone is one of great importance to the unmarried girl, and one which has a lot of importance within the marriage rite.⁴⁸ This is then shown within Euripides's work through it having been Persephone that demands the sacrifice of a virgin, which Macaria bravely steps forward to volunteer for.⁴⁹ Euripides draws attention to the parallels between marriage and

⁴⁴ Loraux 1991:37

⁴⁵ Seaford 1987:108

⁴⁶ Eur. Hec.365, Eur. IA.

⁴⁷ Seaford 1987:106-7

⁴⁸ Foley 2019:86

⁴⁹ Eur. Heraclid. 409.

death for the girls who must sacrifice themselves to marriage, through the very act of using Persephone herself as the one who calls for blood. As marriage itself can be likened to death, as it can be dragged into the light for the unmarried girl by contrasting with her place within the sacrifice that she must make when she follows the ritual of leaving home, so too do these sacrificial virgins step forth into the unknown, whether that's to become Hades's bride, or whether that is to complete marriage vows with an unknown man that was chosen for her.⁵⁰ Either way, the girl must submit.

In regards to Euripides's parallels, it must be noted that Iphigenia was lured to Aulis all under the pretence of a marriage.⁵¹ She and Clytemnestra are called there believing that she's going to be married off to Achilles, and it should be noted that there is a version of the myth where Iphigenia marries him, and does have a child with him.⁵² While the audience has seen Agamemnon agonise over whether to retract the previous letter he's sent, they may have been aware of a differing version of myth. Rabinowitz likens it to Iphigenia having also been promised in a marriage to Greece, and her choosing that as her marriage and children before Achilles, however she may blush to see him.⁵³ The entire first half of the play features the buildup to what Iphigenia and Clytemnestra believe will be a marriage, believing Clytemnestra's first daughter is about to leave her, and Agamemnon uses this as a cover for his own grief.⁵⁴ Regardless of whether it's to marriage or sacrifice, both

⁵⁰ Seaford 1987:107

⁵¹ Loraux 1991:38

⁵² Seaford 1987:108

⁵³ Rabinowitz 1993:48, Eur. IA. 1340

⁵⁴ Seaford 1987:109

Agamemnon and Clytemnestra will lose her anyway, for she will pass into belonging to her husband's house.

While Iphigenia was lured to Aulis to marry Achilles, and Polyxena uses language that likens herself to being a bride of Hades, it is Achilles who demands her sacrifice.⁵⁵ Both women are romantically linked to Achilles, and her sacrifice stands in place for the marriage she could, or should have had, provided the Trojan War had ended differently.⁵⁶ In the language used, the way that they are spoken about post sacrifice is as though they had experienced marriage.⁵⁷ Loraux draws attention to the way in which it seems "as though a throat-cutting equaled a defloration".⁵⁸ If sacrifice in these cases, both connected to Achilles, both some facsimile of marriage, echoes it to the point where these girls are no longer spoken of in the same way after. Their journey to the underworld, in this case, in this method, leads to them no longer being the same virgins that they were pre-sacrifice. They are presented as wives after the sacrifice, but what replaces their virginity?⁵⁹ As they are sacrificed this is the closest they will come to a fulfilment of marriage, as should have been what usually awaited them. The sacrifice becomes their marriage, becomes their death, and they say goodbye to their girlhood either way. If the violence of sacrifice, of them being sacrificed in front of the entire Greek army, can be representative of marriage to such an extent, can this be Euripides calling attention to all the ways that the ritual of marriage for a young girl is a violence? If these violent acts are comparable to marriage, to the experience of journeying to their new *oikos*, can this be something that Euripides wanted to represent?

⁵⁵ Eur. Hec. 125-6

⁵⁶ Rabinowitz 1993:55

⁵⁷ Loraux 1991:39-40

⁵⁸ Loraux 1991: 41

⁵⁹ Loraux 1991:28

Sacrificial Virgins

To a certain extent Macaria separates herself from one section of the usual following of the marriage tradition. One part is when they are separated from their mother and the women that surround them within their girlhood, but Macaria fights to stay within the sphere of women.⁶⁰ Within *Children of Heracles*, she states “ask the king to see to it that I breathe my last Not in men’s hands, but women’s” (565). This is a departure from the usual routine of the wedding ritual - and is a departure from the portrayals of both Iphigenia and Polyxena, who are forced to move into the spheres of war - the man’s domain, when they are seen to give themselves up to their sacrificial futures. Iphigenia in particular is seen to be taken from her mother’s sphere, and Rabinowitz especially emphasises that she puts first her relationship with her father, and moves from the feminine into the masculine spheres of power.⁶¹ Polyxena on the other hand is moved from her mother by force, and is then presented to the entire Greek army, moving from the private realm into the public masculine arena.⁶² While Polyxena and Iphigenia are sacrificed publicly in front of the Greek army, Macaria’s sacrifice is not recounted to us, and we are not told how or who sacrifices her. Macaria is also sacrificed so that the army can prosper, but we do not know if this is done within the ranks, such as Polyxena and Iphigenia are. Clytemnestra even attempts to journey with Iphigenia as she is taken to her death, but Iphigenia argues that she must stay.⁶³ This would echo the journey that the young girl makes to her new *oikos*, how the mother takes her to her husband and the new world that she will inhabit, but Iphigenia stops her, journeying into this world of men alone.

⁶⁰ Rabinowitz 1993:21

⁶¹ Rabinowitz 1993:45-7

⁶² Rabinowitz 1993:54

⁶³ Eur. IA. 1450

Within the Greek animal sacrificial ritual, there was a step that had to take place - the animal would be forced to nod, in order to denote consent to the slaughter.⁶⁴ The animal had to show a willingness to be a victim. This is again echoed within the works themselves - Iphigenia, Polyxena and Macaria all show themselves to be willing victims, turning to rhetorical action in which to elucidate their willingness to be put under the sacrificial knife. In contrast to this, Euripides has changed the story to some extent - if we compare his Iphigenia to Aeschylus's, we see that it's a very different approach. In his *Agamemnon* Aeschylus emphasises how much Iphigenia does not want to be sacrificed, and shows the way in which force has to be used in order to get her to the sacrificial altar.⁶⁵ He does not leave time for her to consent or not, but Euripides has her freely, nobly and proudly surrender herself to the army, for their plans.⁶⁶ Euripides must have chosen to depart from the depiction in *Agamemnon* for a reason, perhaps to legitimise the sacrifice? Perhaps to call attention to the parallels between?

Rabinowitz, in her analysis of Iphigenia, concentrates wholly upon why Iphigenia would agree to proceed with Agamemnon, and does, I think, come to many of the wrong conclusions.⁶⁷ Clytemnestra attempts to insist that she gets to play her usual role within a marriage ceremony, and Iphigenia, when she agrees to go with her father to the masculine sphere of war, she tells Clytemnestra to stay behind, and denies her her place within the ritual.⁶⁸ Rabinowitz argues this is because she idolises her father over her mother, but Iphigenia to this point has completely

⁶⁴ Loraux 1991:42

⁶⁵ Aesch. Ag. 230-40

⁶⁶ Loraux 1991:43

⁶⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:45

⁶⁸ Rabinowitz 1993:46

embodied the perfect ideal for a young girl, as she blushes to see Achilles, up until she realises this may be her opportunity in which to realise any attempt to gain *kleos*, or fame, or glory. She doesn't wish for Clytemnestra to come with her, because that's not correct, that's not the sphere that her mother belongs in, and even as she presents herself to the slaughter, she doesn't wish for her mother to be part of it. Clytemnestra isn't supposed to be seen by the entire army, and we see that Achilles is embarrassed to be seen with Clytemnestra.⁶⁹ Iphigenia has previously completely respected the two outlined spheres that exist within Greek society, and her move from the feminine to the masculine does not mean that she no longer knows what that could mean for Clytemnestra. She sees this as her one opportunity, but she does not ask her mother to compromise herself in the process.

As Polyxena and Iphigenia are natural foils for each other, bookends to the Trojan War, so too are they obvious foils for the figure of Helen, who haunts every narrative of the Trojan War, the evil woman on whom they heap the blame.⁷⁰ Hekabe states to Odysseus that they should have come for Helen to be the victim at Achilles's tomb, because she is the one that is the villain, and is to blame for his death.⁷¹ She argues that Helen was the most beautiful of all, and is the entire reason Achilles was brought to Troy. Iphigenia curses her, blames her for all that she is now going to die in the name of.⁷² Iphigenia is not an appropriate victim to pay for Helen's crimes.⁷³ Neither of them are. And yet they are sacrificed at either end of a war that was fought, in their opinion, because of this woman. They must go forth to this war, in the opinion of the men who choose it, because Helen represents exactly what they're

⁶⁹ Rabinowitz 1993:47

⁷⁰ Scodel 1996:124

⁷¹ Eur. Hec. 265-71

⁷² Eur. IA. 1316

⁷³ Foley 2019:83

scared of.⁷⁴ Rape, after all, is a crime against the man who owns the woman, not the woman herself. And Iphigenia and Polyxena are happy to pass the blame, but all we see is how it doesn't matter which woman is punished, so long as one is, even if it is the ones that are held up as paragons of virtue, and their own words can be used within the male echochamber that Greek theatre was to continue to, as Rabinowitz argues, shape and promote this idea of gender, enforcing it through the sacrificial virgin's mouth. In IA the betrayal of marriage is emphasised as the cause of the war, and this is shown as the primary trigger, in a tragedy that is full of marriages and their deceptions, that uses the institution of marriage to illustrate the rituals that take place within society.⁷⁵ What women are depicted as saying about other women can often be the most telling.

There is an emphasis upon virginity and beauty, both. The sacrificial virgins are religious spectacle, are beautiful to look upon, and the army itself reacts to Iphigenia and Polyxena in a way that echoes this.⁷⁶ The beauty is part of what makes them precious, and Scodel argues that this is because they are essentially equal to a fine peplos.⁷⁷ This is echoed within Rabinowitz, and her theory of exchange.⁷⁸ The exchanging of women, both to solidify relations between men and other men and also as gifts to the gods, similar in some ways to the very gifts that are brought with women when they are given away by their fathers. The very thing that makes virgins the most suitable for these sacrificial deaths - the waste of it - is what emphasises the evil of it.⁷⁹ There's a certain disconnect, as it comes to the portioning of the

⁷⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:50

⁷⁵ Foley 2019:75

⁷⁶ Scodel 1996:112

⁷⁷ Scodel 1996:114

⁷⁸ Rabinowitz 1993:21

⁷⁹ Foley 2019:60, Scodel 1996:112

sacrificial goods when it is a human sacrifice that is the issue at hand - how do they rationalise the waste of it, when there is nothing but smoke, where there would usually be a shared meal.⁸⁰ They are simultaneously only worthy for these deaths because it is like wasting, throwing away, expensive luxury goods, this is what makes it clear to the audience that there is a moral judgement taking place. Or at least, this is what Scodel argues, that daughters were “simultaneously inessential and precious”.⁸¹ This is shown in Iphigenia being saved by Artemis at the end of IA.⁸² This is also echoed within *the Phoenician Women*, as Menoeceus’ brother won’t do - he’s already been promised to another, and they emphasise through this that while it is a boy that is being put to the knife, it’s still a boy who has yet to have officially been promised to anyone.⁸³ Through being beautiful virgins the girls have a particular kind of value to men,⁸⁴ but this does not explain why Menoeceus too needs to be unbetrothed. The argument that Rabinowitz makes hinges upon their sexual value to men, and how that hinges upon them being untouched. This also links into Scodel’s argument, because they cannot be beautiful items if they’ve been touched, but men are not viewed in this way. Menoeceus’ future use wouldn’t have been to make children, but it does once again illustrate this notion of waste. The likening to a beautiful luxury item is not quite right - but the wastefulness, the perception of the loss of something and that being what makes them so desirable as a sacrifice, that adds up, and their loss as future childbearers, or as future kings, is still felt. As Menoeceus is sacrificed before he can fulfil his role as warmaker, this draws comparisons - war for boys, marriage for girls, violence for both.

⁸⁰ Foley 2019:37

⁸¹ Scodel 1996:114

⁸² Eur. IA. 1590

⁸³ Eur. Phoen. 950

⁸⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:55

Iphigenia was sacrificed *for* violence.⁸⁵ Polyxena was sacrificed as a counterpoint to the other end of this war, and Menoeceus was sacrificed instead of being able to fulfil his military obligations that would have come to him with adulthood. This relationship with violence, this ritualised approach to it, it ripples through these tragedies. Echoes of asking what they would do to win this war, this echoes Euripides's own standpoint upon the war that Athens was a part of at the time of writing, and leads those viewing them to question the war.⁸⁶ Violence and marriage are intermingled within Iphigenia's placing in this play, and this raises questions - do young maidens have to die so that these wars can be waged? Girls killed so that these young men can rail against each other?⁸⁷ The sacrificial metaphor is a way in which to explore violence, both from divine and human sources, and in exploring marriage does the poet come to violence?⁸⁸ Ritual is deeply entrenched in violence, and Euripides does not shy away from the ways in which even the marriage ritual has its roots in violence, even if it is sacred violence.⁸⁹ Just as boys and girls were subjected to rituals in the name of taming the violence within them, is this the final expression of that, are these boys and girls ritually sacrificed in order to tame the savage in the others.⁹⁰

And it is sacred violence - in the case of Iphigenia, it is Artemis who requests it,⁹¹ and in the cases of Macaria and Menoeceus it is communicated to them through seers.⁹² For Menoeceus this is communicated by Tiresias but it is called upon by Ares, and it is so that they can be victorious in the battle that follows, and save their city. For Macaria it is so that her brothers can continue to seek asylum in Athens, so that they

⁸⁵ Foley 2019:82

⁸⁶ Rabinowitz 1993:42

⁸⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:64

⁸⁸ Foley 2019:59

⁸⁹ Foley 2019:51

⁹⁰ Zaidman 1992:343

⁹¹ Seaford 1989:91

⁹² Eur. Heraclid. 400, Eur. Phoen. 940.

can finally be free of the death that follows them, and this is called for by Persephone herself⁹³. In all three cases this sacrifice is called for by the gods, whether through the medium of a seer or not. Artemis was often the recipient of sacrifices made by girls as they were preparing for marriage, and this reflects the theme that is found within *IA*.⁹⁴ This sacrifice is still made for violence, even if it is to Artemis that it is devoted. Ares called for Menoeceus, the god of war, and this is telling - Menoeceus is called to war even as he dies. He sacrifices himself so that his city can succeed, so that they can continue, but he does so as a soldier, such as they do so as brides.⁹⁵ Macaria dies for her brothers and for Athens, a city that she has no such connection to but which she dies for all the same.⁹⁶ These deaths are all called for by sources that come from the divine, and the active agents in the play do not question this. They accept that they have been called upon by the divine, and their places within myth, where they experience the world as something like a power struggle between humanity and the gods, where the gods are closer than the audience would experience them, an undisputed part of their lives. Rabinowitz argues that Euripides questions the gods, but doesn't expand upon this point.⁹⁷ In the presentation of the gods as something that ask, that take, that doesn't intrinsically mean there's an urge to present this as something to be challenged, and the rituals that take place are still religiously motivated.⁹⁸ The gods were intimately involved in every section of life within the *polis*, and any portrayal of them comes from within this framework.⁹⁹

⁹³ Loraux 1991:40

⁹⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:44

⁹⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:65

⁹⁶ O'Connor-Visser 1987:23

⁹⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:13

⁹⁸ Neumann 1998:103

⁹⁹ Zaidman 1992:338

Menoceus dies for the same reasons - because the gods demand it, because he wants to save those he loves, because he wants to protect the city.¹⁰⁰ He too only belongs to his country, is not yet promised to anyone, and therefore can still be given to the gods in this method.¹⁰¹ But he's afforded things that the sacrificial girls are not, in the cases of Polyxena and Iphigenia. He is afforded privacy, and he is afforded the benefit of being able to wield the weapon himself.¹⁰² Similar to Macaria in that they do not linger over his death scene, he is able to act as the actual agent within his choice.¹⁰³ Menoeceus wields the knife himself, and gets to play the soldier, even if he is not yet of the age where he would proceed to being a soldier for real.¹⁰⁴

Rabinowitz argues that the sacrifice, instead of marriage, stands in for the life of a king, although his brother Haemon, who is promised to Antigone, is surely the firstborn?¹⁰⁵ As the girls are sacrificed and sent to be Hades's bride, so too does Menoeceus send himself down to Hades, but he does so with a dignity that they are not as fortunate to receive, as they are watched by the Greek army in both cases.¹⁰⁶ Rabinowitz argues extensively that this is a fetishisation, even though both deaths are conveyed through messenger speeches, which admittedly Menoeceus doesn't receive, but Macaria doesn't either. Macaria is given a private death, we assume, as Demophon agrees to allow her to die as she wishes.¹⁰⁷ If Iphigenia's and Polyxena's deaths were merely pure spectacle, designed to titillate, why is Macaria allowed to receive this dignity that they aren't? She too is a virgin of noble birth, in a similar position to Polyxena in that she is a suppliant.¹⁰⁸ That displays that these scenes

¹⁰⁰ O'Connor-Visser 1987:15

¹⁰¹ Rabinowitz 1993:64

¹⁰² Rabinowitz 1993:65

¹⁰³ O'Connor-Visser 1987:42-3

¹⁰⁴ Loraux 1991:41

¹⁰⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:64

¹⁰⁶ Rabinowitz 1993:65

¹⁰⁷ O'Connor-Visser 1987:43

¹⁰⁸ O'Connor-Visser 1987:56

were not included purely for the reason of exciting a Greek audience, even if they prefer to see girls go under the sacrificial knife.¹⁰⁹ One thing that it does present to the audience is the way in which they choose to put themselves under the knife.

¹⁰⁹ Loraux 1987:42

The glory of choice

The question of choice. Of free will. Of what pushes these virgins to the final sacrifice, what pushes them to their final choice. The element of agency that they are allowed to display. Rabinowitz argues that the only one allowed any agency at all would be Menoeceus, that the sacrificial girls had been cornered, and had been given only the illusion of choice.¹¹⁰ That the outcome would have always been the same, and that they've been seduced into a male honour code that does not, in fact, invite them in but rather still, even in the case of their being praised, runs contrary to everything that they do actually receive. O'Connor-Visser argues that they do this for love, that these sacrificial plays show a tenderness and an element of heart that Rabinowitz does not comment upon.¹¹¹ Foley suggests that the very thing that turns the sacrifice of Iphigenia into a sacrifice and not a murder is her love for her father.¹¹² These plays do not have endings that are solved with a secular approach, such as that of Aeschylus, but they do feature a submission, not to masculine ideals, but to gods.¹¹³ The sacrificial victims accept that they are needed for this, by the gods, and see the immutable truth that stands before them - it must be done so that others can continue. It must be done so that their way of life can continue, regardless of what that looks like. They all die *for* things, and they are ultimately choices that they themselves make, and in this way they take control of the decision of their own death.¹¹⁴

Loraux goes through the ways in which these three sacrificial girls are similar, how their deaths reflect and influence each other, how Iphigenia's eventual saving by

¹¹⁰ Rabinowitz 1993:65

¹¹¹ O'Connor-Visser 1987:15

¹¹² Foley 2019:101

¹¹³ Foley 2019:100

¹¹⁴ Loraux 1991:45

Artemis leaves a distinct final impression of the free choice that she made.¹¹⁵ Artemis saves her for her choice, but what of the others? What of Polyxena, and a death that makes her good enough to be better than the barbarians she comes from, but not good enough to be saved?¹¹⁶ Their choices, their agency, within the constraints of their genre, of their myth, are narrowed down to one singular thing. To die in the name of all that they see as good, to die in order for the continuation of their worlds, or whether to let the story change, let the constraint of their girlhood stop them from being able to do the one thing that would lead to their name in the canon. It's a call to sit up and be counted, a call to die in the way in which they choose to, as shown by Polyxena when she offers up her throat and her breast for the sword.¹¹⁷ Their deaths are theirs, even those that the Greek army are responsible for, even the ones where some official is given the honour of holding the knife.¹¹⁸ It's not a perfect choice, not one where they could continue untouched by it if they didn't proceed, but they take any agency they have and stand up and make it their own, in a situation and a time and a genre where they have very little to call theirs.

Rabinowitz argues that this is just the ultimate exchange, that they are being passed into amorous male hands to experience feminine and therefore eroticised deaths for the ideal that is male superiority.¹¹⁹ Just as she argues that Iphigenia chooses her father over Clytemnestra, she argues that they are providing an ideal for women where they die solely for the good of the men, at the hands of and for the ends of men. But this view does nothing to account for the small amount of agency that Iphigenia is able to display here, does nothing to account for the decision made by

¹¹⁵ Loraux 1991:44

¹¹⁶ Loraux 1991:45

¹¹⁷ Eur. Hec. 560-70.

¹¹⁸ Rabinowitz 1993:65

¹¹⁹ Rabinowitz 1993:65

Euripides to make it a choice on her part, nothing but accounting for it as another way for men to control. Yes, this Iphigenia is written by a man, but he allows her to be saved. Allows her to make the choice and be rescued, by a goddess and not by a man, as she is not allowed either in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Both Iphigenia and Polyxena refuse to be hoisted and treated as an inert body as they have previously been displayed in versions of their own myths.¹²⁰ Within Ovid's depiction of the myth Polyxena is given the warrior's death of being stabbed through the chest, rather than her throat as is chosen within Euripides.¹²¹ Does the depiction in Euripides enable Polyxena to later be given even further honour? Does time allow for her depiction to continue to change? From vases that show her hoisted and forced and inert to choosing the warrior's death, put down by Achilles?¹²²

Loraux concentrates on the position of the wound, of the prevalence of the cutting of the throat, how it echoes that of the sacrificial animal.¹²³ How the baring of the breasts and the decision of the throat reclaims them for femininity, how they die in a way uniquely female, even as they are then praised after for what is a masculine glory. Rabinowitz presents this and then uses it to underline her argument that this is part of the army's need to see women's castration, that she is fetishised and then mutilated.¹²⁴ While Polyxena is sacrificed in front of the entire army, such as Iphigenia is, and they are both described in ways that echo art,¹²⁵ this more illustrates the problematic portrayal of the sacrifice. It emphasises the waste, which in turn emphasises the wrongness of the procedure. Virgins were displayed in their

¹²⁰ Loraux 1991:45

¹²¹ Ov. Met. 13. 475-80

¹²² Loraux 1991:45, 61

¹²³ Loraux 1991:61

¹²⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:60

¹²⁵ Scodel 1996:126

pre-marriage rituals, were displayed as future wives, are described by Scodel as “advertising themselves”.¹²⁶ While Rabinowitz presents this as though this is not being shown to the audience as anything but erotic spectacle, Scodel argues in favour that the baring of the breasts is rather a barbarian’s criticism, and that Polyxena’s sacrifice echoes Iphigenia’s on purpose.¹²⁷ Polyxena bares herself, and draws attention to the place where the knife will strike, because she is able to from a position outside of the Greek *polis*. As a barbarian’s viewpoint, she can criticise their practises, and Euripides uses her to do this, just as he allows Iphigenia the dignity she had not been allowed by Aeschylus. The two girls still die femininely, and still with an audience, but they die *for* something, even if that something is contained within the male sphere of the theatre, and they die with something like glory.

One thing that Rabinowitz concentrates upon when it comes to the presentation of choice and agency with the sacrificial girls is the positions that they would be in if they don’t consent.¹²⁸ Both Macaria and Polyxena linger upon how they would be good for nothing but as a bed warmer for a slave in their speeches before they are sacrificed.¹²⁹ As virgin daughters of noble birth they state what was expected for them - to be wives of kings, and this is taken from them before they even ponder the choice that they must make.¹³⁰ Polyxena especially lingers upon the *gravitas* that might once have been her just position in the world - as she is led to the knife she states that “I may die free. I am of royal blood”.¹³¹ She is fully aware of the standing that her noble birth lends her, and she is desperate to retain that, even in her death.

¹²⁶ Scodel 1996:112

¹²⁷ Scodel 1996:122

¹²⁸ Rabinowitz 1993:36

¹²⁹ O’Connor-Visser 1987:56

¹³⁰ Scodel 1996:124

¹³¹ Eur. Hec. 550

She is brave in her final moments, and to her the most important thing that she still wishes for is to be as free as her blood should have allowed her to be.¹³² Scodel argues that this sacrifice in particular, unlike in other Euripides presentations, does incite and emphasise spectacle.¹³³ But while Rabinowitz also supports this view that her death is profoundly presented both to the theatre audience and the internal audience of the Greek army as a spectacle, she does not believe that this was done for any reason other than to communicate the eroticisation of the sacrificial victim, and that she is making herself desirable.¹³⁴ Scodel brings this presentation back to the idea of waste, that this was to denigrate the wasteful nature of what Achilles has asked for in his honour, while Rabinowitz simply states that she would have been sold off for silver.¹³⁵ Polyxena refuses to beg Odysseus for her life, and in doing so she presents herself with a bravery that is rarely seen, but one which Achilles also sees in Iphigenia at her moment of acceptance.¹³⁶ There is little that awaits these girls if they are not to proceed with the sacrifices - slavery and an acceptance of a position lower than that of their noble birth, and for Iphigenia, would the only solution be to relive the action of the *Agamemnon* once again? She may have been hauled to the sacrificial altar regardless, and all she can do in this moment is take the most dignified exit, to accept death and her only attempt to find liberty.¹³⁷

In the argument of how these girls had nothing left to them, no other choices, it draws the question of why not suicide? Suicide is seen as a women's solution, and they could have had ample opportunity, especially in the cases of Polyxena and

¹³² Scodel 1996:124

¹³³ Scodel 1996:126

¹³⁴ Rabinowitz 1991:60

¹³⁵ Rabinowitz 1991:61

¹³⁶ Rabinowitz 1993:58, 48

¹³⁷ Loraux 1991:17, 19

Macaria.¹³⁸ If nothing remained to them, even before they were presented with the question of the sacrifice, why wait? Polyxena, as we've seen above, believed there was nothing left to her, and Macaria has almost nothing left when they get to Athens. They all mourn the children they will never have, the marriages they will never have, and this draws the question of why not suicide. But as Phaedra dies for her glory, so do they.¹³⁹

The sacrificial girls are united in the way in which their sacrifice allows them to find some kind of *kleos* or glory in this masculine sphere that their deaths have brought them to.¹⁴⁰ What replaces their previous position within their societies is this yearning for something like the masculine goal of honour, or glory, and in their death it's the only possible way for them to achieve it.¹⁴¹ As their virginity is taken with their lives, so it is replaced with a form of masculine glory that should never have been available to them, and Iphigenia dedicates her body to Greece and to Artemis, in a fashion that is untypical of the other sacrificial virgins that we see in Euripides and elsewhere.¹⁴² This emphasises her choice, and also enables her to dedicate this glory to her mother.¹⁴³ Rabinowitz counters that she is conditioned to make the choice she does, and that having been positioned between Achilles, who cannot accept her due to the machinations of the Greek army, and a marriage to Greece, she doesn't have any real choice, and therefore the glory given rings hollow.¹⁴⁴ She is given glory because she is upholding this ideal of men being able to possess women, and through appearing to "choose" honour, she is actually upholding the

¹³⁸ Loraux 1991:8

¹³⁹ Loraux 1991:29

¹⁴⁰ Loraux 1991:40

¹⁴¹ Loraux 1991:48

¹⁴² Foley 2019:77

¹⁴³ Foley 2019:76

¹⁴⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:49

Greek narrative of marriage that will in fact bring her nothing of use, and the glory is a flimsy prize merely used to placate.¹⁴⁵ But however the choice is presented, it cannot be questioned that she is given the praise and glory that she so wished for, that she prizes and emulates just as Polyxena does.¹⁴⁶

This push for glory is something that is surprising within the context of these sacrificial girls - as said above women do not long for glory, and as a woman's preferred state was that of passing silently into the beyond, as specified by Pericles within his oratory speech post Samos.¹⁴⁷ Female fame is hard-won, perhaps even impossible to gain, and this glory that they are said to gain in their sacrifice leaves them believing that may be the only way for them to gain it.¹⁴⁸ But another example of a woman within Euripides's corpus that has a concentration upon her honour would be Medea.¹⁴⁹ Medea is shown to have a very strict honour code, and she too seeks *kleos* and glory, but as Iphigenia then emulates this and also shows herself to have a strong wish to die in glory, this is reflected as a masculine trait.¹⁵⁰ Opportunity to die in a way that reflected honour and glory was exclusively the domain of men, usually.¹⁵¹ As Clytemnestra and Medea show themselves to be "masculine women" in ways that virgins cannot, they can still, in this sacrificial ritual, find ways in which to find this glory that should be impossible for them to achieve, even as the Greek army finds it impossible to look beyond the very femininity of the body that offers itself up.¹⁵² The sacrifices become questions of honour, opportunities for these girls to gain the glory and *kleos* that would never be available to them in a life and *polis* that

¹⁴⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:51

¹⁴⁶ Loraux 1991:48

¹⁴⁷ Rabinowitz 1999:98

¹⁴⁸ Rabinowitz 1993:68

¹⁴⁹ Blondell 1999:164

¹⁵⁰ Eur. IA. 1561

¹⁵¹ Rabinowitz 1993:36

¹⁵² Loraux 1991:60

wants nothing more than silence from them.¹⁵³ In this way their deaths make them able to experience being called courageous and honourable in a society that usually would never allow for girls to be in a situation where they would even be able to attempt any sort of action that would call for their names to be remembered. As Loraux says “Silence is the adornment of women,” and through taking active roles these girls do not allow themselves to be left behind as only this.¹⁵⁴ They are able to offer up a presentation of courage and bravery that should not be allowed to them, able to take the reins on their lives, even, in the way that they actually cannot in the usual process of the betrothal and then the marriage to men that they often don’t know and are chosen for them.¹⁵⁵

As they are chosen to be sacrificed, so they are, for the briefest moment, given agency and released from the bonds of their *kurios*.¹⁵⁶ And they make the choice for the sacrifice, they decide upon it, and through this they are rewarded with the *eukleia* that is not the domain of wives.¹⁵⁷ As Iphigenia accepts and even celebrates her marriage to Greece, this move to submit herself happily to that which has been paralleled with marriage throughout the play, as her own experience thus far has taught her to, she’s able to take a place within the mythological corpus that is not usually the domain of women.¹⁵⁸ As Polyxena is her narrative foil, the other half of sacrificial victims given in the name of the Trojan War, she is also awarded a place within the Greek myth that would not usually be the domain of the barbarian.¹⁵⁹ She is still defined as other, but is able to die gloriously as she would not have lived if she

¹⁵³ O’Connor-Visser 1987:9

¹⁵⁴ Loraux 1991:21

¹⁵⁵ O’Connor-Visser 1987:45

¹⁵⁶ O’Connor-Visser 1987:45

¹⁵⁷ O’Connor-Visser 1987:47

¹⁵⁸ Foley 2019:77

¹⁵⁹ Blondell et al. 1999:22

had been made a slave, or even if she were to become a consort like her sister Cassandra.¹⁶⁰ Macaria comes from noble birth, and she wants nothing more than to die in a way that is representative of who her father is.¹⁶¹ She wants to be the most courageous of all, and she is able to be because of this moment where she is able to submit to the calling of the gods. As much as these are actions fulfilled by men, in plays written by men, these girls are answering a higher calling. As Menoeceus fulfils a soldier's death before his time, so too do these girls to a certain extent, and are far closer to that glorious death than they would have had any reason to be in any other context. As he dies for military prowess, for success in battle, so too do Iphigenia, Polyxena and Macaria, when they would never had had any reason to receive glorious death in battle, when they had little else planned for them.

As discussed above, the sacrifices are all called for by a divine presence. They are not submitting themselves, simply and with no caveats, to men. They are submitting themselves to a godly presence, as much as that presence is not always benevolent. They're not giving themselves to men, they are giving themselves in sacrifice to the gods, and wish to take their places on the altars of sacrifice. As blood sacrifices required baskets of barley, these girls respected that they were required.¹⁶² As virgins took their places within festival and ritual circumstances, so too do they take their places within myth.¹⁶³ As there is a sacrifice before a marriage, as the girls sacrifice in the process to prepare for this ritual, so too do these sacrificial victims take their place in the ritual, although in the case of the usual Athenian girl it would be a sacrifice of their hair.¹⁶⁴ As much as Euripides takes the mythic tradition and

¹⁶⁰ Scodel 1996:124

¹⁶¹ O'Connor-Visser 1987:25

¹⁶² Zaidman 1992:344

¹⁶³ Zaidman 1992:345

¹⁶⁴ Zaidman 1992:362, Foley 2019:85

places it within the usual, the domestic and civic disputes that plague the everyday, these are still full of the religious ritual that dogged the step of every process in the Greek world.¹⁶⁵ Are they sacrificed so that the world of men can continue, so that men can continue to thrive, virgin's blood offered up instead of theirs, or are they sacrificed because a god demands it?¹⁶⁶ As women's futures are dictated by the men that choose their betrothals, so too are men governed on the battlefield. But in myth this is then finally decided by the gods; so often who wins is decided by them, as with the outcomes of the battles that follow Menoeceus and Macaria's sacrifices. The outcome turns upon the sacrifice, but this is chosen by the god.

¹⁶⁵ Foley 2019:177

¹⁶⁶ Loraux 1991:34

Wives and daughters, fathers and sons

Just as marriage can be a death for girls, Alcestis sacrifices herself so that her husband may live, and this recalls a familiar association between that of the marriage-bed and death-bed.¹⁶⁷ As Alcestis mourns her marriage at her marriage-bed, as she mourns how easily her husband may abandon her, this calls forth the way that death doggedly follows on in association where it comes to marriage for women and girls.¹⁶⁸ She too holds a status as a Persephone figure, and she is praised as the ultimate wife throughout the text.¹⁶⁹ As she cries over the marriage-bed, this is a recognition of the way in which her very marriage has been responsible for her death.¹⁷⁰ In the tragedy itself we don't know if she volunteered or if she was asked and found herself to say no, but there is emphasis upon her sacrificing herself, as shown in the praise she receives. As the others had sacrificed themselves for their cities and their brothers and their father's battles, Alcestis sacrifices so that her husband may live, and she is praised for this, but in a different way to the virgins that receive *kleos* for it.

As the virgins are awarded *kleos* and glory, in a way that they would not usually be able to, Alcestis is awarded praise, but in a way that more readily aligns with the praise a wife could be expected to receive. She dies so as to clearly and obviously align herself with her husband's family far beyond her own.¹⁷¹ She dies when Admetos's father and mother would not, and therefore is the ultimate keeper of his *oikos*. Through her need to protect her husband's house, she fulfils the ultimate task that a wife could be assigned, and she is given dignity in the way in which she

¹⁶⁷ Saeford 1987:123

¹⁶⁸ Saeford 1987:117

¹⁶⁹ Rabinowitz 1999:96, 99

¹⁷⁰ Rabinowitz 1999:100

¹⁷¹ Rabinowitz 1993:75

prepares for this death, as some of the other victims of this ritual are not.¹⁷² But even she, the ultimate wife, then earns her glorious death through the masculine trait of courage, to some extent in a similar way to how the virgin girls moved into the masculine world when they made the choices that they made.¹⁷³ But even then Alcestis is not a usual wife; there is no hanging for her, nothing but a wasting away.¹⁷⁴ She dies the best of women for her self sacrifice, and she is glorified throughout the text.¹⁷⁵ It seems the perfect female route to glory, and yet for her to be *eklees* is a uniquely masculine trait.¹⁷⁶

Rabinowitz uses Alcestis to continue to argue that the plays trick the female audience into believing that this cycle of self-sacrifice is something that they should want, and is purely to promote the idea of convincing other women to sacrifice themselves for a male ideal.¹⁷⁷ By praising her sacrifice we are unwittingly playing into the “ideological work” of the play, but this relies upon an ideal of male supremacy that isn’t quite present within the play itself. Admetos himself is uniquely feminised within this play, to carry on along their ideological grounds.¹⁷⁸ Euripides does use this play to outline an ideal wife, one who fully embodies this idea of shrouded silence, and who is willing to die for her husband.¹⁷⁹ But as Vellacott states, all this does is emphasise and draw attention to the very obvious discrepancies that exist within this relationship.¹⁸⁰ As Alcestis is perfect, as her marriage shows the ideal that a woman can strive for, so too does it show how Admetos basically

¹⁷² Scodel 1996:115

¹⁷³ Loraux 1991:28-9

¹⁷⁴ Loraux 1991:31

¹⁷⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:77

¹⁷⁶ O’Higgins 1993:81, 84

¹⁷⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:84

¹⁷⁸ Rabinowitz 1999:96

¹⁷⁹ Rabinowitz 1999:97

¹⁸⁰ Vellacott 1974:16

expects this from her.¹⁸¹ At the time this discrepancy wasn't something to challenge or question - the very life of a woman was not worth that of her husband's, and therefore this should have been something that was understated. And yet, Alcestis is spared for it. Just as Iphigenia is spared, she is given a second chance, and yet also is given the glory of having survived.¹⁸² As we see Euripides present this position within the ancient Greek marriage, so too do we see Admetos returning to his marriage chamber notably upset to have lost her.¹⁸³

As Rabinowitz argues that Admetos betrays Alcestis almost immediately, this seems to slightly ignore some of the characterisation that we have been given of him.¹⁸⁴ O'Higgins also presents a view of Admetos that is less than favourable, and puts forward that he does not wish for his wife to gain the *kleos* that she has rightfully earned.¹⁸⁵ While it is true that some of his manliness seems to be questioned,¹⁸⁶ there seems to be a concentration within *Anxiety Veiled* that this must be because of the homoerotic undertones that may have been present within his relationship with Apollo.¹⁸⁷ As Admetos is posed as less than a perfect husband, as his argument with his father outlines the ways in which he ignores his familial obligations, Alcestis is his natural foil.¹⁸⁸ Vellacott describes this as him being given one choice and then continuing to make further ones even as he is dogged by guilt.¹⁸⁹ Admetos is given a gift to bear by the gods, and his wife is almost the one who pays for it.¹⁹⁰ But even as he bears it, there seems to be a real feeling of upset at what must happen to

¹⁸¹ Vellacott 1974:17

¹⁸² Vellacott 1974:17

¹⁸³ Eur. Alc. 918, 922

¹⁸⁴ Rabinowitz 1993:81

¹⁸⁵ O'Higgins 1993:83

¹⁸⁶ Rabinowitz 1999:96

¹⁸⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:97

¹⁸⁸ Eur. Alc. 690

¹⁸⁹ Vellacott 1974:20

¹⁹⁰ Eur. Alc.1071

Alcestis, and he does appear to mean it when he goes back to his home upset that he has lost her. There is a concentration for him, on the private, in a way that usually is not the domain of men, just as Alcestis dying in the light is unlike the usual place of women.¹⁹¹

O'Higgins draws to our attention the ways in which Alcestis is committed to her duty in a way that is ordinarily expected of heroic males - she knows what she must do in order to honour her marriage, and is willing to give up her life as it exists to do so.¹⁹² And also brings forth the ways that she *chooses* death, and uses it to grant herself something like immortality.

Euripides, again, here, is calling attention to marriage and death, and the ways they are intertwined, but he is doing so in a way that also calls attention to the general inequality that is prevalent within the Athenian conception of marriage.¹⁹³ As Admetos is seen to be an honourable member of society, so too are the elders brought into this depiction of marriage, for which Vellacott argues Admetos shows clearly how the guilt belongs to all. Rabinowitz states that while Alcestis appears to have a form of power when she requests that Admetos not take another, she does not linger upon this presentation of marriage, does not question anything other than the clear discrepancies, not why Euripides may have showcased them.¹⁹⁴ As marriage is distinctly intertwined for the younger sacrificial victims, so too is her sacrifice intertwined deeply with marriage and the representation of it that Euripides presents. Is there something knowing within that, something that needs a little

¹⁹¹ O'Higgins 1993:80

¹⁹² O'Higgins 1993:81

¹⁹³ Vellacott 1974:19

¹⁹⁴ Rabinowitz 1999:103

parsing? Or is he simply presenting to the audience that which they already know, already expect? There's an element of Alcestis simply considering what will be left to her if she survives him - what will happen to her children and her life?¹⁹⁵ Will she be doomed to a Penelope type narrative, and then cursed to be considered sneaky as women generally were if she were to attempt any sort of other recourse?¹⁹⁶ Again, as with the sacrificial virgins, it is almost defined as a suicide.¹⁹⁷ The only choice that they have in these cases is to embrace their own death, to go willingly and in a way that will gain them *kleos*.

Heracles notably describes her as being "thrown in with the livestock" when he brings Alcestis back to Admetos and demands that he accept her.¹⁹⁸ He presents her as being another gift, something to receive, and echoes the imagery of livestock that the young girls are also described with to illustrate their suitability for marriage. Throwing Alcestis in with the livestock draws attention, once again, to the marriage ritual and the process of it, and likens her to a gift, something to be given away and possessed, such as the fine peplos that Scodel likens the sacrificial girls to.¹⁹⁹ But as gifts they should still be passed correctly between *kurios* and future husband, and in this Heracles takes the place of them, passing her hand to Admetos, and again copying the marriage ritual.²⁰⁰ In this way the emphasis is placed upon the likening to a second marriage process, and in so doing her death is imagined in the terms of her wedding.²⁰¹ On the other hand, as her death is imagined in terms of her wedding, so is her life. She must pass back into being in the ownership of someone, must come

¹⁹⁵ Rabinowitz 1999:77

¹⁹⁶ O'Higgins 1993:79

¹⁹⁷ Rabinowitz 1993:75

¹⁹⁸ Eur. Alc. 1032

¹⁹⁹ Scodel 1996:119

²⁰⁰ Rabinowitz 1993:90

²⁰¹ Seaford 1987:123

back into life as having some form of *kurios*, and as this passes to Heracles, as he “won” her, and therefore owns her, so he passes this ownership back to Admetos, as it had been previously. Marriage and ownership in this context are interchangeable. As the men pass ownership of her she is given a second marriage to her husband, and she is exchanged like a prized item. But this ignores any of the power that she may have gained, and ignores the *kleos* that has been bestowed upon her. She avoids the usual problem of the sedentary woman’s life, and does receive a praise tradition.²⁰² And, for a moment, not only does she demand things of her husband but she exists in a liminality that shows she has been somewhere that very few have ever been.²⁰³ As Admetos follows Heracles and proves his need to provide hospitality far above that which seems entirely necessary, Alcestis proves herself to be better than him, all by being a silent and veiled presence as the men speak of her.²⁰⁴ While she is exchanged between men, as shown in Rabinowitz’s theory of exchange, she also has the moral upstanding - Admetos has just fought with his father, Heracles has shown himself to be a drunk who loves carousing, and she is inbetween it all, having done nothing other than commit herself to saving her husband in any way she possibly could.²⁰⁵ Rabinowitz discusses her power and whether she has it, how she functions as a prize and a sacrifice solely for men, but she does not consider how Alcestis has proven herself.²⁰⁶ She’s proven herself within the arena of marriage, however much that arena is purposefully set up against her, and even as Euripides has her do so within the context of a misogynistic society that he is aware of.²⁰⁷ Regardless of whether it is Admetos or Heracles that is holding

²⁰² O’Higgins 1993:85

²⁰³ Rabinowitz 1999:100

²⁰⁴ Rabinowitz 1999:102

²⁰⁵ Vellacott 1974:20

²⁰⁶ Rabinowitz 1991:95

²⁰⁷ O’Higgins 1993:82

the power at the end of the play, she is holding something that enables some form of shift for the opinion of women, she is a woman that is nothing but unimpeachably good, regardless of whether Admetos tries to drag her back down.²⁰⁸

As Alcestis shows herself to have some kind of consciousness of public life, so too does Jocasta, where in *The Phoenician Women* she shows herself to have a clear interest in prioritising public interest.²⁰⁹ As Creon immediately hatches a plan in order to save his son, Menoeceus, she continues to act in the interest of the city.²¹⁰ As a play that focuses the conflict between state and family and male and female, this is shown in the way in which women and children are the ones who continue to prioritise the city in a way that one would expect from Creon, and something in which he fails utterly.²¹¹ As her two sons attempt to destroy each other and the city itself, Jocasta steps in and speaks in a reasonable fashion in an attempt to stop the two of them from falling prey to the family curse.²¹² As a grown married woman, just as Alcestis shows herself to prioritise the future of her city, so too does Jocasta. Euripides' presentation of Creon is somewhat more what we would have expected from Jocasta - as Euripides has his chorus act in a way that is opposite to how it was presented in the Aeschylean tradition, so too does his Creon act in a way that the audience may not expect.²¹³ As women concern themselves with the public, so too do the men act in a way that is contrary to the public interest.²¹⁴ This is something which is familiar, too, from Admetos - he agrees to Alcestis's request not to remarry, even as this is something that may sabotage the very thing that she died to

²⁰⁸ O'Higgins 1993:89

²⁰⁹ Foley 2019:112

²¹⁰ Eur. Phoen. 970

²¹¹ Foley 2019:114

²¹² Foley 2019:115

²¹³ Foley 2019:115

²¹⁴ Foley 2019:120

protect.²¹⁵ As the public and private are blended within *The Phoenician Women*, so too is it in the *Alcestis*.²¹⁶ Alcestis and Jocasta both act in ways that are unlikely to have been usual for married women, or at least in the ways that we have had them defined to us at various points in his own plays.²¹⁷ Many arguments have been made in regards to the ironic in his plays - could it be that there is something tongue-in-cheek about the attention he always draws to the “correct” role of women in the public and private sphere, especially as they are presented in plays that usually contain a central struggle between domestic and civic life.

Jocasta prioritises the public in this play where it is the son that is sacrificed, but Antigone also makes a sacrifice.²¹⁸ As a play that consistently shows a pattern of inverting the usual positions of male and female roles, we then see Antigone making a sacrifice just as Menoeceus does.²¹⁹ While Menoeceus’ sacrifice is completely unusual, a different form of sacrifice, we do then see something much more usual from Antigone.²²⁰ While Menoeceus’ sacrifice is the one that has the effect upon the action, and is the one that helps the *polis*, Antigone ultimately does something that is much more expected, and goes much further along the normal lines of what is expected in a sacrifice. A girl gives up marriage and children for someone else.²²¹ As we have seen this is just what is expected from girls in the sacrificial plays. As Menoeceus, a boy, gives up his potential military future, so too does Antigone give up her future, but not in the way that she does in the expected Sophocles version of events.²²² In Sophocles she hangs herself, and dies by her own will, and in Euripides

²¹⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:79

²¹⁶ Foley 2019:124, Rabinowitz 1993:78

²¹⁷ Foley 2019:117

²¹⁸ Foley 2019:142

²¹⁹ Foley 2019:126

²²⁰ Foley 2019:134

²²¹ Foley 2019:144

²²² Loraux 1991:31

she does experience a kind of death, though only to her girlhood, such as the other sacrificial virgins experience. Menoeceus sacrifices himself so that Zeus can operate his godly will and provide the thunderbolt, so that the prophecy of Tiresias can be enacted.²²³ The movement of these two sacrifices is that which restores the spheres of female and male - as Menoeceus dies for the public Antigone sacrifices her future for the private.²²⁴ Even as this restores the previous expected positions, Antigone still receives *kleos* for doing so, and is still rewarded even as she has left the place she belongs, leaving behind her virgin contemporaries in the chorus and moving into the world of men.²²⁵ *The Phoenician Women* has the agents within the play all acting in a way that does not quite live up to the par of what is expected within Athenian society, even as the attention is once again drawn to how Antigone should not be seen by the world of men. Euripides lays all of these characters out for the audience and yet does not seem to quite answer the action himself - the movements of them all seem to be taken in vain, and it's hard to reconcile many of the disparate elements.²²⁶ Ultimately, Foley presents the play as having an internal core of restoring a "confidence in ritual" and having a "sacrificial cure",²²⁷ but regardless of this the way in which gender is played with throughout this play of so many disparate features, as the tensions move between the public and private, as the two are always slightly muddled within royal families, shows us something more in Euripides's presentation of the public and private. As the scales move between the two sides, as the principle actors move between acting in their private and public interests, we see women presented as having the rational responses, as helping their ailing fathers, and children being prepared to do what men will not. While there's discussion about

²²³ Foley 2019:136

²²⁴ Foley 2019:145

²²⁵ Foley 2019:141, 140

²²⁶ Foley 2019: 145

²²⁷ Foley 2019:146

whether this was supposed to mirror the political landscape within Athens at the time, this still does not quite explain why Jocasta, who eventually spears herself on her son's sword, is given the rational responses.²²⁸

²²⁸ Loraux 1991:51

Women wielding the knife

As we have studied Iphigenia in his *Aulis*, it is time to turn to his *Tauris*. This is where her sacrifice to Artemis takes her, transported at the end of *Iphigenia at Aulis* to come to this barbarian country to sacrifice Greeks for Artemis herself.²²⁹ For all the *kleos* she allegedly gains in her actions at Aulis, for all the masculine glory and fame, she has spent at least twenty years as a priestess of Artemis slaughtering those who come from where she does, desperately trying to send home a letter she cannot read in an attempt to discover what has become of her family.²³⁰ Here, it is important to fully articulate the Athenian conception of *barbaros* as illustrated by Aristotle.²³¹ Barbarians as it is pictured by this ideal is an explicitly formulated idea of Other, often likened to women and children, and completely opposite to the conception of the freely democratic ideologically elevated Athenian citizen.²³² Otherness is important within this play - it is Otherness that enables the conception of Iphigenia as slaughterer of Greeks (though there is some dispute as to whether this was blood that was actually on her hands).²³³ The Otherness of her place within them, and the way in which she slips back into her Greek roots immediately upon the recognition scene with Orestes, is what allows this - even as the very threat of Orestes's blood on her hands would leave an Athenian audience to view her as polluted.²³⁴ The Otherness within this is where Euripides lays the blame for the violence present within this society - even as the barbarians attribute this violence to their iteration of the goddess Artemis, this turns the focus from the god, and this is echoed when Iphigenia offers her own explanation of the ritual.²³⁵ As the Otherness permeates the

²²⁹ Eur. IT. 780., Strachan 1976:133

²³⁰ Wolff 1992:332

²³¹ *Politics* 1252b, 1255a

²³² Blondell et al. 1999:23

²³³ Strachan 1976:131

²³⁴ Strachan 1976:140

²³⁵ Foley 2019:58, Wolff 1992:311

play so too does the spectre of Iphigenia's previous role as the once upon a time victim of that same goddess (and the way in which she was lucky enough to be saved). As Iphigenia is not pure enough for Artemis now, surely, affected by her role within the barbarian cult, so too do we recall that she is a previous victim of the very same goddess.

In this we have recounted to us a dream in which Orestes is sacrificed, and a priestess who is directly responsible for the preparation of human sacrifices, who recalls, painfully, her own sacrifice.²³⁶ As she has previously been a sacrifice herself she dreams of Orestes being sacrificed just as she was, something which subverts the usual masculine and feminine roles to such a point this can only be possible under the aura of the Otherness that the location provides. This is a perverted ritual, but one that Iphigenia has long been a part of.²³⁷ As Loraux tells us, women do not get to wield the knife, do not get to execute their own sacrifices, must always cede the control to the slaughterer's knife.²³⁸ But even as Iphigenia passes the direct blame to someone else, as she claims that she merely prepares the victims and does not wield the knife, she is still directly responsible for the death of Greek men.²³⁹ She does not hold the knife, but she is shown throughout to have sacrificed Greeks, and has a bloodlust that is surely not fitting for a woman as their general preferred behaviour has been presented throughout the plays that have been discussed above.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Wolff 1992:310

²³⁷ Wolff 1992:311

²³⁸ Loraux 1991:32

²³⁹ Strachan 1976:140

²⁴⁰ Strachan 1976:131

Iphigenia had once been sacrificed in the place of her marriage and children, and had chosen this willingly, sacrificed to the maiden goddess instead of ever seeing her marriage ritual to fruition, and she then became the cult figure, as far as we know, for women that die in childbirth.²⁴¹ She becomes a figurehead of a part of the cycle of women's lives, but for a part of it that she could never experience, a part that she would never survive to, even in this iteration; the sacrifice still took the possibility of childbirth and marriage from her, and she is "without marriage or child or city or friend" at the beginning of the play.²⁴² Regardless of having survived, she still has had those things taken from her, and has been left in a different *polis*, far away from home and everyone she has ever known, assumed by all to have been dead while she has been fulfilling barbarian rituals far away.²⁴³ The sacrifice and all its marital connotations has still taken this from her, even if she is now, technically, alive. As she has been given life she has not been given back any of the things that she lost in the events at Aulis, and she has instead been given to Artemis. As the maiden goddess asked for her blood, and then saved her, she continued to hold her, and kept her as a priestess, and as her fearlessness and power are evident so too are they things she is capable of having because of the hold that Artemis continues to have on her, and as her place as not quite a virgin and not quite a wife.²⁴⁴ Iphigenia is given a place at Artemis's altar, one closer to home, but she is still not given all that she wished for when she dreamed that she was to marry Achilles in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.²⁴⁵ She still will not be given all that was taken from her when she was sacrificed, and never will. But in exchange for her maidenhood she does receive *kleos* - for surely there is no better realisation of that than a place within the cult of

²⁴¹ Wolff 1992:321

²⁴² Wolff 1992:322, Eur. IT. 220.

²⁴³ Eur. IT. 565.

²⁴⁴ Wolff 1992:330

²⁴⁵ Eur. IT. 1450.

Artemis. The *kleos* that is promised to these sacrificial virgins is realised within her - as she loses her chance at marriage and parenthood she is given the opportunity to operate within her own sphere of ritual power and to, eventually, restore her father's house. She moves into the masculine sphere in the action of the *IA*, and to some extent she never leaves it. Her priestesshood and her own elevated status as a chosen one of Artemis, both maiden and beyond it, leaves her in a position to occupy a space in this land that the Athenian woman usually would not.

Orestes and Pylades are able to be considered as sacrificial victims because of the Otherness of the scene, because the location and Artemis and Athena's involvement circumnavigate the usual procession of the situation.²⁴⁶ While Orestes recognises her first in the classic recognition scene, she is still the one that takes control going forward.²⁴⁷ As this play takes place in a situation that is far outside of that which is familiar to the Athenian audience, so too does Iphigenia not comment upon the proper actions of a Greek girl, because the play takes place within the religious and ritual sphere, where both the Otherness and the power of women and their ability to speak up within this leaves her able to present the fierceness that is seen when she offers herself up as a wife to all Greece.²⁴⁸ In contrast to this Iphigenia is concerned wholly with her family and her return home, while Orestes presents himself as carrying out a task to return the former power of his fallen house. Orestes is still concerned with the public, and the return of his former standing, while Iphigenia is concerned with getting home, returning to her *oikos*, and takes control of the ritual deception that will allow them to return, as she is able to commit this deception within the sphere that she has lived in since her sacrifice, and Orestes even says that it is

²⁴⁶ Wolff 1992:319

²⁴⁷ Wolff 1992:324

²⁴⁸ Wolff 1992:329

“like a woman’s cleverness” to be able to concoct the plan to deceive their way to retrieving the statue and leaving.²⁴⁹ The ritual deception is what enables an ending, one that Euripides perhaps found more satisfying than what Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* was able to give them.²⁵⁰ The religious preoccupation within this play links religion consistently back to the *polis*, as it gives the root myth for the Arkteia cult at Brauron, and moves the foreign depiction of the goddess back into the Athenian *polis*.²⁵¹ Euripides, here, uses ritual as a source of healing, and the sacrificial rite enables them to repair that which has been broken within the house of Atreus, in a way that exposes once again a preoccupation with the godly and the religious.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Eur. IT. 1030.

²⁵⁰ Foley 2019:135

²⁵¹ Wolff 1992:329, 323

²⁵² Foley 2019:135

Conclusion

Throughout the plays presented there's been two threads that have been returned to again and again - that of the ways in which ritual itself has been presented and how the women concerned with these rituals have comported themselves. As Euripides has presented love within these works so too has he presented religion.²⁵³ As the Greeks experienced their gods as not always loving and often violent, so too did they experience a preoccupation with ritual and the ways in which it stabilised and helped them to process events within their society, and this dependence on ritual and their divine superstructure was a large part of the makeup of their lives.²⁵⁴ This is shown clearly within the six texts that have been examined here, and shows a side of Euripides that can sometimes be pushed aside.

As figures within myth it has often been the path of least resistance to speak ill of the portrayal of women, even to reach to theoretical heights to analyse every moment as either eroticised or steeped within misogynistic feeling.²⁵⁵ As Blondell et al. point out, Aristophanes criticises Euripides for this very thing while indulging in many of the same approaches himself.²⁵⁶ Euripides is not anything other than a product of his own time, but there is a certain reduction of his work that happens when the modern audience is unable to look past this, unable to even attribute sacrificial virgins with the one decision that they are able to make. Aristotle himself even has problems with Iphigenia in the *IA* for having too much sense, for portraying too much bravery and intelligence, and yet Rabinowitz boils her down to simply wanting to emulate her father to the ignorance of all else, without analysing at all how she might have been

²⁵³ Foley 2019:100

²⁵⁴ Foley 2019:58-9

²⁵⁵ Rabinowitz 1993:31

²⁵⁶ Blondell et al. 1999:68

socialised that way.²⁵⁷ To analyse their deaths solely from the axis of how these actions are advantageous for men leaves the audience a little cold and leaves no room for forgiveness, no room for something like an awareness of how and why these stories are still relevant to a modern audience so many years later.

Euripides throughout these works calls for a return to ritual - he creates unstable worlds and then he brings about their return to the previously expected action, the myths that were so familiar to the audience, via the medium of the healing sacrificial rite.²⁵⁸ And this is done within the tragic makeup of the sphere of *oikos* and battlefield, male and female, public and private. The return of order means the return of these binaries, these dichotomies, but it also means the return to the sacred. As sacrifice is born from violence, so too is society born from the ashes of what remains, and Greek tragedy comes from this sacred violence, as the entire corpus is grounded within these mythic and violent tales.²⁵⁹ As ritual, and by extension tragedy, works to tame their society and attempt to put to words forms of catharsis and emotional bloodletting, so too does this form the society on which it works.²⁶⁰

Iphigenia, Polyxena and Macaria aren't simply just sacrificial virgins, aren't sacrificed purely so that men can continue to thrive and go to war, and to create subliminal messaging that women's best route is to die. Iphigenia's evolution in the Iphigenia of the *IT* is foreign and strange, when held up next to these sacrificial virgins, and it could be said that she was meant to be accepted that way. There's something compelling, nonetheless, in the narrative of the girl who chooses, the one who

²⁵⁷ *Poetics* 1454a, Rabinowitz 1993:55

²⁵⁸ Foley 2019:59

²⁵⁹ Neumann 1998:101

²⁶⁰ Foley 2019:60

decides to embrace her own death in order to exercise the one choice that she has access to. And Menoeceus embraces death just as readily, even as Creon wishes he wouldn't, even under all of the chaotic action that takes place in *The Phoenician Women*, just as Antigone is prepared to give up her originally expected future in order to journey with her father. Alcestis wastes away for her husband and is rewarded, is given away in a second marriage right back to the man that she had died for. And all these myths and the way in which they are told within Euripides's corpus circle ritual, and sacrifice, and death, and marriage, and these elusive ever-shifting transitional periods within a life. Blood sacrifice was central to Greek religion, and Euripides presents these perverted sacrifices again and again, and how they can continue to right and shape the very makeup of his society.²⁶¹

As these victims are offered up to the crowd within the genre of tragedy, so too are the underlying and implicit parts of society, both to sure up and to dissect, and through the medium of this ritual, as tragedy was, we see how relations with the gods were a part of every person's life.²⁶² As the figures of myth move throughout these rituals the modern audience is presented with the very pervasiveness of the religious feeling within this society; as women were allowed into parts of the religious sphere that were not allowed to extend to the public, so too do we see them do so within Euripides's work.²⁶³ Occasionally a tragedy, too, can be the surprising domain of women, just as the ritual and religious sphere sometimes could have been.

²⁶¹ Osborne 1993:395

²⁶² Osborne 1993:405

²⁶³ Osborne 1993:405