

# Conflicted Fatherhood and Committed Brotherhood in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*

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μέγα τι θηρεύειν ἀρετάν,  
γυναιξὶ μὲν κατὰ Κύ-  
πριν κρυπτάν, ἐν ἀνδράσι δ' αὖ  
†κόσμος ἔνδον ὁ μυριοπλη-  
θῆς† μείζω πόλιν αὔξει. (568-72)

"It is a great thing to hunt after excellence, which for women lies in hidden love, whilst amongst men the presence of boundless good order makes the state greater."<sup>1</sup>

This statement of the Chorus of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* points to a gendered division between public and private priorities.<sup>2</sup> Clytemnestra also espouses a gendered distribution of activity to her husband Agamemnon: "go and deal with matters outside, and I will settle the affairs within the household" (ἐλθὼν δὲ τᾶξω πρᾶσσε, τὰν δόμοις δ' ἐγώ, 740). Although spoken within the context of wedding arrangements, her words offer a microcosm of a traditional division in classical Athenian ideology between a male emphasis on public life and a domestic, familial sphere of female activity.<sup>3</sup> Despite such statements from its characters, the play as a whole challenges so neat a division of political and familial activity and sentiment.

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<sup>1</sup> Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 568-572. All translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Conacher, *Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme and Structure* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 257; Walter Stockert, *Euripides: Iphigenie in Aulis*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 367-368, where there is also discussion of quite what "hidden" may mean in the context. Plato, *Meno* 71e offers a similar distinction between the public focus of male excellence and the private context of the female equivalent.

<sup>3</sup> Pericles' Funeral Oration, as recounted in Thucydides, offers a particularly striking statement of this ideology: all men should be involved in public life (Thucydides 2.40), but women should aspire not even to be discussed in the public sphere (2.45.2). Men need not *completely* disregard their private affairs (2.40), but the emphasis of the speech is very squarely upon the primacy of male activity in the public sphere and in the public interest, for which the war-dead commemorated therein laid down their lives (2.43).

Scholars have long noted this phenomenon amongst the female characters of the play: whilst Clytemnestra is a devoted mother with a consistently, intensely familial focus,<sup>4</sup> who never accepts the necessity of Iphigenia's politically motivated sacrifice, her daughter conversely embraces her fate and espouses the political and in particular Panhellenic<sup>5</sup> ideology which is presented as justification for her death.<sup>6</sup> This blurring of public and private, however, is also, however, prevalent amongst the male characters of the play,<sup>7</sup> and forms the subject matter of this paper, which explores the depiction of fatherhood and brotherhood in the face of this complex interaction of political and familial forces. *Iphigenia in Aulis* is not a play in which the traditional equation of the public with the male and the domestic with the female is rigorously upheld, nor in which the infamous dysfunction of the House of Tantalus leads to the total breakdown of family structures and loyalty regardless of gender,<sup>8</sup> but rather one in which male responses to a conflict between public and private interests are diverse. The duties of fatherhood tend to lose out to public pressures, but the bond of brotherhood remains strikingly firm.

At the play's outset,<sup>9</sup> Agamemnon, commander of the Greek army, is in a state of considerable distress; before the events of the play, he allowed himself to be persuaded to send a letter luring his daughter Iphigenia to the military camp at Aulis with the (false) prospect of marriage to Achilles, in order for her to be sacrificed to Artemis in fulfilment of an oracle and thus allow the expedition against Troy to proceed. Despite initial attempts to countermand his earlier instructions, news of his daughter's arrival and fear of the bellicose Greek army induces Agamemnon to accept the necessity of her sacrifice. He maintains the pretence of the marriage to Achilles, but his wife Clytemnestra subsequently discovers the plot to sacrifice their daughter, and so calls upon her prospective son-in-law to protect Iphigenia. Having gained his support, she and her daughter confront Agamemnon, who proffers a combination of fear of the Greek army

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<sup>4</sup> Clytemnestra's familial focus is discussed by, amongst others, Celia Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia: A Study of Euripides' "Iphigenia at Aulis"* (Berwick: Aural, 1988), pp. 86-87; Christina Sorum, "Myth, Choice and Meaning in Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis", *AJP* 113 (1992), pp. 537-538. Helene Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 96-97 and Conacher, *Euripidean Drama*, p. 259 decry Clytemnestra as motivated by narrow self-interest, but this is an uncharitable reading.

<sup>5</sup> Panhellenism is the notion of an overarching Greek identity and the desirability of political co-operation between Greeks, particularly in warfare against non-Greeks, despite the fragmentation of the classical Greek world into numerous city-states; Lynette Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the Barbarian* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2007), pp. xv-xxi offers a useful introduction.

<sup>6</sup> 1377-401; John Gibert, *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), p. 223; Suzanne Saïd, "Iphigénie à Aulis: une pièce panhellenique?", *SEJG* 31 (1989-90), pp. 372-373.

<sup>7</sup> Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to pervasive family dysfunction in e.g. Euripides' *Electra*.

<sup>9</sup> The authenticity of the prologue has generated much more scholarly controversy than cannot be adequately discussed here; Stockert, *Euripides: Iphigenie in Aulis*, pp. 66-79 offers a thorough overview of the issues. I follow Katarzyna Pietruczuk, "The Prologue of Iphigenia Aulidensis Reconsidered", *Mnemosyne* 65 (2012), pp. 565-83, in accepting the prologue as authentic with the exception of references to the secrecy of the oracle, thus deleting 106-7, 414-442, 518-535.

and Panhellenic rhetoric to justify his decision, before leaving the stage for good.<sup>10</sup> Achilles remains willing to defend Iphigenia, but the anger of his own troops, who are in a bellicose frenzy, threatens his safety. This crisis is resolved by Iphigenia herself, who remarkably now comes to accept her sacrifice, adopting and expanding upon the Panhellenic rhetoric of her father. She implores Clytemnestra accept the necessity of her death for Greece and forgive Agamemnon, before departing, at the play's conclusion, to her probable death. This sacrifice of Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis in forms a longstanding and varied mythical tradition.<sup>11</sup> It is most famous as the prelude to numerous tragedies, most importantly Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.<sup>12</sup> Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, however, first performed in 405 B.C.,<sup>13</sup> is the only extant tragedy to depict the events and decisions leading up to the sacrifice itself.

### Conflicted fatherhood - Agamemnon

From his first appearance, Agamemnon is characterised by the conflict he faces between his paternal and political obligations; he never completely rejects or relinquishes either his public or familial role, but his inability successfully to combine them causes great emotional pain. Upon news of his family's arrival, Agamemnon remarks upon the powerful hold political duty has upon him, describing himself as "enslaved to the masses" (τῶι τ' ὄχλωι δουλεύομεν, 450), but is nonetheless filled with anguish at the prospect of explaining his decision to go ahead with the sacrifice to his family (454-466). Throughout his reunion with Iphigenia (631-680), Agamemnon is clearly pained by the knowledge of the fate he is to inflict upon his daughter for the sake of the Greek army,<sup>14</sup> but, when asked what is the matter, he responds that "many things are a cause of concern for a king and general" (πόλλ' ἀνδρὶ βασιλεῖ καὶ στρατηλάτῃ μέλει, 645). Although clearly a loving father, he does not relinquish his political responsibilities, despite their impact upon his family. This conflict culminates in Agamemnon's final speech (1255-75), an impassioned response to Iphigenia's pleas for mercy which encapsulates his position and characterisation in the play as a whole:

Αγ. ἐγὼ τὰ τ' οἰκτρὰ συνετός εἰμι καὶ τὰ μή, (1255)  
 φιλῶ τ' ἐμαυτοῦ τέκνα· μαινοίμην γὰρ ἄν.

<sup>10</sup> In line with James Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Stockert, *Euripides: Iphigenie in Aulis*, I consider the end of the authentic text to come at 1531, and Agamemnon's subsequent brief reappearance to be a later interpolation.

<sup>11</sup> It is found in pre-tragic sources including the *Cypria*, the *Catalogue of Women* and Steisichorus' *Helen*, but is conspicuously absent from Homer. See Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 582-584; Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and ritual: Homer and tragedy in the developing city state* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> The sacrifice is recounted at *Agamemnon* 184-257, and invoked by Clytemnestra as justification for her murder of Agamemnon at 1414-1418. Clytemnestra and Electra also offer competing accounts of the sacrifice in Sophocles' *Electra* 530-551 and 566-574. Iphigenia herself (rescued at the last moment by Artemis and transported to Tauris), narrates her experience at Euripides, *Iphigenia at Tauris* 354-391.

<sup>13</sup> David Kovacs, "Towards a Reconstruction of Iphigenia Aulidensis", *JHS* 123 (2003), pp. 77-78.

<sup>14</sup> See 643-4, 650, 663, 653, 657, 677-80.

δεινῶς δ' ἔχει μοι ταῦτα τολμῆσαι, γύναι,  
 δεινῶς δὲ καὶ μὴ· ταῦτ' ἀ γὰρ πρᾶξαι με δεῖ.  
 ὄραθ' ὅσον στράτευμα ναύφαρκτον τόδε  
 χαλκέων θ' ὄπλων ἄνακτες Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι, (1260)  
 οἷς νόστος οὐκ ἔστ' Ἰλίου πύργους ἔπι  
 οὐδ' ἔστι Τροίας ἐξελεῖν κλεινὸν βᾶθρον, (1263)  
 εἰ μὴ σε θύσω, μάντις ὡς Κάλχας λέγει. (1262)  
 μέμνηε δ' Ἀφροδίτη τις Ἑλλήνων στρατῶι  
 πλεῖν ὡς τάχιστα βαρβάρων ἐπὶ χθόνα (1264)  
 παῦσαι τε λέκτρων ἀρπαγὰς Ἑλληνικῶν·  
 οἷ τὰς ἐν Ἄργει παρθένους κτενοῦσί μου  
 ὑμᾶς τε κάμῃ, θέσφατ' εἰ λύσω θεᾶς.  
 οὐ Μενελάω με καταδεδοῦλωται, τέκνον,  
 οὐδ' ἐπὶ τὸ κείνου βουλόμενον ἐλήλυθα, (1270)  
 ἀλλ' Ἑλλάς, ἧ δεῖ, κἂν θέλω κἂν μὴ θέλω,  
 θῆσαι σε· τούτου δ' ἥσσονες καθέσταμεν.  
 ἐλευθέραν γὰρ δεῖ νιν ὅσον ἐν σοί, τέκνον,  
 κάμοι γενέσθαι, μηδὲ βαρβάρων ὑπο  
 Ἑλληνας ὄντας λέκτρα συλᾶσθαι βίαι. (1275)

(Agamemnon:) "I understand what is pitiable and what is not, and I love my children; I would be mad otherwise. It is terrible for me to dare these deeds, but terrible also not to; for I must do this. You see how large this seaborne army is, and how many lords of the Greeks armed with bronze there are, who cannot sail to the walls of Troy nor destroy its famous seat if I do not sacrifice you as the prophet Calchas says. Lust rages through the army of the Greeks, to sail as quickly as possible against the land of the barbarians and put a stop to abductions of Greek brides. They will kill my daughters in Argos *and* you *and* me, if I do not fulfil the goddess' prophecy. It is not Menelaus who has enslaved me, child - nor have I gone over to his wishes - but Greece, for whom I must sacrifice you, whether I am willing or not; I am her subject. She must be free, child, as far as it is in your power or mine, nor should Greeks have their wives abducted by barbarians."

Agamemnon's speech never denies his position as a father, but sets it in the context of the wider political pressures which have operated upon him throughout the play and are driving him to such drastic action against his own child. Despite intending to sacrifice Iphigenia, he makes explicit his paternal sentiment: "I love my children" (φιλῶ τ' ἐμαυτοῦ τέκνα, 1256). He is, however, caught in a dilemma (1257-8); the balanced "terrible ... terrible" (δεινῶς ... δεινῶς) reflects the closely-matched contest between the two forces, paternal duty and political pressure, which act on Agamemnon, whilst the wordplay between "terrible" (δεινῶς), and "I must" (δεῖ), points to his decision. Both of his possible courses of action may be terrible, but one is also necessary. Powers and pressures from beyond the family largely inform Agamemnon's resolve; the army, whose scale Agamemnon emphasises - "**how large** an army" (ὅσον στράτευμα, 1259); "**how many** lords" (ἄνακτες ... ὅσοι, 1260) - cannot sail against Troy without the sacrifice of

Iphigenia.<sup>15</sup> Agamemnon's description of the army's intentions employs the rhetoric of war against the barbarians which would be at home in contemporary Greek political discourse;<sup>16</sup> Troy is barbarian soil (1265), and the expedition must avenge the abduction of Greek women (1266).<sup>17</sup>

Despite such "public" rhetoric, however, Agamemnon somewhat desperately presents his actions as aiming at the wellbeing of his family, as failure to satisfy the army's demands threatens their lives (1267-1268). Although the plausibility of this threat has been questioned,<sup>18</sup> the threats of violence Achilles faces from his own Myrmidons should the sacrifice fail to take place (1351-1353) grants credibility to Agamemnon's assertion. More importantly, however, Agamemnon is claiming that his actions are still, in part, motivated by his paternal role; if he does not kill one daughter, his other daughters back in Argos - as well as the rest of his family at Aulis - will perish. This adds piquancy to the plural "children" (τέκνα, 1256) at the opening of the speech; Agamemnon is not the father of Iphigenia alone, and thus his paternal role cannot hinge solely on her wellbeing.

Familial motivations do not, however, triumph. Agamemnon rejects the influence of his brother and instead casts himself as beholden to the demands of Greece: "Menelaus has not enslaved me, child... but Greece" (οὐ Μενέλεώς με καταδεδούλωται, τέκνον, ... ἀλλ' Ἑλλάς, 1269-71).<sup>19</sup> Once again, we have the language of slavery,<sup>20</sup> of subjugation (1272), and of necessity (1271, 1273). The war is in the cause of Greek freedom (1273-1274), but not Agamemnon's, whose wishes are irrelevant (1271).<sup>21</sup> Agamemnon, in this final appearance upon stage, reaches the climax of the conflict to which he has been subject throughout the play. Although never totally rejecting his role within the family, and clearly still at least partly motivated by paternal sentiment, he ultimately suborns his paternal role to the demands placed upon him by his political position.

### Tyndareus

Agamemnon is not, however, the only father in the tragedy who must mediate between his role within the family and the pressures to which he is subject from beyond it. Although he never appears onstage, various references to Tyndareus establish him as a counterpart to Agamemnon's situation and actions, broadening the notion of conflicted fatherhood within the play beyond Agamemnon himself.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 1263-1262; cf. 89-93.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the Barbarian*, p. xx.

<sup>17</sup> This motivation is an established component of Panhellenic discourse; see, for example, Herodotus 1.1-5

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Siegel, "Agamemnon in Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis", *Hermes* 109 (1981), pp. 262-263.

<sup>19</sup> Saïd, "Iphigénie à Aulis" pp. 369-370.

<sup>20</sup> See 450.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Vellacott, *Ironic drama. A study of Euripides' method and meaning* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 175-6 remarks on the irony of Agamemnon's 'enslavement' to the cause of Greek freedom.

<sup>22</sup> Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia*, pp. 84-5 notes that Tyndareus is the most prominent member of the preceding generation in the play.



Tyndareus protected you, as you were his suppliant, and you had me as your wife once again."

This first marriage seems to have been a Euripidean innovation,<sup>28</sup> and casts Tyndareus' mediation of familial and external pressures in a less favourable light. Agamemnon is revealed as having a history of infanticide, and Clytemnestra's language emphasises his brutality: "with force" (βία, 1149); "having murdered" (κατακτανών, 1150); "having snatched away forcefully" (βιαίως ... ἀποσπάσας, 1152). Tyndareus, however, accepts this man, who has committed such violence against his son-in-law and grandchild, as a suppliant (1155-1156). Although supplication is a powerful and serious act, the suppliant's requests need not always be granted;<sup>29</sup> it is not clear why Tyndareus accepted that of Agamemnon and returned his daughter to a marriage achieved through force.<sup>30</sup> Much like the sacrifice of Iphigenia, we may see in Tyndareus' action here a father seeking to manage relationships and events beyond the family at the expense of his duties to his blood relatives. *Iphigenia in Aulis* does not only depict Agamemnon as a father struggling to negotiate between paternal and public pressures, but uses Tyndareus to present such a struggle as a feature of fatherhood more generally, with paternal pressures often losing out.

### Committed brotherhood - Menelaus' change of heart

The conflicted nature of fatherhood within the play is brought more clearly into focus by its juxtaposition with the commitment and tenacity of the bond of brotherhood within the play. For instance, Menelaus' role in the tragedy serves as a point of contrast for Agamemnon's ultimate subordination of paternal love to political concerns. Initially, Menelaus follows the traditional male emphasis upon public activity, and adds to the political pressures acting upon Agamemnon. In a fiery speech intended to shame Agamemnon into returning to his initial intention to sacrifice Iphigenia (334-375), Menelaus reminds his brother that "you were eager for command amongst the Greeks in the war against Troy" (ἐσπούδαζες ἄρχειν Δαναΐδαίς πρὸς Ἴλιον, 337), resorting to forced affability (349-341) and even bribery (342) in his pursuit of power. Indeed, Menelaus presents Agamemnon's dismay as stemming from anxiety as how to resolve the threat to his ambition posed by the hostile winds (355-356); the prospect of sacrificing Iphigenia was joyfully received as a *solution* to these political ills (359-360). Menelaus even interprets Agamemnon's decision against sacrificing Iphigenia (364) not as the triumph of paternal feeling, but rather the failure of political will (366-369). He rebukes Agamemnon's change of heart against the sacrifice as a betrayal of public interest and Panhellenic aspiration;<sup>31</sup> Greece, "wishing to do something worthy" (θέλουσα δρᾶν τι

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<sup>28</sup> John Gibert, "Clytemnestra's First Marriage: Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*", in Victoria Pedrick & Steven Oberhelman, (eds.), *The Soul of Tragedy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 229; Foley, *Ritual Irony*, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Fred Naiden, *Ancient supplication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 3-4, 78, 130-133. In contrast to Tyndareus' more generous conduct, Agamemnon rejects Iphigenia's supplication in this play.

<sup>30</sup> Gibert, "Clytemnestra's First Marriage", p. 232.

<sup>31</sup> Saïd, "Iphigénie à Aulis", p. 368.

κεδνόν, 371) against worthless and mocking barbarians, has been thwarted because of Agamemnon and his daughter (372).

Agamemnon's response does not reject Menelaus' accusations about his own political ambitions,<sup>32</sup> but rather exposes the private motivations underlying Menelaus' enthusiasm for this public enterprise. Agamemnon reminds Menelaus that he is eager for war because "you want your beautiful wife back in your arms" (έν άγκάλαις / εϋπρεπῆ γυναῖκα χρήιζεις, 385-386); Menelaus' enthusiasm for the war and Iphigenia's sacrifice stems from equally private motivations as Agamemnon's reluctance. Whereas Menelaus linked Agamemnon's paternal role to disappointment and shortcoming in the public sphere, Agamemnon places both men firmly within their families. Whilst Agamemnon speaks to Menelaus as befits a brother (379-380), he counteracts the latter's attempt to characterise him solely in terms of his political responsibilities and ambitions by repeated reference to his role as a father (396, 399), and refuses to subordinate it to Menelaus' desires as a husband (396-8).

Rejecting Menelaus' invocation of public and political concerns does not, however, end the latter's attempts to pressure Agamemnon into sacrificing his daughter. Instead, Menelaus now adds private and familial pressures to his appeal to political factors. In addition to continued invocation of Greece (410-1) he attempts to exploit Agamemnon's "love" (φιλία, 404-5, 408), and also the fraternal relationship to which Agamemnon himself had alluded, in comments such as "will you show yourself to be born from the same father as me?" (δείξεις δέ ποῦ μοι πατρός έκ ταῦτοῦ γεγώς; 406). He does not succeed; Agamemnon sets clear boundaries for what can be demanded of these personal and familial bonds - for example, "I am willing to be sensible with you, but not to be sick with you" (συσσωφρονεῖν σοι βούλομ', άλλ' οὔ συννοσεῖν, 407) - and so Menelaus ultimately accuses him of "betraying [his] brother" (κασίγνητον προδούς, 412). Menelaus' attempts to pressure his brother into placing the demands of politics, friendship and fraternal duty before his sense of paternal responsibility do not succeed.

Both Menelaus and Agamemnon, however, reverse their respective positions. It is striking how emphatic and extensive Menelaus' fraternal feeling is upon his reappearance upon stage.<sup>33</sup> Menelaus' very first word to Agamemnon upon his return is "brother" (άδελφέ, 471),<sup>34</sup> whilst the speech in which he makes clear his change of heart begins with a lengthy invocation of their shared ancestry (472-474). This recalls 406, throwing into sharp relief how significantly Menelaus' position – and his rhetorical use of brotherhood – has shifted in the interim. He now acknowledges how much he had demanded in asking Agamemnon to kill his child (490), and explicitly rejects the prospect of gaining Helen "whilst losing a brother, which I should do least of all" (άπολέσας άδελφόν, όν μ' ἦκιστ' έχρηῖν, 487). Whereas in many ways Menelaus has changed his rhetoric and adopted Agamemnon's,<sup>35</sup> the theme of brotherhood remains from his prior speech. The irony is, of course, that in the interval in which Menelaus has had a change of heart, so too has

<sup>32</sup> Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> John Wilson "Eris in Euripides", *Greece & Rome* 26 (1979), pp. 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Also at 497.

<sup>35</sup> 482-4 essentially accepts and restates Agamemnon's argument at 395-399, for instance.



Agamemnon; he feels he must kill Iphigenia to placate the army.<sup>36</sup> Although both Agamemnon and Menelaus are clearly enmeshed in a complex interplay of public and private forces and desires, Menelaus ultimately rejects the prospect of war against Troy at the cost of his relationship with his brother, whilst Agamemnon conversely subordinates his clearly powerful paternal bond with his daughter to this public endeavour.

### Brothers as champions

This is not the only instance in the play in which the behaviour of brothers and fathers differs strikingly. When recounting Agamemnon's murder of her first husband and child, Clytemnestra contrasts the response of her brothers and her father (1153-6). Whereas Clytemnestra's father protected her husband's murderer and married her to him, the Dioscuri, her brothers, "waged war" (ἐπεστρατευσάτην, 1154) on their sister's behalf. They engaged in the military activity so prominent in the public life of the classical Greek male, but in defence of their blood relation. Clytemnestra casts both the Dioscuri as the sons of Zeus, in contrast to other versions of the myth in which one of them is the biological son of Tyndareus,<sup>37</sup> thus casting them as συγγόνω - literally "blood relative" but used in this play particularly for brothers<sup>38</sup> - to her alone. Thus the Dioscuri's devotion to their sister is not tainted by disobedience to a father; their singular commitment to their sister throws Tyndareus' prioritisation of Agamemnon, a non-relative, into sharper relief.

The theme of brotherly solidarity is perhaps most clearly represented in the play by Iphigenia's infant brother Orestes.<sup>39</sup> Whilst Menelaus and the Dioscuri combine public and familial interests and activities - ultimately and strikingly coming down in favour of the latter - Orestes is, as an infant, completely familial in his focus. Nonetheless, the language used of Orestes by the other characters often implies abilities or even activities far beyond the limits of his age. Agamemnon's imagining of Iphigenia's sacrifice includes the thought of Orestes in support; the infant brother "will cry aloud for her, his meaning clear though his words are not" (ἀναβοήσεται / οὐ συνετὰ συνετῶς, 465-466) This may reflect Agamemnon's guilt, in that he imagines even an infant understanding his crime, but it also suggests an expectation of almost instinctive fraternal support for Iphigenia. Iphigenia's pleas to Agamemnon to let her live include an appeal to Orestes for aid (1241-1243):

ἀδελφέ, μικρὸς μὲν σὺ γ' ἐπίκουρος φίλοις,  
ὄμως δὲ συνδάκρυσον, ἰκέτευσον πατρὸς  
τὴν σὴν ἀδελφὴν μὴ θανεῖν·

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<sup>36</sup>cf. 450.

<sup>37</sup> cf. e.g. Pindar, *Nemean Odes* 10.

<sup>38</sup> cf. 85, where Agamemnon uses the term to describe himself as Menelaus' brother.

<sup>39</sup>Orestes' presence in the play is the subject of a longstanding controversy: Gibert "Clytemnestra's First Marriage", p. 239; Denys Page, *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 206. I find his presence perfectly acceptable.

"Brother, you are a small ally for your friends, but weep with me all the same, supplicate our father so that your sister may not die."

"Brother" (ἀδελφέ) recalls Menelaus' language in his second speech (471, 497), and is matched with "sister" (ἀδελφήν); Iphigenia emphasises the sibling bond in appealing to her brother as Menelaus did to his. "Ally" (ἐπίκουρος) also has political overtones and military uses;<sup>40</sup> there is almost an image of Orestes fighting for his sister as the Dioscuri did for theirs. Orestes achieves little - he does not even cry out (1245) - but in her farewell Iphigenia nonetheless remarks, in an echo of the language of her plea at 1241 ff., "dearest one, you helped your friends as much as you could" (ὦ φίλτατ', ἐπεκούρησας ὅσον εἶχες φίλοις, 1452). David Kovacs decries the line as ridiculous,<sup>41</sup> given how little Orestes has or indeed could achieve, but this is perhaps the point. Despite his clearly limited power as an infant, both Agamemnon and Iphigenia imagine Orestes supporting his sister's case and pleading for her life. This infant is consistently characterised as a devoted brother, in line with the fraternal commitment shown by the Dioscuri and (ultimately) Menelaus. His impact or otherwise on the situation is immaterial; he serves as yet another point of focus for the contrast within the play between the divided loyalties of fathers and the devotion of brothers.<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion

*Iphigenia in Aulis* explores the relationship between public and private, family and state. Individuals within the play are confronted with the difficulty of fully reconciling the often competing demands or pressures of these two spheres, but their ultimate choice to prioritise public over private or vice-versa does not follow the gendered division prominent in classical Athenian ideology. The resilience of the bond of brotherhood in the face of pressures from beyond the family draws attention to the substantial conflict between familial and public responsibilities on the part of the fathers of the play, a conflict which rarely resolves itself in the prioritisation of the paternal role. The accounts of Tyndareus' choices as father and the suffering they inflicted upon his daughter Clytemnestra demonstrate the considerable cost Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice Iphigenia will have. Nonetheless, even though an alternative model of male behaviour which prioritises the bonds of family is proffered by the brothers of the play, Agamemnon chooses to follow in Tyndareus' footsteps, sacrificing his loving and beloved daughter to allow a frenzied army to embark on the infamously long and gruelling Trojan War. It is difficult to feel that he made the right choice.

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<sup>40</sup> It is an Attic term for mercenary soldiers; *LSJ* s.v. A.II.

<sup>41</sup> Kovacs, "Towards a Reconstruction of Iphigenia Aulidensis", p. 98.

<sup>42</sup> Note also that, although Agamemnon's father Atreus had a famously fractious and bloody relationship with his brother Thyestes (see Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1577-1611, Euripides *Electra* 699-746), the brief references to him in this play have been "cleaned up"; Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia*, p. 84. This reinforces the play's emphasis upon committed and (relatively) harmonious fraternal bonds.

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