

Parker, L.P.E. (ed.) 2016. *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. cvi + 385. ISBN 978-0-19-955009-8 (hbk). £80.

Iphigenia in Tauris (abbreviated as *IT*) is the Latin title of the play by Euripides known in English as *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. 'Tauris' is not strictly speaking a geographical term, although used as such by Goethe (*Iphigenie auf Tauris*) among others, and Parker might have offered more by way of explanation than a sarcastic footnote (p. lxxii n. 143). *IT*, produced about 414 B.C., is one of Euripides' late plays sometimes known as 'romances' or 'melodramas'. It is set in the Crimea, and resembles *Helen* (set in Egypt) in taking a famous heroine of myth to an exotic location and subjecting her to innovative adventures. Both plays end with an exciting escape and return to Greece. The happy ending may seem untragic, but Aristotle (*Poetics* 14) regarded the averted catastrophe in *IT* as an example of the best kind of tragedy.

Oxford University Press has a distinguished history of Euripides editions, going back to the series of 'reds' which began in the 1930s, including D.L. Page's *Medea* (1938) and E.R. Dodds's *Bacchae* (1944). This was aimed at undergraduates and the upper forms of schools, and had a policy of using Gilbert Murray's Oxford Classical Text in order to keep the price down. Recent Oxford commentaries on Euripides and other Greek dramatists have been larger in format and printed their own texts, with the result that they are a great deal more expensive.

Maurice Platnauer's edition of *IT* (1938) is generally regarded as one of the weaker in the Oxford 'red' series, but the play has been well served by editors since then. There is an Oxford Classical Text by James Diggle (1981), a Teubner by David Sansone (also 1981), a Loeb by David Kovacs (1999), an Aris & Phillips edition, with translation and commentary, by Martin Cropp (2000), and a substantial commentary by Poulheria Kyriakou (2006). The intended readership of Parker's edition is not entirely clear. She claims to have paid 'particular attention to the needs of adult readers who have studied Greek for a relatively short time' (p. vii), and does indeed offer elementary help with translation. On the other hand, the commentary has more textual criticism than most students will want, and does little to inspire interest in *IT*'s qualities as a play.

The hundred-page introduction begins with an account of Iphigenia in myth and cult, material already well treated by Cropp and Kyriakou. There are a mere ten pages of literary interpretation of *IT* itself, and Parker has little to contribute in this area. A rather longer section on 'Iphigenia and the Critics' peters out into brief comments on some recent discussions of the play. Reviewers of her edition of Euripides' *Alcestis* (2007) commented adversely on the ungenerous and even offensive tone of her criticism of other scholars, and she has done nothing to moderate it here (for example, 'Kitto and Conacher proceed by pure assertion. There is no attempt to engage with the text, or to analyse it', p. lxxiii). A long section on the reception of the play is based on a lecture which Parker delivered in 2009, ignoring Edith Hall's entertaining and wide-ranging *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford 2013). Some effort should have been made to engage with Hall's ground-breaking work, although Parker later offers a characteristically sharp remark on her treatment of the metrical evidence for dating the play ('There is no sign that Hall has ever considered the matter seriously', p. lxxx). Metre is Parker's speciality, and her helpful discussion of it here has some differences of emphasis from the equivalent section of her *Alcestis* edition.

Parker's commentary is, at 300 pages, three times longer than Cropp's. Her discussion of textual and linguistic issues is much fuller, and there are undoubtedly places where she understands the text better (for example, lines 23, 466, 505, 627, 678, 699, 711, 785). On the other hand, Cropp is a more accomplished Euripidean scholar and is better able to focus on what is necessary for understanding the play. She criticizes him for the quite full stage directions in his translation (p. cvi n. 228), but her own commentary gives little sense of *IT* as a work for the stage.

The commentary contains a great deal of useful detail, but it is sometimes difficult to see the wood for the trees. For example, Iphigenia recalls her last words to Agamemnon (lines 369-71): 'Αἰδης Ἀχιλλεύς ἦν ἄρ', οὐχ ὁ Πηλέως, / ὃν μοι προτείνεις πόσιν ἐν ἀρμάτων ὅχοις / ἐς αἵματηρόν γάμον ἐπόρθμευσας δόλωι. Parker translates: 'So, after all, Hades was the Achilles, not the son of Peleus, whom you offered me as husband, to bring [me] by the conveyance of a carriage to a bloody wedding by deceit'. The key point here is her belief that Iphigenia uses 'Achilles' for 'bridegroom', but in a full page of notes on various aspects of the

lines she offers little justification for this, and fails adequately to consider other possible interpretations such as Cropp's 'Achilles, then, was Hades, not Peleus' son'.

Another example is her discussion of the passage in which a messenger reports the prayer of a pious cowherd on seeing Orestes and Pylades: ὦ ποντίας παῖ Λευκοθέας, νεῶν φύλαξ, / δέσποτα Παλαῖμον, ἴλεως ἡμῖν γενοῦ, / εἴτ' οὖν ἐπ' ἄκταις θάσσετον Διοσκόρω, / ἢ Νηρέως ἀγάλμαθ', ὃς τὸν εὐγενῆ / ἔτικτε πεντήκοντα Νηρηίδων χορόν. 'O son of sea-goddess Leucothea, guardian of ships, lord Palaemon, be gracious to us, whether they are the Dioscuri sitting on the shore or the pride and joy of Nereus who begot the noble chorus of the fifty Nereids' (270-74, my translation). Parker comments, 'The pious man reacts instantly by calling at random on all the marine deities that come into his head, male and female. A touch of comedy'. Indeed it would be, but she fails to make clear that her interpretation depends on an taking θάσσετον in line 272 as second person dual ('you are sitting'), rather than third person ('they are sitting') as is also possible. Her discussion becomes even more puzzling when she states, 'There is no need to suppose that the pious man has in mind two grandsons of Nereus, as has sometimes been suggested. He has not yet seen Orestes and Pylades'. His speech is actually introduced with a participle, εἰσιδών, meaning 'on seeing them' (line 269), so 'the pride and joy of Nereus' can hardly be female. Kyriakou's note on the passage is much more helpful.

This book contains much learned and judicious discussion, with useful summaries of scholars' views on individual passages. It is not very suitable for students, but will need to be consulted by specialists interested in textual, linguistic, and – especially – metrical problems.

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