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“Escaping” Tragedy: Metadramatic ὄψεις of Euripides’ *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

### 1. Euripides, *Helen* 42-3 & 203-4\*

a. Φρυγῶν δ’ ἐς ἀλκίην προυτέθην ἐγὼ μὲν οὖ,  
τὸ δ’ ὄνομα τοῦμόν, ἄθλον Ἔλλησιν δορός.

And for the fight against the Trojans I was put forward for the Greeks as a prize of war (*though it was not me but only my name*).

b. ὁ δ’ ἐμὸς ἐν ἀλί πολυπλανῆς  
πόσις ὀλόμενος οἴχεται.

*my husband* wandering on the sea  
*is lost and gone*;

### 2. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 4-9 & 55-8\*\*

a. τοῦ δ’ ἔφυν ἐγὼ,  
τῆς Τυνδαρείας θυγατρὸς Ἰφιγένεια παῖς,  
ἦν ἀμφὶ δῖνας ἄς θάμ’ Εὐρυπος πυκναῖς  
αὔραις ἐλίσσω κυανέαν ἄλα στρέφει  
ἔσφαξεν Ἑλένης οὐνεχ’, ὡς δοκεῖ, πατῆρ  
Ἀρτέμιδι κλειναῖς ἐν πτυχαῖσιν Αὐλίδος.

It is from this last that I was begotten, I, Iphigenia, daughter of Tyndareus’ daughter Clytaemestra. Near the eddies which the Euripus with its frequent breezes sets rolling, churning up the dark-blue sea, my father sacrificed me—*so it is believed—to Artemis for Helen’s sake* in the famous clefts of Aulis.

b. τοῦναρ δ’ ὧδε συμβάλλω τόδε·  
τέθνηκ’ Ὀρέστης, οὗ κατηρξάμην ἐγώ.  
στῦλοι γὰρ οἴκων παῖδές εἰσιν ἄρσενες,  
θνήσκουσι δ’ οὐδ’ ἂν χέρνιβες βάλωσ’ ἐμαί.

This is how I interpret the dream: *Orestes is dead*—it is he I consecrated for sacrifice—for the pillars of a house are its male children, and those who are sprinkled by my lustral basin are killed.

### 3. Euripides, *Helen* 813, 1032-4 & 1049-67

a. ἐς ἄπορον ἦκεις· δεῖ δὲ μηχανῆς τινος.

Your situation is desperate: you need a clever *ruse*.

b. Μενέλαε, πρὸς μὲν παρθένου σεσώμεθα· τοῦνθένδε δ’ εἰς  
ἐν τοὺς λόγους φέροντε χρηὴ κοινήν· ξυνάπτειν μηχανὴν  
σωτηρίας.

Menelaus, our lives have been spared by the maiden. From here on we two must take common counsel and *devise a way* for us both to reach home safely.

c. Ελ: ἄκουσον, ἦν τι καὶ γυνὴ λέξι σοφόν. βούλη λέγεσθαι  
μὴ θανῶν λόγῳ θανεῖν;

Μ: κακὸς μὲν ὄρνις· εἰ δὲ κερδανῶ, λέγε· ἔτοιμός εἰμι μὴ  
θανῶν λόγῳ θανεῖν.

Ελ: καὶ μὴν γυναικεῖοις <σ> ἂν οἰκτισαίμεθα κουραῖσι  
καὶ θρήνοισι πρὸς τὸν ἀνόσιον.

Μ: σωτηρίας δὲ τοῦτ’ ἔχει τί νῶν ἄκος; ματαιότης γὰρ τῶ  
λόγῳ γ’ ἔνεστί τις.

Ελ: ὡς δὴ θανόντα σ’ ἐνάλιον κενῶ τάφῳ θάψαι τύραννον  
τῆσδε γῆς αἰτήσομαι.

Μ: καὶ δὴ παρεῖκεν· εἶτα πῶς ἄνευ νεῶς σωθησόμεσθα  
κενοταφοῦντ’ ἐμὸν δέμας;

Ελ: δοῦναι κελεύσω πορθμίδ’, ἧ καθήσομενκόσμον τάφῳ σῶ  
πελαγίους ἐς ἀγκάλας.

Μ: ὡς εὖ τόδ’ εἶπας πλὴν ἔν· εἰ χέρσω ταφὰς θεῖναι  
κελεύσει σ’, οὐδὲν ἢ σκῆψις φέρει

H: *Listen and see whether a woman too might say something clever.* Are you willing, though alive, to be reported dead?

M: It is a bad omen. But if I am going to profit by the tale, tell it: I am willing, though alive, to die in report.

H: *Then I would mourn <you> before the godless man, cropping my hair and wailing as women do.*

M: But how does that help us to escape with our lives? Your story seems a bit pointless.

H: Since you died at sea I shall ask the king’s permission to bury you in a cenotaph.

M: Well, suppose he agrees: how can giving me a cenotaph win our escape if we don’t have a ship?

H: I shall ask him to provide a vessel so that we may throw overboard adornment for your grave in the arms of the deep.

M: *What a good idea*—except for one thing: if he tells us to perform the funeral on land, the pretext does us no good. / A

Ελ: ἀλλ' οὐ νομίζεις φήσομεν καθ' Ἑλλάδαχέρσῳ καλύπτειν  
τοὺς θανόντας ἐναλίους.

Μ: τοῦτ' αὖ κατορθοῖς·

#### 4. Euripides, *Helen* 1091-2

ἢ γὰρ θανεῖν δεῖ μ, ἢν ἀλῶ **τεχνωμένη**, ἢ πατρίδα τ' ἐλθεῖν  
καὶ σὸν ἐκσῶσαι δέμας.

#### 5. Euripides, *IT* 798-809/815

Ιφ: ξέν', οὐ δικάϊως τῆς θεοῦ τὴν πρόσπολον χραίνεις  
ἀθίκοις περιβαλὼν πέπλοις χέρα.

Ορ: ὦ συγκασιγνήτη τε καὶ ταυτοῦ πατρὸς Ἀγαμέμνονος  
γεγῶσα, μή μ' ἀποστρέφου, ἔχουσ' ἀδελφόν, οὐ δοκοῦσ'  
ἔξιν ποτέ.

Ιφ: ἐγὼ σ' ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἐμόν; οὐ παύση λέγων; τό τ'  
Ἄργος αὐτοῦ μεστὸν ἦ τε **Ναυπλία**.

Ορ: οὐκ ἔστ' ἐκεῖ σός, ὦ **τάλαινα**, σύγγονος.

Ιφ: ἀλλ' ἡ Λάκαινα Τυνδαρίς σ' ἐγείνατο;

Ορ: Πέλοπός γε παιδὶ παιδός, οὗ κ' ἐπέφυκ' ἐγώ.

Ιφ: τί φῆς; ἔχεις τι τῶνδ' ἐμοὶ τεκμήριον;

Ορ: ἔχω· πατρώων ἐκ δόμων τι πυνθάνου.

...

Ιφ: ὦ φίλτατ', ἐγγὺς τῶν ἐμῶν χρίμπτη φρενῶν.

#### 6. Euripides, *IT* 876-85 & 998-1002/1017-9

a. Ιφ: τίνα σοι <τίνα σοι> **πόρον** *εὐρομένα*  
πάλιν ἀπὸ πόλεως ἀνδροφόνου πέμψω  
πατρίδ' ἐς Ἀργεῖαν,  
πρὶν ἐπὶ ξίφος αἵματι σῶν πελάσαι;  
τόδ' <ἤδη> τόδε σόν, ὦ μελέα ψυχά,  
χρέος *ἀνευρίσκειν*.  
πότερον κατὰ χέρσον, οὐχὶ  
ναῖα ἀλλὰ ποδῶν ῥιπαῖ;

b. Ιφ: τίς δ' ἔνεστί μοι λόγος;

ἀλλ', εἰ μὲν ἔστι, τοῦθ' ὅπως γενήσεται

ἄγαλμά τ' οἴσεις κάμ' ἐπ' εὐπρύμνου νεῶς ἄξεις, τὸ  
κινδύνευμα γίγνεται καλόν·

...

**πῶς οὖν γένοιτ' ἄν** ὥστε μῆθ' ἡμᾶς θανεῖν  
**λαβεῖν θ' ἄβουλόμεσθα**; τῆδε γὰρ νοσεῖ  
νόστος πρὸς οἴκους, ἡ δὲ βούλησις πάρα

#### 7. Euripides, *IT* 1029-33 & 1313-6/1354-5

a. Ιφ: ἔχειν δοκῶ μοι καινὸν **ἐξεύρημά** τι.

Ορ: ποῖόν τι; δόξης μετὰδος, ὡς κάγω μάθω.

Ιφ: ταῖς σαῖς ἀνίαις χρῆσομαι **σοφίσμασιν**

Ορ: δειναὶ γὰρ αἱ γυναῖκες εὐρίσκειν **τέχνας**.

Ιφ: φονέα σε φήσω μητρὸς ἐξ Ἄργους μολεῖν.

**clever plan in truth**, save in one particular; suppose he bid thee  
rear the tomb upon the strand, thy pretext comes to naught.

H: Well, we will say that it is not our custom in Greece to give  
land burial to those who die at sea.\*\*\*

M: **Another good suggestion! /Thou removest this obstacle  
too;\*\*\***

Either I must die if my **tricks** are discovered, or return to my  
fatherland and save your life.

Ip: Stranger, it is not right for you to defile the servant of the  
goddess, putting your arms about her inviolate clothing!

Or: Sister, born from the same father Agamemnon, do not turn  
away from me: you have your brother though you never  
expected to have him again!

Ip: **I have my brother? Won't you stop this talk? It is Argos  
and Nauplia that hold him.**

Or: **Poor woman, your brother is not there.**

Ip: But did the Spartan daughter of Tyndareus bear you?

Or: Yes, to Pelops' grandson, my father.

Ip: What? Do you have some proof of this for me?

Or: have: ask me something about our father's house.

...

Ip: Dear man, how near you touch my memory!

Ip: What **means**, <what means,> shall I **find** to send you  
from this murderous land  
to your Argive home  
before the sword goes after your blood?  
This <now>, this is your task, poor soul, to **discover**.  
Shall it be by land, with no ship  
but with rhythmic tread of feet?

Ip: **What plea can I make?**

**Yet if there is a way that this can happen**

and that you can take the statue and me on your well-built ship,  
the risk would be a noble one.

**How then can we get what we want** and avoid being killed?

That is where the trouble lies for our journey home: we do not  
lack the will.

Ip: I think I have hit on a **new idea**!

Or: What is it? Share it with me so that I may know it too.

Ip: I shall make use of your woes as a clever **ruse**.

Or: Well, women are clever at inventing **subterfuges**.

Ip: I shall say that you have come from Argos as your mother's  
slayer.

b. Αγ: ἡ νεᾶνις ἦ ἴθάδε  
βωμοῖς παρίστατ', Ἰφιγένει', ἔξω χθονὸς  
σὺν τοῖς ξένοισιν οἴχεται, σεμνὸν θεᾶς  
ἄγαλμ' ἔχουσα· **δόλια δ' ἦν καθάρματα**  
...  
ἡμεῖς δ' ἀφειδήσαντες, ὡς ἐσειδομεν  
**δόλια τεχνήματ'...**

Mes: The young woman,  
who used to preside at the altar here, Iphigenia, has left the  
country with the two foreigners and has taken the goddess'  
statue! The purification was a *trick!*  
...  
Having seen her *trickery*, we were pitiless

### 8. Euripides, *Helen* 60-3, 153-5 & 819-23

a. Ελ: ἕως μὲν οὖν φῶς ἡλίου τόδ' ἔβλεπεν  
Πρωτεύς, ἄσυλος ἦ γάμων· ἐπεὶ δὲ γῆς  
σκότῳ κέκρυπται, **παῖς ὁ τοῦ τεθνηκότος**  
**θηρᾶ γαμῆν με.**

While Proteus still looked on the light of the sun,  
no marriage threatened me. But now that he lies buried  
in earth's darkness, *the late king's son wants to marry me.*

b. Ελ: ἄπεστι δὲ  
κυσὶν πεποιθὼς ἐν φοναῖς θηροκτόνοις·  
**κτείνει γὰρ Ἑλλην' ὄντιν' ἂν λάβῃ ξένον.**

Helen (to Teucer on Theoclymenus): He is away  
hunting wild beasts with his hounds,  
but *he kills every Greek he catches.*

c. Ελ: ἔστ' ἔνδον αὐτῷ ξύμμαχος θεοῖς ἴση.  
Μ: φήμη τις οἴκων ἐν μυχοῖς ἰδρυμένη;  
Ελ: οὐκ, ἀλλ' ἀδελφή· Θεονόην καλοῦσί νιν.  
Μ: χρηστήριον μὲν τοῦνομ'· ὅ τι δὲ δρᾶ φράσον.  
Ελ: **πάντ' οἶδ' ἐρεῖ τε συγγόνῳ παρόντα σε.**

H: *He has indoors an ally powerful as the gods.*  
M: Some voice dwelling in the house's inmost recesses?  
H: No, his sister: she is called Theonoe.  
M: The name has a prophetic ring to it. Tell me what she does.  
H: *She knows everything and will tell her brother you are here.*

### 9. Euripides, *IT* 38-41, 1079-81,

a. Ιφ: [θύω γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ νόμου καὶ πρὶν πόλει]  
ὄς ἂν κατέλθῃ τήνδε γῆν Ἑλλην ἀνήρ  
**κατάρχομαι μὲν, σφάγια δ' ἄλλοισιν μέλει**  
[ἄρρητ' ἔσωθεν τῶνδ' ἀνακτόρων θεᾶς].

Ip: [*I sacrifice, since this was also formerly the custom for the  
city*], *I consecrate as victim any Greek who comes to this land,*  
*but the slaying is the concern of others* [, secret sacrifices  
within this temple of the goddess].

b. Ιφ: σὸν ἔργον ἦδη καὶ σὸν ἐσβαίνειν δόμους·  
**ὡς αὐτίχ' ἦξει τήσδε κοίρανος χθονός,**  
**θυσίαν ἐλέγξων εἰ κατείργασται ξένων.**

Ip. (to Or. & Pyl.): It is your task now, and yours, to go into the  
temple. *The king of this land will soon be coming to see*  
*whether the sacrifice of foreigners has been carried out.*

c. Ιφ: ἐρημίας δεῖ· καὶ γὰρ ἄλλα δράσομεν.  
Θ: ἄγ' ἔνθα χρήσεις· οὐ φιλω τᾶρρηθ' ὄραν.  
Ιφ: ἀγνιστέον μοι καὶ τὸ τῆς θεοῦ βρέτας.  
Θ: εὔπερ γε κηλὶς ἔβαλέ νιν μητροκτόνος.  
Ιφ: οὐ γὰρ ποτ' ἂν νιν ἠράμην βάθρων ἄπο.  
Θ: δίκαιος ἠυσέβεια παι προμηθία.

Ip: I need a deserted place: I shall do other things as well.  
Th: Go wherever you like: *I do not wish to see forbidden things.*  
Ip: I must also purify the goddess' statue.  
Th: Yes, if it has been touched by the taint of matricide.  
Ip: It has: otherwise I would not have taken it from its pedestal.  
Th: Your piety and forethought are quite proper.

### 10. Euripides, *Helen* 894-904

Ελ: ὦ παρθέν', ἰκέτις ἀμφὶ σὸν πίτνω γόνυ  
καὶ προσκαθίζω θᾶκον οὐκ εὐδαίμονα  
ὑπὲρ τ' ἐμαυτῆς τοῦδέ θ', ὄν μόλις ποτὲ  
λαβοῦσ' ἐπ' ἀκμῆς εἰμι καθανόντ' ἰδεῖν·  
μή μοι κατείπης σῶ κασιγνήτῳ πόσιν  
τόνδ' εἰς ἐμὰς ἦκοντα φίλτατον χέρας,  
σῶσον δέ, λίσσομαί σε· **συγγόνῳ δὲ σῶ**  
**τὴν εὐσέβειαν μὴ προδῶς τὴν σὴν ποτε,**  
**χάριτας πονηρὰς κἀδίκους ὄνουμένη.**  
μισεῖ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὴν βίαν, τὰ κτητὰ δὲ  
κτᾶσθαι κελεύει πάντας οὐκ ἐς ἀρπαγὰς.

H: (kneeling before Theonoe) Maiden, I fall as a suppliant at  
your knees for myself and for this man, sitting before you in an  
attitude of misery. I have barely got him back, and now I am in  
danger of seeing him perish. Please do not tell your brother that  
my dear husband has come to my arms! Save him, I beg you!  
*Do not sacrifice your own godliness for your brother's sake,*  
*buying with it tokens of gratitude that are wicked and unjust.*  
God hates violence, and he bids all men acquire their goods  
without stealing.

### 11. Euripides, *IT* 1056-60 & 1075-7

a.Ιφ: ὦ φίλτατα γυναῖκες, εἰς ὑμᾶς βλέπω,  
καὶ τᾶμ' ἐν ὑμῖν ἔστιν ἡ καλῶς ἔχειν  
ἢ μηδὲν εἶναι καὶ στερηθῆναι πάτρας  
φίλου τ' ἀδελφοῦ φιλότατης τε συγγόνου.  
καὶ πρῶτα μὲν μοι τοῦ λόγου τάδ' ἀρχέτω·

b. X: θάρσει, φίλη δέσποινα, καὶ σφῶζου μόνον·  
ὡς ἔκ γ' ἐμοῦ σοὶ πάντα σιγηθήσεται  
(ἴστω μέγας Ζεὺς) ὧν ἐπισκίπτεις πέρι.

Ip: Dearest women, I look to you.

My fate is in your hands—whether I prosper, or am ruined  
and deprived of my country, my dear brother, and beloved sister.  
Let my plea begin here.

Ch: Courage, dear mistress! Just get safely home!

For, as Zeus is my witness, *I will keep the secret  
you ask me to keep.*

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\* Euripides’ *Helen* translation by David Kovacs (Loeb)

\*\* Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* translation by David Kovacs (Loeb)

\*\*\* Euripides’ *Helen* translation by Edward P. Coleridge