

Yes/No Future: Queer Temporality in Iphigenia at Aulis

Building off Ella Haselswerdt's theory on Iphigenia's sacrifice in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, I argue that Iphigenia's sacrifice and her desire to be sacrificed, even if she is to be replaced by a horned doe, occupy more of a temporal middle ground between queer temporality on the one hand, and normative futurity and the heteroreproductivity of the Greek social order on the other. Haselswerdt argues that Iphigenia's replacement by a horned doe is queer in its subversion of heteroreproductive societal structures (Haselswerdt 2022, 56). These structures, in considering sacrifice and marriage, are designed for taming animals and women (Haselswerdt, 56), and the horned doe represents an animal that lives beyond normal human bounds as it eludes domestication and normative gender expectations (Haselswerdt 53-54). She expands this argument into the realm of queer temporality by discussing Brandão's and de Sousa's idea of the centrality of delayed gratification for the queer subject, as Iphigenia's replacement by the doe positions her temporally between life and death (Haselswerdt, 56).

While Iphigenia does escape reproductive futurity by giving herself up for sacrifice and thus destroying her potential for such a future, her cooperation with her sacrifice nonetheless upholds heteroreproductivity and the normative social order. Haselswerdt positions Iphigenia's escape from sacrifice as securing her a queer future that reflects Jose E. Muñoz's idea of queerness as a "rejection of here and now" (Muñoz 2009, 1). I argue, rather, that Iphigenia's desire to be sacrificed seemingly brings her in line with Lee Edelman's call to reject a "more hospitable future," in which the child is seen as the emblem of "reproductive futurism" (Ruti 2017, 28; Edelman 2004). But, as Haselswerdt recognizes in the Chorus' story of the divine beauty contest and Paris' eventual meeting with Helen, "heterosexual desire leads to war"

(Haselswerdt, 62). Iphigenia's sacrifice, in turn, ensures that this war driven by heterosexual desire will happen and will restore the transgressed Greek social order by getting revenge for Helen's abduction, even as she is enacting a queer rejection of her own reproductive future.

Iphigenia recognizes her own queer rejection of the future when she claims that her sacrifice will serve as her memorial, her children, and her marriage, and that through her sacrifice she will be living a different lifetime and fortune (*IA*, 1398-1399, 1507). While she takes up Edelman's call to reject a reproductive future, Iphigenia nevertheless also grounds her argument for sacrificing herself in the idea that she will secure that barbarians no longer snatch away Greek women and that Helen's ruin shall be avenged (*IA*, 1380-1384). In turning back to Edelman's understanding of reproductive futurism, Iphigenia's sacrifice does not represent something "dangerous to the social order" (Ruti, 28; Edelman 2004), but rather is intended to restore a future for Greece that is normative and upholds the heteroreproductive social order. Thus, in terms of temporality and futurism, Iphigenia's sacrifice situates itself in this middle ground between the queer and the heteronormative future.

Bibliography

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