

## Concealed Kypris in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*

The chorus of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* praises "concealed Kypris" (569-70) as a marker of virtue for women. This paper first demonstrates how their ambiguous statement contradicts Greek norms, and then argues that the chorus' identification of Aphrodite as hidden foreshadows the unusual relationship between Iphigenia and Achilles and connects it with larger themes of secrecy and revelation in the play.

The first stasimon of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (543-89) offers an impassioned plea for moderation. Using language associated with the wedding, the young matrons of the chorus pray that Aphrodite will spare them from excessive and inappropriate Eros (543-72). However, some of their statements have confounded editors and critics, particularly their notion that women's virtue (ἀρετή) is "according to concealed Kypris" (κατὰ Κύπριν κρυπτάν, 569-70). While the phrase is attested in manuscript and papyrus versions of the text, it has proven difficult to explain and has occasioned several emendations (Stockert 1992, obelized by Kovacs 2003). As noted by commentators (e.g. Cesareo 1962 and Stockert 1992), earlier instances of hidden love are extramarital and morally risky for women. Secret love has such connotations in earlier poetry (e.g. *Il.* 6.161, Mimnermus fr. 1.3 W) and designates sexual activity outside of marriage in other Euripidean plays (*Hipp.* 154, *Ion* 1524, *El.* 922). Such concealment contrasts with the public wedding ritual, which features wholesome manifestations of Aphrodite and the revelation (*anakalypteria*) of the bride (Llewellyn-Jones 2003). In addition to being publically recognized, weddings are organized by the bride's father, and represent an agreement between groom and father-in-law. In lauding "concealed Kypris," the chorus presents a strangely unorthodox view of legitimate female sexual activity.

I argue that this confusion is reflected in the anomalous engagement of Iphigenia to Achilles and in the play's larger themes of secrecy and revelation. Iphigenia's sacrifice has often been interpreted as a perverse wedding (Foley 1982 and 1985, Seaford 1987, Rabinowitz 1993, Torrance 2017). The chorus's suggestion of Aphrodite's secret machinations draws attention to other incongruous elements in Iphigenia's interactions with Achilles, all of which occur in private. In the most jarring scene, she is 'given' to her groom not by her father (who lied about making a marriage alliance with Achilles) but by her mother (963-64). In fact, Clytemnestra forces Iphigenia to reveal herself to Achilles (1341-44) although she prefers to hide inside. It is at this moment, offered to him as a potential bride in secret, that she appears to feel her concealed love for him, which perhaps leads her to sacrifice herself willingly (Foley 1985, Micheli 1999-2000). Because of Agamemnon's deceit, Clytemnestra takes on the traditional role of the bride's father. Instead of arranging a well-publicized wedding, however, she becomes the go-between for an extra-marital encounter between Achilles and her daughter. The operations of "concealed Kypris," in this instance, do not undergird traditional gender norms but signify their destabilization.

The concealment and revelation of Iphigenia and her love is matched by the concealment and revelation of the sacrifice plot, hidden from Clytemnestra, even if not from the army (Kovacs 2003). This comes to a head in the confrontation between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, which uses markedly nuptial and erotic language. Echoing the chorus, Agamemnon complains that his "secrets" (κρυπτά, 1140) have been discovered. On her part, Clytemnestra promises to uncover (ἀνακαλύψω, 1146) her response, as if it were a bride. The cause for all of these plots and sufferings is Helen's secret love affair with Paris, which was made dramatically public. As Iphigenia herself notes (1315-55), it is because of Helen that she

finds herself faced with her death instead of her wedding. Helen's confusion of appropriate bridal iconography with inappropriate adultery has led to malignant secrecy and inappropriate roles for Aphrodite and marriage.

The chorus' appeal to the virtue of "concealed Kypris" would surprise an ancient audience and foreshadows other shocking events in the play. Iphigenia's quasi-engagement to Achilles is deeply untraditional, and the concepts of concealment and revelation characterize not only their relationship, but also Agamemnon's plans and Helen's infidelity.

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