IV

Eye of the Camera, Eye of the Victim: *Iphigenia* by Euripides and Cacoyannis

Marianne McDonald

Michael Cacoyannis has produced and directed three films based on plays by Euripides: *Electra* (1961), *The Trojan Women* (1971), and *Iphigenia* (1977).[1] The last of these, after Euripides' play *Iphigenia in Aulis*, is severe and forbidding, challenging its audience to struggle for an appreciation of ancient tragedy and the patterns of experience it represents rather than reducing its source to an easily understood story. Cacoyannis makes things strange to us, for instance in our comprehension of Clytemnestra. How, and to what extent, do we understand, imaginatively even become, Clytemnestra? Do we bring our own experience of war and human suffering to Cacoyannis's version of Euripides' artistic vision? Is this process itself reductive, so that all we are left with is one more depiction of how women and children suffer when men rattle their swords?

A film adaptation renders this suffering more concrete than is possible in a production of Euripides' play on the stage. Siegfried Kracauer's claim that film redeems physical reality is applicable here.[2] Cacoyannis's camera allows us first to identify with Iphigenia, the frightened child. Near the opening of the film, the Greeks are hunting a deer, and the camera follows it through the underbrush, focusing on its eye bulging in panic.

1. On these films, and others based on Euripides, see my *Euripides in Cinema: The Heart Made Visible* (1983; rpt. Boston: Greek Institute, 1991). In general see Kenneth MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy into Film* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986). See further MacKinnon's and my "Cacoyannis vs. Euripides: From Tragedy to Melodrama," *Intertextualität in der griechisch-römischen Komödie*, ed. Niall W. Slater and Bernhard Zimmermann (Stuttgart: M and P: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1993), 222–234.

2. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Later we see the same landscape and similar camera movements when Iphigenia is hunted down. Cacoyannis forces us to identify with the oppressed, especially women and children, perhaps even more than Euripides had done. (Cacoyannis's Electra, for instance, had been more sympathetic than Euripides'.) With film, our identification with a character or characters is different from the emotional involvement the theater offers its audience. Tragedy on the stage moves us to an emotional and even intellectual pleasure which arises from our watching the play. But in a play it is mainly the language and its delivery that elicit and shape our response, while film gives more emphasis to the visual and, in this way, to a more immediate, visceral experience on the part of the spectator.

If we identify first with Iphigenia as an innocent victim and then with Clytemnestra as an elemental avenging force, what happens to our own individuality and theirs? In the spurious ending of Euripides' play Iphigenia is replaced on the sacrificial altar by a deer.[3] We readily think of Isaac replaced on the altar by a ram and of all the theories that attempt to explain the evolution of ritual sacrifice. The great resonance of film adaptations of Greek tragedy, however, derives from the sense they give us of the fundamental and unchanging, but also inescapable, patterns of experience. The more elemental the style and texture of the adaptation, giving the semblance of faithful adherence to the original, the more shocked we are to see ourselves as victims and our leaders as oppressors.

Cacoyannis presents us with a complex work. The story is set in the mythic-historical period just before the Trojan War, but in addition Cacoyannis makes us think of Euripides' time, that of Athens during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.), and even of his own, the Greek Civil War after World War II (1946–1949) and the rule of the colonels (1967–1974). The myth's two most powerful dramatic treatments besides Euripides', those by Aeschylus and Seneca, also condemn Agamemnon's arbitrary and arrogant abuse of power, but Cacoyannis makes of Euripides' already poignant depiction of Iphigenia's suffering the fulcrum to arouse moral outrage in his audience. We come to wonder about the relation between the universal and the historically specific: What is the power of the modern adaptation of a classical text that can move us more forcefully than contemporary fact, such as news reports of wars and civil wars,

3. Euripides may have died before writing the ending. Most scholars agree that the ending we have is late. There is also much dispute about how much of the play was written by Euripides and how much by others making an actable version of what Euripides may have left unfinished. And who today would believe that a deer was substituted for Iphigenia at the last minute?

or contemporary fiction? To a large extent, the answer lies in the way Cacoyannis creates his audience's identification with the sufferers.

Cacoyannis, who was born on the island of Cyprus, dealt with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 in his only documentary film, *Attila '74*, made that year and named after the arbitrary line that divided the island into Turkish and Greek parts. Cacoyannis knew what the power and madness of an invading army could be like and repeatedly shows the faces of the victims: men, women, children weeping, mourning their dead and missing, forced to leave their land. With its emphasis on the suffering of the war victims, the film carries thematic overtones of *The Trojan Women*. Like Euripides, Cacoyannis understood the passion and fickleness of the mob, not least of a military mob. Three years later, when his Iphigenia says that she is volunteering her life to keep Greece free of barbarians, her words acquire a resonance well beyond their mythical context. Both *Attila '74* and *Iphigenia* are works about betrayal, accommodation, and collaboration: Iphigenia is sacrificed with the collusion of Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus, Agamemnon, and the whole army; Cyprus was betrayed, Cacoyannis suggests, by the Greek junta in collaboration with the United Nations, Turkey, and the CIA.

Both Euripides' and Cacoyannis's versions of the Iphigenia myth show us how ostensibly civilized men can turn barbaric. The characters who exhibit true heroism are women, slaves, and children, usually as victims of men in power. Euripides was a critic of his society, and his dramas were not popular in Athens. (He apparently won only four victories during his lifetime, in contrast to Aeschylus' thirteen and Sophocles' twenty-four.) Unpopular critics, such as Euripides' friend Socrates, are rarely appreciated in their own countries. We can accept their truths only when we are not under the influence of political counterpressures. Euripides and Cacoyannis are closely allied in spirit with their powerful criticism of war and the corruption of martial, religious, and political leaders. Both create moving drama. They lead us beyond a feeling of frustration and resentment against corrupt regimes to empathy with the suffering of individual victims. That is where the real tragedy occurs. There is a vast difference between our moral outrage at the idea of injustice and the rising horror we feel when we see the imminent death of a particular child. In Euripides, conventional male "heroes" constantly betray *aretê* ("excellence"); instead, true *aretê* is often found in women, slaves, and children. The same is the case with Cacoyannis.

It is a truism, but one worth repeating, that war has been a constant concern for mankind. When not in thrall to its ideology, we question its goals and the price it exerts. War and its consequences intrigue Cacoyannis, particularly the question of power: Who holds it and over whom, and what are its abuses? What is a noble war (the Persian Wars of the fifth century B.C.), and what is an ignoble one (civil war)? Is a noble war ever possible? Almost twenty-five hundred years ago, these were Euripides' questions, too. Both Euripides and Cacoyannis make political statements, derived from their own experiences of war and exile. Even more than Homer, who besides showing the horrors of war also extolled the glories of battle and the honor of its heroes, Euripides emphasizes the heroism of the victims, futile as it often is. The wages of war are earned by blood, and in this case the honor gained by Iphigenia as victim is honor lost by Agamemnon.

The issues in Euripides' play are clear. He shows us the price we pay for war: the lives of our children, whenever a country sends its young to fight its wars. Agamemnon's agreeing to slay his own daughter is, fundamentally, the decision all political leaders make when they declare war. Only they think war's tragedies will strike others, and the deaths they suffer will not be their own or their children's. As the herald says in Euripides' *The Suppliants*: "When a people vote for war, no one thinks of his own death, but thinks this misfortune is someone else's, for if death could be seen at the time of voting, never would spear-mad Greece destroy itself" (482–486). In several of his plays, Euripides exposed the Athenians' moral corruption. He questioned the gods by depicting them as more callous and irresponsible than humans. Political leaders often used them for their own ends. Sometimes Euripides also showed the disaster of an arrogant or ambitious man behaving like a god. Euripides had seen the Athenians, after their victory over the Persians, form an oppressive empire under the pretext of protecting Greece from a renewed Persian threat. In 416 B.C., when the island of Melos refused to support Athens, the Athenians reacted by killing all adult men and selling the women and children into slavery. It seems likely that Euripides wrote *The Trojan Women* in response, since the play was performed in 415 B.C. Sparta eventually inflicted total defeat on Athens in 404 B.C., two years after Euripides' death and after the posthumous performance of *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In this play, Clytemnestra recognizes the decision of the Greeks to kill her daughter for the crime that it is and clearly states that this "unholy murder" was an evil choice (1364). Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus, and the army consider Iphigenia's sacrifice a "good," but its evil nature is clear to Clytemnestra always and to Agamemnon at times. Agamemnon had been torn by conflicting responsibilities and interests but eventually had opted for power; the longer he waited, the more restricted he became in his ability to choose or to change his mind. By the time the army knew, it was altogether too late. When Agamemnon made the excuse to Iphigenia and Clytemnestra that their whole family could

be murdered (1264–1268), he was probably right. But earlier he had had a choice.[4]

Euripides' plays reveal his growing awareness of the realities of war and the prevarication of the leaders who had to pander to a mob. The word "mob" (*ochlos*) occurs more often in the late plays *Orestes* and *Iphigenia* than in any other of Euripides' plays. He gradually realized the power of the mob and its demagogues. In regard to the Trojan War, mob power is an anachronism: Euripides was speaking about his own time. His later plays reflect Thucydides' evaluation of a general deterioration of morals that occurred in Athens in the course of the Peloponnesian War. Words acquired new meanings; power and success were worth more than justice or truth.[5] Euripides' Iphigenia, with her noble display of self-sacrifice for the sake of Greece, seems a Homeric hero lost in a Thucydidean world, seeking honor when the people about her do not know the meaning of the word.[6]

This is also Cacoyannis's perspective. He reproduces the corruption of people and political leaders he himself had known in modern Athens. To him, the contemporary situation had resonances from his country's antiquity, just as to Euripides the confrontation between the mythical brothers Menelaus and Agamemnon exemplified the struggle for power with which he was familiar at his own time. Conflicts and indecision such as theirs led to an oligarchic takeover in Athens in 411–410 B.C., which in turn brought about a number of murders to consolidate the new power. Similar things happened in Cacoyannis's Athens, when the conflict between various leaders allowed someone else to take advantage of the situation and seize power for himself. In 1967, vacillations in leadership led to a general disillusionment with the government and to the military coup by Giorgos Papadopoulos. When Menelaus accuses Agamemnon of abandoning the people who helped him after he consolidated his power, Cacoyannis sees in this a parallel to Papadopoulos's gradual rise and subsequent abandoning of the constituency that had helped him obtain his position of leadership. Euripides and Cacoyannis show us that this is the lesson history teaches: Leaders make and break alliances with the people for the sake of political expediency.

4. Choice, particularly moral choice, was important in tragedy and was determined by character; see Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b17–18.

5. See Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 3.82–84.

6. As other scholars have done, Thomas Rosenmeyer, "Wahlakt und Entscheidungsprozess in der antiken Tragödie," *Poetica*, 10 (1978), 1–24, explains Iphigenia's change of mind in terms of heroism. He sees Iphigenia as impelled by desire for glory, pursuing the Homeric ideal of "immortal fame" (*Iliad* 9.413).

Cacoyannis humanizes Euripides by eliminating the ancient gods and centering good and evil in humans, with no divine element as either source or judge. Without any supernatural framework, and in the absence of fatalism, man is now wholly responsible for his actions. Euripides shows some human alliances as a way of combating irrational gods, but Cacoyannis puts man in charge of his fate, although he is often victimized by his own weakness. He adds a calculating and obviously corrupt Calchas in league with a self-serving Odysseus. Neither Calchas nor Odysseus had appeared in Euripides' play. Cacoyannis's Calchas takes on the arbitrary and perverse qualities of Euripidean gods, who exercise their irrational power to cause human suffering. In this Calchas we may also see Cacoyannis's criticism of the Greek Orthodox Church, which sometimes made morally questionable decisions. The church allied itself with the colonels' junta because it approved of the conservative values of the military and wanted to be protected from Communism. Cacoyannis may also have had in mind some of the disastrous decisions made by Bishop Makarios on Cyprus.[7]

There are other humanizing factors in the film. The army's struggle is not simply for honor, vengeance, or some other abstract ideal. In his earlier film *The Trojan Women*, getting Helen back from the Trojans was simply a pretext for the Greeks; their real motive had been gold. In *Iphigenia*, Cacoyannis echoes this when Agamemnon says that Helen gave them an excuse to go to war but that Troy's gold was the real reason. The economic basis of power was the major criticism leveled by Andreas Papandreou against the "palace, the Junta, the economic oligarchy, and the American CIA."[8] This illustrates what history confirms: Economically comfortable people are easily ruled.

Cacoyannis presents an Achilles more sympathetic to Clytemnestra's and Iphigenia's predicament than Euripides' had been. Cacoyannis introduces a charming Achilles, played by a young, handsome actor, instead

7. Keith R. Legg and John M. Roberts, *Modern Greece: A Civilization on the Periphery* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 104: "The church has generally been more comfortable with conservative parties because of its fears of educational and language reforms. In the postwar period, the fear of communism—especially considering the position of Orthodox Christianity in communist countries—surely made the church a natural ally of right-wing parties. . . . The traditional values espoused by the military leadership were far more congenial to church leaders than to center and center-left politicians." The Greek Orthodox Church, however, has occasionally made glorious gestures, such as backing the revolution of 1821. On March 25 of that year, Bishop Germanos, Metropolitan of Patras, raised the flag of Greece at Agia Lavra, signaling the beginning of the revolution.

8. D. George Kousoulas, *Modern Greece: Profile of a Nation* (New York: Scribner, 1974), 275.

of the egotistical prig we find in Euripides. Achilles' eyes meet Iphigenia's slowly, and it is love at first sight. Kenneth MacKinnon describes the way they look at each other as "oddly reminiscent of Tony's first glimpse of Maria in Robert Wise's *West Side Story*."[9] Cacoyannis seems to think that a popular film needs a love interest. His Achilles takes Clytemnestra and Iphigenia more seriously than Euripides' Achilles does. This Achilles is certainly more willing to risk his life for Iphigenia. He is a hero capable of making her change her mind, not least for his sake; he looks at her first with compassion, later with admiration. His first direct words to her are: "Don't be afraid, I'll defend you." In Euripides, he had only addressed her directly after her decision to accept death with dignity, and he begins by calling her "child of Agamemnon" (1404). In the film we see him arguing with his men on her behalf and even being driven off by them with stones for his effort. Euripides had played this down; his Achilles only reports it (1349–1357). Cacoyannis's Achilles acts heroically, and what was verbal in Euripides has become visual.

Agamemnon also appears softened from his Euripidean counterpart. In Euripides, Agamemnon waffles over his choices, as does Menelaus, and they both unveil each other's weakness, the one's for power, the other's for a woman (317–414). Neither has the people's good at heart, or his family's. Euripides unmasks the men and shows them changing their position, reversing their roles as to which of them is in favor of the sacrifice. Cacoyannis has also made Menelaus more sympathetic, as when he shows Menelaus swayed by family loyalty after his argument with his brother, whose hand he takes in a gesture of emotional closeness. Cacoyannis's Agamemnon is weak, but we never doubt that he is a loving father.[10] His weakness is visible as he wavers between sacrificing his child and giving up the expedition; he is finally resolved when the army hails him as leader and sings a song of victory at the instigation of Odysseus. Agamemnon then takes a deep breath, an indication not so much of relief as of defeat and complicity. Another filmic effect that conveys Agamemnon's weakness and hesitation appears in what we might call a visual and aural close-up. We see and hear Agamemnon scratching his nails across a clay jar as he waits for the arrival of his daughter; we hear his labored breathing and see his tortured eyes. With such physical indications Cacoyannis conveys to us Agamemnon's emotional torment.

9. MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy into Film*, 90.

10. There are many interpretations of Agamemnon, from father and general to wholly corrupt politician. For a summary of scholarly views of his motives see Herbert Siegel, "Agamemnon in Euripides' 'Iphigenia at Aulis'," *Hermes*, 109 (1981), 257–265.

In both play and film, Iphigenia changes her mind. At the beginning she says that she would be a fool to want to die, at the end that she embraces death for the good of the people. Her father gave her no more than rhetorical reasons for the sacrifice, but she idealistically embraces this rhetoric. Rather than violating Aristotle's principles about tragic characters—according to *Poetics* 1454a26–33, her change of mind is too abrupt—she follows his ethics by obeying the concept of *philia* ("devotion, love") and the duties it entails.[11] Aristotle complained that Euripides threw her into contradiction, giving a young girl mature patterns of thought. Here Aristotle's misogyny is evident, denying a woman the freedom to think. Today we are more likely to see Iphigenia's embrace of pan-Hellenism as essentially tragic. Tragic heroes seize as their own the choice the gods seem to have made for them.

Cacoyannis has made Iphigenia's death more believable by emphasizing her gradual realization that she has no choice about living or dying but that she does have a choice over the manner of her death. He has eliminated the Euripidean Iphigenia's chilling comment to Achilles that "one man's life is worth more than ten thousand women's" (1394). In the film, her dignity is unmistakable; it is that of a brave child. (Tatiana Papamoskou, the extraordinary actress playing her, was only twelve years old.) At the last minute she tries to escape again when she realizes that the winds are rising, but she is caught by a fiendish-looking Calchas. Her terrified scream is not a final heroic moment, but it does not diminish her bravery. Her humanity intensifies her credibility and deepens our sympathy for her. Cacoyannis's Iphigenia has much in common with Carl Theodor Dreyer's heroine in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Both protagonists are young girls surrounded by the corrupt or the weak. Their vulnerability, innocence, and moral choices contrast with the sordid nature of the people at whose hands they are forced to die. Both choose a heroic death. But Cacoyannis's Iphigenia is also similar to Shakespeare's Juliet in the combination of adult and child. When she contemplates suicide, Juliet combines the determination of a woman in love with a child's fear of death and the dark (*Romeo and Juliet*, act 4, scene 3).

In the film's prologue and in Calchas' private interchanges with Odysseus, Cacoyannis makes it clear that the seer has personally contrived the oracle, falsely claiming that the goddess Artemis demands Iphigenia's

11. On this see my "Iphigenia's *Philia*: Motivation in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, new ser., 34 (1990), 69–84. The only value in a morally unstructured universe is *philia*, the tie linking one person to another, as Euripides' Heracles says: "Whoever prefers wealth or power over faithful friends thinks poorly" (*Heracles* 1425–1426).

death. Odysseus tells Calchas to hurry the sacrifice because the winds are already rising. This is a radical change from Euripides: Artemis was to send winds only after Iphigenia's death. It is clear that Cacoyannis's Agamemnon knows that Calchas has invented the oracle and is fully aware of the priest's corruption. When Iphigenia approaches him to ask him to spare her life, he says that it is too late, that the army has been incited to frenzy and demands the sacrifice. To deny them means death—hers, his, and his family's.

At the end of the film, when Agamemnon sees the wind rising and runs up the steps toward the altar and Calchas, he really is too late, as we know from his eyes, in which we see his defeat more effectively than words could convey. There is no messenger speech telling us about the sacrifice, as there had to be in Euripides; in the film we understand from her father's eyes that Iphigenia is now dead. Eyes are the vehicle Cacoyannis uses to convey suffering, pity, love, hate, horror, defeat, and finally death. They are indeed the windows of the soul, through which the ancient Greeks had expressed the concept of the self.

The director's eye is the camera, with which the audience also sees and understands. Throughout the film Cacoyannis makes reference to eyes. Who sees and who does not see relates to the issue of power; more often than not, seeing is the sole power of the female, as in the confrontations between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Looks emphasize the differences between the sexes. There is a distinct difference between the way Cacoyannis presents males and females. Men can be static and are shown from behind; they often avoid the eyes of a female. Women move and are seen from the front; female eyes stare, blaze, blame, or threaten. Iphigenia pierces her father with her eyes as she is crowned and sprinkled with water in preparation for death; Agamemnon avoids her gaze here as he did earlier when she first arrived. He only stares at her after she is dead and her movements have ceased. Clytemnestra's gaze, particularly at the end, is like the destructive gaze of the Gorgon, which turned people to stone. Modest women should avert their eyes; women who are transformed by their pain transfix their abusers with their silent stare.

One of the most significant modern expressions in *Iphigenia* is Clytemnestra's term of endearment for her daughter: *matia mou* ("my eyes"). The words convey the ultimate human value, a parent's love for a child. The same words had occurred in *Attila '74*, with weeping parents mourning their children. To viewers of both films, the timeless theme of Euripides becomes perhaps more poignant here than anywhere else.

In *Iphigenia*, Cacoyannis shows heroes (Iphigenia, Achilles), mixed characters (Agamemnon, Menelaus), and villains (Calchas, Odysseus, the army). There are also those who are only victims (Clytemnestra, the old servant). This is in contrast to Euripides, who makes all except Iphigenia partially blameworthy. Some critics see even her as calculating; they interpret literally Achilles' words at line 1409 that Iphigenia has aligned her will with what she sees as clear necessity.[12] Euripides has no heroes except Iphigenia and no out-and-out villains. Menelaus and Agamemnon are corrupt only up to a point.

Cacoyannis's treatment, particularly in his prologue and ending, and in the chase sequence in the middle of the film, resolves a number of the ambiguities inherent in Euripides' text, but it presents us with some new ones. We have an open-ended drama and not the compact and complete imitation of an action that Aristotle demanded (*Poetics* 1459a17–20). Cacoyannis's prologue suggests the major themes of the entire film. He shows us the Greek fleet and the restless army, overcome with heat and impatient in its desire to sail to Troy. From the very beginning, Cacoyannis makes us conscious of the army and of the power that an anonymous mass can exert over its leaders. Given the limitations of the ancient stage, Euripides could only suggest, whereas Cacoyannis can be visually far more explicit. So we can understand why Agamemnon panders to his men by leading them on a slaughter of animals tended by Calchas and his followers. He tries to prevent the killing of a sacred deer but is too late. We see the deer flee, trying to escape through the woods. We see the woods through the deer's eyes, sharing the victim's perspective. The animal's death foretells Iphigenia's. Later, when Iphigenia is hunted down, we again see as if through her eyes.[13] We share her perspective, literally and figuratively. The parallel and its meaning are clear.

Close-ups of eyes and shared perspectives convey the major issues of the film. Over the dying deer, his sacred property, Calchas looks at Agamemnon. The close-up of his eyes suggests his future course of action, his power play against Agamemnon. After the death of the deer,

12. One of the earliest negative assessments of Iphigenia was by Bruno Snell, "From Tragedy to Philosophy: *Iphigenia in Aulis*," in *Greek Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Erich Segal (New York: Harper and Row, 1983, also published in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983]), 396–405; this is a slightly abridged English version of "Euripides' aulische Iphigenie," in *Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1928 [Philologus Supplementband 20, no. 1]), 148–160. Snell suggests that Euripides may be questioning the entire heroic code. Cf. Herbert Siegel, "Self-Delusion and the *Volte-Face* of Iphigenia in Euripides' 'Iphigenia at Aulis'," *Hermes*, 108 (1980), 300–321.

13. We may compare the hunt in Jean Renoir's film *Rules of the Game* (1939). The pilot Jurieux is caught in a similar game that takes place among the humans and dies a casual sacrifice in a sport he took seriously. The film, coming shortly after Renoir's *Grand Illusion* (1937), warns against war as the ultimate game. The duck hunt in Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900* (1977) is a brief homage to Renoir's film.

Cacoyannis returns to the fleet. One of the ships' masts is made to resemble a death's head, and then the film's title appears over a blood-red sea. Cutting and close-ups make for an ominous and immediately gripping opening sequence.

The film comes to an end with the sunset and the ships sailing for Troy, but the future is in Clytemnestra's eyes. We see her watching the Greek fleet sailing off; her face reveals her ineffable grief over the loss of her daughter but also threatens the revenge to come when her husband, murderer of her child, returns from the Trojan War. The sunset colors the sea a red as bloody as that at the beginning. Then Clytemnestra's gaze pierces us, for she looks straight into the camera, her black hair blowing across her face. Cacoyannis, who does not believe in the use of masks in realistic films, captures Clytemnestra's suffering and brooding desire for revenge in this powerful prolonged close-up. The wind now stirs both us and Clytemnestra; just as she appears to us, it is primordial, irresistible, implacable. The wind and Clytemnestra combine to represent elemental forces. Then, through a cut to a close-up of her point of view, we see her hair blow across the screen, obscuring our view of the fleet. We now have become Clytemnestra, just as earlier we had been the deer and Iphigenia. This ending is one of doom brooding and waiting. The true end of the story will occur after Agamemnon's return home. Iphigenia is dead, but her mother lives for vengeance. She, too, after killing Agamemnon, will be killed, in what threatens to become an endless cycle of vengeance and bloodshed. Even a victim of violence can become a perpetrator, then again a victim in retaliation for this violence. This is the plot of Euripides' *Electra*, a tragedy Cacoyannis had already filmed.

Of all the choices and changes that Cacoyannis made for his film, perhaps the most significant is to have cast Irene Papas as Clytemnestra. Cacoyannis and Papas have a deep political and philosophical rapport, which explains the artistic success of their collaboration. They provide us with as immediate an experience of ancient tragedy as is possible today. Their own political experiences lend force and nuance to their work, although the substance remains Euripides'. As Euripides had done long ago, Cacoyannis and Papas show us, in a modern artistic medium, human beings bending to forces beyond their control, compelled to make tragic choices. Irene Papas's Clytemnestra becomes a force of nature, but we do not forget Iphigenia. Mother and daughter together come close to embodying the core of human existence itself.

I close on a personal note. The works of classical literature are vitally modern and should be approached accordingly. For this reason I regularly incorporate film screenings into my courses on Greek mythology and literature and on classical civilization. In 1990, my students read Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* and watched and discussed Cacoyannis's *Iphigenia* in a course on Greek tragedy and film. For their final project, the students put on a performance of Euripides' play. Several of them were going off to fight in the Gulf War. The play was staged outdoors, and jets flew over our heads during the performance. We, the audience, saw our children being sent off to fight a war that did not directly concern many of us but that politicians in a faraway capital had set in motion for reasons of power. We were all Clytemnestra then.

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Contents