Finality for Antigone and Iphigenia:
The Masculine Suicide and Feminine Sacrifice in Greek Tragedy

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Abstract

The paper uses the case of Antigone and Iphigenia in Greek tragedy to illuminate how differing modes of finality within a political moment can be construed along gender lines. For feminine characters whose political life never experiences a birth while ensconced in the Athenian apparatus of male political oppression, understanding how Antigone and Iphigenia both become politically born through their chosen mode of finality or death aids in pinpointing one of the very few agentic methods available to women in ancient Athens. Through a careful understanding of Greek tragedy, the place of women in Ancient Athens, and a discussion of views of gender during the time, the paper offers a comprehensive view, understanding the text for what it is within a contemporary reading of gender. What does Antigone's suicide imply about power inside a political situation and what does sacrifice takes away? Antigone's suicide effectively makes her a masculine actor in the eyes of an Ancient Athenian spectator while Iphigenia's sacrifice is uniquely feminine. This paper also represents preliminary work into the importance and significance of persons whose political finality has been decided but have open to them a choice in mode.

Introduction

Finality is one of the absolute certainties of existence. To live is also to die, an almost universal truth, yet the *mode of finality* can often evoke more than metaphysical ends. For an individual caught in a life deprived of political agency yet faced with the certainty of finality within a politically charged atmosphere, the *mode* of finality or the manner of death can take on an entirely new strength of meaning. Modes of suicide and willing sacrifice become nuanced and intentional within such a narrow context. If we can face the certainty of death and seem to have some control over the manner, is this a moment that we can capture in order to claim a moment of agency, until then, never supplied? "Oh yes but you won't win glory/ won't you be praised/ it's not as if you're dying of disease or war/ you choose to live autonomous/ and so you die/ the only one of mortals to go down to Death alive" – the refrain of the ancient Chorus to the doomed Antigone offers an answer.

It was in the ancient tragedies that certain modes of finality in such an impossible and entirely political context would play out. Though almost all characters in tragedy are placed in an impossible situation and left to an ill fate, often via suicide, sacrifice, or murder, it is particularly female characters who embody the utility of a chosen mode for their finality as it is the only choice afforded to them.[1] The ultimate question concerns what the choices of these female

[1] Though women are not exclusively in roles of suicide and sacrifice, they occupy them more often than their male counterparts, proportionally. In addition to the tragedies discussed here,

characters concerning their mode of finality are doing within the broader context of the tragedy and ancient society? Are their choices agentic moments? Are they claiming in their intention-filled modes of death an agency they did not have up until their demise? These questions are perhaps interwoven in the further question: Why is it that women, who were viewed so passively and non-agentially in ancient Athenian culture, are given prominent roles in their most sacred and attended artform, roles which clearly imply a deep intentionality? Not only does focusing on these questions prompt the need for a new understanding of gender for female tragic figures in antiquity, but it also seeks to delve into the motivations of the tragedians for writing female characters as they did.

Portrayals of women in Greek tragedy are both powerful and illuminatingly present; of the 32 surviving tragic plays, only one does not feature a pivotal, vocal female character. The plots share a common and melancholy theme, relying on their women characters to act on impossible decisions, which must ultimately and most often lead to their deaths by sacrifice or suicide or murder.[2] My paper aims to unite sacrifice and suicide as an interchange of gender

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Antigone and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Elise Garrison notes female suicides and sacrifices in at least ten other tragedies, which she explicates in her work *Groaning Tears: Ethical and Dramatic Aspects of Suicide in Greek Tragedy* (1995). Though I will ultimately argue that in this work Garrison has the tendency to conflate sacrifice and suicide, it is useful to utilize their similarities.

[2] I allude to a third large category of finality within Greek tragedy, which I ultimately do not include a structured theory of here. I do this because it is a potential quagmire for the more immediate and nuanced modes of sacrifice and suicide. Murder is also far more different a mode

roles and as nuanced modes of finality being a mechanism of intentionality and agency for women in Greek culture. Although these poignant moments of agency may seem to liberate a female character momentarily from the limits of male-dominated Greek society; in fact, by relegating these actions only to female characters, and characterizing them as male during crucial moments of intentionality, the action of suicide and sacrifice with tragedy again represents another method in which women were sequestered and silenced in ancient Athens.

Understanding how ostensibly female characters are actually male-gendered in the intense moment of their deaths rests entirely on the pivotal political moment in which they reside. There is a seemingly clear consensus among classical scholars that the great playwrights, not only the tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, but also the comedians, especially among those Aristophanes, would use the stage as a vehicle for multiple social functions, not only religious observance, entertainment, but also a forum to explore, voice, and mimic political speech, litigation, and the virtues and vices of democracy.[3] "Thus citizens brought political wisdom informed by tragedy to the deliberations of the assembly, and the experience of being democratic citizens in the assembly, council, and courts to the theater…In sum, tragedy was a

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than suicide or sacrifice as it strips away the victim's own intentionality for their death. Getting into blood sin, criminality, punishment, and what that means for gender and agency in a moment of death risks overwhelming the two modes of interest. For a work cited here that does explore some of those topics, see Danielle Allen *The World of Prometheus* (2000).

[3] Euben, J. Peter. "Introduction" in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, 1986, 23 and Meier, Christian *The Political Art of Greek Tragedy*, 132-133.

form of public discourse that inculcated civic virtue and enhanced the citizen audience's capacity to act with foresight and judge with insight."[4] Just as the Greek tragedies not only shaped, voiced, and preserved ancient Athenian political community, for the scholars of today "Greek tragedy also shaped the tradition of political theory as a whole."[5]

The cases *of Antigone and Iphigenia at Aulis* are tragedies especially well-suited to help illuminate how women in between the rock of a society which prized non-feminine agency and the hard place of the politically-charged moment can, through their imminent and unchangeable finality, grasp at agency, even if it ultimately propagates the male-only-agentic state. Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis,* feature the title-women as leading characters centered amidst wholly political and constrained decisions.[6] Antigone commits suicide among questions of divine justice and human law, while Iphigenia is sacrificed among decisions of war, domestic and foreign policy, and political, divine, and familial alliances.

The central arguments of my paper are as follows. Though some scholars may regard Antigone's suicide and Iphigenia's sacrifice as symbols of feminine power and declarations of feminine political agency in ancient Athens, I argue that this supposition, though attractive from

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[4] Euben (1986), 23

[5] Ibid, 2

[6] It is also important to note that women are particularly inclined in Greek tragedy to moments of intense, forced, and situationally-difficult deliberation, see Edith Hall *Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun* (2010), 66-67.

a feminist position,[7] is in fact a potential misreading. At the very moments of their supposed agency and power, derived from what seems a tragically heroic choice of intentioned finality, Antigone and Iphigenia are, in fact, no longer gendered as women. Instead, in these critical moments, they both act on Greek masculine values, toward masculine ends, and are even descriptively characterized as masculine. Moreover, Antigone's suicide and Iphigenia's sacrifice are not products of their own agency, but the end-result of male-domination and manipulation.

Expositional Background and the Scholarly Tradition

Sophocles' *Antigone*, performed in 441 B.C.E., begins after the turmoil left in Thebes in the wake of the events of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*. With Thebes left kingless, Oedipus' two sons, Antigone's brothers, battle for control of the kingdom and vanquish each other. Antigone's uncle, Creon takes the throne and outlaws the burial of Polyneices, the previously exiled brother. The tragedy primarily concerns the decision of Antigone to bury her brother under penalty of death through an appeal to justice. The tragedy ends with Antigone's death ordered, yet in a moment of clarity Creon goes to release her only to find she has killed herself in her prison.

Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, written around 410 B.C.E., recounts in dramatic form the oral tradition of a seminal event launching the Trojan War, that of the general Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to Artemis in order to let the fleets sail on calm seas. Though

[7] See Warren J. and Ann M. Lane's work "Politics of Antigone" (1986), especially 165-167, for a reading of Antigone which does not disentangle her physical sex from her gender and how her moves are interpreted as entirely female.

this event is only alluded to in the surviving written text of the *Iliad*, Euripides' interpretation ends with a remorseful Agamemnon who tries to stop the sacrifice, a submissive Iphigenia who allows herself to be sacrificed for the good of all Greeks, and a miraculous rescue of Iphigenia by the goddess Artemis, who replaces her with a deer and whisks the girl off to a distant place.

These two tragedies provide a uniquely rich portrait of a political suicide by a female character and a political sacrifice of a female character. Unlike their surviving counterparts, which feature female suicides, sacrifices, and murders, Antigone and Iphigenia are given a larger text of solo speeches, a clear implication of their importance and usefulness for comparison. The two also have a long tradition of being compared with each other. Aristotle first brought the characters of Antigone and Iphigenia into conversation in his analytic work on the beauty, merit, and politics of literature, especially tragedy, the *Poetics*.[8] In his work, Aristotle brings out the themes of fear and pity for the two female characters which help evoke the cleansing force of κάθαρσις, necessary for a well-functioning Athenian citizen.[9] One motivation of bringing the two back into context is certainly from this Aristotelian foundation, which I explore more in the following sections. Moreover, the two plays are excellent examples of the particular gendering I hope to link to political intentionality and agency for women which happens in Greek tragedy.

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[8] Freeland, Cynthia, A. "Introduction" in *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle* (1998), 7 and Barbara Koziak's "Tragedy, Citizens, and Strangers: The Configuration of Aristotelian Political Emotion" in the same volume, 273-274 and 281. Also see Standford *Greek Tragedy and the Emotions: An Introductory Study* (1983), 115.

[9] Koziak, 263 and 276.

Antigone is the quintessential male-gendered woman, while Iphigenia is relegated by her femininity to sacrifice.

Furthermore, these works are inextricably tied to each other as a matter of literary lineage and cultural interconnectedness as well. Both Sophocles and Euripides are writing in continuation and conversation with Aeschylus, either as continuing his myths or taking on aspects of his theatrical style.[10] These works became embedded in the Greek consciousness, adding to their mythic history, and they were cited in everything from their contemporary works of philosophy to law.[11] Not to compare across them would be missing the bouquet for the flowers, yet discussing all of Greek tragedy would be far too ambitious for an article-length paper.

Through a deep textual analysis both in the source-texts of these two tragedies and in translation, I hope to identify sacrifice and suicide first as a type of strictly feminine power in these tragedies, then identify movements which force that power back into the passive and silent through a re-gendering of the characters - the feminine into masculine during moments of intense intention where finality is certain. Much of the discussion will serve to reveal the duality of active and passive, men and women, suicide and sacrifice, and align these with the actions of both Antigone and Iphigenia at crucial moments when both become male-gendered, as a singular actor, and when they become female-gendered, as a communal victim.

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[10] Humphreys, Milton, W. "Introduction" in Milton W. Humpreys's *The Antigone of Sophocles* (1819), 27

[11] Ibid.

My paper will begin by outlining a brief conception of the woman in ancient Athens and within Greek tragedy. This will provide a healthy context for deciding how Antigone and Iphigenia are portrayed according to their decisions, including the caliber, level of determinism and, oddly enough though perpetually interesting, the temperature of their actions. Next, a survey of relevant literature on the two tragedies and the political implications of their characters will be especially useful, while both borrowing and departing from useful terms and concepts provided. Using new conceptions of suicide and sacrifice as types of agency and power, I hope to then recast these new concepts within the ancient traditions and views of suicide and sacrifice, again to provide much needed context for the figures of Antigone and Iphigenia.

Moving into the argument, I first must demonstrate how the context of Athenian society cannot be forgotten when understanding how Antigone and Iphigenia make fluid gender moves in the eyes of the Athenian spectator as well as cast a light on how women in Athens just like the female leads were deprived of a political life, cornered into an apparatus of male-domination. This context lends incredible depth and importance to the certain of their finality and the gender moves within that moment. Next, I demonstrate Antigone and Iphigenia to be gendered similarly in equivalent moments, yet differently in their final moment.

I hope to show how Antigone's masculine-gendered portrayal and seemingly agentic suicide in fact bears too many important similarities to the sacrifice of Iphigenia for her to remain an active, visible force. This will culminate in the conclusion that though the suicide of Antigone at first seems wildly liberating for Greek women, as embodiments of rebellion for the sake of justice, in fact, because of the manipulated and forced self-sacrifice which is her suicide,

she re-affirms gender-roles in Greek society,[12] cloistered as a figure who makes male choices, contradictory to her womanhood. She has been relegated back to the realm of sacrifice, most similar to Iphigenia, powerless, yet compelled by religious and honorific mores, both of which are male-engineered foci of ultimate ends.

As mentioned earlier, analysis of these two tragedies together actually begins with Aristotle. Aristotle's *Poetics* discusses the merits of tragedy and how through fear and pity, the

[12] I have used the terms "ancient Athens" and "ancient Greece" interchangeably so far. I have also not yet addressed the relevancy of a play taking place in Thebes as being related in any way to Athenian politics. First, all surviving written work with few and fragmented exceptions, and all surviving tragedies, we have from ancient Greece are from Athenian authors, even the works concerning other parts of Greece are from the point of view of Athens. Though it might seem preposterous to generalize Athens to all of Greece, classical scholars are often forced via this peculiar, inherent aspect of the only available source material to do just that. Moreover, as the metropolitan center of Greece, all parts of Greece had ties to Athens, and travel to Athens from other city-states was common, effectively diffusing parts of Athenian culture into all of Greece via trade and travel. Second, though the tragedies are set far from Athens, this does not negate them as political and literary reflections of Athens, recalling that the tragedies were written by Athenians, performed in Athens, for an audience of majority Athenians as discussed in Froma Zeitlin's "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama" (1986), 101-141. In the same work Zeitlin utilizes the special fact that some tragedies take place in Thebes as a particularly politically driven move.

great tragedians illicit a kathartic response, purging citizens of their own grief and fear. Aristotle focuses on the character of Iphigenia in Euripides' later revival of the character in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, but also alludes occasionally to *Antigone,* in which he stresses that Creon is the true tragic hero, a point I will support in my later analysis.[13] Aristotle's discussion of women in tragedy allow important background knowledge to how the Greek audience probably considered these tragic heroines. Consider these lines from Aristotle's *Poetics*:

> "In the characters there are four points to aim at. First and foremost, that they shall be good. There will be an element of character in the play, if (as has been observed) what a personage says or does reveals a certain choice; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good. Such goodness is possible in every type of personage, even in a woman or a slave, though the one is perhaps an inferior, and the other a wholly worthless being. The second point is to make them appropriate. The character before us may be, say, manly; but it is not appropriate in a female character to be manly, or clever. The third is to make them like reality, which is not the same as their being good and appropriate, in our sense of the term."[14]

Though I agree with Aristotle's initial assumption that the male characters are the central tragic heroes of all Greek tragedy, I hope to use Aristotle's later claims to push against him. Though Aristotle, as above, would say it is not good tragic form to have the female

[13] Aristotle's *Poetics* 1454a1

[14] Ibid. 1454a15-a25

characters act masculine, in fact, that is exactly what the tragedians do, and, in so doing, draw a harsher light on the masculine heroes through the mechanism of the male-gendered women's deaths. The importance of the choice and the intention of Greek tragedy, however, cannot be overlooked, as Aristotle makes it a paramount consideration.

Several impressive political theorists and scholars from assorted disciplines have posited useful schemas by which to analyze the figures of women in Greek tragedy. Most notably, Bonnie Honig's interpretation of Antigone's exemplification of a politics of lamentation is particularly striking as it adheres to the context of public grieving outside of the courts as well as appealing to the after-effects of Antigone's suicide, and even Iphigenia's sacrifice if she had wished to apply it there.[15] However brilliant the move to understand politics within the lamentation sparked in ancient tragedy, it seems to lack an immediacy concerned with the nature of the death itself. Lamentation and grieving fall temporally after a death, after a very real and political choice is made, which excludes the choice-maker, who of course is now deaf and mute to the politics following their demise. The political decision seems to reside more monumentally in the moment during which the two female characters decide on their deaths. Honig is certainly not wrong, but in focusing on the lamentable, she devalues the power of the moment of choice, of agency, offered by a suicide and imposed by a sacrifice.

Honig does make a clear note of Antigone's suicide as sacrifice being a wholly non-novel consideration, as Antigone's heroic sacrifice has been re-analyzed in Christian and feminist

[15] Honig, Bonnie, *Antigone, Interrupted*, (2013), 2-7

frames since the 19th century.[16] Honig similarly puts Antigone's suicide in terms of a sacrifice, but instead of likening it to a more straightforwardly political sacrifice as I hope to do by introducing Iphigenia, she turns from this conception in favor of a sacrifice in place of her sister Ismene, a sacrifice of sorority.[17] Furthermore, Honig lends the vocabulary of the impossible choice made possible.[18] Though Antigone is faced with a choice of two evils, she nevertheless chooses, and even in choosing death, reclaims her own demise to be by her own hands. Finally, via a humanist route, Honig firmly connects the finality of human life with an opportunity to turn toward just and ethical choices.[19]

This reclamation of an individual's own death can be best understood in reference to Simon Gikandi's work on enslavement. Gikandi points to a viable agency space where suicide takes on a strategic motivation, a way to avoid oppression, and reclaim not only the mastery of one's own life but also justice.[20] Elaborating on Gikandi's perception of suicide as an agentic decision for silenced individuals, how Antigone goes about choosing her impossible choice could point to something similar. However, in case of a sacrifice, which is generally taken to be against one's will, is there any agency? Again, making the impossible choice possible in regard to this question and the case of Iphigenia might show that sacrifice can be elevated to agentic

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[16] Ibid, 155.

[17] Ibid, 156-171

[18] Ibid, 172-177

[19] Honig "Antigone's Two Laws: Greek Tragedy and the Politics of Humanism," (2010), 1-5.

[20] Gikandi, Simon, "Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement" (2015), 99-100.

space of suicide if a choice is made, but so equally can a suicide be removed of its agentic power if the choice is manipulated.

In order to make this distinction slightly clearer, it is useful to consider ancient conceptions of sacrifice and suicide. Not unlike the preconceptions of today, the Greeks had developed connotations of good and bad forms of suicide.[21] Imposed suicide was judged differently than suicide by pure choice; the former was viewed more honorably as a mode of preserving the honor of self and family instead of enduring capital punishment based on wrong-doing or even false condemnation.[22] Though honor-based suicides are more famously known among men in ancient Athens, it is safe to judge based on the general typology of women that between the genders, men would be considered more likely to commit suicide honorably, whereas women might be more likely to commit the dishonorable suicide resulting from a weak will to live and driven far more by emotion rather than duty. This concept of suicide as a method to preserve honor in the face of a criminal accusation qua an imposed suicide will be important to the case of Antigone, but also to Iphigenia, as a consenting suicide.

Garrison presents a thorough volume charting prominent suicides in Greek tragedy in her book *Groaning Tears*. Garrison, however, treats Antigone rather stagnantly through the lens of

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[21] Garrison, Elise, "Attitudes Toward Suicide In Ancient Greece" (1991), 5, as well as Garrison's wonderful explication of Durkheim's theory of suicide in her book *Groaning Tears: Ethical and Dramatic Aspects of Suicide in Greek Tragedy* (1995), especially 39-40.

[22] Lykouras, L. et al, "Suicidal Behavious in the Ancient Greek and Roman World" (2013), 548-551.

family and marriage, noting her as the empathy-inducing figure at mercy to the irony of Creon's poor decision-making.[23] Garrison also categorizes Iphigenia and Antigone as both belonging to the category of noble suicide, which seems to conflate the nuance of sacrifice and suicide while also continuing with the marriage themes rather than notions of gender that lead their deaths to be considered "noble."[24] Nussbaum also notes that Creon is the true tragic figure as it is his poor decisions which lend to the tragic deaths which culminate the play, but also she seems to paint Antigone as a figure bound almost like an automaton to religious duty and community.[25] Though scholars of such excellent caliber as Honig, Garrison, and Nussbaum have elaborated usefully on an understanding of Antigone's suicide, especially, but also Iphigenia's sacrifice, none mention the importance nor explain how the re-gendering of these figures in their ultimate moment of finality come to the fore.

Women Cornered as Non-Agents in Ancient Athens and Its Tragedy

This section hopes to illuminate the very few choices for agency that women in Ancient Athens had available to them. By reveling how Antigone and Iphigenia act in a moment where they seem to be given a political birth through their political deaths, it becomes all the more poignant to discover that the male tragedians gendered their female characters as male in their

[23] Garrison (1995), 134-137

[24] Ibid, 154-156.

[25] Nussbaum, Martha *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986), 52-53, 66-67.

moments of political birth through death.[26] They remain ultimately female, and thus non-agential, in their inescapable finality, mirroring Athenian society, rather than radically departing from it.[27]

Passivity, invisibility, and silence were prized among women in ancient Athenian society. Women were widely viewed as the passive receptors in all things, contrasted starkly to the active male agent. Women could not own property, sit on juries, vote, attend or speak in the Assembly.[28] A woman could appear in court as a family member or directly related party but only to grieve or more accurately display grief, not speak or offer arguments.[29] In fact, a good Greek woman was to be completely silent in public outside of the grief function; even uttering a

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[26] Similar to the concept of social death explicated briefly in Vincent Brown's "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery" (2009), political death imagines the metaphorical death of the political life that Brown alludes to in the same piece.

[27] Here, Edith Hall in her book, *Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun* (2010), 62-63, also elaborates on the tragedies clear and uncanny ability to mimic the decision-making process of Athenian democracy and mirror Athenian culture and political, while also noting the curious frequency of female characters to be given many deliberative moments, 66-67.

[28] Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth entry in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1996), 1623-25.

[29] However, they could bring a man to in front of juries to speak for them, but this was a laughable strait for the man, see Danielle Allen's *The World of Prometheus* (2000), 111-113.

woman's name in public was deemed unrespectable.[30] As this excerpt from Pericles' funeral oration exemplifies: "If I should say a word on the duties of the wives who will now be widows, I will sum up the whole in a short piece of advice: your great glory is not to fall beneath the nature you have been given, and hers is the greatest glory who is least talked about among the men for praise or for blame."[31]

Young girls were usually educated along with their male siblings until early adolescence, when they would separate, and the young women would learn the tasks of the house, including managing grain and water, making textiles, and, for upper-class women especially, managing the household and estate slaves.[32] Lower-class women, on the other hand, could, and often out of necessity, work outside of the home as midwives, craftswomen, artisans, tradeswomen, and prostitutes.[33] Women were only expected to be seen and active during their segregated religious rites and festivals where they would take part in libations, parades, and prayers.[34]

Arranged marriages were prevalent in Greek culture, as a woman was married with heavy considerations of property holdings and transfers as opposed to an emotion-driven union. Girls were typically betrothed at 5 years old and married around 15 years old; they would be expected

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[30] Hornblower and Spawforth, 1623-1625.

[31] Thucydides, et al. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. (1996) 2.45.2

[32] Martin, Thomas *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times* (1996), 171-181.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid, 159-171.

to marry again if their husbands died while they were still of an age to bear legitimate children so that the husband's property could transfer accordingly.[35] A woman was viewed as reproductively functional, but mentally and physically inferior.[36] Both Plato and Aristotle write on women's proclivity to be easily deceived, unable to make good judgements, as well as have little to no strength of will.[37] The inability and undesirability of women to make decisions outside of the home, especially in legal or political matters was not unique to Aristotle alone as Xenophon also makes note of a woman's only useful role being within the house, not outside of it. Aristotle even likens women to being malformed men, a result of the womb being too cool, and relates their weakness of action and conviction as a matter of temperature, i.e. women are too cold where men are hot.[38]

Temperature was one of the only heuristics available to ancient Greek doctors, and the measuring and assigning of value to temperature remained an important metric for Greek medicine and biology, especially between the sexes.[39] As I hope to show certain descriptive words relating to the differing humors also remain indicative of gender. Men are referenced as

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[35] Hornblower and Spawforth, 1623-1625.

[36] Ibid, and Deslauriers, Marguerite "Sex and Essence in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Biology*" (1998), 138-167

[37] Ibid, and Saxonhouse, Arlene *Women in the History of Political Thought: Ancient Greece to Machiavelli* (1985), 37-91.

[38] Deslauriers, 148-149 and Saxonhouse, 64-68

[39] Ibid.

bright, hot, dry, and representative of air, sky, and sunlight as any rudimentary knowledge of the Olympian gods might confirm.[40] While women are the opposite, dark, cold, wet, and belonging toward the water, earth, and night, just as the chthonic goddesses are represented.[41]

In part as a result of the non-existent conception of women as a unified group in ancient Athens as well as the general regard for women as being weak-willed and mentally inferior to men, each woman was supposed to be under a κύριος or male authority, either the woman's father, brother, or husband who was meant to structure and guide her course of life. This particular term is also used heavily in ancient political philosophy, especially that of Aristotle, as a term for an ultimate authority of the πόλις, so not only does it carry the connotation of authority and power in general, but, in the particular, as complete political power.

As for women in Greek tragic theater, their place remains somewhat ambiguous.[42] Religious festivals were a chance for women to go out in public rather than being sequestered in the γυναικεῖον (a part of the home reserved for women, possibly on the second floor), and the festival of Dionysus, during which the tragic plays were performed was the largest and most

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[40] Lloyd, G.E.R., "The Hot and the Cold, the Dry and the Wet in Greek Philosophy" (1964), 102-103, and Clark, Stephen R.L. "Aristotle's Woman" (1982), 180-185.

[41] Ibid.

[42] It is continually debated whether women attended, did not attend, or attended in a way that negated their participation, forced to sit in the far back where they could hear little of the dialogue. See Pickard-Cambridge, Arthur Wallace, Sir, et al. *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*. (1968), 264-265.

attended.[43] Greek theater was, at its most essential function, a religious festival, as the ancient Greeks had a very public conception of religion.[44] The performance of tragedies was meant to reaffirm the public relationship between the gods and men though it is still up to some debate whether women were included as attendees or not.[45] Even if women were not present physically, they certainly were on stage, though of course, always played by men.[46] Almost every Greek tragedy, all but one tragedy among all three of the great tragedians (Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides), features a strong, central female character, who, if not the main protagonist or antagonist, carries a plot-driving role. This interesting aspect of Greek tragedy becomes even more present when considering the truth behind how Greek theater not only mirrored by also shaped society.[47]

The brief survey above points to several important points concerning the power of women in Greek society. The overwhelming point is that they had no power. As passive, cold, and inferior subjects in need of a male authority in order to go about life, women were denied any traditional or relatively normal avenues of political agency such as a vote, a voice, or even a presence. Yet why were they positioned so prominently in the celebrated and highly public

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[43] Ibid, and Meier, 58-59, and Hornblower and Spawforth, 1493-1495.

[44] Martin, 159-171, and Meier, 45-47, and Zimmermann, Bernard *Greek Tragedy: An Introduction* (1991), 10-11.

[45] Hornblower and Spawforth, 1538-1542, and Meier, 58-59.

[46] Pickard-Cambridge, 126-127 and Martin, 159-171.

[47] Segal, Charles. "Greek Tragedy and Society: A Structuralist Perspective" (1986), 43-75.

performance of tragedy? My preliminary answer is contained in the question itself and in the move to positioning women's power within their own deaths, an ultimate silence. Because it is a tragedy, and the key women are either vilified through life, as the case with Medea[48] and Clytemnestra[49] or celebrated, but only celebrated in the honor they provide for men dependent on the woman's suicide or sacrifice, which they ultimate accept only in their capacity to be male-gendered in moments of intentionality.

Suicide as Sacrifice for Antigone

Suicide and sacrifice both seem to be inextricably tied to Greek culture as modes of maintaining individual honor in a public sense. Considering how sacrifice is integral to maintaining the liberal structures of the πόλις in the context of mystical and chaotic myths of religion,[50] it can be argued that imposed suicide is really no different than sacrifice in this regard.[51] An imposed suicide, or the legal presentation of the impossible choice made possible, is forced when an individual essentially martyrs themselves in the face of an unjust law, take the

[48] The scorned lover who murders her children in her titular tragedy, Euripides' *Medea* 431 B.C.E.

[49] The second murderer in the dark House of Atreus, tragedized in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* performed in 458 B.C.E.. Clytemnestra revenges her daughter Iphigenia's sacrifice when Agamemnon returns from Troy in the first part of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon*.

[50] Endsjø, D.Ø.. "To Control Death: Sacrifice and Space In Classical Greece." *Religion*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2003, pp. 323 - 340.

[51] I follow Garrison (1995) here, but with important differences that will hopefully become clear.

example of Socrates as one outside of the dramatic.[52] This, in itself, goes beyond self-sacrifice, because the context of the imposed suicide, just like a sacrifice, is manipulated by the judgement of society and laws. Sacrifice, however, bears the connotation of coercion and force. A human, it is not assumed, would willingly go as a sacrificial victim, but in the case of Iphigenia, her remarkable turn in the play, from unwilling (female-gendered) to willing (male-gendered) sacrifice marks the definition of a consenting sacrifice. This turn is crucial to my continued argument, that imposed suicide is indistinguishable from consenting sacrifice.

From the outset of both tragedies, the title women are immediately set into conditions decided by the ruling elite, naturally the powerful men in the plots, Creon in the case of *Antigone* and Agamemnon and Menelaus in the case of *Iphigenia*. For Antigone, Creon's ruling that her brother is not to be buried goes beyond all reasonable cultural norms at the time, which dictated that a body must have the correct funeral rites, performed by family, or the souls of the recently dead would wander, homeless, on the earth. Though he buries her other brother, Eteocles with proper honors, Creon decrees that anyone to touch Polyneices will be stoned to death publicly: "Kreon is resolved/ to honor one of our brothers with burial/ the other not/ Eteokles he has laid in the ground in accordance with justice and law/ Polyneikes is to lie unwept and unburied/ sweet sorrymeat for the little lusts of the birds."[53] Already, in Antigone's opening

[52] In the *Crito* and *Apology*

[53] Anne Carson's translation of *Antigone*, which I will denote further as Carson, 13. I use Carson's translation when I find my own translation to be impotent in comparison as hers is remarkable true to the Greek while translated the thermal and gendered tonality I would wish to

speech to her sister, Creon's decree is framed as a sure death to Antigone who seems to have decided before the play even begins that she will honor the old burial customs (νόμοι), instead of the new decree, spelling her inevitable death.

As for *Iphigenia*, the tragedy begins with Agamemnon's realization that listening to his brother, Menelaus, [54] and sending for his daughter under false marriage pretenses to the hero Achilles, was not only dishonorable but a sin against family. "You have acted with terrible boldness, King Agamemnon, in promising your daughter as wife to the son of the goddess, when you meant to bring her here to be slaughtered for the Greeks/ AGAMEMNON: "O misery! I was out of my mind. Alas! I am falling into mad ruin."[55] He attempts to write for her to stay home instead, but is again persuaded by political pressures, especially Menelaus, insisting the Greek ships must sail, and Iphigenia's death is the only way to accomplish it. Two stark differences seem obvious from the beginning. Antigone knows she will die from the first moment, but Iphigenia does not, which implies a useful difference between her sacrifice as only an imposed suicide, but ultimately does not run along intentionality lines.

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preserve in my own translation any way. The Greek will be provided for my own translations with a line number.

[54] Menelaus is the husband of the infamous Helen, and one of the chieftains of the Argive army. He is Agamemnon's brother, Iphigenia's uncle.

[55] Morwood, 87-88

Unlike Iphigenia, from the outset Antigone is forcefully attached to her decision to die, similar to Creon in her dogma.[56] Antigone resoundingly affirms within the first hundred lines of the tragedy to her sister, Ismene, "I will bury him/ and this is right to do/ though I die for it…let me go/ for I'll not suffer anything so grievous as to rob me of a noble death".[57] After Antigone is caught and brought before Creon, she quickly confesses, and reaffirms "I know that I must die, / Even if you did not order it;/and if I die before my time, I say it is a gain".[58] This strength of will and opinion is entirely masculine, whereas vacillation is usually denoting as a feminine trait. Even Agamemnon is criticized by Menelaus as unmanly for being so irresolute in the case of Iphigenia:

> "Yes, but a mind devoid of steadfastness makes a man unjust and untrustworthy to his friends…A good man should not change his ways when he achieves greatness…You gladly promised to sacrifice your child. And you willingly wrote to your wife – nobody forced you, don't say that they did – telling her to send your child here on the pretext of marriage with Achilles. And now you have been

[56] As Nussbaum notes, 67.

[57] Carson, 15.

[58] θανουμένη γὰρ ἐξῄδη, τί δ᾽ οὔ;
κεἰ μὴ σὺ προὐκήρυξας. εἰ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου
πρόσθεν θανοῦμαι, κέρδος αὔτ᾽ ἐγὼ λέγω (*The Antigone of Sophocles* [1891], 460-462)

> caught sending a different message, since you are no longer willing to be the killer of your daughter. Have you shifted yet again? Most certainly you have."[59]

Compare those lines of Antigone's to the resolute Iphigenia in the second half of Euripides' tragedy, "Hear what has settled in my mind, mother, as I thought about this. I have made the decision to die. I want to do this gloriously, to reject all meanness of spirit. Only consider these things with me, mother, and you will see how nobly I am speaking…And indeed it is right that I should not be too much in love with life."[60] Here in Iphigenia's moment of decision, she also takes on the masculine identity. Yet, this change of attitude for Iphigenia is not met with the same anger which Agamemnon's indecision received from Menelaus. Because she has changed her mind based on masculine motives and serving the male character's ends, she is praised. As the messenger reports after Iphigenia is gone: "She has won glory throughout Greece, glory that will never die."[61]

The previous lines from Antigone and Iphigenia confirm the characters' inherent similarity and unity. On the one hand, Antigone has been manipulated into an imposed suicide by a law made irrationally against her and in violation of the law of the gods as Creon himself admits after her death: "this sacrilege that I called public policy."[62] On the other, Iphigenia has been persuaded to consent to her sacrifice on the grounds that Achilles' would lose his reputation

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[59] Here I use Morwood's classic translation, denoted as Morwood, 93…94…94.

[60] Ibid, 125.

[61] Ibid, 131.

[62] Carson, 52

to defend her if she chose to resist and further by the logic of Menelaus, which insists that if the Greeks do not go to Trojan shores, the Trojans will ransack theirs committing wholesale loss of life and freedom.

> "Greece in all its greatness now looks to me and no one else, on me depends the voyage of the ships across the sea and the overthrow of the Phrygians; and if the barbarians try to seize our women from happy Greece in the future, it lies with me to stop them by ensuring that they pay for the ruin of Helen whom Paris snatched away. Through my death I shall secure all this and my fame as the liberator of Greece will be for ever blessed."[63]

In the wake of Iphigenia's male-like glory-seeking willfulness to sacrifice, Antigone's suicide has become indistinguishable in terms of power and agency to that of Iphigenia's consenting sacrifice, because they have both been placed in a sacrificial narrative by the encompassing powers of Menelaus and Creon.

Elise Garrison makes an even stronger argument to identify Antigone's suicide as being closer to a sacrifice by comparing her to the adjacent suicide of Creon's wife, Eurydice, whose death Creon refers to in the same breath as Antigone's as σφάγιον, a sacrifice.[64] However, Garrison is careful and correct to note the manner of Antigone and Eurydice's death are

[63] Morwood, 125-126

[64] Garrison (1991), 27.

inconsistent with typical sacrificial deaths.[65] Another point which Garrison elucidates that may put my reading of Antigone and Iphigenia as directly similar includes the concept of exchanging for suicide and sacrifice. Antigone disobeys the law, a negative, so she must die, a positive.[66] Iphigenia seems to grant a negative, her death, in exchange for a positive, the Greeks' successful sail. However, her rescue seen at the end, and the pre-existing knowledge of the audience that the choice to sacrifice Iphigenia would only bring doom to the house of Atreus,[67] in fact, flips the relationship to resemble Antigone's slightly more closely. Taking this perspective, Iphigenia's death becomes a positive which rights the negative of the immoral choices of her male authorities, her father and uncle.

Antigone and Iphigenia are strikingly similar in terms of their power potential. They live within an engineered context, which grants them limited choice, with the only culturally accepted mode allowing them to die honorably. Their choices, however, seem ultimately muted, because before they die the male agents know that there is no need for them to die, and that they themselves, the agentic male actors, have simply deliberated and chosen foolishly. The tragedies, then, exemplify less the agency and power of women, but the folly of men wielding poor judgement. In fact, Sophocles enumerates this lesson exactly, "what does this teach us?/ bad

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid, 26.

[67] The events of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* are in response to the mythic sacrifice of Iphigenia, including the murder of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and her lover, and the hounding of Orestes by the Furies.

judgement/ bad judgement/ is the worst thing in the world a *man* can have."[68] So, what power is left to the two female sacrifices if not the seeming heroic martyrdom, negated by the knowing folly of the contrived situation?

The Feminine Power of Sacrifice

One answer to the above query could rest again on Antigone and Iphigenia's resilience to decide willfully and directly for themselves and accept their deaths knowing that they do not need to die. Brian Lush argues this in the frame of political subjectivity. Using his framework, the female characters must create a new political narrative in order to survive in the male-dominated political landscape, which will not reasonably hear their protests even if invoking justice, the law of the gods, or the ancient customs.[69] I argue that Antigone and Iphigenia are less creating their own narrative as the tragedian authors are re-framing the women themselves as male. This could also seem to square the seeming paradox of a male-dominated culture putting women at the forefront of their religious tragedies. The tragedians needed a woman to exemplify male traits for a moment if only to show the real tragedy, not the sacrifices of women, but the potential folly of men. Take this telling moment in *Antigone*, "No man is so foolish to love (desire) death."[70] Sophocles seems to be implying that only a woman could take this role, especially as Antigone is spoken of like a man for her boldness, but not for her decision. It seems

[68] Carson, 51, emphasis mine.

[69] Lush, Brian "Popular Authority in Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis" (2015), 207-210.

[70] οὔκ ἔστιν οὕτω μῶρος ὃς θανεῖν ἐρᾷ (*The Antigone of Sophocles* [1891], 220).

that the underhanded hope for women's sacrificial power is threaded throughout a context of women acting more male then the men in the tragedies themselves.

In this way, the actions of the male tragic hero are made even more tragic and placed in the forefront. It is Creon's rash actions that punish him at the end via the death of his wife and son, not a poignant victory for Antigone. Not only this, but other points from the play are noticeably marking Creon as the tragic hero not Antigone.[71] As Humphreys notes, "Another dramatic means of manifesting the heroine's isolation is the constitution of the Chorus. It is usually composed of persons belonging to the same class as the chief character; but here it consists of men. One might almost suspect that Creon is the hero; especially as we hear nothing more about Antigone after her death is announced."[72]

Antigone is constantly being referred to as masculine, bold, active, and even hot, θερμὴν, the way men in Greek medicine are qualified.[73] Creon presumes, based on the boldness of the action and the doing of the action itself, that the culprit must be a man, and even when she stands in front of him, Creon remains in disbelief and likens women to horses and slaves, incapable of being high-spirited. Creon asks, "What are you saying/ what *man* would have dared."[74] Again he wonders, presuming Antigone to be entirely manly, hot and hard: "Here's something to ponder/

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[71] Again, Nussbaum also notes that *Antigone* is really about Creon not Antigone, 67

[72] Humphreys (1819), 14.

[73] It is interesting to note that if a woman was suffering from an illness it was presumed she was suffering from an over-abundance of heat, see Lloyd, 102.

[74] Carson, 20 – emphasis added.

say we have a piece of iron baked in the fire till it's super hard/ I can show you how to smash it/ I've seen high-spirited horses broken to a tiny tiny bit/ slaves shouldn't think big/ this girl knew her act was criminal."[75] "And she boasts of it she laughs/ surely I am not a man here/ she is the man/ if she wins this trick and walks away," Creon declares, fully gendering Antigone as masculine and only feminine in that she must die, sacrificially as he has ordained it.[76]

Iphigenia is framed in a similar way, but only after she has changed her mind to consent to the sacrifice. I would like to make a claim similar to Edith Hall's at this point: "Aristotle notoriously complained about the 'inconsistent' characterization of Iphigenia, whose understandable rejection of the plan to sacrifice her is subsequently replaced by a passionate death-wish…But Iphigenia is only imitating the male characters in her own play."[77] Iphigenia as initially gendered feminine, wishing to be spared, calling on her womanhood and her viability for marriage as reasons to be rescued. Not until she meets Achilles, practically one of the male Olympians, is she inspired by glory and honor and partly to save his reputation, partly to save all women of Greece (from the raping and sack of Athens that will occur should Greece not sail first to Troy). Before she consents, she self-deprecates herself for wishing to live based on the fragility and baseness of none other than her womanhood: "The success of my whole case rests on this single point. This light of day is very sweet for men to look upon and what is below the

[75] Ibid, 27.

[76] Ibid, 30.

[77] Hall (1999), 24, referencing *Poet*. 1454a26

ground is nothing. The person who prays to die is mad. To live basely is better than to die nobly."[78]

Yet, when Iphigenia is incapsulated in her turn of intentionality towards not only accepting her finality, but reveling in it, she is surrounded by the pressure of the most essential male-gendered figure in perhaps all of Greek mythology – Achilles. After she consents, she cites glory, nobility, and a *manly* honor, as well as a call on her mother and family not to morn for her honorable death – "I give my body to Greece. Sacrifice me and sack Troy. This shall be my lasting monument, this shall be my children, my marriage and my glory. It is right that the Greeks should rule barbarians, mother, and not barbarians Greeks. For they are slaves and we are free."[79] To her mother she invokes the desire not to mourn an honorable death, "Do not cut off a lock of your hair, or clothe your body in black robes."[80] In the moment of Iphigenia's intentionality she seems to be entirely masculine, trading her womanly rights, marriage and child-bearing, for masculine aspirations, glory and honor.

Citing the current political climate of an Athens on the brink of war with the "barbarians of Asia," Hall writes that the Athenian audience, especially the conscripted *male* attendees,

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[78] Morwood, 121. Her supplications continue to 123 where she cites reasons which include her youth, potential for marriage, and her poor lack of skills to convince him otherwise – "If I had the voice of Orpheus…But as it is I shall offer the only skill that I possess, my tears. They are my only resource" (120).

[79] Ibid, 126

[80] Ibid, 127

would have felt "a warm glow in the theatre when Iphigenia declares that she is happy to die because 'it is right that the Greeks should rule barbarians, mother, and not barbarians Greeks'."[81] I would reiterate that Hall is exactly correct when she writes, "Iphigenia's real problem is how to die nobly in an ignoble cause for the sake of thoroughly ignoble men."[82] The choice to go ahead with her sacrifice, just as Antigone chooses suicide before death allows their political birth and death to coincide in this moment of feminine intention, though the motivations for their agentic action is ultimately postured as masculine.[83]

Yet, in Euripides' tale, Iphigenia is not so unlucky as Sophocles' Antigone. At the last moment, Artemis replaces Iphigenia with a deer on the sacrificial altar and vanishes the girl to a far-off temple.[84] As the messenger reports to Clytemnestra:

> "But suddenly there was a wonder to behold. Everyone would have heard the thud of the blow clearly, but the girl had sunk into the ground, nobody knows where…For a deer lay panting and struggling on the ground, an impressive sight in its vastness and its beauty, and it was that creature's blood that spattered the altar."[85]

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[81] Hall (1999), 24.

[82] Ibid, 25.

[83] However, the move remains a political birth ironically within the moment of finality.

[84] The choice in using the word "finality" rather than "death" now may become apparent. There are many modes in which a person's existence becomes final while not necessarily dying.

[85] Morwood, 131.

Animal sacrifice as a mode of religious practice was traditional and mundane in ancient Greece as it represented a religious exchange between mortals and the divine.[86] Human sacrifice was uncommon, if existent at all, but was dramatized in the literature of the time with the same unique tie to maintaining social status and identity as well as political power.[87] In this light Iphigenia's sacrifice again pulls a type of power, but a coerced one as she becomes a lynchpin for the politically tense move to commence the Trojan war.

The demand for her sacrifice discloses the differing motives of the Greek generals, on the one hand, Agamemnon does not want to sacrifice his daughter, his army, or his fatherly honor for the sake of sacking Troy and re-acquiring Helen for his brother, Menelaus. Menelaus, however, frames the Trojan War as a preemptive attack which will save the Greeks from the conquest of the Trojans if they are victorious, as well as bring back his promised wife. Iphigenia's sacrifice not only re-unifies the camps of the Greek armies, but also legitimizing the Trojan campaign. Her rescue by the goddess Artemis at the end even saves Agamemnon's fatherly obligation from being mired, yet, though all things end up well for the male-leaders, the female characters including Iphigenia and her mother Clytemnestra end up still suffering the loss of marriage and family. Clytemnestra still views her daughter as lost to her despite her replacement under the sacrificial knife: "O my child, which of the gods has stolen you? By what name can I call you? How can I be sure that this story has not been made up to console me so

[86] DeMaris, Richard, E. "Sacrifice, an Ancient Mediterranean Ritual" (2013), 66-67.

[87] Ibid, 65

that I can lay to rest my cruel grief over you?"[88] Everything feminine has been stripped from Iphigenia, marriage and children, things Clytemnestra, a female-gendered character in the events of this tragedy, still closely feels.

One possible counter-argument to the male-gendered role of Antigone could rest with the suicide of her cousin, Creon's son Haimon, and her betrothed. Upon learning of her fated death, he seals himself in her prison and commits suicide as well. There could be two possible categorizations for his suicide that would still fit soundly in my reading. First, he could represent a man with sound judgement who is ignored by his unreasonable father and thus contributes more to the tragedy of the plot in dying. Second, Haimon could actually be gendered more feminine to offset the masculine overtones of Antigone herself and bring the tragedy to bear as a love denied by death and injustice.[89] It seems the more likely reading is the first, as it lends credence to Antigone's suicide as a masculine-agentic action. Haimon is not forced like Antigone to die, so though her suicide can be read as a sacrifice it holds that the choice of suicide which she makes would still ring as a masculine action to onlookers uniquely via the suicide of Haimon who also protests Creon's choices.

Because these characters are so male-gendered, their decisions are muted in respect to their agency as women. Their decisions are admirable to the audience, insofar as they have made them, and the supporting characters have lauded them, as being made from male-type

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[88] Morwood, 132.

[89] Miller, Peter. "Destabilizing Haemon: Radically Reading Gender and Authority in Sophocles' Antigone" (2014), 163-185, and Garrison (1995), 114-115.

motivations. Is this reaffirming Greek conceptions about women's decision-making, or is it pointing to a kind of catch-22 which women have been placed into, so that fulfilling the called upon sacrifice becomes voice in the only way afforded to them, a distinctly male-way? It seems to be the latter, as Antigone returns to the same invisibility she arose from and to which Iphigenia is spirited away.

Conclusion

It is my hope that I have been able to put forward clear and logical preliminary evidence to the reading that Antigone and Iphigenia exemplify a sort of strictly feminine sacrificial power, which instead of liberating the female subject in the context of a patriarchal society, instead categorizes their heroic moments as masculine, while their sex cloisters them in the role of exemplifying the poor judgement of men as the true tragedy as opposed to the sacrifice of women. Not only does this help square the apparent paradox concerning why women are so visible on the stage yet invisible off of it, but it also allows a more critical lens with which to examine the perception of ancient Greek women and what, if they had any at all, their political power looked like. It seems that it would look restricted by engineered scenarios, forcing them into a decision detrimental to them, but self-serving to the male authorities. Yet, they retain the power to dignify their individuality by making the impossible choice, how to capture agency they have never had through the mode of inevitable death, possible.

This short paper is a preliminary attempt at a more thorough final project. The grandest scheme would be a handbook of sorts concerning modes of finality and intentionality as they intersect in a gendered sphere. The continuing project would hope to elucidate a more coherent and consolidated definition of feminine sacrificial power directly while exploring the paradox of

Greek women's invisibility in the reality of day-to-day life and remarkable visibility in the public celebration, which was the Theater of Dionysus. It would hope to present a politics of feminine sacrifice beyond suicide and continue to explore the re-gendering of the agential figures in these moments and the connotations it carries after.

Further work in explicating modes of finality and the case of Antigone and Iphigenia will shed light on the tragedies of contemporary women finding themselves with only enough agency to decide the *mode* of their death or finality. For future work, I am especially interested in following Dorit Naaman's work which attempts to tackle the enormous work gendering is doing for female suicide bombers, who face their political and mortal finality.[90] Finally, there are many lush opportunities for rich textual empirics especially concerning the proximity of certain gender-coded terms to others as the plots of both plays reach closer to the climactic deaths, allowing for a larger framing of Antigone and Iphigenia within a context of all Greek tragedy.

Suicide and sacrifice run through antiquity in both mythic and mundane torrents at once, both as dramatized visions of a heroic past and tragic homages cast in contrast to the everyday joy of living in a society free of warrior demigods and an immediately vengeful pantheon. Yet, if anything from my argument concerning these two modes of truly tragic action has gained saliency, it would prove to be how clearly evident the presence of deeply human and ostensibly political issues were addressed in antiquity in the same way they are today, through art, theater,

[90] See Naaman, Dorit. "Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: Media, Gender, and Performance in the Case of the Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers." (2007)

philosophy, and literature. The relevancy and immediacy of agency, agentic power, the turmoil of right and justice, and how to act within the finality of human existence persist with as much analytic force then as they do today.

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