

# *Music in the service of politics: The Iphigenia operas written for Maria Casimira Sobieska as a case study*

ANETA MARKUSZEWSKA\*

## ABSTRACT

The main aim of the article is to present two Iphigenia operas from the viewpoint of their political utility. The pair studied in this article is *Ifigenia in Aulide* and *Ifigenia in Tauris* by Carlo Sigismondo Capece and Domenico Scarlatti. Dating back to 1713, the pieces were composed for the Roman theatre of Maria Casimira Sobieska, Queen Dowager of Poland.

## KEYWORDS

*Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Maria Casimira Sobieska, War of the Spanish Succession, Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska, opera

## IZVLEČEK

Razprava predstavlja dve operni deli na temo Ifigenije v kontekstu njihove politične uporabnosti. To sta *Ifigenija v Avlidi* in *Ifigenija na Tavridi* Carla Sigismonda Capeceja in Domenica Scarlattija. Obe deli sta nastali leta 1713 za rimsko gledališče Marije Kazimire Sobieske, poljske kraljice vdove.

## KLJUČNE BESEDE

*Ifigenija v Avlidi*, *Ifigenija na Tavridi*, Marija Kazimira Sobieska, španska nasledstvena vojna, Tereza Kuniigunda Sobieska, opera

The sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father Agamemnon, leader of the Greek army in the Trojan War, is a familiar trope in Western culture thanks to classical myth and drama, particularly the plays of Euripides. As Derek Hughes notes, Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* is about the irrationality and corruption of war: a study of greed and the hysteria of crowds.<sup>1</sup> Agamemnon sacrifices his own daughter to hold on to his command over the Greek troops, and he is further incited to his monstrous act by the ambition of the other Greek leaders, who include Menelaus, Odysseus and Achilles. In addition, Menelaus wishes to avenge himself on the lover of his beautiful wife and to win her back. Restless

---

\* Dr. Aneta Markuszewska, Institute of Musicology, University of Warsaw, e-pošta: amarkuszewska@hotmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Hughes, *Culture and Sacrifice. Ritual Death in Literature and Opera*, p. 36.

with inactivity, the Greek troops get out of control, clamouring for victory and plunder.

The myth of Iphigenia appears to have been used in opera for the first time in *Ifigenia*, a *dramma per musica* by an unknown librettist and composer presented in Brunswick in 1702. This story of a noble and innocent girl was subsequently dramatized on a number of Italian operatic stages – first in Padua (*Ifigenia*; libretto by Tardivelo, music by an unknown composer; 1705), next in Venice (*Ifigenia*; lib. Riva, Aureli, mus. Coletti; 1707) and then in Rome (1713), where two operas<sup>2</sup> were given in the private theatre of Maria Casimira Sobieska, Queen Dowager of Poland: *Ifigenia in Aulide* and *Ifigenia in Tauride* by Carlo Sigismondo Capece and Domenico Scarlatti. Particularly popular among those early attempts in the first half of the eighteenth century was a libretto by Apostolo Zeno entitled *Ifigenia in Aulide*, first presented in 1718 in Vienna with music by Antonio Caldara,<sup>3</sup> and later set to music by a number of other composers. In the second half of the eighteenth century *Ifigenia in Aulide* by Mattia Verazi, with music by Niccolò Jommelli, was a great “hit”<sup>4</sup> that enjoyed considerable success in Rome, where it was performed in 1751. Today, the best-known Iphigenia operas from the second half of the eighteenth century are a pair of operas, *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774) and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), which were written by Christoph Willibald Gluck for the Parisian stage.

The surviving libretto prefaces and *argomenti* suggest that audiences were quite familiar with the Iphigenia myth. The libretto of the Padua *Ifigenia* explains that the drama “treats of a story that I will not relate to you since it is familiar enough”.<sup>5</sup> The libretto of the Venice opera refers to “this subject with which all the noblest story-tellers have adorned their tragedies”.<sup>6</sup> The libretto by Maria Casimira Sobieska’s poet states: “So familiar is the mere name of Iphigenia to anyone with a small knowledge of Greek fables that

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of opera pairs, see Strohm, *Dramma Dualities*, pp. 551-561.

<sup>3</sup> Other interesting libretti containing Iphigenia’s story include: *Iphigénie en Tauride* (lib. Duche de Vancy, Danchet, mus. Desmarests, Campra, Paris, 1704); *Ifigenia in Tauride* (lib. Pasqualigo, mus. Orlandini, Venice, 1719); *Ifigenia in Aulide* (lib. Rolli, mus. Porpora, London, 1735); *Ifigenia in Aulide* (lib. Villati, mus. Graun, Berlin, 1748); *Ifigenia* (lib. ?, mus. Jommelli, Rome, 1751); *Ifigenia in Aulide* (lib. Cigna-Santi, mus. Bertoni, Turin, 1762); *Ifigenia in Tauride* (lib. Coltellini, mus. Traëtta, Vienna, 1763); *Ifigenia in Tauride* (lib. Verazi, mus. De Majo, Mannheim, 1764); *Ifigenia in Aulide* (lib. Serio, mus. Martin y Soler, Naples, 1779); *Iphigénie* (lib. Adlerbeth, mus. Uttini, Stockholm, 1777-1779); *Ifigenia in Aulide* (lib. Moretti, mus. Zingarelli, Milan, 1787). See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, and Forment, ‘*La Terra, il Cielo e l’Inferno*’, pp. 104-109 (I give many thanks to the last-named author for making his thesis available to me).

<sup>4</sup> Petzoldt McClymonds, *Transforming Opera Series*, pp. 119-132; Cumming, *Gluck’s Iphigenia operas*, pp. 217-242.

<sup>5</sup> “Egli tratta una favola, che qui non ti espongo, per essere nota à bastanza”. Tardivelo, *Ifigenia*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> “Questo soggetto di cui hanno adornate le loro Tragedie tutte le lingue più gentili [...]”. Riva, Aureli, *L’Ifigenia*, p. 4.

were I to explain from where I took the material for the present opera and the other opera, which perhaps will likewise be performed during this Carnival, I would deter rather than attract the curiosity of those intending to read them [...]”.<sup>7</sup> In his introduction Apostolo Zeno notes: “[...] this sacrifice is among the most celebrated subjects for poets, who have, however, recounted it in very diverse ways”.<sup>8</sup>

Authors of Iphigenia operas drew on a variety of sources that included Greek mythology and tragedy (particularly by Euripides), Racine’s *Iphigénie* (1674) and Pier Jacopo Martello’s *Ifigenia in Tauris* (1709). Zeno spelled out with the greatest clarity why the Iphigenia myth proved to be such an enduring inspiration for opera writers:

Some have asserted that Iphigenia was actually sacrificed – thus Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and others. Some have been of the opinion that Diana, moved to pity, snatched her from the hands of Calchas and removed her to Tauris, causing a doe or some other animal to be sacrificed in her stead. Euripides shows himself to be of the same opinion, and Ovid mentions this in his *Metamorphoses*. Finally, others have written that although an Iphigenia was indeed sacrificed, she was not the daughter of Agamemnon but a daughter of Helen born to her in secrecy from Theseus before she became the bride of Menelaus, King of Sparta, to whom she never divulged her secret or her previous marriage to Theseus; consequently, the descent of that Iphigenia was kept secret from him and all others since she lived under another name, and so I call her Elisena. In constructing my drama I have followed that third opinion, held by Euforione Calcidense, Alessandro Pleuronio and Stesicoro Imereo, as related by Pausanias in Book 2, since the first led the tale to an excessively tragic conclusion, and the second to an excessively implausible dénouement. The first two versions of the events were treated by the incomparable Euripides, and the third by the famous Racine [...].<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> “Il nome d’Ifigenia è così cognito per se stesso a chiunque ha mediocre notizia della favola Greca, che lo spiegarne i casi da i quali ho preso la materia per la presente Opera, e per l’altra, che forse dovrà rappresentarsi anche in questo Carnevale, sarebbe più tosto offendere, che allettare la Curiosità di chi vorrà leggerle [...]”. Capece, *Ifigenia in Aulide*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> “[...] Questo sacrificio è uno de’ più celebri fatti appresso i poeti, i quali però assai diversamente l’han riferito”. Zeno, *Ifigenia in Aulide*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> “Alcuni hanno asserito, che veramente Ifigenia fosse sacrificata. Così Eschilo, Euripide, Sofocle, ed altri. Alcuni sono stati di parere, che Diana mossane a pietà l’avesse rapita nel punto del sacrificio delle mani di Calcante, e portata in Tauride, facendo, che in vece di lei rimanesse uccisa una cerva, o altro animale. Euripide mostra di essere stato anch’egli di questo sentimento, e Ovidio ne parla nelle sue Metamorfosi. Altri finalmente hanno scritto, che una Ifigenia fu veramente sacrificata, non già la figliuola di Agamennone, ma una figliuola di Elena, natale in segreto da Teseo, avanti che fosse sposa di Menelao, Re di Sparta, al quale non confide mai questo suo segreto e primo matrimonio con Teseo; e per conseguenza a lui e a tutti tenne occulta la nascita di questa Ifigenia, la quale fece allevare sotto altro nome; e io le do quello di Elisena. Questa terza opinione, che è sostenuta da Euforione Calcidense, da Alessandro Pleuronio, e da Stesicoro Imereo, riportati da Pausania nel libro II è stata seguita da

In this paper I will discuss in detail only the two operas performed in 1713 at the Roman court of Maria Casimira Sobieska, Queen Dowager of Poland. But in order to do that, some more information about the queen and her patronage of music in Rome is required.

Maria Casimira Sobieska (Polish: Maria Kazimiera), *Regina Vedova di Polonia*, arrived in Rome in the spring of 1699. European tours were fashionable among foreigners at the time, but the Queen Dowager's arrival in the Eternal City was of a political rather than a touristic nature. Deeply unpopular with the Polish nobility, Maria Casimira became a queen without a crown after she was left a widow by the Christian military champion King Jan III Sobieski of Poland, so that she felt compelled to leave Poland permanently. Her decision to settle in Rome was unsurprising. In the capital of Christendom she would be sure of receiving a ceremonious welcome, and in due course she settled down in a palazzo offered by Prince Don Livio Odescalchi, a cousin of Pope Innocent X and, like her husband, a hero of the Battle of Vienna (1683). The Queen Dowager soon began to dispense patronage to local artists, and became a very important patron of opera. The libretti for her private theatre were written by Carlo Sigismondo Capece, poet and personal secretary to the Queen Dowager. Alessandro Scarlatti, and later mainly Domenico Scarlatti, composed the music.

The following is a list of titles of the *drammi per musica* performed in Sobieska's residence, the Palazzo Zuccari:

1. *Il figlio delle selve*, dramma per musica, 1709
2. *Silvia*, dramma pastorale, 1710
3. *Tolomeo et Alessandro*, dramma per musica, 1711
4. *Orlando ovvero la gelosa pazzia*, dramma, 1711
5. *Tetide in Sciro*, dramma per musica, 1712
6. *Ifigenia in Aulide*, dramma per musica, 1713
7. *Ifigenia in Tauri*, dramma per musica, 1713
8. *Amor d'un Ombra e gelosia d'un'Aura*, dramma per musica, 1714

In 1713 Maria Casimira had two operas presented in her theatre: *Ifigenia in Aulide* and *Ifigenia in Tauri*. In my opinion, she used the familiar story of the House of Atreides to voice her sharp protest against the ongoing War of the Spanish Succession, but also to add her voice to a public debate on war as such, in which the tragedy of the individual involved in a military conflict was beginning to be recognized.

---

me nell'ordinamento del Dramma: poiché la prima menava la favola a un fine troppo tragico, e la seconda ad uno scioglimento troppo incredibile. Nelle prime maniere l'argomento è stato maneggiato dall'incomparabile Euripide, e nella terza dal famoso Racine [...]". Zeno, *Ifigenia*, pp. 3-4.

## **The War of the Spanish Succession – key facts**

On 1 November 1700 Charles II of Spain died without issue. The last descendant of the Spanish Hapsburgs, Charles bequeathed his Spanish possessions to Philip d'Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV, who was to reign over Spain as Philip V. This was accepted by the pope and some Italian states, and, reluctantly, by Spain itself – but not by Emperor Leopold I. Leopold I had his own claims to some of the Spanish territories; even more importantly, the proposed succession presented him with the worrying prospect of French domination in Europe. England and the Netherlands were likewise unimpressed, fearing that a combined Franco-Spanish force would upset the balance of naval power. War was inevitable, and its consequences were far-reaching. In the event, Spain lost all of its possessions in Italy including Sicily, Naples and Sardinia (which provided strategic control over the south of the Mediterranean), along with the strategic city of Milan. Belgium and the Netherlands likewise passed from Spanish control. The Spanish Empire had collapsed, and the Austrian Hapsburgs were on the rise. The new political consensus, with its direct implications for the networks of influence in Italy, exposed the weakness of Pope Clement XI. The collapse of the Spanish Empire put an end to the real power of popes in early modern politics. In 1709 Emperor Joseph I threatened to sack Rome unless Clement XI, a Franco-Spanish sympathizer, recognized Joseph's brother, Charles III, as the rightful Catholic king of Spain: the pope acquiesced, an act clearly demonstrating that the claims of papal divine right, as once formulated by Counter-Reformation theologians, were no longer being taken seriously.<sup>10</sup>

At a more personal level, the War of the Spanish Succession dealt a heavy blow to the family of Maria Casimira Sobieska. When hostilities erupted in 1701, Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria and Maria Casimira's son-in-law, joined the fray on the side of the French. Despite some early military success he was eventually defeated by the combined imperial and British forces, and had to seek a safe haven in exile in the Netherlands, while Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska, his pregnant wife and Maria Casimira's daughter, became Regent of Bavaria, a land surrounded by enemy forces.<sup>11</sup> Scholarly opinion differs on why Theresa Kunegunda left Munich and went to Italy in February 1705. Weakened by a recent childbirth and the several exhausting months in which she had to wield executive power, she was also receiving alarming news about her husband's lifestyle, which was not exactly saintly. Theresa Kunegunda wanted to see her mother, but her hopes that Maria Casimira would be able to

---

<sup>10</sup> This theory was strongly promoted in particular by Jesuits such as Francisco Suárez and Robert Bellarmine; cf. Dandeleit, *Politics and the State System*, p. 14, and the literature recommended there.

<sup>11</sup> Komaszyński, *Teresa Kunegunda*. All the information on Teresa Kunegunda in this article is based on Komaszyński's study.

visit her in Munich were soon dashed.<sup>12</sup> In March mother and daughter were reunited in Padua. Theresa Kunegunda planned to return swiftly and rejoin her children in Munich, but she was stopped at the Austrian border. Theresa Kunegunda and Maria Casimira pleaded with the imperial couple, but to no avail. Theresa Kunegunda was forced to return to Venice, where she remained in exile for ten years, writing letters to her husband, and praying for the health of her children and for a speedy end to the war.<sup>13</sup> She was refused entry to Bavaria even to attend the funerals of her children.

This was a dark and lonely period in Theresa Kunegunda's life, and the entertainments available in Venice can have done little to alleviate the gloom (Theresa Kunegunda had access to opera performances during the carnival period, establishing artistic contact with Vivaldi and Albinoni; she also started to assemble a private collection of paintings and had sporadic contact with the local aristocracy). Understandably, she missed her children, and lavished care on an Armenian foster child she had taken under her wing. Maria Casimira applied for a passport to visit her daughter in Venice, but her request was likewise turned down. This element of personal injury must have contributed to Sobieska's unambiguous condemnation of the war and its key political players.

### *Ifigenia in Aulide and Ifigenia in Tauri*

In 1713 Maria Casimira and her son Alexander Sobieski held two private opera performances during the carnival period. Contemporary accounts suggest that the works were favourably received by the invited guests. The *Foglio di Foligno* makes the following reference to *Ifigenia in Aulide*, dated 28 January 1713:

Comedies continue to be staged both in the Polish Queen's private theatre and in the Capranica theatre, and both have met with great favour on account of the quality of the singers and the beauty of the sets and costumes.<sup>14</sup>

The same author wrote again on 18 February 1713 to announce the premiere of *Ifigenia in Tauri*:

The performances of the second operas in the Capranica theatre and the Polish Queen's theatre have earned great applause, but that of Her Majesty

---

<sup>12</sup> The Emperor refused to issue the passport to the Queen Dowager because of his fears that the Bavarian ruling couple might instal Maria Casimira as Regent for the duration of the war. The Queen acquiesced in their plan, especially since it meant that the Elector and his wife might become reunited in Brussels.

<sup>13</sup> During this period Theresa Kunegunda acquired the nickname of "Penelope".

<sup>14</sup> "Continuano le recite di queste Comedie, che si rappresentano tanto nel Domestico Teatro di questa Regina di Polonia, che in quello di Capranica, riuscendo ambedue di sommo applauso per la qualità de Recitanti, e per la Vaghezza delle Scene, e degl'Abiti" (28.1.1713) *Foglio di Foligno*.

is superior to the one at the Capranica theatre both on account of the poetic composition and on that of the music and costumes, for which reason everyone is hastening to enjoy such a fine entertainment.<sup>15</sup>

In imitation of Euripides, the librettist, Carlo Sigismondo Capece, divided the story into two parts: *Ifigenia in Aulis* and *Ifigenia in Tauris*. The *argomenti* emphasize that the two pieces are linked by the identity of its heroine and together create a continuous story that can be analyzed as a single whole. Domenico Scarlatti, Maria Casimira's *maestro di cappella*, composed the music. Disappointingly, only five arias from it survive.<sup>16</sup>

In both *argomenti* Capece identified the source of his pieces as the tragedies of Euripides, which he knew from a translation by *Padre* Ortensio Scamacchi.<sup>17</sup> In the case of *Ifigenia in Tauris*, he mentioned in addition the recent (1709) play of the same title by Pier Jacopo Martello. The present article will not discuss the two operas' departures from the Greek original, since the differences arise mainly from operatic convention. But despite the differences, Capece's libretti touch on the same themes as Euripides' two tragedies – the symbolism of human sacrifice in a religious cult, the difficult choices to be made between natural law and divine law,<sup>18</sup> the question of free will, the problematic aspects of revenge and friendship, and the symbolism of Tauris for an individual life.

The story of the first opera, *Ifigenia in Aulide*, is familiar. Under the command of Agamemnon, the Greek troops are impatiently waiting for a favourable wind to carry their ships to Troy. A soothsayer by the name of Calcante (Calchas) informs Agamemnon that the winds have been withheld by the angry goddess Diana, who can be appeased only by the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia. Agamemnon and Ulysses arrange an ostensible marriage between Iphigenia and Achilles. Iphigenia comes to Aulis with her mother Clytemnestra and with Pilliade, a young man who is in love with her. Troubled by his conscience and the obvious injustice of the situation, Agamemnon tries to warn his wife and daughter. He tells them that Achilles has changed his mind, and urges them to return home immediately. Angered by

---

<sup>15</sup> "Riesce di sommo applauso la recita delle seconde Opere in questi Teatri di Capranica, e della Regina di Polonia, ma quella della Maestà Sua supera l'altra di Capranica, si per la Composizione delle Parole, che della Musica, e degl'Abiti, onde ogn'uno si affatica per godere di sì nobile trattenimento" (18.II.1713) *Foglio di Foligno*.

<sup>16</sup> D-DI, sygn. Mus. I-F-30.

<sup>17</sup> Ortensio Scamacca or Scammacca (1562–1648) was a very prolific Jesuit poet and playwright known for his loose adaptations of classical Greek dramas, primarily by Sophocles and Euripides. The total number of his adaptations amounts to forty-five plays collected in numerous volumes published in 1632–1648. See *Storia letteraria d'Italia*, pp. 444-445; Sacco Messineo, *Il martire e il tiranno*.

<sup>18</sup> Agamemnon has to choose between his obedience to the oracle and his love for his daughter. His heart's desire goes against the will of the Greeks and his duty towards the state.

this perceived slight, Clytemnestra calls for revenge on Achilles. She confronts him, and when Achilles cannot keep his eyes off the beautiful Iphigenia, she accuses him of deceit. The perplexed Achilles pledges love to Iphigenia and revenge for the affront. He mentions the meeting to Agamemnon, who realizes that his daughter is doomed. Achilles' outrage and Clytemnestra's anguish will prove futile. Reconciled to her fate, Iphigenia is led off to a shrine, where Diana whisks her away from the sacrificial altar. Borne aloft by the goddess, Iphigenia points out the rising wind, which presages a Greek victory.

In *Iphigenia in Tauris* Euripides (and his future imitators among poets and theorists) posed a question about the meaning of Tauris in the life of an individual. In the earlier accounts, Tauris (today's Crimea) had been presented as a remote place hostile to strangers. This is the vision recorded by Herodotus in his *Histories*:

[...] Of those the Taurians for their part use laws like this: on the one hand they sacrifice to the virgin the shipwrecked and whomever of the Greeks they take hold of, when they are brought out to sea in opposition, in a manner like this: having performed the initiatory rite, with a club they strike the head. Some indeed say that they thrust the body down from the cliff (for on a cliff the shrine is set up) and the head they impale; others, although they give the same account concerning the head, yet give an account that the body is not thrust from the cliff, but is concealed with earth. And that divinity, to which they sacrifice, the Taurians themselves say is Iphigenia, Agamemnon's daughter. And to the enemy men whomever they worst they do this: each, having cut off a head, carries it away for himself to his house; thereafter on a large piece of wood he impales and stands it projecting far over his home and most over the smoke-vent. They assert then that those are suspended above as guardians of the whole home.<sup>19</sup>

Tauris functions as a symbolic separation between civilization, on the one hand, and the brutal and chaotic world of superstition and ignorance, on the other. It also doubles as a shorthand for exile.<sup>20</sup> This kind of combination would have appealed strongly to Maria Casimira, given that the sacrifice of Iphigenia and her journey to the hostile land of Tauris were transparent allusions to the experiences of her daughter, Theresa Kunegunda.

Euripides wrote his pair of tragedies during the Second Peloponnesian War, a fateful conflict that dealt a severe blow to the political and military stature of Athens. Capece, similarly, worked on his two libretti during the War of the Spanish Succession. Although there was no automatic association in

---

<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, *Inquiries*.

<sup>20</sup> For more information see Hughes, *Culture and Sacrifice*, p. 121.



eighteenth-century European culture between the myth of Iphigenia and periods of heightened warfare,<sup>21</sup> it is unlikely that the analogy was pure coincidence.<sup>22</sup>

Every war makes victims of women, and Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska was certainly one such victim, suffering separation from her family and children in the manner of thousands of other women, many of them anonymous. By the lights of her time, such a violent severing from her children and the domestic sphere<sup>23</sup> was a drastic experience, challenging the contemporary notions promoted by the Church and society that a woman's natural calling was one of wife and mother.<sup>24</sup> A woman's expected role was to serve and to care: feeding her family, nursing sick family members to health and accompanying them at their hour of death.<sup>25</sup> To have her most basic womanly rights denied, including the right to bury two of her sons, would have seemed particularly barbarous in 1705.

Performed in the private theatre of Maria Casimira, the *drammi* made broad allusions to her daughter's misfortunes and took care to include a dramatic role for Clytemnestra, Iphigenia's mother.<sup>26</sup> We know that Maria Casimira sent the scores and libretti of this pair of operas to her daughter in Venice, and it is worth pointing out that, to my knowledge, Capece's libretto contains the most active and dramatic depiction of Clytemnestra's character of any eighteenth-century libretto on the subject. In *Ifigenia in Aulide* one encounters long conversations between the mother and her daughter. At the beginning of the drama Clytemnestra advises Ifigenia in matters of love and marriage. She cheers up Ifigenia, pointing out the great honour and prestige entailed in being a daughter-in-law to Thetis. Later on, they discuss the infidelity of Achilles. At the end of the opera, crying and screaming in anguish for her lost daughter, Clytemnestra seems like a poignant portrayal of Maria Casimira herself, crushed as she was by the indifference of the emperor and other rulers, who made their life-and-death decisions about the lives of others with the cool indifference of Olympian gods. In a recitative and its following aria, she complains: "But what could be done | By a single faint-hearted woman | Against the fury of an entire armed camp, | Against the severity of the Gods and the Stars" ("Mà che far potea | Femina sola, e imbellè | Contro il furor di tutt'un campo armato, | Contro il rigor de' Numi, e delle Stelle"), followed by:

---

<sup>21</sup> To this day, the myth is open to a number of interpretations. For instance, it has a timeless relevance in discussions of the death penalty.

<sup>22</sup> Zeno's libretto of 1718 can be connected with the Austrian war against the Turks. It was performed in Vienna on 5 November not long after the treaty of Passarowitz was signed (21. VII.1718).

<sup>23</sup> The French reportedly had the saying "Femme grosse a un pied dans la fosse" (A pregnant woman has one leg in her grave). Hufton, *The prospect before her*, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> *Historia życia prywatnego. Od renesansu do oświecenia*, p. 431.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Importantly, we know that she sent the scores and libretti of those works to her daughter in Venice. Over, ...*sotto l'Ombra della Regina*, p. 263.

Si sì voi perfidi Numi, Si sì voi barbare Stelle Sete quelle, che usurpate Falso onor di Deità. Sempre ingiuste all'innocenza, Sempre cieche alla clemenza, Sempre sorde alla pietà. Si & c.	Yes, indeed, you perfidious gods, Yes, indeed, you barbarous stars, You are the ones who falsely usurp The splendour of divinity. Ever unjust to innocence, Ever blind to clemency, Ever deaf to pity. Yes & c.
--	---

Maria Casimira's surviving correspondence records the anguish caused by her daughter's plight,<sup>27</sup> which might explain the poignant ring of truth that the arias of Clytemnestra have. The following aria occurs in Act I, Scene 10:

Per vendicarmi avrò la forza, e l'armi Da un oltraggiato honor. Se alla vendetta Con più dolcezza alletta Un disprezzato Amor. Per & c.	I shall have the strength and the weapons To be avenged For my slighted honour If a spurned Amor With more sweetness incites [me] To revenge. I shall & c.
--	---

In this aria Clytemnestra reacts to Achilles' alleged repudiation of Iphigenia. According to Greek custom, this kind of slight to one's honour justified vengeance, but the aria can also be interpreted, in a broader context, as Maria Casimira's appeal to the consciences of contemporary rulers. Theresa Kunegunda's plight was not the only example of insulting and exploitative treatment suffered by descendants of King Jan III Sobieski at the hands of European princes.

In her next recitative (III.9), the furious Clytemnestra declares agitatedly: "Vedrai | Quanto in man d'una Madre hora più vale: | Del generoso Acchille | Al lato, col tuo brando saprò anch'io | O liberar la figlia, ò pur morendo | Liberar dal dolore il petto mio" ("You will see | how much more in a mother's hand [your dagger] is worth: | With generous Achilles | at my side, I, too, will find a way, with your sword, | either to set free my daughter or, simply by dying, | to release my heart from pain").

Another aria runs:

---

<sup>27</sup> "I pray incessantly to God ... to reunite us all and to restore your family to its ancestral greatness". Maria Casimira Sobieska, cited in Komaszyński, *Teresa Kunegunda*, p. 113.

Morire, ò vincere, Anch'io saprò. Tigre, che vedasi Rapire i figli Di tali artigli Mai non s'armò. Morire &c.	To die or to triumph, I, too, can do that. A tiger seeing Its cubs snatched away Never armed itself With such claws. To die &c.
--	--

As in Euripides' play, the personality of Capece's Iphigenia undergoes a profound change. After her initial outburst of despair, she is calm and dignified as she gives up her life at the sacrificial altar. Saved from death at the last moment by the goddess Artemis, who sweeps her off to the barbarian lands of Tauris, Iphigenia will spend the next ten years performing human sacrifices herself. Tauris seems to symbolize Theresa Kundegunda's period of exile in Venice, where, like the mythical Iphigenia, she spent long, solitary hours praying, thinking about home and fearing for her family (in the case of Theresa Kunegunda, the woes were aggravated by financial difficulties). The opera's closing scenes hold out the promise of a better future – a promise that came true for Theresa Kunegunda on 7 March 1714, when the Peace of Rastatt finally brought the war to an end after fourteen years. The following year, the Electress was back in Munich.<sup>28</sup>

Capece's use of themes such as Tauris and ritual slaughter contained coded criticism of a system of power that not only sanctioned the cruelty and greed of war but also laid bare a political system in crisis that was actually prepared to make a sacrifice of the family, one of its supreme social values.<sup>29</sup> As Walter Davis notes, "To dramatize the truth of the family is to reveal the truth of the world".<sup>30</sup> After 1713 the dark goings-on in the House of Atreides would become increasingly popular on the stages of Europe, proving that its status as political theatre was as enduring as war itself.

## Bibliography

Ariès, Philippe: *Historia dzieciństwa: dziecko i rodzina w dawnych czasach*,

<sup>28</sup> Following the death of Maximilian Emmanuel, Teresa Kunegunda returned to Venice since her relations with her father's successor, Karl Albrecht, were fraught. She died in Venice in 1730.

<sup>29</sup> The view of the family as a basic unit of society and a refuge for its members began to take shape in the fourteenth century, replacing the medieval clan model. The first iconographic depictions date back to the fifteenth century, and they become widespread in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depictions of family members in genre art become very popular. Family ties and emotions begin to inspire art and artists. With the strong support of religion, the family becomes venerated in early modern societies. For more information on the family in early modern Europe, see Ariès, *Historia dzieciństwa*.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *The Play's the Thing*, p. 4.

- Polish translation of *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, transl. M. Ochab. Gdańsk: Marabut, 1995.
- Capece, Carlo Sigismondo: *Ifigenia in Aulide*, Roma, 1713.
- Capece, Carlo Sigismondo, *Ifigenia in Tauri*, Roma, 1713.
- Cumming, Julie E.: Gluck's Iphigenia operas: sources and strategies. *Opera and the Enlightenment* (eds. Th. Bauman and M. Petzoldt McClymonds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 217-242.
- Dandeleit, Thomas J.: Politics and the state system after the Habsburg-Valois Wars. *Early Modern Italy 1550–1796* (ed. J. A. Marino). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp.11-29.
- Davis, Walter A.: The Play's the Thing: Censorship, Theatre and Ideology. *Art and Politics. Psychoanalysis, Ideology, Theatre*. London: Pluto press, 2007, pp. 3-16.
- Forment, Bruno: 'La Terra, il Cielo e l'Inferno'. *The Representation and Reception of Greco-Roman Mythology in 'Opera Seria'*, PhD Thesis. Universiteit Gent, 2006–2007.
- Chartier, Roger (ed.): *Historia życia prywatnego. Od renesansu do oświecenia* (Polish translation of *Histoire de la vie privée*), vol. 3. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1999.
- Herodotus, *Inquiries*, Book 4, translated by Shlomo Felberbaum, instalment 23. <[http://www.losttrails.com/pages/Tales/Inquiries/Herodotus\\_23.html](http://www.losttrails.com/pages/Tales/Inquiries/Herodotus_23.html)>, (accessed 25. 10. 2010).
- Hufton, Olwen: *The prospect before her. A history of women in Western Europe 1500–1800*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Hughes, Derek: *Culture and Sacrifice. Ritual Death in Literature and Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Komaszyński, Michał: *Teresa Kunegunda Sobieska*. Warszawa: PIW, 1982.
- Over, Berthold: Kurfürstin Therese Kunigunde von Bayern in Venedig (1705–1715). *Das Musikleben am Hof von Kurfürst Max Emanuel, Bericht über das Internationale Musikwissenschaftliche Symposium, veranstaltet von der Gesellschaft für Bayerische Musikgeschichte und dem Forschungsinstitut für Musiktheater der Universität Bayreuth* (eds. S. Hörner and S. Werr). Tutzing: Schneider, 2012, pp. 85-117.
- Over, Berthold: "...sotto l'Ombra della Regina di Pennati Antonio Vivaldi, Kurfürstin Therese Kunigunde von Bayern und andere Wittelsbacher". *Italian Opera in Central Europe 1614–1780, vol. 3. Opera Subjects and European Relationships* (eds. N. Dubowy, C. Herr, A. Żórawska-Witkowska), Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008, pp. 251-297.
- Petzoldt McClymonds, Marita: Transforming opera seria: Verazi's innovations and their impact on opera in Italy. *Opera and the Enlightenment* (eds. Th. Bauman and M. Petzoldt McClymonds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 119-132.
- Riva, Aurelli: *L'Ifigenia*, Venezia, 1707.

- Sacco Messineo, Michela: *Il martire e il tiranno. Ortensio Scammacca e il teatro tragico barocco*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1988.
- Sartori, Claudio: *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, 7 vols. Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli Editori, 1990.
- Jannaco, C. and M. Capucci (eds.): *Storia letteraria d'Italia, Il Seicento*. Padua: Piccin, 1986.
- Strohm, Reinhard: Drama Dualities: Metastasio and the Tradition of the Opera Pair. *Early Music*, 1998, pp. 551-561.
- Tardivelo, *Ifigenia*. Padova, 1705.
- Zeno, *Ifigenia in Aulide*. Wien, 1718.

### **Glasba v službi politike: študija primera oper z motivom Ifigenije, napisanih za Marijo Kazimiro Sobiesko**

#### Povzetek

Motiv Ifigenije, ki jo bogovom žrtvuje lastni oče Agamemnon, vodilni grški knez v vojni proti Trojancem, je v zahodni kulturi dobro znan antični mit, ki se je ohranil predvsem v Evripidovih delih. Ifigenija naj bi bila žrtvovana zato, da bi bogovi grški vojski naklonili ugoden veter za izplutje iz Avlide, plovbo proti Troji in končno zmago.

Derek Hughes meni, da je Evripidova *Ifigenija v Avlidi* tragedija o »iracionalnosti in pokvarjenosti vojne, njenem pohlepu in množični histeriji«. Ambiciozni vojaški poveljniki, med katerimi so Menelaj, Odisej in Ahil, Agamemnona prepričajo, da žrtvuje življenje svoje lastne hčere, da bi obdržal poveljstvo nad grško vojsko. Nemirna grška vojska po dolgem obdobju brezdelja glasno zahteva plenjenje in zmago. Ifigenija mora skupaj s tisoči drugih vojnih žrtev umreti nesmiselne smrti, da bi zadostila krvoločni drhali. Celo najbolj civilizirane dele sveta obvladuje sla po nasilju.

Evripidova tragedija je postala vir navdiha za številne pesnike, od Shakespeara, Corneilla in Racina do Goetheja, pa tudi za libretiste, ki so v 18. stoletju pisali operna besedila (C. S. Capece, A. Zeno, B. Pasqualigo, P. Rolli, L. de Villati, M. Coltellini), in posredno za številne operne skladatelje, kot so R. Keiser, D. Scarlatti, T. Traetta, Ch. W. Gluck in A. y Soler. Kaj je bilo torej za umetnike tako zanimivega v tej zgodbi? In kakšen potencial je imela v kontekstu opernega mecenstva?

Marija Kazimira Sobieska, poljska kraljica vdova, je postala pokroviteljica glasbe in umetnosti kmalu po svojem prihodu v Rim leta 1699. Španska nasledstvena vojna, ki je izbruhnila leta 1701, je močno vplivala na njeno življenje v Rimu (zamude s prenosom denarja, ki ga je prejemale iz Poljske) in življenje njene hčere Tereze Kunigunde Sobieske, žene bavarskega volilnega kneza.

Kraljica je hitro spoznala, da glasba v Rimu ni le prvovrstno orodje politike prestiža in moči. Predstavlja tudi možnost komentiranja in kritike trenutne politike in sodobnih politikov, prav to pa je kraljica storila v dveh libretih, zasnovanih na znanem motivu žrtvovanja Ifigenije.