

A Dramatic Heist of Epic Proportion: *Iphigenia among the Taurians* in the Acts of the Apostles*

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■ Abstract

While scholars have explored the profound influence of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (*IT*) on Greco-Roman fiction, including Christian apocryphal Acts, the play has yet to be considered seriously as a potential inspiration on the canonical Acts of the Apostles. A close comparison of *IT* with the story of the Ephesian riot (Acts 19:21–20:1) reveals a compelling relationship in matters of plot, setting, characterization, purpose, and themes. The Ephesus saga in Acts achieves a creatively miniaturized and satirized recasting of this famous Euripidean play.

■ Keywords

Euripides, *Iphigenia*, Acts of the Apostles, mimesis criticism, Ephesus, Demetrius

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■ Introduction

The canonical Acts of the Apostles reflects the highly polyphonic religious, cultural, and literary Greco-Roman milieu of its time.¹ A vast amount of scholarship has traced its numerous intertextual strings—from Homer to the *Bacchae*, from philosophy to historiography to early Greek novels—which together show Acts to be one of the most eclectic and experimental narratives of the early imperial period.² The Ephesian riot (Acts 19:21–20:1) in particular, the focus of this article, has been detailed as an intricate embroidery of colorful threads borrowed not merely from the letters of Paul but also from Josephus,³ Pliny the Younger,⁴ and perhaps also

¹ For the Roman cultural context of Acts, see Rick Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (BZNW 80; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), and idem, *Strange Acts: Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles* (BZNW 126; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004). For its material context, see Laura Salah Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” *JBL* 127 (2008) 533–66, and eadem, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), with literature; and esp. Drew W. Billings, *Acts of the Apostles and the Rhetoric of Roman Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), with further literature.

² The genre of Acts has been heavily debated. For an overview, see Sean A. Adams, *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography* (SNTSMS 156; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 1–22. On Acts as apologetic historiography, see Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). For connections with ancient fiction and novellas, see Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). For connections with epic Greek and Latin literature, see the many works of Dennis Ronald MacDonald, esp. *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature* (The New Testament and Greek Literature 2; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); idem, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and idem, “The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul,” *NTS* 45 (1999) 88–107; and also Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). Among connections to Greek drama, the *Bacchae* of Euripides is paramount, e.g.: Richard Seaford, “Thunder, Lightning and Earthquake in the *Bacchae* and in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *What Is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (ed. Alan B. Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997) 139–51; John Moles, “Jesus and Dionysus in the Acts of the Apostles and Early Christianity,” *Hermathena* 180 (2006) 65–104; and Courtney J. P. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus: Euripides’ Bacchae and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans, and Christians* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) at 208–21, with further bibliography. See also M. David Litwa, “Paul the ‘god’ in Acts 28: A Comparison with Philoctetes,” *JBL* 136 (2017) 707–26, for crucial bibliography on the topic. For further classical intertexts in the work, see *Classical Greek Models of the Gospels and Acts: Studies in Mimesis Criticism* (ed. Mark G. Bilby, Michael Kochenash, and Margaret Froelich; Claremont Studies in New Testament and Christian Origins 3; Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2018); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992) 97, 217, 313, 435; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) 317, 727, 1008.

³ Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006) at 490 notes a stock pattern in Josephus that the Ephesian saga in Acts repeats, a story “beginning with a malicious agitator and ending with the intervention of an official.” He also marshals considerable evidence for the influence of an early collection of Paul’s letters.

⁴ The speech of Demetrius, particularly in Acts 19:26, imitates the *a minori ad maius* sentence structure and tone of abjection of Pliny’s *Ep.* 10.96.9 in regard to the spread of *christiani* in and

Plato's *Apology*, Xenophon's *Memorabilia*,⁵ and Dio Chrysostom.⁶ Another major inspiration also deserves consideration, both for the Ephesian saga and for Acts more generally: Euripides's *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. Exploring not only lexical comparisons but also larger thematic allusions and mythical characterizations, our analysis belongs to the growing body of scholarship in religious and classical studies exploring intertextuality as both artistic creation and received performance.⁷

First performed at the Great Dionysia ca. 412 BCE, Euripides's *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (hereafter *IT*) is set in Taurica on the Crimean peninsula. Euripides's other eponymous play, *Iphigenia at Aulis* (hereafter *IA*), was first

beyond cities. The speech of the city scribe/clerk also recalls the insistence on orderly trial proceedings to curtail mob justice in the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan: *Ep.* 10.96–97. See Mark G. Bilby, "Pliny's Correspondence and the Acts of the Apostles: An Intertextual Relationship?," in *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity: What Did He Really Know?* (ed. Joseph Verheyden and John S. Kloppenborg; BTS 29; Leuven: Peeters, 2017) 147–69, at 149–51 and 159–60; see also Thomas E. Phillips, "How Did Paul Become a Roman 'Citizen'? Reading Acts in Light of Pliny the Younger," in *ibid.*, 171–89.

⁵ See MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 88–89, who notes parallels to Plato's *Apology* in the mention of a "mob," "confusion," a "riot," and the "disturbance" being stopped, and notes a "striking resemblance" between the defense speech of the clerk and Xenophon's *Mem.* 1.2.62–63: "According to the laws, if it becomes apparent that someone steals, robs, burglars, kidnaps, or pillages temples, the penalty for such people is death. No person is further removed from these offenses than that man. Moreover, with regard to the city he never was a cause of injury caused by war, or riot, or treason, or any other evil."

⁶ Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Shorter Commentary* (London: Continuum, 2002) 302.

⁷ For the diverse range of allusions in classical literature, see esp. Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The leading champion of "mimesis criticism" in New Testament studies is Dennis Ronald MacDonald, who evaluates "mimetic intertextuality" between two texts based on the criteria of accessibility, analogy, density, distinctive traits, and interpretability; see, e.g., *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts* (The New Testament and Greek Literature 1; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 6–7. See also the review by Karl Olav Sandnes, "Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's 'Mimesis Criticism'" *JBL* 124 (2005) 715–32, who focuses on the readerly reception of these intertextual relationships while he rejects their uniform intentionality, e.g., at 727. For a more balanced approach of intentional allusions and intended audience, see, e.g., George H. van Kooten, "The Last Days of Socrates and Christ: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* Read in Counterpoint with John's Gospel," in *Religio-Philosophical Discourses in the Mediterranean World: From Plato through Jesus to Late Antiquity* (ed. Anders Klostergaard Petersen and George H. van Kooten; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 219–43, at 219 and 230. For mythical elements as belonging to a larger mythical narrative than the text itself, see Charles Segal, "Greek Myth as Semiotic and Structural System and the Problem of Tragedy," *Arethusa* 16.1–2 (1983) 173–98, as well its intertextual adaptation in Anna Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives: The Bold and Faithful Heroines of the Greek Novel* (MythosEikonPoiesis 8; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017) at 17–24. On thematic intertextuality, see also Aldo Tagliabue, *Xenophon's "Ephesiaca": A Paraliterary Love-Story from the Ancient World* (Ancient Narrative Supplements 22; Eelde: Barkhuis, 2017). On reader-related intertextuality adapting not only the text but also the genre to which a text belongs, see the growing interest in intergenericity, e.g., in S. J. Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), and in the numerous contributions to *The Dynamics of Intertextuality in Plutarch* (ed. Thomas S. Schmidt, Maria Vamvouri, and Rainer Hirsch-Luipold; Leiden: Brill, 2020).

staged posthumously in 405 BCE. Treating earlier mythical-biographical subject matter, yet composed and performed later, *IA* stands as the Euripidean prequel to *IT*. In *IA* the young princess is (nearly?) sacrificed by Agamemnon to appease Artemis and secure the Achaean army's embarkation to Troy.⁸ The narrative in *IT* thus reads retrospectively as creative repetition and inversion of *IA* plotlines. At Aulis, Iphigenia played the tragic role of the fated bride of death, betrothed to the doomed Achilles and sacrificed by her own father. By contrast, at Taurica she holds the terrifying role and responsibility as priestess of the Scythian Artemis, overseeing the human sacrifice of foreigners, which soon will include her brother and his closest friend. Euripides trusted his audience's knowledge of the tragic cycle of vengeance that had engulfed the Atreides during the intermission between the two plays: upon his return from Troy, Agamemnon had been murdered by Clytemnestra and her suitor, Aegisthus, in revenge for Iphigenia's sacrifice. Orestes in turn murdered Clytemnestra at the command of Apollo and in vengeance for their father. As Euripides's eponymous play *Orestes* narrates, this heinous, albeit divinely sanctioned, matricide left him in a state of madness, victimized by the Erinyes, nursed back to health by his trusted friend, Pylades, brought to a hasty trial at the Areopagus in Athens, and sent into exile by Apollo. Subsequently, in *IT* Orestes is guided by an oracle of Apollo and shown the path to regain his sanity and standing in Argos by journeying together with his companion, Pylades, to Scythia to steal its famous Taurian statue of Artemis and bring it back to Greece. On the *IT* quest, Orestes is nearly sacrificed by his own sister before the two long-separated siblings finally recognize each other. Reconciled, they hatch and carry out a plot to fool the Scythian ruler, Thoas. Finally, after having stolen the Scythian statue, the fellowship narrowly escapes, with the help of Athena, safely back to Greece, where Iphigenia is destined to become priestess of Artemis at Brauron.

Composed together with Euripides's other so-called escape tragedies,⁹ *IT* offers considerable thematic depth and dramatic intrigue: exile and restoration, substitutions and narrow escapes from death, emotional reunions and recognitions, moral modeling of female courage and male friendship, a paradigm for political folly, distinctions between Greekness and barbarism, and a succession of religious

⁸ There have been many conjectures about whether *IA* originally ended with the substitution around 1509 and after 1578, where the text of the play is corrupt. For a recent summary of the argument, see Naomi A. Weiss, "The Antiphonal Ending of Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis," *CP* 109 (2014) 119–29, at 120. The altered ending would have allowed the seamless, successive performance of *IA* and *IT* in later times; see Edith Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy* (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) xxvi. In pre-Roman times there is only one, uncertain piece of evidence for the substitution of Iphigenia; see *LIMC* 5.1, s.v. Iphigenia, fig. 11, whereas from Roman times onward, it is widespread, e.g., fig. 50–51.

⁹ For the play's date and dramatic setting, see Matthew Wright, *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies: A Study of "Helen," "Andromeda," and "Iphigenia among the Taurians"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), who rightly emphasizes the tragic elements of the plot as opposed to the earlier scholarly tendency to understand the play as melodrama.

rituals and rivalries. All of this inspired admiration for the play from the time of its inception and throughout antiquity.¹⁰ For an imperial audience, hallmark staples of the play, such as the ritual worship of Artemis and the theft of her famous statue, the role of Apollo as quest summoner, Scythian human sacrifices, the madness of Orestes, the mutual recognition of long lost family members, and, above all, the narrow escape from death, would have been synonymous with the drama whether or not a virgin maiden or her brother were the focus.

Many of these elements of interconnected Iphigenian and Orestean lore, it will be argued, are more or less implicitly present in the narrative arc of Acts 17–19 and certainly would have been recognized as such by its hellenized audience: the subplot describes Paul's adventures as he journeys from Athens, where he delivers his famous Areopagus speech, then to Corinth and on to Ephesus, Artemis's sacred city, where his visit causes upheaval. The Ephesians fear that a new god has come to overthrow their native Artemis, whose temple and oriental cult was renowned across the empire and throughout antiquity.¹¹ The present study will 1) survey the accessibility of *IT* for the author(s) and audience of Acts, 2) explore the linguistic and plot connections between *IT* and the Ephesian riot (Acts 19:21–20:1), and 3) detail a broader litany of dramatic parallels and myth-related characterizations.

■ The Accessibility, Popularity, and Retellings of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*

Despite the meager manuscript and papyrological evidence, both Euripidean *Iphigenia* plays were widely accessible, while the closely connected *Orestes* was antiquity's most popular drama.¹² Their reception across numerous media showcases their importance for different audiences throughout the Roman Empire. The plays

¹⁰ For Aristotle's praise of *IT*, see *Poetics* 14.1454a4–7, 16.1455a16–20, 17.1455b3–15 and Elizabeth Belfiore, "Aristotle and Iphigenia," in *Essays on Aristotle's "Poetics"* (ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 359–77. For interpretations of core *IT* themes across the centuries, see Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*. For similar plot patterns across Euripides and some possible prior inspirations on the specific Euripidean creation of *IT*, see M. J. O'Brien, "Pelopid History and the Plot of *Iphigenia in Tauris*," *CQ* 38 (1988) 98–115.

¹¹ For the oriental characteristics of the Ephesian Artemis in relation to early Jewish messianic communities, see the different contributions in *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (HTS 41; ed. Helmut Koester; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1995); Strelan, *Paul*, esp. at 130–40; and Daniel Frayer-Griggs, "The Beasts at Ephesus and the Cult of Artemis," *HTR* 106 (2013) 459–77.

¹² For the transmission history, see Günther Zuntz, *An Inquiry into the Transmission of the Plays of Euripides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965). The Hellenistic collection of Euripides's edited works was finalized ca. 250 CE. Some plays, however, that started with the letters H, I, K, such as *IT*, seem to have circulated separately and were transmitted only by a 14th-century manuscript, *Laurentianus* 32.2. William S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) at 52, notes that the selection does not mirror the actual reading taste. See also Paolo Carrara, *Il testo di Euripide nell'antichità. Ricerche sulla tradizione testuale euripidea antica (sec. IV a.C.-sec. VIII d.C.)* (Studi e testi 27; Florence: Università degli studi di Firenze, 2009) 251–52, 335, 434.

were performed as drama¹³ and adapted as mime, making the story accessible to a wide audience around the empire in places such as Oxyrhynchus.¹⁴ The employment of mythical exempla for historical and fictional characters and the revision of classical myth within sophisticated *Mythenkritik* were popular in the first two centuries CE in both literary and visual media.¹⁵ Evidence of the myth's reception in the visual arts¹⁶ shows that, whereas the story of the virgin narrowly sacrificed and substituted by a hind at Aulis was a popular voyeuristic theme of Roman frescoes, sarcophagi instead commemorated the key events of *IT*: the madness of Orestes, the mutual fidelity of Orestes and Pylades (often depicted with portrait heads), the statuette and temple of the Taurian Artemis, and the adventurous escape of the fellowship by boat, all evoking themes of heroism, friendship, and loyalty cherished by Roman elites. Imperial writers used *IT* specifically to discuss piety. Plutarch, for example, associated the myth with the military achievements and piety of his biographees, particularly their aversion to human sacrifices and even to animal sacrifices as forms of barbarism.¹⁷ Others romanticized the friendship of Orestes and Pylades or the betrothal of Iphigenia and Achilles, while the hellenized Lucian used the

¹³ Poulheria Kyriakou, *A Commentary on Euripides' "Iphigenia in Tauris"* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 80; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006) at 43, notes that *IT* was reproduced and rewritten many times. For performances in Roman times, see C. P. Jones, "Greek Drama in the Roman Empire," in *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (ed. Ruth Scodel; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993) 39–52.

¹⁴ Cf. Chariton (*P.Oxy.* III.413). See Edith Hall, "Iphigenia in Oxyrhynchus and India: Greek Tragedy for Everyone," in *Παραχορήγηση: μελετήματα για το αρχαίο θέατρο προς τιμήν του καθηγητή Γρηγόρη Μ. Σηφάκη* (ed. Stavros Tsitsiridis; Heraklion: University of Crete Press, 2010) 225–50, and in eadem, *Adventures*, at 121, she points out that the spectators at Oxyrhynchus would have attended both the restaging of the Euripidean play and its burlesque reworking and would be able to compare the two.

¹⁵ The *progymnasmata* trained the students in declamation by using fictive situations, often inspired from myth; cf. Theon, *Progymnasmata* 94 (Medea), 112 (Ajax vs. Odysseus). For indirect characterization using mythical/historical exempla in fiction, see Koen de Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Greek Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 34–35; for biography, see Judith Mossman, "Plutarch," in *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature* (ed. Koen de Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas; Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative 4; Leiden: Brill, 2018) 486–502.

¹⁶ For artistic representations, see *LIMC* 5.1, s.v. "Iphigenia," esp. at 726; Kurt Weitzmann, "Illustrations of Euripides and Homer in the Mosaics of Antioch," in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes III: The Excavations 1938–1939* (ed. Richard Stillwell; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941) 237–44; Jean-Michel Croisille, "Le sacrifice d'Iphigénie dans l'art romain et la littérature latine," *Latomus* 22 (1963) 209–25. For Orestes and Pylades as exemplars of friendship in Roman culture, see John T. Fitzgerald, *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (RBS 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 166, and Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, 92. For Orestes on the sarcophagi and the portrait heads, see Ruth Biefeldt, *Orestes auf römischen Sarkophagen* (Berlin: Reimer, 2005), and Paul Zanker and Björn Christian Ewald, *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi* (trans. Julia Slater; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. Orestes at 227–29.

¹⁷ Cf. Plutarch, *Pel.* 21 and *Ages.* 6.4 in Anna Lefteratou, "Plutarch's Less Tragic Heroes: Drama and Epic in the Pelopidas," in *The Dynamics of Intertextuality in Plutarch* (ed. Schmidt, Vamvouri, and Hirsch-Luipold), 421–39.

story to renegotiate Greek versus barbarian cultural identity by emphasizing the Scythian esteem for friendship.¹⁸

The story of Iphigenia proved quite popular across literary genres transcending both religious and cultural barriers. Associations with her near or actual sacrifice were possibly part of the creation and certainly the later reception of the Hebrew stories of the *aqedah* of Isaac in Genesis 22 and Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11.¹⁹ The mime *Charition* characteristically did not use names for its mythic protagonists but did set the recognition and escape plot in India, making the eponymous protagonist a priestess of Selene.

The most dedicated appropriations of Iphigenia-related themes fill imperial prose fictions, which merge *IA* and *IT* to depict the adventures of the heroines and their male lovers, who likewise narrowly avoid death and sacrifice and are recognized and reunited with their beloved ones.²⁰ The novelistic heroines are often pictured as Iphigenia analogues and/or the male heroes as Orestes analogues, irrespective of their erotic or non-kinship relationship to the female lead. In Chariton's mid-first-century novel, the Orestes-like Chaereas, maddened by his love for and guilt over nearly murdering his wife, Callirhoe, arrives in Asia accompanied by his faithful friend to search for her and atone. The late second-century Xenophon of Ephesus's Anthia—herself a protégé of the goddess of her home-city, Artemis of Ephesus—narrowly avoids being sacrificed three times, while her fiancé Habrocomes escapes death many times.²¹ Heliodorus's third- or fourth-century *Aethiopica* has its protagonist Chariclea narrowly escaping death three times and also being nearly sacrificed by her own father. Most characteristically, Achilles Tatius's second-

¹⁸ Cf. Lucian, *Tox.*, and Antoninus Liberalis, *Metam.* 27. For the reception of Iphigenia in the Second Sophistic, see Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, ch. 6, and Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, ch. 1, esp. 31–49.

¹⁹ See Josephus, *Ant.* 1.222–236; Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus as Biblical Interpreter: The ‘Aqedah,’” *JQR* 75.3 (1985) 212–52; Thomas C. Römer, “Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?,” *JSOT* 77 (1998) 27–38, at 36; and Bruce Louden, *Greek Myth and the Bible* (New York: Routledge, 2018) 112, 124, 126.

²⁰ For a summary of these influences and the reception of signature motifs and themes from the Iphigenia saga, otherwise described as its “megatext,” see Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, at 101–5.

²¹ Gottfried Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (THKNT 5; Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1983) 387, notes that “great” is also the attribute used to describe Artemis in Xenophon of Ephesus 1.11.5. There has been a debate about whether or not Xenophon indeed depicts the cult of Artemis Ephesia, especially as the goddess in the novel lacks oriental attributes; e.g., John Gwyn Griffiths, “Xenophon of Ephesus on Isis and Alexandria,” in *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren* (ed. Margreet de Boer and T.A. Edridge; 3 vols.; Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 68.1; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 1:409–37, believes the writer to be acquainted more with the Egyptian Isis and Alexandria and not Artemis. On the conscious hellenization of Artemis in the novel, see Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Greek Novels: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 30, and for the influence of the visual representations of the temple's iconography on the novel, see Aldo Tagliabue, “Thrason's work in the Ephesian Artemision: An Artistic Inspiration for Xenophon of Ephesus' ‘Ephesiaca,’” *Hermes* 141 (2013) 363–77.

century novel explicitly restages the Crimean *IT* play in Ephesus. There, after several sham deaths of Leucippe, the virgin takes refuge in the temple of Artemis when her Phoenician fiancé, Clitophon, accompanied by his Pylades-like friend, Clinias, faces torture, whereupon he exclaims that Ionia has been transformed into Scythia and that the “blood that flows among the Taurians now flows in Ephesus too.”²² This displacement of the story by the Phoenician hellenized narrator of the novel is characteristic of the renegotiation of Greek versus barbarian cultural identity that is also found in Lucian, especially since Phoenicians were infamous for child sacrifices. The character of Clitophon similarly appropriates the myth from a Greek perspective.

Iphigenia and Orestes myths saturated the literature of the imperial era and shaped new legends, for characters originally both historical and fictional. Early Christian apocrypha feature Iphigenia-like female leads, such as Thecla, who safeguards her virginity while miraculously avoiding execution and whose relationship and adventures with Paul recall those of the two Argive siblings.²³ Caught up in this expansive cultural milieu, the Acts of the Apostles sculpts the stories of Paul and his companions following the templates of Orestes, Iphigenia, and their companions as recognizable and meaningful cultural analogues.

■ Shared Plots to Steal “God-Fallen” Statues

At the start of our intertextual exploration of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and the Acts of the Apostles—an exploration focused primarily on matters of plot, theme, and characterization—we begin by highlighting a crucial and long-recognized lexical connection. In Acts 19:35 the Ephesian clerk refers to a famous “god-fallen” (διοπετής) object: “Citizens of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple-guardian of the great Artemis and of the god-fallen?” (ἄνδρες Ἐφεσίοι, τίς γάρ ἐστιν ἀνθρώπων ὃς οὐ γινώσκει τὴν Ἐφεσίων πόλιν νεωκόρον οὖσαν τῆς μεγάλης Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ τοῦ διοπετοῦς;). Scholars have previously noted that the lemma διοπετής—which is *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament and appears nowhere in the LXX—was best known from *IT* 977–978: “Phoebus sent me here, to take the god-fallen | statue and enthrone it in Athena’s

²² Achilles Tatius 8.2.1 in Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, at 74–75.

²³ Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, esp. at 45–46, on a painting of Thecla and Paul as a new Iphigenia and Orestes found near the theater of Ephesus; and at 113–14. Thecla emulates Iphigenia not just as virgin martyr, but also as adventurous traveler, associate of animals, and (in manuscript G of the *Acts of Thecla*) as priestess of Artemis likewise carried on a cloud. For a translation of the G manuscript, see J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 372–74. Iphigenia proved a veritable template for virgin heroines, both pagan and Christian. See Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (trans. John Raffan; Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) at 151, who says the “myth of Iphigenia” is “the most famous Greek myth of human sacrifice,” and at 152 says that “the very figure of the Virgin grows out of the sacrifice.” For later Christian appropriations of Iphigenia, see Anna Lefteratou, “Rebranding Iphigenia as Christian: Virgins in Ambrose’s *De Virginitibus* and in the apocryphal *Passio Matthaei*,” *Apocrypha* 28 (2017) 123–54, with literature.

land” (Φοιβός μ’ ἔπεμψε δεῦρο, διοπετές λαβεῖν | ἄγαλμ’ Ἀθηνῶν τ’ ἐγκαθιδρῦσαι χθονί).²⁴ Other *IT* passages also attest the “god-fallen” statuette of Artemis using similar formulations, a repetition that highlights the centrality of the object for the drama’s plot and reception.²⁵

The lemma διοπετής has vexed commentators as a peculiar linguistic and historiographical puzzle, since no testimony of any such famous “god-fallen” Ephesian Artemis statue exists outside of Acts.²⁶ The ambiguity of τοῦ διοπετοῦς in Acts 19:35 is exacerbated by it being either a substantive adjective or lacking an implied antecedent noun, a gap that translators have attempted to fill in various ways.²⁷ Commentators have attempted to fill this interpretive gap both linguistically and historically, sometimes even speculating that διοπετής here in Acts referred to an actual though otherwise unattested meteorite contained in the Artemesium of Ephesus!²⁸ While the terminological connection between *IT* and Acts is sometimes noted by scholars, very rarely is there any effort to consider a larger relationship

²⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2010) 661; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 575 and n. 5; *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury; 5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920–1933) 4:250. See esp. Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 2:936. See also Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008) 498; Schnabel, *Acts*, 810; Strelan, *Paul*, 151, surprisingly the only page in the book that mentions *IT*. Neither Iphigenia nor Euripides is mentioned in Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

²⁵ *IT* 87–88: “To take the goddess’s statue, which is said here | into this temple to have fallen from heaven” (λαβεῖν τ’ ἄγαλμα θεᾶς, ὃ φασιν ἐνθάδε | ἐς τοῦσδε ναοὺς οὐρανοῦ πεσεῖν ἄπο). *IT* 1383–1385: “[Orestes] placed his sister inside the fine-decked ship, | and what had fallen from heaven, the statue of god’s daughter” (ἔθηκε ἄδελφὴν ἐντὸς εὐσήμου νεῶς, | τό τ’ οὐρανοῦ πέσημα, τῆς Διὸς κόρης | ἄγαλμα).

²⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 16.79.213, notes the Artemis statue was made of ebony or vinewood. Haenchen, *Acts*, 575 n. 5, notes that διοπετής is “claimed . . . only here for the Ephesian Artemis.” See also C. L. Brinks, “Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians: Acts 19:23–41 in Light of Goddess Worship in Ephesus,” *CBQ* 71 (2009) 776–94. For other sky-fallen statues, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, and on their agency, see Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 96–97, with literature.

²⁷ διοπετής is rendered as “fallen from god” in BAGD and Friberg, and “fell from Zeus” in *LSJ*. English translations of the lemma in Acts 19:35 often circumvent its polytheistic import: “fell (down) from heaven” (NASB, NIV, NRSV), “fell from the sky” (ESV, RSV). Cf. “fell down from Zeus” (NKJV), “fell down from Jupiter” (KJV). An antecedent noun is often improvised: “image” (ASV, Darby, KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV), “statue” (NRSV), and even “stone” (RSV).

²⁸ Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 300, and idem, *Acts*, 2:936; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 661; Haenchen, *Acts*, 575; Johnson, *Acts*, 346, 350; Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990) 705; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 89; Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 389; Schnabel, *Acts*, 810. Contra the meteorite theory, see Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 369. Pervo, *Acts*, at 498, reads “god-fallen” as evoking artistic quality and realism, citing Cicero, *Verr.* 2.187, about a statue of Demeter so lifelike as to lead viewers to believe they were beholding the goddess herself.

with *IT* as key to understanding the function of the term διοπετής, not to mention the larger plot of the Ephesian riot and escape.²⁹

The popularity of *IT*, the centrality of Iphigenia and her mythology to Artemis worship,³⁰ and the reputation of Ephesus as the cosmic center of Artemis worship in the Roman Empire all beckon us to find in the lemma διοπετής a rich world of literary-mythical allusion and an interpretive key to the Ephesian saga. After the clerk in Acts 19:35 refers to the “god-fallen” statue, in Acts 19:37 he flatly dismisses the charges against Paul and his companions by asserting that they are “neither temple-robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess” (οὔτε ιεροσύλους οὔτε βλασφημοῦντας τὴν θεὸν ἡμῶν). Whence this rebuffed concern about Paul and companions being “temple-robbers”? The apologetic statement in the second speech apparently answers to the charges levied in the first speech by the local silversmith Demetrius at 19:27:

Now this poses a danger to us, not only that our apportionment may come to disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be spoken of as nothing, and also that she is about to be taken down from her magnificence which all Asia and the inhabited world worships.

οὐ μόνον δὲ τοῦτο κινδυνεύει ἡμῖν τὸ μέρος εἰς ἀπελεγμὸν ἐλθεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν εἰς οὐθὲν λογισθῆναι, μέλλειν τε καὶ καθαιρεῖσθαι τῆς μεγαλειότητος αὐτῆς, ἣν ὅλη ἡ Ἀσία καὶ ἡ οἰκουμένη σέβεται.

The subject of the passive infinitive καθαιρεῖσθαι is vague,³¹ but the word likely refers to Artemis in connection with the goddess’s physical epiphanic manifestation, i.e., her statue.³² Previously, at 19:24–26, Demetrius had accused Paul of threatening his trade—manufacturing images of the gods—with a traditionally Jewish, aniconic

²⁹ E.g., Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 2:936; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 661. MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 89, goes farther than most scholars in summarizing *IT* here, though he does not claim a mimetic relationship. Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, at 24–26 and 144, explores the associations between the Taurian, Ephesian, and Brauron Artemis-cult and interprets the prominence of Acts’ διοπετής as Christian triumphalist rhetoric at Ephesus, where Paul and John eventually oust the dominant goddess and where Paul and Thecla take on the role of Orestes and Iphigenia as Christianized patrons to the city. On this, see esp. Billings, *Acts*.

³⁰ In antiquity, Iphigenia was a second Artemis, whose myth and cult were closely bound to that of the goddess herself. See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, at 147, “with Artemis and Iphigenia, a near identity of god and victim is at play,” and at 152, “Artemis is mirrored in Iphigenia; Iphigenia herself becomes a goddess, a second Artemis.”

³¹ English translations of καθαιρεῖσθαι in Acts 19:27 have often obscured and only occasionally highlighted this implied threat of temple robbery: “brought down” (Young’s); “deprived” (NRSV); “deposed” (ASV, ESV); “destroyed” (KJV, NKJV, Geneva); “dethroned” (NASB); “pull down” (Johnson, *Acts*, 348); “robbed” (NIV).

³² *LSJ*, s.v. καθαιρέω II.2: “put down,” “reduce,” “bereft.” For statues as the embodiment of the god, see, e.g., Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 47: “images themselves have the potential to be viewed as epiphanic embodiments of the deities they represent. They can simultaneously symbolize and constitute divine presence.” Theurgic interpretations of statues were prevalent in Greco-Roman religion and even philosophy, as for example in the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus.

message, “that gods made with hands are not gods” (λέγων ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοὶ οἱ διὰ χειρῶν γινόμενοι). Paul’s message is depicted as a direct threat to Demetrius’s temple-connected trade in its totality, his wares together with their connected sacred history and symbolism.³³ Demetrius may be described as “making silver temples of Artemis” (ποιῶν ναοὺς ἀργυροῦς Ἀρτέμιδος), but his craft likely encompasses statuettes of the goddess, i.e., replicas of its famed “god-fallen” statue.³⁴ Economic and cultic specifics notwithstanding, Demetrius probably alludes to the well-known *IT* plot and threat when warning that Artemis is about “to be taken down” (καθαρεῖσθαι).³⁵ The clerk’s later defense of Ephesian lore about the διοπετής likely answers to the crux of the silversmith’s charges. The twin speeches raise and refute the allegation that Paul and companions represent a new Orestes and companions on the verge of carrying off their temple’s most holy object.

Detached from this literary-mythological context, modern commentators have puzzled over the absurdity of Demetrius’s charge, especially when taking it as a contemporaneous (ca. 50s CE) assertion that the historical Paul and friends were perceived as a threat so severe as to disrupt or even destroy the Ephesian cult of Artemis and her temple.³⁶ Echoes of the temple’s destruction by Herostratus in 356 BCE were too distant in the past for the audience of Acts, even if they were not necessarily forgotten. The new temple was rebuilt more than a century before Paul’s reported visit and destroyed again more than a century after it, in 267 CE.

Consequently, the anguish of Demetrius most likely expresses the prevalent preoccupation in antiquity about the power of guardian statues and the worrisome threat of their theft and removal, on which could turn the cultic and economic disempowerment of whole cities, regions, and even empires. The legendary theft of the *palladion* of Athena from Troy by Odysseus and Diomedes is certainly the most famous example of this, celebrated accordingly across Greek and Latin

³³ For the commercial exploitation of the Artemesium, see Marc Kleijwegt, “Textile Manufacturing for a Religious Market: Artemis and Diana as Tycoons of Industry,” in *After the Past: Essays in Ancient History in Honour of H. W. Pleket* (ed. Willem Jongman and Marc Kleijwegt; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 81–134, at 119, with literature.

³⁴ In favor of statuettes, see Helmut Koester, “Ephesos in Early Christian Literature,” in *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia* (ed. Koester), 119–141, at 130; Pervo, *Acts*, at 491, “niches with a statue of Artemis (*vaiskoi*).” The ancient exegete Ammonius understands Demetrius as being both a silversmith and a craftsman of statuettes, e.g., *Catena in Acta (e cod. Oxon. coll. nov. 58)*, in John Anthony Cramer, *Catena Graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum* (8 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1838–1844) 3:321: ποιῶν αὐτοῖς ναοὺς καὶ θεοῦς ἀργυροῦς.

³⁵ Cf. the other meanings of the verb in *LSJ*, s.v. καθαίρω, III, “seize,” V, “less freq. like the simple αἰρεῖν, take and carry off,” quoting Herodotus 5.36, 6.41. John Chrysostom, *In Acta (PG 60.297)*, also understood the danger Paul posed to the statue: “if this man has such strength as to remove everything and endangers the things of the gods, how great his god must be!” (εἰ ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος τοσαῦτα ἰσχύει ὡς μεταστήσαι πάντα, καὶ κινδυνεύει τὰ τῶν θεῶν, ἡλικὸς ὁ τούτου Θεός).

³⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 576–78; Shauf, *Theology as History*, 243–46, notes that the “anxiety” of Demetrius “about the status of Artemis and her temple does not at all match up with the reality of the religious situation at Ephesus.”

epic.³⁷ Yet such thefts—whether mythical or actual, suspected or successful—were more prevalent and could alternatively lead to the celebration, humiliation, or even execution of their perpetrators.³⁸ In fiction, even notable women themselves are portrayed as holy statues whose theft could provoke war and change the fate of nations.³⁹

In the realm of novelistic fiction and the performative arts, the single most popular story of the theft of a “god-fallen” guardian statue—not to mention a statue of Artemis—was *IT*.⁴⁰ Here, King Thoas presses Iphigenia (*IT* 1157–1158): “Why have you lifted up from its immovable pedestal, | child of Agamemnon, the goddess’s statue in your arms?” (τί τόδε μεταίρεις ἐξ ἀκινήτων βάθρων, | Ἀγαμέμνωνος παῖ, θεᾶς ἄγαλμα’ ἐν ὠλέναις;). The audience already knows the answer: it was Apollo who had ordered the removal of the statue. The divine summons, approval, protection, and redemption frames the entire plot, exculpating Orestes from the matricide that Apollo had commanded.⁴¹ Through divine agency, the statuette will be permanently removed from Taurica. While Scythia will thus be bereft of its most

³⁷ This is related in the *Ilias Mikra* of the Homeric epic cycle. Its theft was believed to have left Troy militarily vulnerable and exposed to the Greeks for conquest. The Romans borrowed this epic trope from the Greeks by having the *palladium* come to Lavinium through Aeneas himself (see Vergil, *Aen.* 2.162–179; Ovid, *Fast.* 6.419–460), making Rome the conqueror of both Greece and Troy. The vestal virgins were entrusted with the guardianship of the *palladium* in Rome, which was believed for centuries to keep the capital safe. For broader context, see Polly Georgina Weddle, “Touching the Gods: Physical Interaction with Cult Statues in the Roman World” (PhD diss., Durham University, 2010) esp. at 130–145, with sources and literature.

³⁸ As part of his successful campaigns throughout Greece, the Roman general Sulla stole the image of Athena from her temple at Alalcomenae (Pausanias 9.33.6), leading to the sanctuary’s abandonment. As a 2nd-cent. CE Hellenistic geographer and historian, though, Pausanias made sure to recount that Sulla fell victim to horrific disease and lice as divine vengeance for his theft! Conversely, Pausanias notes that the “people of Patrae” celebrated Preuges as a hero after he had stolen from Sparta an image of Artemis, the “Lady of the Lake” (7.20.7–9). In the *Aesop Romance* 127–128, 132, the protagonist is charged with temple-robbery in his execution by the Delphians, only for them later to be defamed and plagued for their false accusations. See Margaret Froelich and Thomas E. Phillips, “Throw the Blasphemer off a Cliff: Luke 4.16–30 in Light of the Life of Aesop,” *NTS* 66 (2019) 21–32, at 30–31.

³⁹ On the kidnapping of the Helen-like Callirhoe in Chariton, see Jean Alvarez, “Chariton’s Erotic History,” *AJP* 118 (1997) 613–29, at 618. On the kidnapping of the “statue archetype” / ἀρχέτυπον ἄγαλμα Chariclea (*Aethiopia* 2.33.3) as the cause of the Delphian Sacred War, see Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, at 285. Note that the identities of Iphigenia, Artemis, and the statue are merged in *IT*; the cloud-descended protagonist is willingly kidnapped along with the god-fallen statue. In their dramatic escape, when climbing into the boat, Orestes carries Iphigenia and the statue (1381–1384), doppelgangers of Artemis.

⁴⁰ Cicero speaks of the theft of a sacred statue of Diana from Segesta as ordered by Verres (*Verr.* 2.23, 2.34, 5.72).

⁴¹ *IT* 87–88, 104–117, 996–1001, 1013–1015, 1157–1158, 1315–1316, 1358–1359, 1384–1385, 1438–1442, 1448, 1477–1481. Typically, the word “statue” (ἄγαλμα) is used (*IT* 87, 978, 997, 1014, 1038, 1158, 1316, 1385, 1441, 1448, 1480), but sometimes the object is called a “wooden image” (βρέτας) (*IT* 980, 1040, 1291, 1477, 1499) or a “carved statue” (ξόανα) (*IT* 1359); βρέτας is even the last word of the play (*IT* 1499).

holy relic, Attic Halai will serve Artemis better by purging the cult of its barbarian aspects, i.e., human sacrifices.⁴²

Thus, what comes across in a first-century historiographical reading of Acts as ridiculous hyperbole or proselytizing audacity makes far more sense as a much later, highly creative retelling of the most famous ancient drama about Artemis statue robbery. Demetrius's suspicion fits well within the larger plot of Acts and its characterization of Paul against a Roman imperial background. Paul is pictured as a Pharisee who subscribes to traditional Jewish aniconism and whose fate is expressly driven by his unrepresentable, foreign god, Jesus and/or the divine spirit.⁴³ The verisimilitudinous presentation and rejection of Paul as an Orestean threat simultaneously raised and assuaged imperial fears. For readers of Acts, Paul's story posed a different kind of dichotomy: not between human and animal sacrifices, nor between Scythian and Attic Artemis, but instead between Artemis and YHWH/Jesus, between idols and aniconism, between sacrifices and no sacrifices at all.

This reading also befits the late Trajanic or Hadrianic historical context of the composition of Acts.⁴⁴ While it would have been absurd for the Artemesium of Ephesus—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—to have been threatened by the historical Paul of the 50s CE, Roman temples were targets of special antipathy, both physical and rhetorical, between 115 and 135 CE, after the destruction of the second temple of Jerusalem and the prolonged failure to see it reconstructed. The messianic Jewish *Sibyline Oracles* picture the divine destruction of the Ephesian Artemis temple in gruesome terms (5, lines 293–299), a rhetorical target John Collins characterizes as a “notable feature” arising out of the “Jewish revolt in the Diaspora of A.D. 115,” that is, the Kitos War.⁴⁵ This revolt resulted in

⁴² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 59, 152; Kyriakou, *Commentary*, 26; Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, at xxviii, noting the Attic sanctuary at Halai Araphenides, and at 25–27, noting the religious importance of the transportation of the statue; Lefteratou, “Rebranding Iphigenia,” 126.

⁴³ Note the above cited literature on Acts being deeply influenced by Homeric and Vergilian epic, as well as the *Bacchae*. These imitations cast Jesus and his apostles as introducing a new god as a rival to other gods, provoking resistance from keepers of traditional cultus, and yet driven by divine destiny. Regarding the aniconism of the Paul of Acts, see esp. Acts 17:16, where he describes Athens as being “full of idols” (κατείδωλον).

⁴⁴ For the Acts of the Apostles being dated well into the 2nd cent., see, for example, John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942) 114–39; James C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Settings* (London: SPCK, 1961) 1–63; Christopher Mount, *Pauline Christianity: Luke-Acts and the Legacy of Paul* (NovTSup 104; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Joseph B. Tyson, “The Date of Acts: A Reconsideration,” *Forum* 5.1 (2002) 33–51; Mary Rose D'Angelo, “The ANHP Question in Luke-Acts: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (ed. Amy Jill Levine; Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002) 44–69; Joseph B. Tyson, “Why Dates Matter: The Case of the Acts of the Apostles,” *The Fourth R* 18.2 (2005) 8–14; Matthias Klinghardt, “Markion vs. Lukas: Plädoyer für die Wiederaufnahme eines alten Falles,” *NTS* 52 (2006) 484–513; Pervo, *Dating Acts*; Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles.”

⁴⁵ See John J. Collins, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 1:390, and translation of 5.293–299 at 1:400. Note also

the partial or complete destruction of an Artemesium in Cyrene.⁴⁶ Pliny's ca. 110 description of *christiani* (i.e., Jewish messianics) as a major threat to local cultus and the sacrificial economy in Bithynia-Pontus also stands in the more immediate historical background of Acts.⁴⁷ Hadrian's construction of a temple to Jupiter to crown Aelia Capitolina ca. 129 CE provoked similar antipathy, leading to the start of the bar Kochba revolts ca. 132 CE. Within this historical context, the theft of the guardian statue of Artemis Ephesia would have been a tremendous coup for Jews and *christiani* in western Asia Minor. Whereas in the Euripidean play the barbarians' Artemis is merely relocated to Athens to revisit and civilize her oriental character, within an Ephesian Roman imperial setting the removal or destruction of the Artemesian διοπετής might have entailed a total defeat and eclipse of the goddess.⁴⁸

■ Shared Theatrical Settings, Characterizations, Speeches, Themes, and Satires

Linguistic and historical connections notwithstanding, a close comparison of Acts with *IT* also illustrates the many ways in which the Ephesian saga evokes many elements of Greek drama: theater settings, plot patterning, characterization, action sequences, speech acts, and themes. Acts borrows the *IT* setting of a major Artemis center but shifts the action outside the temple to its public-facing venues, the Hellenistic city's ἀγορά (Acts 19:23–29) and especially its θέατρον (19:28–31), a famous structure built adjacent to the Ephesian city harbor, visible from the theater's top seats.⁴⁹ As a play, Euripides's *IT* was staged in theaters such as this one. Its internal action mainly takes place within the ominous Taurian Artemis temple, but its characters move back and forth between the beach as a ship's harbor and the temple.⁵⁰ It should be noted here that this passage in Acts contains two of only three occurrences of the word “theater” (θέατρον) (19:29 and 31) within canonical New Testament literature. The word appears nowhere in the LXX, and its only other appearance in the New Testament is in 1 Cor 4:9, where Paul describes suffering apostles such as himself as a spectacle upon a cosmic stage:⁵¹

the heavy-handed critique of Artemis worship that appears in the *Acts of John* 37–47.

⁴⁶ See Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem* (New York: Vintage, 2008) 458, “During the disturbances the temples of Apollo, Zeus, Demeter, Artemis and Isis in the city of Cyrene were all destroyed or damaged . . . it would be unsurprising if Jewish frustration at Roman attacks on Judaism manifested itself in a war against the religion of the oppressive state.”

⁴⁷ See Bilby, “Pliny's Correspondence,” and Phillips, “How Did Paul Become a Roman ‘Citizen’?”

⁴⁸ Writing after 267 CE, Ammonius claimed that Paul here foretold the second destruction of the Ephesian Artemesium and the triumph of Christianity over Artemis and paganism; see *Catena in Acta* (e cod. Oxon. coll. nov. 58), in Cramer, *Catena Graecorum patrum*, 3:321.

⁴⁹ Martin Steskal, “Ephesos and Its Harbors. A City in Search of Its Place,” *Byzas* 19 (2014) 325–38, fig. 2. See also Paul R. Treblico, “Asia,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Greco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 291–362.

⁵⁰ E.g., *IT* 106–107, 256.

⁵¹ For Paul and the theater, see Laurence L. Welborn, “The Runaway Paul,” *HTR* 92 (1999) 115–63. For the theatrical setting underlining the dramatic aspects of martyrdom in early Christian

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display as the last ones [in the procession], like those condemned to die, because we have been made a spectacle to the whole created order, to angels and to human beings.

δοκῶ γάρ, ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθανατίους, ὅτι θέατρον ἐγενήθημεν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις.

Together with the report in 1 Cor 15:32—whether metaphorical or not—that “I fought the beasts in Ephesus” (ἐθηριομάχησα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ), the theater reference in 1 Cor 4:9 was evidently the primary Pauline point of inspiration for the theatricality permeating the Ephesian drama in Acts.

The scholarly literature on Acts has noted these connections with Paul’s letters but has often proven short-sighted, tending to provide itinerary-based, realia-focused, touristic descriptions of the impressive architecture of the Ephesian amphitheater or of the theater’s political role as a place for official civic gatherings.⁵² Within the context of ancient prose writing—both fictional and nonfictional—the theater was a central locus and major symbol of the general theatricality of Hellenistic public life.⁵³ Both the theater and arena were common backdrops for early Greek fictional novels where dramatic plots similar to those in Acts are recast.⁵⁴ Thus, the two unique, explicit references to the “theater” in this passage in Acts could evoke a novelistic setting typical of its early imperial era. It could also point to the influence of actual theatrical performances and dramatic models, especially *IT*. It could also frame an outsider critique of such cultural productions. The specific encouragement of the Asiarchs to Paul “not to give himself to the theater” (μὴ δοῦναι ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸ θέατρον) (Acts 19:31) may dovetail with early orthodox apologist critiques of the theater’s polytheistic intrigue and idolatry, or serve as a coy indication that *christiani* could appropriate yet transform theatrical-mythological elements, or perhaps both.⁵⁵ In any case, both politically and literarily, the ἀγορά and θέατρον

narrative, see Courtney J. P. Friesen, “*Paulus tragicus*: Staging Apostolic Adversity in First Corinthians,” *JBL* 134 (2015) 813–32, esp. at 824 and n. 40, arguing that Paul uses the term theater in 1 Cor 4:9 “in view of tragic drama.”

⁵² E.g., Barrett, *Acts*, 299; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 659.

⁵³ For theater and theatricality in public life, see Angelos Chaniotis, “Theatricality beyond the Theater: Staging Public Life in the Hellenistic World,” in *De la scène aux gradins. Théâtre et représentations dramatiques après Alexandre le Grand* (ed. Brigitte Le Guen; Pallas 47; Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1997) 219–59.

⁵⁴ For the theater as the backdrop of novelistic plots and the theatricality of early novels, see Apuleius, *Metam.* 6.23; Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.4; Regine May, *Apuleius and Drama: The Ass on Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 193. For arena- and myth-framed executions, see Kathleen M. Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” *JRS* 80 (1990) 44–73. On the recasting of Orpheus’s dismemberment, the Danaids, or Dirke’s dismemberment by a wild cow, all featured in the martyrdoms of Perpetua and Polycarp, see Leonard L. Thompson, “The Martyrdom of Polycarp: Death in the Roman Games,” *JR* 82 (2002) 27–52.

⁵⁵ Regarding the consistent aversion to the theater among early orthodox Christian apologists, see Tatian, *Or Graec.* 23; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 37.12; Theophilus, *Autol.* 3.15; Tertullian, *Spect.*; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.11. See also Timothy D. Barnes, “Christians and the Theater,” in *Beyond the Fifth Century: Interactions with Greek Tragedy from the Fourth Century BCE to the*

were crucial spaces for *christiani* to negotiate and reclaim civic identity. Historical and/or fictional spectacle set in these spaces could allow them to garner sympathy and win followers by drawing on shared cultural metaphors and values, all the while casting their suffering as a theater of the real, a theater of the cosmos itself.

Many features of Greek dramas in general, and of *IT* in particular, have parallels in the Ephesian saga in Acts, including typical characters. Euripidean plays usually have two main messengers who give major speeches and move the plot, and the same is true here in Acts. Playing the role of the first messenger (*IT* 260–339), Demetrius vengefully accuses a Greek-named foreigner of harming his trade, just as the Euripidean cowherd—whose livelihood was connected to his local Artemis cult—sought vendetta against Orestes for slaughtering his cattle in a fury-driven fit of madness. Both Demetrius (Acts 19:25) and the Euripidean cowherd (*IT* 306) lead mobs to arrest the foreigners and have them executed. In the parallel second messenger roles, the Ephesian assembly clerk recalls yet inverts the role of the Taurian royal/temple official (*IT* 1284). Instead of having a barbarian functionary attempt to rouse his king and people, enforce the sacrifice of the strangers, and prevent their escape, we now have a Roman official who calms the crowd, sternly warns against mob execution, and implicitly facilitates their escape. This official's effective halt to the rush of mob justice also recalls the general penchant of Greek plays for *deus ex machina* conclusions and the role of Athena in *IT* (1431–1489) in stopping the hasty pursuit of the barbarian king Thoas and his people.

Minor characters in Acts play their dramatic roles as well. The backdrop of the Ephesian riots recounts a violently possessed man (Acts 19:15–16), comparable to the first messenger's analeptic recounting of the violent, Erinyes-plagued fit of Orestean rage. The spirit in Acts 19:21 fills in the role of Apollo in *IT* 77 as the divine summoner of the journey. The Ephesian crowds—twice summoned to ritual chants (Acts 19:28, 34)—play the part of the Greek chorus in *IT* in narrative placement (chanting after the first messenger speech, then twice more before the second messenger speech) and content (shared devotional chants to Artemis).⁵⁶ While the names may be borrowed from Paul's authentic epistles, Acts' sequence of vignettes runs parallel to the adventures of Orestes and Pylades: a pair of Greek-named men travel together (Timothy and Erastus; 19:22); then a pair of Greek-named men and travel companions are arrested and dragged away together before they apparently escape (Gaius and Aristarchus; 19:29–20:1). This latter group recalls the capture and escape of Orestes and Pylades and illustrates the common dramatic theme of protagonists avoiding human sacrifice or mob execution.⁵⁷ It may also illumine

Middle Ages (ed. Ingo Goldenhard and Martin Revermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010) 313–34.

⁵⁶ No slavish imitation, the frenzied chants of the Ephesian crowds demanding execution in Acts are satirized inversions of the laments of the female Greek chorus about human sacrifices. See the table below for specific references.

⁵⁷ Cf. esp. the attempts to put Thecla to death in the arena and the wild beasts as analogous of Iphigenia's near sacrifice in Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, 45. Cf. also the case of another sacrificial virgin in Courtney J. P. Friesen, "Dying Like a Woman: Euripides' Polyxena as Exemplum

the reception of 1 Cor 15:32 in Acts, whose editor may have interpreted Paul's statement that he had "fought beasts in Ephesus" as a life-threatening situation from which he narrowly escaped. It could also echo the Ephesian lynching of Clitophon in Achilles Tatius, where the protagonist considers himself another innocent Orestes-like victim.⁵⁸ As in the novel, the backdrop in Acts of the holy city of Artemis would have enhanced such readerly interpretations.

The Euripidean theme of friendship is similarly revisited. Paul, his disciples, and the Asiarchs together enact dramatic roles of fidelity and self-sacrifice in the mold of Orestes, Pylades, and Iphigenia. In the play, the two deeply faithful friends have an extended back-and-forth dialogue in which each pledges willingness to die for the other, only for the other to refuse that option (*IT* 680–704). Paul's eagerness to save his companions at Acts 19:30 conveys an equally strong friendship bond. The self-sacrificial courage of both Orestes and Pylades is collapsed into Paul's singular purpose: "desiring to go into the populace" (βουλομένου εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν δῆμον) to die in solidarity with or in place of Gaius and Aristarchus. The dramatic roles of the mutually protective friends are also replayed by Paul's anonymous "disciples" who "would not permit him" (οὐκ εἶψιν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταί) to die (19:30). The Asiarchs next play the part of Iphigenia protecting her friends, delivering a message to Paul in the middle of the drama (19:31)—a moment matching the pivotal place of the famous letter scene in *IT* and its centrality in representations and retellings of her story. The Asiarchs who warn Paul "not to give himself to the theater" (19:31) may also echo Iphigenia's insistence that her Greek kinsmen not die but instead follow her plan of escape.

The dramatic negotiation of Greek versus non-Greek identities is also evident, especially in the so-called Alexander *intermezzo* (aptly so named by scholars) in Acts 19:33–34, which has long remained a puzzle.⁵⁹ *IT* and its broader dramatic, literary, and religious contexts suggest several decoding options. It may illustrate how Paul and his friends are saved by a Hellenistic Jewish kinsman, just as Orestes was saved after being recognized by his Greek sister in Taurica. Alexander had tried to "make a defense to the assembly" (ἀπολογεῖσθαι τῷ δήμῳ) (19:33), but because "they recognized that he is Judean" (ἐπιγνόντες δὲ ὅτι Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν), he is chanted down by the crowd (19:34). Similarly, Iphigenia gives a defense of her plan in a dialogue with King Thoas (*IT* 1153–1223), is eventually recognized as loyal to her fellow Greeks (1284–1419), and is thereafter pursued by an enraged Taurian army (1422–1434). A potential imitative inversion of *IT* could be that, while Alexander was "being pushed forward by the Judeans" (προβαλόντων αὐτὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων) (19:33)—thus hastily and perhaps dangerously revealing his identity as an ethnic-

between Philo and Clement of Alexandria," *GRBS* 56 (2016) 623–45.

⁵⁸ The "dragging in" of Gaius and Aristarchus to the theater to kill them may well evoke Attic Halae's Artemesian Tauropolos ritual of mock sacrifice described in *IT* 1446–1461. About this ritual, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 59, 152.

⁵⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 577–78; Schnabel, *Acts*, 807.

religious minority—the secret of Iphigenia’s true identity and loyalties was kept safe by the female chorus of her fellow exiled Greeks (*IT* 1056–1074). The abrupt introduction and disappearance of this character could also evoke Alexander the Great, whether recalling his spread of Greek culture among Jews, or, more likely and more ominously, the burning of the Ephesian Artemesium in 356 BCE on the very night of his birth.⁶⁰ The stress on Alexander’s (Hellenized) Jewish identity, if pictured positively, could demonstrate that some Jews could out-Greek Greeks, while some Greeks, like some Jews, were acting more like barbarians than Greeks. To put it differently, it could illustrate that ethics and civilization transcend facile labels of ethnicity and geography, a point also made by Clitophon in Achilles Tatius and a main theme in *IT*. Yet another way to read the Alexander *intermezzo* is to show how misguided were Jewish attempts to find common cause with traditional Roman religionists in sanctioning mob violence against *christiani* in defiance of Roman authority. Still another possibility, given the imitation of Alexander legends in the Matthean infancy narrative, is that Acts here evokes Jesus as a Jewish Alexander who threatens the Artemis cult centered in Asia Minor.⁶¹

Taken together, the imitations of *IT* in Acts 19:21–20:1 *press a sophisticated satirical critique of mob justice as akin to the barbarism of human sacrifice*.⁶² Here it should be noted that Euripides’s *IT*—which itself enacts a Hellenic critique of barbarism and human sacrifice—was regularly retold and satirized in both philosophical and novelistic texts.⁶³ Of special note: Juvenal’s critique of Egyptian animal worship specifically connects *IT* with the Ephesian Artemis cult.⁶⁴ Achilles Tatius makes a similarly critical connection, when Clitophon likens Ephesus to Scythia.⁶⁵ The retelling of *IT* to parody Ephesian barbarism is crucial to Acts but certainly not unique to it.

These appropriations likely shed light on the place of 1 Cor 15:32 in Acts. That Paul had described himself as having “fought beasts in Ephesus” (ἐθριομάχησα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ) sometimes raises the specter of discrepancy in readings of Acts as history or travelogue. But what we have here is far more likely art imitating art, and more

⁶⁰ About this Alexander birth legend, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 657.

⁶¹ Regarding the imitation of Alexander’s birth legends (esp. that of Plutarch’s *Vita Alexandrini*) in the Matthean infancy narrative, see Richard C. Miller, *Resurrection and Reception in Early Christianity* (Routledge Studies in Religion; New York: Routledge, 2017) at 124–26.

⁶² See Jeffrey M. Tripp, “A Tale of Two Riots: The *synkrisis* of the Temples of Ephesus and Jerusalem in Acts 19–23,” *JSNT* 37 (2014) 86–111. Tripp traces out the close, sequential parallels between the riots Paul faces in Ephesus and Jerusalem, esp. at 93–94. The contrasting conclusions highlight that the people of Jerusalem act even more barbarously than those of Ephesus in regard to disrespecting Roman authority; see 103–5.

⁶³ Lefteratou, “Rebranding Iphigenia,” 131. See also Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, 86–87, 123, and Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, 45–46.

⁶⁴ Juvenal, *Sat.* 15.115–119. Frayer-Griggs, “The Beasts at Ephesus,” at 476, notes the place of *IT* in Juvenal’s critique of Egyptian animal-worship, yet he does not even mention Iphigenia by name, only “Agamemnon’s daughter.”

⁶⁵ Achilles Tatius 8.2.3. Plutarch, *Pel.* 21, critiques human sacrifice with reference to Agamemnon and Iphigenia in *IA*. See Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, 37–38.

specifically, satire expanding satire. Acts dramatizes the clever Pauline critique of Artemis as the goddess of wild beasts.⁶⁶ Acts may recall Juvenal, but it almost certainly borrows Paul's satirical jab, an antetext that now inspires a new, ringing indictment of the Ephesians—the keepers of the most illustrious cult of Artemis in the Roman Empire—as hastily duped into the role of the hapless, barbaric Taurians of Euripides's *IT*. The *synkrisis* of wisdom and folly—both within character development and between characters—is a hallmark feature of classical drama.⁶⁷

Once we recognize the thoroughgoing intertextuality of vocabulary, plot, geographic-cultic settings, characterization, dialogue, action sequences, and themes, several additional aspects of word choice and reception history also brim with possibility. The clever transitional wordplay between the “god-fallen” (τοῦ διοπετοῦς) statue in 19:35 and “haste” (προπετῆς) in 19:36 may punctuate the central movements of *IT*. The name Erastus (Ἐραστός) in 19:22 may derive from the name of the “city treasurer” (ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως) mentioned in Rom 16:23, but here it likely also evokes and puns on the name Orestes (Ὀρέστης).⁶⁸ Thus, the pairing of Erastus with Timothy—Paul's most faithful companion throughout his letters—casts Timothy as a new Pylades, the archetypal faithful friend of Euripidean drama in antiquity.⁶⁹ The reference to “the Asiarchs” (τῶν Ἀσιαρχῶν) in 19:31 could also be a coy double entendre, not just to provincial magistrates or imperial cult priests in Ephesus, but also to Iphigenia's priestly identity as well as her backstory as the royal daughter of Asia's mythic conqueror, Agamemnon.⁷⁰ The Vulgate translation of διοπετής as *iovisque prolis* (“descendant/offspring of Jove”) could nod to *IT*, since that drama connects the “god-fallen” statue with Artemis as the descendant of Zeus and with Iphigenia herself as having descended from a heavenly cloud into Taurica.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Morna D. Hooker, “Artemis of Ephesus,” *JTS* 64 (2013) 37–46; Frayer-Griggs, “Beasts.”

⁶⁷ On the dramatic dimension of wisdom and foolishness, see Friesen, “*Paulus tragicus*,” e.g., at 829 in relation to *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the *Bacchae*.

⁶⁸ MacDonald finds many similar mimetic wordplays with names within the Gospels; see *Gospels and Homer*, 10–13. For scholarship on the identity (or identities) of three Erastus references in the New Testament, and the relevance of roughly contemporaneous inscriptions, see John K. Goodrich, “Erastus of Corinth (Romans 16.23): Responding to Recent Proposals on his Rank, Status, and Faith,” *NTS* 57 (2011) 583–93.

⁶⁹ The Greek word ἐραστής means “lover,” “admirer,” or “adherent.” See *LSJ*, s.v. ἐραστής. In antiquity, the love between Orestes and Pylades was commonly seen as more than platonic friendship. See, e.g., Lucian, *Erotes* 47 and Augustine, *Conf.* 4.6, both quoted in Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia*, 107–8. Given the etymology of the name and its intertextual indebtedness, Erastus and his pairing with Timothy may suggest a positive homoerotic interpretation. Regarding the paradigmatic status of the friendship of Orestes and Pylades, see esp. Lucian, *Tox*.

⁷⁰ *LSJ*, s.v. Ἀσιάρχης, “priest of the Imperial cult in the province of Asia,” citing *IG*12(3).531, 14.2405, *OGIS*525.8 (Halic.). One might also read Paul's Asiarch friends as a nod to Paul standing among the famous horde of Asia's conquerors, not just Agamemnon, but also Hercules, Dionysus, and/or Alexander.

⁷¹ Barrett, *Acts*, 2.936, finds the Vulgate here “surprising.” Wycliffe's translation followed the Vulgate, “the child of Jupiter,” as did the Douay-Rheims, “Jupiter's offspring.”

■ Conclusion: The Jig Is Up

Throughout our analysis, we have seen numerous ways in which *IT* intertexts significantly improve on the interpretability of otherwise difficult or puzzling matters in Acts. The sum effect of its Ephesian saga is a powerful mytho-religious dramatization of and sophisticated satirical confrontation with the historical and sociopolitical predicament in which *christiani* in Asia Minor found themselves during and after Pliny's precedent-setting correspondence with Trajan, with its description of the accused as engaged in Bacchanalia, disruptors of local cultus, endangered targets of mob violence, and ultimately offered refuge in citizenship, aristocratic connections, and orderly legal proceedings under Roman authority.⁷²

In the face of the growing body of evidence demonstrating the influence of Greek drama on Acts, both classicists and New Testament scholars should reflect, *quo vadis?* Treating the Acts of the Apostles—mainly by dint of a prologue written in an historiographical register that also reframes the canonical version of Luke—as if it were a prolonged generic exercise in contemporaneous eyewitness reporting or itinerary recording is now indefensible. Debates in the commentary literature, so often mired in religious-partisan divides about genre, historicity, and unknown sources, should adjust and focus on the creative reworking of known sources/models, and not merely the still-evolving letters of Paul or the Gospels. Such sources must include the most popular and influential texts of the time, including Greek epic, philosophy, history, hymnody, and drama. Along with Euripides's *Bacchae*, his *Iphigenia among the Taurians* must also be added to the list of notable Greek dramatic influences on Acts. As an imitation and transformation of *IT*, Acts achieves its own religious and cultural dramatic heist of epic proportion. These evocations of *IT* are only part of the evolution of the narrative of Acts around a larger, coherent Orestean plot.⁷³

⁷² See Bilby, "Pliny's Correspondence" and Phillips, "How Did Paul Become a Roman 'Citizen'?" Both are cited approvingly in Shelly Matthews, "Does Dating Luke-Acts into the Second Century Affect the Q Hypothesis?" in *Gospel Interpretation and the Q Hypothesis* (LNTS 573; ed. Mogens Müller and Heike Omerzu; London: T&T Clark, 2018) 243–63, at 248.

⁷³ As our article about the *Orestes*, the *Oresteia*, and the Acts of the Apostles (currently in preparation) will show, based on our research presented at the Celtic Conference in Classics at Coimbra in 2019 and the Society of Biblical Literature conference at San Antonio in 2021.

■ Appendix: Acts 19:21–20:1 and *IT* Compared Sequentially

Acts 19:21–20:1	<i>Iphigenia among the Taurians</i>
“Paul was set in the spirit to travel through Macedonia and Achaia” (ἔθετο ὁ Παῦλος ἐν τῷ πνεύματι διελθὼν τὴν Μακεδονίαν καὶ Ἀχαΐαν) (Acts 19:21)	Orestes was “driven by the furies” (Ἐρινύων ἡλαυνόμεσθα) “wandering all over Hellas” (περιπολῶν καθ’ Ἑλλάδα), and directed by Apollo to travel from Argos to Taurica and back (<i>IT</i> 77–92)
Paul sends a pair of Greek men, Timothy and Erastus (Ἐραστον), to embark on a journey (Acts 19:22)	Apollo sent a pair of Greek men, Pylades and Orestes (Ὀρέστης), to embark on a journey (<i>IT</i> 77–122)
Previously: “a man in whom there was an evil spirit” (ὁ ἄνθρωπος . . . ἐν ᾧ ἦν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ πονηρὸν) subdued and wounded a group of men (Acts 19:16)	Analeipsis: Orestes wounds a group of cattle with a sword, “thinking such would ward off the Erinyes” (δοκῶν Ἐρινύς θεὰς ἀμύνεσθαί τάδε) (<i>IT</i> 296–299)
A local silversmith (Demetrius), acting on personal vengeance, reports how Paul has threatened his trade (Acts 19:24–27) and gathers a group of his fellow artisans against Paul to have him executed (19:25)	A local herdsman (the first messenger) reports how Orestes slaughtered his cattle (<i>IT</i> 295–302) and how he led the group of cowherds and others to capture Orestes and Pylades and bring them to the king (301–334); he also appeals to Iphigenia’s own personal vengeance as a basis for slaughtering them (334–339)
Paul is suspected as intent on “taking down” (καθαιρεῖσθαι) Artemis “from her majesty” (τῆς μεγαλειότητος αὐτῆς) (Acts 19:27)	Orestes and Pylades are intent on taking down and stealing a statue of Artemis (<i>IT</i> 85–92); Iphigenia later joins this mission (989–1006), forms a plan (1030–1055), and accomplishes it (1056–1400)
Demetrius ascribes his attempt to kill Paul to Artemis and her defense (Acts 19:27)	The savage Taurians ascribe their human sacrifices to Artemis (<i>IT</i> 236–391); Iphigenia disagrees with this interpretation (385–391)
The Greek Ephesian crowd chants unified praise to Artemis aimed at mob execution (i.e., human sacrifice) (Acts 19:28)	The exiled Greek chorus chants a unified lament recounting human sacrifices to Artemis (<i>IT</i> 393–455, esp. 401–406)
The “city is filled with confusion” (ἐπλήσθη ἡ πόλις τῆς συγχύσεως) (Acts 19:29)	Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades are consumed with confused questions about past events, identities, and coming actions (<i>IT</i> 467–911); Iphigenia laments their “house thrown into confusion” (ᾧ συνταραχθεῖς οἶκος) (557)
The people “rush together into the theater” (ὄρμησάν τε ὁμοθυμαδὸν εἰς τὸ θέατρον) (Acts 19:29)	The chorus together enters onto the theater stage and remains there until the end of the play (<i>IT</i> 118–end)

<p>Two Greek men, Gaius and Aristarchus, “travel companions” (συνεκδήμιους) of Paul, are dragged into the theater for execution (Acts 19:29)</p>	<p>Two Greek men, Orestes and Pylades, future travel companions of Iphigenia, are arrested, to be sacrificed in the temple (<i>IT</i> 238–339); later, they are led away from the temple in shackles to prepare for their execution (1153–1223)</p>
<p>Paul “wants to go into the populace” (βουλομένου εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν δῆμον) to die, but “the disciples don’t let him” (οὐκ εἶων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταί) be the one to die (Acts 19:30)</p>	<p>Orestes and Pylades both want to be the one to die and counsel each other against being the one to die (<i>IT</i> 680–704)</p>
<p>“Some Asiarchs . . . being his friends” (τινὲς . . . τῶν Ἀσιαρχῶν, ὄντες αὐτῷ φίλοι) “send to him a message” (πέμψαντες πρὸς αὐτὸν παρεκάλουον) that convinces Paul against going to death in the theater (Acts 19:31)</p>	<p>Iphigenia (daughter of Asia’s conqueror), treating Orestes and Pylades as fellow Greeks and friends, writes and delivers a letter that convinces them against going to death (in the context of a theatrical drama) (<i>IT</i> 727–792)</p>
<p>“Some shout one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most did not know why they had come together” (ἄλλοι μὲν οὖν ἄλλο τι ἔκραζον· ἦν γὰρ ἡ ἐκκλησία συγκεχυμένη καὶ οἱ πλείους οὐκ ᾔδεισαν τίνος ἔνεκα συνεληλύθεισαν) (Acts 19:32)</p>	<p>Even after Orestes receives the letter, the confused dialogue continues until Iphigenia realizes Orestes is her brother (<i>IT</i> 793–826); previously, there was confusion during and after the trial of Orestes in Athens (967–978); Iphigenia’s plot throws the king and city into mass confusion (1153–1419)</p>
<p>“The voice became one from all [of them], as for two hours they cried out, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians’” (φωνὴ ἐγένετο μία ἐκ πάντων ὡς ἐπὶ ὥρας δύο κραζόντων· μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων) (Acts 19:34)</p>	<p>The chorus, speaking in unison, gives two long chants (<i>IT</i> 1097–1153; 1234–1282), first a lament initially focused on Artemis (1097–1105), then a praise to Apollo (1234–1282); Iphigenia prays multiple times to Artemis (1082–1088; 1230–1233; 1391–1405)</p>
<p>A representative scribe’s words (apparently) liberate two male prisoners while warning against barbarian mob killings (Acts 19:35–40)</p>	<p>A representative scribe’s (Iphigenia’s) words liberate two male prisoners (<i>IT</i> 727–1223), while the second messenger summons Thoas to a barbarian mob killing (1284–1419)</p>
<p>Ephesus is confirmed as the rightful “temple-guardian” (νεωκόρον) of Artemis and “what fell from god” (τοῦ διοπετοῦς) (Acts 19:35)</p>	<p>Iphigenia commands the “temple-guardian” (ναῶν πολωρὸς) not to approach Orestes and Pylades (<i>IT</i> 1227); a Greek female chorus of “temple-guardians” (ναοφύλακες) participate in Iphigenia’s plot (1284); Argos, not Taurica, is confirmed as the rightful temple-guardian of Artemis and her “god-fallen” (διοπετές) statue (977–978; see also. 87–88, 1383–1385)</p>

<p>The legal scribe warns the populace to “be restrained and not do anything hasty” (κατεσταλμένους ὑπάρχειν καὶ μηδὲν προπετὲς πράσσειν) (Acts 19:36)</p>	<p>King Thoas summons “all citizens of this barbarian land” (ὅ πάντες ἄστοι τῆσδε βαρβάρου χθονός) to “run” (δραμεῖσθε) and “hasten to chase down these godless men” (σπεύδοντες ἄνδρας δυσσεβεῖς θηράσατε) (<i>IT</i> 1422–1430)</p>
<p>The wise legal scribe defends the two men from being “temple-robbers or blasphemers of our goddess” (οὔτε ἱεροσύλους οὔτε βλασφημοῦντας τὴν θεὸν ἡμῶν) (Acts 19:37)</p>	<p>Athena, goddess of wisdom and law, defends the two men against charges of temple-robbery and blasphemy (<i>IT</i> 1435–1445)</p>
<p>The two men are apparently not killed in the theater (Acts 19:37–41)</p>	<p>Athena institutes the mock sacrifice of men as a legitimate way to honor her (<i>IT</i> 1446–1461); Orestes is released because of disagreement during his trial in Athens (1469–1472; earlier 967–978)</p>
<p>An official “dismissed the assembly” (ἀπέλυσεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν) (Acts 19:41)</p>	<p>King Thoas dismisses the citizen army (1475–1485)</p>
<p>Because of the wise official, the people’s dangerous “uproar” (θόρυβον) “is stopped” (παύσασθαι) (Acts 20:1)</p>	<p>Athena commands the king and people “to stop pursuing” (παῦσαι διώκων) Orestes and accept his divine mission (<i>IT</i> 1435–1445); Thoas “will stop” (παύσω) the army and ships (1484–1485)</p>
<p>Paul and his disciples safely escape (under divine protection) (Acts 20:1)</p>	<p>Orestes, Pylades, and Iphigenia safely escape under divine protection (<i>IT</i> 1446–1461)</p>
<p>“After sending the disciples and encouraging [them], after saying farewell, Paul left to go to Macedonia” by sea (μεταπεμψάμενος ὁ Παῦλος τοὺς μαθητὰς καὶ παρακαλέσας, ἀσπασάμενος ἐξῆλθεν πορευέσθαι εἰς Μακεδονίαν) (Acts 20:1)</p>	<p>Thoas speaks: “I will send” (πέμψω) the Greek women home, as he bids farewell to Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades, who leave by sea for Argos (<i>IT</i> 1475–1485)</p>