

Drama by Jane Lumley.

HOPKINS, Lisa <<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9512-0926>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/29594/>

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

Citation:

HOPKINS, Lisa (2024). Drama by Jane Lumley. In: PENDER, Patricia and SMITH, Rosalind, (eds.) The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing. Palgrave Macmillan. [Book Section]

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Drama by Jane Lumley (née Lady Jane Fitzalan), 1537-1578

Lisa Hopkins, Sheffield Hallam University, UK. L.M.Hopkins@shu.ac.uk

Abstract

At some point in the early 1550s, Lady Jane Lumley, daughter of the Earl of Arundel, translated Euripides' play *Iphigenia at Aulis* into English, becoming both his first English translator and the first known Englishwoman to write a play. Although her achievement has sometimes been scorned and her grasp of Greek derided, recent scholarship has provided new evidence for her competence and shown that the play offers a powerful meditation on the fate of Lumley's cousin Lady Jane Grey. It also introduces new implications and emphases not present in the original, including an interest in the concept of the commodity and Arthurian overtones. Lumley's translation may also have influenced a play possibly commissioned by her widower to greet James VI and I to Newcastle, and it continues to be performed.

Keywords

Translation, sacrifice, Greek tragedy, Lady Jane Grey, Nonsuch Palace, closet drama

Introduction

At some point in the early 1550s, Lady Jane Lumley, daughter of the Earl of Arundel, translated Euripides' play *Iphigenia at Aulis* into English. It is, as Stephanie Hodgson-Wright notes, "both the earliest extant piece of drama in English by a woman and the earliest known English translation of a play by Euripides" (Hodgson-Wright 2004, 326; the article includes a reproduction of part of the MS (British Library MS Royal 15 A ix. 94v-95r) which shows Lumley's beautiful clear handwriting). Its subtleties have eluded some critics. In a recent article Robert S. Miola declares that "Despite some felicities, Lumley frequently errs, leaves

out much, shrinks the conflict to ‘trouble’, and domesticates the women in the play” (Miola 2020, 293). Donald W. Foster, excerpting part of the play for inclusion in his *Women’s Works, Volume 2: 1550-1603*, was also airily dismissive of it, declaring that “Lumley’s wooden *Iphigenia* resists critical and psychoanalytic exegesis” and that she deliberately refrained from any kind of personal intervention in the text: “a compliant translator, she submits herself wholly, like a child-bride, to the authority of her received text” (Foster 2014, 24). In fact, he does not concede that she was even a competent translator, since “Lumley’s Latin texts of Isocrates and her English text of *Iphigenia* register no acquaintance with the Greek originals” (Foster 2014, 24); according to Foster, she was only pretending to know Greek in order to please her father. To complete the dismantling of her authorial persona, he insists on calling her Joane, which he declares is “pronounced *ZHO-an*” (Foster 2014, 25; how does he know?). It is true that Jane Lumley does not always call herself Jane; she signed her dedication to her father “Joanna Lumleya,” apparently taking Joanna for the Latin form of Jane (though the tomb erected for her by her husband calls her Jana), and as a result she is sometimes referred to as Joanna rather than Jane. Joanna will not have been what people actually called her at the time, but Joanna Lumley is a fine, dashing name, and carries a delicious connection to the glamorous actress who played Purdey in *The Avengers*, while Jane was raised to honour by Jane Austen; Joane pronounced Zho-an, a name that no other English writer has borne before or since, does not have the same appeal.

Biography

Jane Lumley, born Jane Fitzalan c. 1537, was the eldest daughter of Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, and his wife Lady Katherine Grey, whose brother Henry Grey was the father of Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days’ Queen. She and her sister Mary (who became the first wife of Thomas Howard, fourth Duke of Norfolk) received an unusually good education for girls,

as did their cousins the Grey sisters. At some point in 1550 Jane Fitzalan married John, Lord Lumley, a university friend of her brother's who was probably three or four years older than she was, and thus became Lady Lumley. The couple lived initially at Lumley Castle in Durham but then moved to Arundel's new home at Nonsuch Palace. Jane Lumley bore three children, but none survived infancy and she herself died on 27 July 1578. Her husband lived until 1609.

Work

As well as dismissing Lumley as a translator, Foster is also not very interested in when *Iphigeneia* (Lumley's spelling) was produced, observing merely that "During the first years of her marriage, she undertook a series of classical translations, which she prepared as gifts to the Earl of Arundel, in bound manuscripts, for his personal library" (Foster 2014, 24). The manuscript is headed *The doinge of my Lady Lumley dowghter to my L. Therle of Arundell*, suggesting that it postdates her marriage to John Lumley. Trudie Messent observes that Jane's father only came by the Euripides text three years after that: "Arundel acquired Archbishop Cranmer's library in 1553, which included Euripides' Greek play *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and Erasmus' Latin translation" (Messant, n.d.). The really interesting thing to know, however, would be whether the translation was completed and presented to Lumley's father before or after 12 February 1554, because although we cannot be sure *when* exactly Lumley chose to do this, we can be reasonably confident about *why* she did: she was surely responding to the sad story of her first cousin Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days' Queen, who nominally ruled England from 10 to 19 July 1553, and who was executed on 12 February of the following year.

Jane Grey had never expected or wanted to be queen, and indeed she had initially been explicitly excluded from the succession in the first draft of King Edward VI's will, which had left the crown to "the Lady Jane's heirs male." But the dying boy changed that wording to "the Lady Jane and her heirs male," leading Lady Jane, at 16, to be bundled into power by a coalition of noblemen only to be deposed by Edward's half-sister Mary I and eventually beheaded along with her husband Guilford Dudley. The death of a virtuous and scholarly young girl whose only fault lay in her birth moved many at the time: Bess of Hardwick, who had been a member of the Grey household, kept a picture of Lady Jane in her bedroom throughout her life (Lovell 2005, 432), and Diane de Poitiers, mistress of the French king Henri II, wrote to her friend Guillemette de la March lamenting the execution of Lady Jane Grey, telling her "that she had just had news of 'the poor young Queen Jane'. She could not but weep, she said, at the death of this 'so gentle and accomplished princess'" (Marshall 2006, 68). Hodgson-Wright notes that even Queen Mary herself did not want her cousin to die, and suggests that "Given the reluctance of Mary I to order Jane Dudley's execution (a decision eventually forced upon her by Wyatt's rebellion), it is possible to detect a double protest in Lumley's translation: against the death of her cousin and the otherwise male-dominated political context that obliged Mary to consent to it" (Hodgson-Wright 2004, 329).

One of those complicit in the execution of Jane Grey was her uncle by marriage, Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, father of Lady Jane Lumley. The doomed Iphigeneia of Lumley's translation, condemned to death by her own father Agamemnon with the collusion of her uncle Menelaus, is a transparent stand-in for the doomed nine days' queen (e.g. Pollard 2017, 49); Alison Findlay calls the play "a text that revivifies the past in order to confront the emotional consequences of betrayal and loss" (Findlay 2014, 134), and Patricia Demers suggests that in order to understand Lumley's translation we need to "braid domestic and

political contexts” (Demers 1999, 2). Lumley’s is a version of the play which is even more interested in women than the original; Tanya Pollard notes that she significantly expands the role of Clytemnestra, who provides much of the emotional focus (Pollard 2017, 49-50), and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright observes that Iphigeneia (like Jane Grey) remembers her sisters before she dies (Hodgson-Wright 1998, 135). Marta Straznicky points out that Arundel’s library included works reflecting “The humanist concern with the status and education of women” (Straznicky 2004, 22), and Diane Purkiss argues that “In giving his daughter a strong classical education, the Earl of Arundel was not giving her a voice so that she might embark on a career as a writer or express herself fluently. He was buying a commodity ... To have a daughter able to read Greek was figuratively to stand near the throne” (Purkiss 1999, 29). It is true that Lumley’s translation advertises her knowledge of Greek; Carla Suthren has recently offered new evidence that she was reading and responding to the Greek alongside Erasmus’ Latin, and notes too that “Her use of Erasmus has historically been seen as a failing, but in fact it establishes her work as actively engaging with wider contemporary receptions of Euripides” (Suthren 2020, 74); it is also a sign of an actively applied humanist education. It is also true that Lumley’s play implicitly identifies the ability to read Greek as a rare and valuable accomplishment; one of the things which causes Agamemnon grief is that he has taken so much care over Iphigeneia’s upbringing, and he laments “Trulye daughter the more wittely you speake, the more you troble me” (Lumley 1909, ll. 608-9). This may additionally draw attention to the fact that the ability to translate Greek was also an accomplishment of Lady Jane Grey (Plowden 2003, 46-7), and was thus one of the skills lost with her death. Elizabeth I, who was sent to the Tower by Queen Mary four weeks after Jane Grey had been executed there, followed Jane Lumley in translating a play by Euripides, although we do not know which.

Jane Lumley's translation not only turns Euripides' heroine into Jane Grey; it also introduces other new implications and emphases. Achilles reports that when he protested against the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, he was told that he was only saying that because he was in love with her, and "I did preferre myne owne pleasure, aboute the co[m]modite of my cuntry" (Lumley 1909, ll. 1124-5), and later Iphigeneia herself tells her mother Clytemnestra that "I was not borne for your sake onlie, but rather for the co[m]modite of my cuntry" (Lumley 1909, ll. 1185-7). Although it did not yet carry quite all of its modern connotations of capitalism and global trade, the word "commodity" already meant a thing that could be bought; in *The Comedy of Errors*, Antipholus of Syracuse, walking through the streets of Ephesus, notes that "some offer me commodities to buy" (Shakespeare 1972, 4.3.6). Iphigeneia implicitly recognises her own status as object, but she also contests it by claiming agency in her fate, which restores her to subjectivity: Trudie Messent observes that "In *Iphigeneia*, the prose narration of events leading up to the sacrifice of the heroine appears straightforward, but is instead subtly gendered: it develops over the course of the play from an emphasis on filial duty, told by predominantly male voices, to an increasing emphasis on self-determination, told by a heroic female voice" (Messent n.d.).

A second suggestive word is "deed." Achilles calls Agamemnon's proposed sacrifice of Iphigeneia a "cruell dede" (Lumley 1909, l. 818), and Clytemnestra says Ulysses "hath taken uppon him a wicked dede, seinge he will defile him selfe with the daunger and deathe of my daughter" (Lumley 1909, ll. 1153-4). "Deed" has the feel of something from an Arthurian romance, an impression underscored by the chivalrous attitude of Achilles, who would have been willing to put himself forward as a squire of dames had it not been for Iphigeneia's voluntary acceptance of her sacrificial role. Achilles' question "Do you not see a greate companie of harneste men?" (Lumley 1909, ll. 1140-1) also seems to take us closer to

medieval knights than ancient Greek warriors, as too does the fact that Menelaus threatens the messenger with a mace (Lumley 1909, l. 228), and in this the translation perhaps takes some colour from the place where Jane Lumley was almost certainly living at the time when she made it, Nonsuch Palace. Messent notes that “*Iphigeneia* is written on paper with a distinctive ‘glove and five point flower’ watermark, known to have been available at Nonsuch Palace, where Lady Lumley was chatelaine for her father from 1557” (Messent n.d.), and Marion Wynne-Davies has argued that the play could even have been staged there, particularly connecting Lumley’s choice of the Latin rather than the Greek name for the goddess Diana to the Diana fountain at Nonsuch (Wynne-Davies 2007, 74). Nonsuch was one of the wonders of Tudor England because of its elaborate decorative stucco work; Roy Strong notes that a visitor named Anthony Watson, writing in the 1580s, observed of the decoration, ‘everywhere there are kings, caesars, sciences, gods’ (Strong 1990, 143). As the mention of kings and caesars suggests, Nonsuch was a house that spoke specifically of male power: Simon Thurley observes that “Nonsuch was a house for the King and his riding household ... It was the residence expressly built for the King’s private entertainment, and this accounts for the lavishness of its decoration” (Thurley 1993, 63), while “The Queen ... had only a single room as her privy lodging on the south front” (Thurley 1993, 65).

The original purpose of Nonsuch had been to serve as a hunting-box for Henry VIII, and as Nicola Tallis notes, the park at Bradgate, where Jane Grey grew up, “was well stocked with deer” (Tallis 2016, 44). Perhaps this tinges Lumley’s choice of word when she translates the animal into which the goddess Diana turns Iphigeneia as “a white harte” (Lumley 1909, l. 1370). The original Greek applies only two adjectives to the deer (*elaphos*), *megiste* and *oreidromon* (big and mountain-running) (Euripides, n.d.); in Philip Vellacott’s Penguin Classics translation this is “a large deer” and “a mountain deer” (Euripides 1972, 425).

“Hart” is another word with the flavour of Arthurian romance, and the white hart of the grail quest represents Christ; but this is not its only meaning, and the white hart of the Wilton Diptych (where it appears as the badge of Richard II) is worn by the angels attending on the Virgin Mary. In a rare acknowledgement that an aspect of Lumley’s text might actually be of interest, Foster suggests that Iphigeneia too is connected to the Virgin Mary: “Lumley’s Iphigenia is in part Greek heroine, embracing her fate, and part Virgin Mary at the Annunciation, yielding up her body as a service of devotion (as in the Latin version by Erasmus)” (Foster 2014, 25), and there is certainly a very firmly Christian ring to the Chorus’s assurance that Iphigenia is “in heauen” (Lumley 1909, l. 1393), a concept wholly foreign to the Greece of Euripides. Indeed Deanne Williams suggests that Lumley’s play is “less like a Greek tragedy and more like a saint’s life” (Williams 2020). Perhaps, though, the image of the white hart might remind us of not just one but both parts of the Wilton Diptych, connecting Iphigeneia/Jane Grey not only to the Virgin but also to Richard II, the last undisputed king of England before the Wars of the Roses, and thus slyly hinting that she is royal as well as sanctified.

Jane Lumley died in 1578, but she was not forgotten. Foster notes that “In 1596, her husband erected a tomb for her at Cheam, Surrey” (Foster 2014, 24); the tomb shows Nonsuch, with some of the decoration visible, and includes the Fitzalan horse. John Lumley may also have remembered her later. At some point in the early seventeenth century, an otherwise unknown playwright called Anthony Brewer wrote a play called *The Lovesick King*, set nominally during the reign of King Canute although the subplot centres on a Newcastle merchant named Roger Thornton who lived during the fourteenth century. Although it was not published until 1655, M. Hope Dodds argues that it was certainly written for one of James I’s two visits to Newcastle in 1603 and 1617. She considers 1617 the likelier date, since there would not have

been much time to prepare it in 1603 when James was in the city from 9 to 13 April on his way south after the death of Elizabeth (Dodds 1924, 164); however I think the earlier date is the more probable, because the play seems likely to have been commissioned by John Lumley, whose home at Lumley Castle King James visited on 13 April 1603 (when he saw portraits which included those of Jane Lumley and Jane Grey) (Wynne-Davies 2007, 63-4).

John, Lord Lumley (d. 1609), whose autograph signature appears on the first leaf of the manuscript of *Iphigeneia*, was both a direct descendant of Roger Thornton (whose only child had transmitted his whole fortune to the Lumleys) and a coal-mining magnate, and much is made in the play of the importance of coal to Newcastle's prosperity. John Leland recorded that

Roger Thornton was the richest merchant ever to dwell in Newcastle. He lived in the time of Edward IV, and built St Katharine's Chapel, the town hall, and an almshouse for poor men, which he sited next to Sandhill Gate within the town, a little below Newcastle Bridge and right on the bank of the Tyne. His daughter and heiress married into the Lumley family, and greatly increased their possessions; the island [?] and almost all the land they own in Yorkshire and Northumberland, was inherited from Thornton.

(Chandler 1993, 340)

The fact that the Lumley family seat was at Chester-le-Street would have given Lumley a motive to commission a play extolling Newcastle, and his almost fanatical interest in his own ancestry (of which he made such great play that James I is said to have remarked "I didna ken Adam's name was Lumley", Wagner 1978, 42) is likely to have been the prompt for the inclusion of Thornton. (He also had a reason to be interested in history because his sister Barbara married the antiquarian Humphrey Lhuyd.)

But if the family history and the idea for the play came from John Lumley, the prompt for using drama to speak of public events and influence opinion surely came from Jane. Canutus' sister Elgina, who falls in love with Alured, the future Alfred the Great, utters a resounding defence of her own identity when, pleading for Alured to be spared, she argues that "If all the English perish, then must I, for I (now know) in England here was bred, although descended of the Danish blood, [the] King my Father, thirty years governed the one half of this famous Kingdom, where I, that time was born an English Princess" (Brewer 1655, sigs B2r-v).

Brewer's Elgina, an unhistorical character with little to do in the plot except speak these lines and then sacrifice herself, might well glance at Lumley's Iphigeneia, who, in her capacity as stand-in for Jane Grey, could also have made the claim that she too was born an English princess. Elgina, like Jane Lumley herself, will very soon die leaving no children behind her, but she has at least claimed a name, a voice, and a status, just as Lumley's Iphigeneia claims her own identity as a daughter rather than having it foisted upon her.

Conclusion

Iphigeneia also continues to speak in its own right. The play is usually assumed to be a closet drama, but that need not necessarily have been so; Deborah Uman intriguingly suggests that "if the play were staged as part of an educational exercise, Lumley might even have read the part of Iphigeneia" (Uman 2011, 63), and Hodgson-Wright notes that "a successful production took place in the United Kingdom in 1997" (Hodgson-Wright 2004, 328). Since then it has been staged as part of an international conference in Auckland (Williams 2020) and in 2014, the year in which the Tower of London moat was filled with red poppies to commemorate the outbreak of World War I, the Rose Company's production clad its heroine in "shining bright red silk" (Findlay 2014, 134) and helped audiences to feel anew the

power of the story (<https://therosecompany.posthaven.com/>; see too <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/sidneys-of-penshurst/0/steps/108062>).

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Tom Bishop, Alison Findlay, Diane Purkiss, Carla Suthren, Deanne Williams, Ramona Wray and Marion Wynne-Davies.

References

- Brewer, Anthony. 1655. *The Love-sick king, an English tragical history with the life and death of Cartesmunda, the fair nun of Winchester*. London: Robert Pollard, 1655.
- Chandler, John. 1993. *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England*. Stroud: Sutton.
- Demers, Patricia. 1999. "On First Looking into Lumley's Euripides." *Renaissance and Reformation* 23, no. 1 (Winter): 25-42.
- Dodds, M. Hope. 1924. "'Edmund Ironside' and 'The Love-Sick King'". *The Modern Language Review* 19, no. 2 (April): 158-68.
- Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*. n.d. Online:
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0108%3Acard%3D1578>
- Euripides. 1972. *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In *Orestes and Other Plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Findlay, Alison. 2014. "Reproducing *Iphigenia at Aulis*." *Early Theatre* 17 (2): 133-48.
- Foster, Donald W. (Ed). 2014. *Women's Works, Volume 2: 1550-1603*. Salem, MA: Wicked Good Books, 2014. 24-5.
- Hodgson-Wright, Stephanie. 1998. "Jane Lumley's *Iphigenia at Aulis: Multum in parvo*, or, less is more." In S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in*

- Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998*, 129-141. London: Routledge.
- Hodgson-Wright, Stephanie. 2004. "Jane, Lady Lumley, Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (c. 1554)." In Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (eds), *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700*, 326-9. New York: Routledge.
- Lovell, Mary S. 2005. *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth*. London: Little, Brown.
- Lumley, Jane. 1909. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, translated by Lady Lumley, edited by Harold Hannyngton Child. Oxford: The Malone Society.
- Marshall, Rosalind K. 2006. *Queen Mary's Women: Female Relatives, Servants, Friends and Enemies of Mary Queen of Scots*. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Messent, Trudie. n.d. "The Tragic Heroine as 'cōmoditye': *Iphigeneia* by Lady Jane Lumley and *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* by Paul Delaroche." Online: https://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/sites/open.conted.ox.ac.uk/files/resources/Create%20Document/22_Messent_pp213_227%20corrected.pdf
- Miola, Robert S. 2020. "Early modern receptions of *Iphigenia in Aulis*." *Classical Receptions Journal* 12 (3): 279-98.
- Plowden, Alison. 2003. *Lady Jane Grey*. Stroud: Sutton.
- Pollard, Tanya. 2017. *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Purkiss, Diane. 1999. "Blood, sacrifice, marriage: why *Iphigeneia* and *Mariam* have to die." *Women's Writing* 6 (1): 27-45.
- Shakespeare, William, 1972. *The Comedy of Errors*, edited by Stanley Wells. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Straznicky, Marta, 2004. *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strong, Roy. 1990. *Lost Treasures of Britain: Five Centuries of Creation and Destruction*.
London: Guild Publishing.
- Suthren, Carla. 2020. "Iphigenia in English: Reading Euripides with Jane Lumley." In
Alessandra Petrina and Federica Masiero (eds), *Acquisition through Translation:
Towards a Definition of Renaissance Translation*, 73-92. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Tallis, Nicola. 2016. *Crown of Blood: The Deadly Inheritance of Lady Jane Grey*. London:
Michael O'Mara Books.
- Thurley, Simon. 1993. *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England*. New Haven: Yale University
Press.
- Uman, Deborah. 2011. "'Wonderfullye Astonied at the Stoutenes of Her Minde': Translating
Rhetoric and Education in Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Iphigeneia*." In Kathryn
M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (eds), *Performing Pedagogy in Early
Modern England: Gender, Instruction, Performance*, 53-64. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Wagner, Anthony. 1978. *Heralds and Ancestors*. London: British Museum.
- Williams, Deanne. 2020. Introduction to Jane Lumley's ca. 1553 translation of Euripides'
"Iphigenia in Aulis" at the Auckland Symposium on "Female Experience in Early
Modern England," 6-7 November 2020. Online:
[https://mediastore.auckland.ac.nz/uploaded/project/CMS_ARTS/public/11-
2020/47e2f9bec5ba44a7a340ea8b94a995d2.preview](https://mediastore.auckland.ac.nz/uploaded/project/CMS_ARTS/public/11-2020/47e2f9bec5ba44a7a340ea8b94a995d2.preview)
- Wynne-Davies, Marion. 2007. *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English
Renaissance: Relative Values*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.