In this paper I wish to examine three claims that ultimately bear on the question of the date of Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Martin Cropp has contributed much to the understanding of the play and to the dating of Euripidean plays generally, and I am hopeful that this examination will offer a modest contribution to subjects of interest to him. None of the three claims can be argued to a point of certain proof. I believe in each case, however, that I can show that the claim is more likely to be true than not, and that as a result we should allow a wider range of possible dates for Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, from 419–413, and not restrict ourselves conceptually to the more usual range of 414 or 413. The claims I wish to argue are as follows:

1. The metrical evidence for the date of *IT* is not as secure as is generally believed.
2. Sophocles’ *Chryses* was produced after 414.
3. Euripides’ *IT* was produced before *Chryses*.

The first claim is methodological, but it insists on a greater chronological range than is often allowed. The second and third claims go against received understanding, but I believe their likelihood can be demonstrated. The result of the discussion points to an important aspect of the literary relationship between Sophocles and Euripides in the late fifth century.

I

The evidence for the date of Euripides’ *IT* is of two types: metrical and circumstantial. There are three principal arguments employing metrical

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1 So Cropp 2000: 60–62, and many others before him.
evidence. Trochaic tetrameters appear in one passage of the play, *IT* 1203–1233. This is a metre used in all the extant plays usually dated after 419, which therefore includes *HF, Tro.* (produced in 415), and *IT*, but not *El.* or any earlier play. Assuming that this criterion is accurate, the only conclusion able to be drawn would be that the play was written after *El.* While Drew-Bear in his discussion of the metre allows his assumptions about the dates of *El.* and *IT* to obscure his argument, he nevertheless notes that there is a division between its employment in *IT* and *Hel.* (produced in 412): “*Helen* . . . differs from [*IT*] in the employment made of trochaic tetrameters, with respect to which *Helen* attaches itself to an entirely different category . . .”

Euripides’ use of the so-called “choriambic dimeter” is similar. Itsume concludes his analysis as follows: “a line can be drawn between *IT* (or *Ion*) and *Hel.* Till *IT* Euripides uses such standard types of ‘chor dim’ as are found in Corinna or ‘eupolidean’ . . ., while his new device is found especially from *Hel.* onwards” (Itsune 1982: 69). This too is phrased with the presumption of a close date between *IT* and *Hel.*, and obscures the real force of the evidence. Two of Itsume’s observations about his classification of the metre are relevant: a “‘Tribrach opening’ (Group II) is commoner in later plays” and “Unusual resolved forms (Group III) appear also in later plays” (1982: 68). However, there are more tribrach openings among “choriambic dimeters” in six plays than in *IT* (*HF, Ion, Hel., Or., Bacch.,* and *IA*; the metre is not used in *Tro.*), and there are more examples of Itsume’s types III, IIIa and IV in eight plays than in *IT* (*Supp., HF, El., Hel., Or., Bacch.,* and *IA*). I do not want to press this evidence beyond what it can bear, since in many cases the sample size is very small. However, it would be fairer to suggest that the evidence of the “choriambic dimeter” pointed to a date for *IT* closer to *Supp.* and *HF* (both probably produced before *Tro.*) than to *Hel.*

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2 Cropp 1988: 1–li argues that the date of *El.* was “between 422 and 417, with 420/19 the most likely” (li).


4 The name, though common, is misleading, for reasons discussed by Itsume 1982: 59 n. 5, and passim.

5 See the table at Itsume 1982: 63.