

Iphigenia: The Mythical Character With Many Dimensions

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Abstract:

The study titled “Iphigenia: The Mythical Character with Many Dimensions” uses the ‘Reader Response Theory’ to critically analyze the texts such as Aeschylus’ (c. 525 – c. 456) *The Oresteia* (458 BCE) and Euripides’ (c. 480 – c. 406 BC) *Iphigenia in Tauris* (414 BC – 412 BC) and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (408 – 406 BC). The multiple interpretations of the legend of Iphigenia and the projection of the character of Iphigenia in multifaceted ways is the focus of the study. The study analyzes the reception of the texts from the points of view of the readers who visit the texts in different periods across a spatial dimension. The study analyzes the role of the readers in terms of continuing signification by generating multiple meanings of the texts. The study shows that the texts are written for the theoretical ‘implied reader’ and they engage in a dialogue with the actual readers. The actual readers respond to the texts by making meaning/s out of the texts. The readers’ subject positions or critical positions are analyzed in the study as they are shown to bestow their ideological frameworks on the texts. The readers’ ideological frameworks are a result of the unconscious archives of ideas that psychologically condition them thereby changing the politics of reception across a temporal dimension and a spatial dimension. The readers are shown to capitalize on the loopholes in the texts to generate meanings. The study highlights the critics’ own subjective and affective reaction/s to a text to understand it. The study exhibits that each reader belongs to an interpretive community conditioned by time and space. The study displays that the readers rewrite different texts by interacting with the texts, influencing texts by their own identities, focusing on the meaning/s of the texts, and imposing their subjectivity on the texts. The study displays that Iphigenia is a mythical character with many dimensions because of the visitations of several readers to the literary texts and the subsequent derivations of meanings that have made the character of Iphigenia more nuanced.

Introduction

In the age of Poststructuralism, literary criticism is preoccupied with the generation or production of meanings. Reader Response Criticism foregrounds a process of reading a literary text that is shared by many of the American and European critical modes which have come into prominence since the 1960s. The reader response critics understand a text as a system of interpretations derived from the psychological orientations and responses of readers when they read through it. The text becomes an activity in the hands of a reader. The critics of the Reader Response Theory think that the meanings of a text are a result of the production or creation of the individual reader. The same critics differ in their opinions regarding the causal factors that mold a reader's responses, distinguish between the objective facts given in a text and the reader's subjective responses to them and differ in their conclusions about some readings being mis-readings as controlled to a certain extent by the text itself and in establishing anyone reading as the right one (paraphrased from Abrams 268-269).

Literature has two significant aspects such as the author who creates it or brings it into existence and the reader who receives and reads literature. The readers may be critics who subscribe to a critical position thereby analyzing the text from a particular perspective whereas they may be mere readers with a subject position thereby reading the text from a particular point of view which may or may not be political. The readers are foregrounded as they bestow meanings on the texts and the authors too are given the position of the readers once the texts have been produced and are launched into the domain of the public. Many readers bestow their ideological framework on the texts to interpret them. The readers rewrite the texts by attributing newer meanings to them and they are active participants who recreate texts during the process of reading the texts. The interpretations provided by the readers are all level players in a domain, but they must be validated by the texts to which they belong. The continuous signification is a reality that makes a work a text. A text is alive and is in a process that evolves over a period. Reading is subjective. It is a meaningful activity that is pleasure-giving and there is no normative standard of reading.

This critical theory analyzes groups of readers over temporal and spatial dimensions. The legend of the "House of Atreus" has been read and used by various readers in other texts thereby exhibiting intertextuality. The legend forms the raw material for the texts which may be used as a bricolage created by different authors or playwrights who are the bricoleurs. The texts that are discussed here basically are comprised of the recycled legend of the "House of Atreus".

Reader

The German critic, Wolfgang Iser, analysed the process of reading by making phenomenology the basis of it which in turn was dependent on Roman Ingarden's description of general reading (paraphrased from Abrams 269). Iser uses his theory to analyze many texts, especially prose fiction. Iser thinks that the literary text as a product of the writer's intentional acts controls the responses of the readers but contains several "gaps" or "indeterminate elements" that the readers fill in with their creative participation by combining it with the textual materials before him/her (paraphrased from 269).

The reader is an individual who reads a text and interprets the meaning of the text or bestows meaning on the text according to the ideological framework of him/her, therefore, continuing the signification. The legend of the "House of Atreus" has been used by various Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides etcetera as well as by other Greek dramatists in their plays. The dramatists are primarily readers who later became authors of the different plays based on the "House of Atreus". The reader dramatists have used various forms of the legends in their plays thereby exhibiting bricolage, that is, the legend served as recycled raw material in the plays produced by them. They have interpreted the legend variously and generated multiple meanings thereby using those meanings to write different plays based on it. According to the legend, Agamemnon is the grandson of Pelops, the son of Atreus, and the brother of Menelaus while Clytaemnestra is the daughter of Tyndareus and the elder sister of Helen. Agamemnon and Menelaus, the sons of Atreus, inherited the kingdom of Argos and married the Spartan Clytaemnestra and Helen respectively. Clytaemnestra bore three children to Agamemnon – Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes. When Paris of Troy seduced Helen and eloped with her the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus organized a great expedition to win her back but when they gathered at Aulis they were held back by wind and weather.

Calchas the prophet divined that this was due to the anger of Artemis, the ancient Greek goddess of the hunt, the wilderness, the wild animals, the nature, the vegetation, the childbirth, the care of children, and the chastity. Artemis could be appeased by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the eldest daughter of Agamemnon. Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia under public pressure and sailed for Troy with his forces. He captured and destroyed Troy in the tenth year of the war but when he came back home, he was murdered by Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, his cousin. Aegisthus was the son of Thyestes, the brother of Atreus, and he took revenge on Agamemnon because Atreus had murdered Thyestes' children and served them in a dish to Thyestes concealing the fact to him in a clever way. Thyestes unknowingly ate their flesh. This was done by Atreus to punish

Thyestes as he had seduced his wife. Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus were later murdered by Orestes for their sin, but Orestes was haunted by the Furies (spirits of retribution) for matricide, was later absolved of his sin and was freed by the Furies from the goddess Athene. Thus, various versions of the legend have been used in the plays written by Greek dramatists after they have been interpreted variously by them. These plays have further given rise to various interpretations of the legend through these plays.

Response

The experience of reading is an evolving process of expectation, exasperation, recapitulation, remodeling, and contentment (paraphrased from Abrams 269). Jonathan Culler in *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) stated that French Structuralist Criticism, "is essentially a theory of reading" that aspires to "specify how we go about making sense of texts" (Culler viii, 128). Jonathan Culler mentions in his book that this kind of criticism emphasizes upon literary traditions, ciphers, and directives which have been incorporated and assimilated by readers to structure their reading experiences so that they aid and constrain the partially creative activity of interpretation. The Poststructuralist turned Structuralist Roland Barthes in his later theory encouraged a mode of reading that opens the text to an endless play of alternative meanings. The Poststructuralist movement of Deconstruction is a theory of reading that subverts the Structuralist view that interpretation in some part is controlled by linguistic and literary codes and instead proposes a "creative" reading of any text as a play of "differences" that generates innumerable mutually contradictory but totally "undecidable" meanings. American proponents of reader response types of interpretive theory usually begin by rejecting the claim of the American New Criticism that a literary work is a self-sufficient object invested with publicly available meanings whose features and structure should be analyzed without "external" reference to the responses of its readers. In radical opposition to this view, these newer critics turn their attention exclusively to the reader's responses, they differ greatly, however, in the factors to which they attribute the formation of these responses (paraphrased from Abrams 270).

The readers or listeners who are individuals with a subject position or critics with a critical position had read the legend or listened to the legend and derived the meaning/s of the legend by utilizing their ideological frameworks to respond to the legend thereby exhibiting their subjectivity. The legend of the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis has many variations. In the Homeric poems, the sacrifice at Aulis and even the name Iphigenia are not mentioned. There the daughters of Agamemnon are named Chrysothemis,

Laodice, and Iphianassa. The name Iphigenia means "strong-birth" and was originally the name of the goddess of childbirth later identified with Artemis. Some like Aeschylus in *Agamemnon* (458 BC), Sophocles (c. 497 – c. 406) in *Electra* (Date Unknown) and after them, Lucretius, Horace, and many others assert that the blood of Iphigenia had been shed and she died at Aulis. Euripides followed another version where Diana or Artemis having pitied this young princess carried her off and borne her to Tauris now when the maiden was about to be sacrificed the goddess had replaced her with a hind or another victim of this kind. The Roman poet Ovid (43 BC – 17 AD) included the same version in his *Metamorphoses* (8 CE). There is a third version to the legend of Iphigenia which says that a princess of this name had been sacrificed but she was the daughter of Helen and Theseus, the mythical king and founder-hero of Athens. Helen had not dared to recognize her daughter because she had not declared to Menelaus that she had been secretly married to Theseus. Pausanias cites both evidence and testimony as well as the names of the poets who agreed with this version of the legend. Stesichorus (circa 630 - 555 B.C.) was one of the Greek lyric poets native to today's Greek Calabria. The dramatists such as Euripides and Aeschylus have read the legend and created their interpretations from which they have molded plays that have tailored the legend to foreground their ideology/ies through them.

Implied Reader

Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) introduced and described the concepts of "implied author" as well as "implied reader" in relation to literary criticism. The implied reader according to "Reader Response Theory" is the position of a hypothetical reader to whom the text is addressed and whose subject position or critical position is different from that of an actual reader. The implied reader is expected to respond in specific ways to the "response inviting structures" of the text while the actual reader is influenced and determined by his or her subject position or critical position. Wolfgang Iser establishes the distinction between the "implied reader", a theoretical entity created by the text to respond to the "response-inviting structures" of it, on other hand the "actual reader" is the one whose responses are a result of the subject or critical position occupied by him/her due to his or her accumulated private experiences (paraphrased from Abrams 269). In both cases, however, the process of the reader's consciousness constitutes both the partial patterns and the coherence or unity of the work as a whole (paraphrased from Abrams 269). Consequently, literary texts generate multiplicity of meanings. The establishing of limits, providing the provision of rewriting a text by the reader, and allowing the rejection

of some readings as mis-readings are a result of the author's intentional acts (paraphrased from Abrams 269-270). Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 B.C.) consists of three tragedies and a satyr-play such as Euripides' *Cyclops* (412 or 408 BCE) but only the tragedies are extant. *Cyclops* is a play based on an episode from the *Odyssey* (8th or 7th Century BC) about the followers of Dionysus who are half human and half animal in form. This play *The Oresteia* deals with the return of the victorious Agamemnon to Argos then his murder by his wife Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. Since Orestes murders Clytaemnestra he is a matricide, he is chased by the Furies and is later freed from them by the goddess Athene. In *The Oresteian Trilogy*, Iphigenia does not appear, but her figure is there in the background of the events that are taking place during the plays. Iphigenia's presence in the trilogy is like the presence of Helen as both are not directly shown to be present in the plays but they have a direct bearing on the events of the plays. In *The Oresteian Trilogy*, Aeschylus shows that Iphigenia has been sacrificed at the altar of Artemis to appease the goddess as advised by Calchas so that the Achaean army could sail for Troy. In the play, Agamemnon, the chorus describes the sacrifice of Iphigenia thereby showing her to be an innocent, passive, helpless supplicant who becomes a victim of circumstances without any fault of hers. Richmond Lattimore in his "Introduction" to *The Oresteia* says that Aeschylus introduced Iphigenia's story remotely in the play *Agamemnon* so that her sacrifice could be shown as one of the reasons for which Clytaemnestra murdered Agamemnon thereby mixing some motive of justice into the treachery of Clytaemnestra. On the other hand, George E. Dimock, Jr. in the "Introduction" to *Iphigenia at Aulis* says that Aeschylus by bringing in the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia wants to show the cruelty and callousness of a parent and, that of an army which would sacrifice a child for the sake of a military conquest. Both viewpoints are indeed valid as Aeschylus used Iphigenia in the trilogy to give a motive to the action of another character and to illuminate the nature of other characters as well as that of a nation like Greece.

"Each complex of imagery has its origin in an idea or a concrete act" (Lebeck 74). Hence, the sacrifice of Iphigenia is one of the two events which is the point of departure for the image of murder as a ritual act that appears throughout *Oresteia* and therefore when Clytaemnestra after murdering Agamemnon is accused by the chorus, she links their metaphor of sacrifice to the actual sacrifice of Iphigenia as she wanted to tell them that they had no right to accuse her because they didn't accuse the man who sacrificed their child. This shows that Aeschylus used Iphigenia or the sacrifice of Iphigenia just to manage the plot of the trilogy and make it convincing. "Female characters, with the exception of Clytaemnestra, play an unimportant

part in the tragedies of Aeschylus" (Haigh 78). It is very true because we see that in The Oresteian Trilogy, the character of Iphigenia has been completely marginalized and her character has just been used to highlight other issues of importance. Although Iphigenia's character is eclipsed in the trilogy, she still comes out to be a scapegoat and a pitiable character. The emphasis of the chorus on her being young and female stresses on the fact that she was defenseless and vulnerable, an unwilling victim who was denied the one retaliation left to the powerless, the curse, that even her mother was able to release upon her son and murderer, Orestes. In the trilogy, Iphigenia is shown to be a passive victim sacrificed at Aulis while Orestes and Electra are shown to be active characters. Hence, Iphigenia as shown in the trilogy provides no basis for a conflict of conscience or action. The Oresteian Trilogy has feminist undertones. Aeschylus depicts the character of Iphigenia as a feminine character who sacrifices her life to honor the ambition of Agamemnon, her father. The character of Clytaemnestra, her mother, is depicted as a feminist character who avenges the death of her innocent victim daughter, Iphigenia, by killing Agamemnon, her husband, thereby rearing her head against patriarchy. Aeschylus creates The Oresteian Trilogy with a focus on the position of women in ancient Greece for the implied reader and projects a feminine character in the form of Iphigenia, a victim who is sacrificed and, a feminist character in the form of Clytaemnestra who avenges her daughter's death. "The picture of Iphigenia is not merely lovely and tearful beyond words; it is a marvel that this gloomy colossus of the stage should for a moment have excelled Euripides on Euripides' strongest ground; it is as if Michaelangelo had painted Raffaele's "Madonna of the Grand Duke" amid the prophets and sibyls of the Sistine Chapel" (Norwood 102).

Euripides depicts the cultural influence resulting from cultural exchanges through his plays based on Iphigenia and projects Iphigenia as a feminist character who stands up for her rights as conveyed to the implied author. He makes her perform several roles to perfection like that of the daughter and that of the sister despite doing a chequered role of an emancipated woman with contrary shades of femininity and feminist fervor. Euripides depicts the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Iphigenia in Tauris as a ritualistic act rooted in the Greek culture to appease the gods and the goddesses for their blessings. It is an omen that is a harbinger of good fortune. The worship of the goddess Artemis in her several forms in different cultures happened by sacrificing humans which shows the cultural exchanges that happened in terms of cultural practices between several cultures. In Iphigenia in Aulis, the character of Iphigenia has been given agency and reaches a new height as she wills her sacrifice to save Greece and becomes a martyr. Her character is given spiritual shades and she is

foregrounded as a brave character. Both Aeschylus and Euripides bring Iphigenia to the center stage of the power structure thereby subverting the binary opposition between man as an embodiment of positive values and woman as an embodiment of negative values. It may be seen as a response to the misogynistic trait of Greece.

Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* is a work of uncertain date produced around (414 – 412 B.C. approximately). The play bears striking similarities to *Ion* (414 – 412 BC) and *Helen* (412 BC). *Iphigenia in Tauris* is a melodrama or a romantic play as it begins in a tragic atmosphere and then moving through perils escapes to a happy end. Hence, H. D. F. Kitto calls this play a "tragicomedy". Philip Whaley (Harsh) in *A Handbook of Classical Drama* says that the tendency to write romantic plays during that period was due to the desire of both playwrights and audiences for a romantic escape from the chaos at Athens during the last years of the long Peloponnesian War. According to A. E. Haigh the play shows the inventiveness of Euripides as well as the casual and fantastic nature of mythological growth.

The human sacrifices that were made by the Greeks was a custom associated with the worship of Artemis Tauropolus who was also called Hecate and Iphigenia. It prevailed in many places but with the advance of civilization the practice disappeared in some places it was replaced by certain milder ceremonies. The practice of sacrificing humans was retained in many parts of Greece, especially at Halae and Brauron, two towns on the southeast coast of Attica. At Brauron and elsewhere there was Iphigenia (birth-mighty), at Halae there was the Tauropolus (bull-rider) but the wooden statue of the goddess from the past too was there; among the savage and scarcely known Tauri, people of Crimea, there was the heinous practice of killing shipwrecked strangers to offer to the maiden goddess. Lastly, there came Olympian Artemis. These goddesses were associated with the moon, with childbirth, and with sacrificing or redeeming the firstborn. When Greeks were introduced to this culture all the goddesses of that culture became a part of the cult of Artemis.

The similarity of Agamemnon's daughter's name, Iphigenia, with the names of the goddesses, associated her with the ancient form of worship, for example, she was considered to be goddess Artemis's priestess at Brauron, and she was identified with the goddess. Hesiod said that she was changed into Hecate and the Taurians declared that Iphigenia whom they sacrificed was Agamemnon's daughter. Hence, the play deals with the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon at Aulis from which she is rescued by Artemis who has taken Iphigenia to her shrine in the land of Taurians where she becomes the priestess of Artemis and every foreigner who came to Tauris was killed and sacrificed to Artemis for which the priestess had to perform the consecration. The ceremony was

watched over by Thoas, the king of Taurians. Orestes for his full expiation had been ordered by Apollo to steal the sacred image of his sister Artemis from the Taurians. With Pylades Orestes reaches Tauris and meets Iphigenia and they recognize each other. They plan to escape but fail and fall into the hands of Thoas. Athena intervenes and rectifies the situation, but the image of Artemis was taken to Halae and kept in a temple there. Iphigenia became a key bearer of another shrine of Artemis at Brauron thereby remaining in the divine realm of Artemis.

The sense of defeat and disappointment is constantly there in Euripides therefore he brings to the fore those who are weak, oppressed, despised, and misunderstood like women, children, slaves, captives, strangers, barbarians etcetera. The plays of Euripides are based on democratic principles and bring the peripheral entities to the center of the power structure. In the plays of Euripides, there is a feminist undertone so women as chief characters outnumber men, his choruses comprise women and the action in the plays is presented from the point of view of women. Euripides has given a feminist undertone to the character of Iphigenia and has provided agency to her. Hence, the central character of this play is a woman, that is, Iphigenia who is no mere sympathetic heroine as referred to in Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* but as Gilbert Murray says in his "Preface" to *Collected Plays of Euripides*, she is a worthy member of her great and sinister house; a haggard and exiled woman facing two conflicting emotions, intense longing for home and all that she had loved in childhood. Iphigenia has a bitter self-pitying rage against her murderers, Helen and Menelaus. She is shown to have a streak of bitterness and resentment against those who were responsible for her misfortunes and unhappiness like Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus, and Helen. She is also vindictive as she wants to take revenge on her enemies. Therefore, Ernst Howald does not seem to be justified in saying that the Taurian Iphigenia has stamped herself on human memory as the noblest of the Greek heroines. The "Taurian Iphigenia is conceived as a much less ethical figure than the Aulian one" (Hamburger 74). This is very much true, and the play seems to show a step in the dehumanization of this Greek woman who has been thrust into barbarism although she still suffers bitterly in the knowledge of her loss. A splendid figure of a woman, but one who is no longer gentle and completely humane. She is shown to be a clever woman as she contrives their escape from Tauris. The willingness of Iphigenia to invent and execute the deception of the king has sometimes been criticized as a blemish upon her character but in my opinion, it is an indication of her superior intelligence through which she at least tries to bring herself as well as Orestes and Pylades out of the difficult situation.

There is Greek "Humanitas" or feminine gentleness to be seen in her. She bitterly complains about her lot and about being forced to participate in human sacrifice. She is also a model of sisterly affection and friendship as she does her level best to save her brother and Pylades from being killed. In the play, Iphigenia is presented in an archaic and barbaric light, but she is a realistic figure. Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis was produced posthumously along with the Bacchae and Alcmaeon at Corinth about 405 B. C. Although Bacchae had been finished before the death of Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis had been left unfinished. The play is about the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon at Aulis to appease the goddess Artemis as advised by Calchas so that she grants favorable winds to the Achaean army for sailing to Troy. The play shows how Agamemnon summons Iphigenia to Aulis by promising Clytaemnestra that he would get Iphigenia married to Achilles. Later when Clytaemnestra accompanies Iphigenia to the army camp at Aulis she comes to know about the deceit of Agamemnon and tries to convince him to act contrarily after consulting Achilles who promises her that he would fight for Iphigenia if Agamemnon didn't listen to her persuasions.

Although Agamemnon faces a dilemma before killing Iphigenia, he has to commit the sacrifice as he is under public pressure but later, we see Iphigenia herself consents to give her life for Greece, and during the sacrifice she is rescued by Artemis who leaves a hind in her place at the altar. In the original form, the play concluded with the "deus ex machina" but later it was substituted by the narration of the sacrifice by a messenger within the confines of the plot of the play. H. D. F. Kitto calls the play melodramatic with no illumination and no catharsis to relieve and justify its cruelty hence Iphigenia is not slain. It is a new type of tragedy of Euripides. The character of Iphigenia as portrayed in Iphigenia in Aulis is different from Iphigenia of tradition as she is transformed from an unwilling victim to a true saint. In Aeschylus' Oresteia, Iphigenia is shown to be a victim, appealing for pity at the moment of her death but Euripides in this play, remolds the character of Iphigenia by giving her free will and hence she agrees to give her life as per the "divine will" and the will of the state. Thus, Iphigenia becomes a tragic heroine with a heroic dimension in the hands of Euripides. Käte Hamburger in From Sophocles to Sartre says that in the brief course of action, Euripides manages to draw a wonderful picture of the girl's development from the innocent happiness of childhood into a heroine who heroically accepts death.

Iphigenia changed from terrified despair to heroic self-devotion when she is acquainted with the reality that the fate of the entire Greece depends on her. This transition has been critiqued by Aristotle on the contrary A. E. Haigh states that the transition could

have been less abrupt although he does not find it to be unnatural. Even Philip Whaley (Harsh) finds the reversal to be melodramatic but undeniably powerful. Indeed, the reversal of Iphigenia is not unnatural as it is humanly possible to change one's mind suddenly and it is powerful as the reversal shows Iphigenia in a heroic light. Gilbert Norwood in his *Greek Tragedy* says that Iphigenia in this play is an ordinary girl who tramples down under her foot the agony of her father, the empty clamor of Achilles, her mother's undignified tremors, and her dread. This is the triumph of human nature and is very much true as we grieve for her anguish and triumph in her exaltation because we can identify with her. This identification is because of her strong psychological foundation. Hence, in this play, in a beautiful exchange with the maidens, Iphigenia is shown to exalt her upcoming death to a triumphant patriotic action the foundation of which is in her strongly accentuated love for her father. Therefore, she is projected as a dutiful and loving daughter who is ready to sacrifice even her life for her filial love.

Mary R. Lefkowitz in *Women in Greek Myth* says that female sacrifice in drama seems intended to demonstrate women's ability to be as courageous as men and as responsible for maintaining the values of a society. Hence, in this play, Iphigenia's character is shown to be as courageous and responsible as she decides to sacrifice her life not only to save Greece but also to prevent Greek women from being carried away by barbarians as Helen was by Paris. Her second major concern is for Achilles as she feels that he should not die for the sake of a woman and says that one man should live more than ten thousand women which is taken as strong evidence of Greek misogyny. In this play, Euripides portrays the Homeric heroes like Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Achilles to be mere human beings and contrasts their weaknesses with the moral strength of Iphigenia. Euripides dramatizes the most pathetic paradox of human life that ordinary human beings are mean and contemptible but at times they may rise to the glorious heights of generosity by committing self-sacrifice as done by Iphigenia in this play. Hence, Eric Segal calls Euripides a "poet of paradox". Euripides conveys a message to Athens through the patriotism of Iphigenia in the last desperate phases of the Peloponnesian War. The Aulian Iphigenia is conceived as an ethical figure, and she is shown to be much more ethical than the Taurian Iphigenia.

The character of Iphigenia has also been contrasted with that of Helen as Helen through selfish love brings travails and troubles upon the Greeks while Iphigenia by selfless sacrifice rescues the Greek expedition from futility and becomes a true savior of Greece. Iphigenia has also been contrasted with Clytaemnestra as Iphigenia loves her father despite his weakness and his intention to kill her

while Clytaemnestra hates her husband and will one day kill him when he returns from Troy as per the legend. Hence, Charles R. Walker in his "Introduction" to Iphigenia in Aulis states that all the three characters namely Iphigenia, Helen, and Clytaemnestra contrast one another. At the same time, Euripides makes Iphigenia identify with Helen because her consent to sacrifice her life for Greece makes her equally responsible as Helen is responsible for the Greek expedition to Troy, the fall of the city, and the miserable homecoming of the Achaens. In the play, the character of Iphigenia undergoes development as she is the only one in the whole tragedy who finds a way out of herself to the universal. She consents to die for an idea which is to bring about the victory of Greece over the barbarians. "This Iphigenia is not a very realistic creation for she is designed to serve a certain poetic, even moral purpose" (Snell 403). Hence, in this play, Iphigenia seems to be a fairy tale character and a symbol of youthful idealism.

Blank or Gap or Silence or Lacuna

A blank or a gap or a silence or else a lacuna in a text may be intentional or unintentional and the reader is expected to read the text in between the lines thereby exploring these blanks, capitalizing upon them and generating new meanings. The blanks lead to the generation of new meanings which sometimes undermine the stable foundations of the texts to create new foundations of the texts. The readers bring their ideological framework when they visit a text and the signification continues. George E. Dimock, Jr. is a critic with a critical position and thus derives meaning of the texts written by Euripides by capitalizing on the blanks that exist in the plays of Euripides. George E. Dimock, Jr. provides a reason for the sacrificial act of Iphigenia which is projected as a blank or gap or silence or else lacuna in the texts as the act has not been provided with a rationale. The reason for choosing Iphigenia for the sacrifice has also not been explained. Thus, according to George E. Dimock, Jr. Euripides in this play identifies the essential cause of aggressive war as "philotimia", that is, the urge to be thought superior and he finds that all the characters in the play have philotimia. He says that the character of Iphigenia too has the trait of philotimia as she is raised under the guidance of the heroic code and it induces her to think of the tragic sacrifice which will send the ships to Troy as her monument, her wedding, her children and as the meaning of her life though she knows that the meanest life is better than the most glorious death. It is not exactly true that the great sacrifice which Iphigenia decides to make is purely due to philotimia because it is difficult for a person to give her own life just for the cause of being admired. Moreover, in this case, Iphigenia had previously been reluctant to give her life but when

she changed her mind it must have been on the ground of some important cause which could not be based on a mere urge to be thought superior. In this case, George E. Dimock, Jr. fills in the blank in the texts regarding the sacrifice of Iphigenia by providing the reason for philotimia as the main propellant for driving Iphigenia to her sacrifice. Moreover, he states that Iphigenia is the chosen character for the sacrifice as she is said to have been raised under the guidance of a heroic code.

Affective Stylistics

Stanley Fish is the advocate of affective stylistics. Fish in his earlier exposition represented reading as a conversion of written words on a page into a time bound flow of real experience in an “informed” reader who has a “literary competence”. The anticipations of the reader while reading a text may be fulfilled when the text unfolds before him or her, or they may turn out to be mis-readings. But the meaning of an utterance according to Stanley Fish is not some final corrected result but the reader’s experience and the reader’s mistakes are part of the experience provided by the author’s language and form an integral part of the meaning of a text. Stanley Fish’s analyses of large-scale literary works were designed to show a coherence in the kinds of mistakes, constitutive of specific types of meaning-experience (paraphrased from Abrams 271).

The critic Stanley Fish described how literary critics may rely on their own subjective or affective reaction to a literary text to understand it. The focus is more on the reception of a text. The text is analyzed by studying the effect of the text on the readers and the subjective responses of the critics to the text. The legend of Iphigenia and the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides have been read by various authors, readers, and critics leading to a variety of interpretations and assigning of subjective responses to a text. Thus, there have been modern adaptations on the theme of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Jean Racine wrote a play called Iphigenia in 1674 which was modeled on Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis with certain changes in the plot. Iphigenia is the drama of a king being cornered in a difficult situation who is saved by a miracle at the last moment. The play has a happy ending. In the play, Racine introduces the character of Iphigenia who is the daughter of Helen and Theseus. In the play, she goes by the name of Eriphile whom Achilles is shown to have captured at Lesbos and sent to Mycenae. In Mycenae, she is befriended by Iphigenia (Agamemnon’s daughter) but Eriphile is jealous of Iphigenia as she too loves Achilles. In this play, it is her blood that is demanded by the goddess Diana and her original name seems to be Iphigenia. Hence, Eriphile was sacrificed which she deserved for her jealousy towards Iphigenia and for her secret wish to destroy Iphigenia. On the other

hand, Iphigenia is shown to be a very virtuous character who shows filial respect, absolute submission to paternal authority, and duty towards race and blood. Hence, Iphigenia is a foil to Eriphile who is dominated by vice.

Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is based on Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and it appeared in 1779. In this play, Thoas is shown to be a lover of Iphigenie and under her influence, he is shown to have abandoned the atrocious customs of the country but is still unable to win her affection, so he determines to avenge himself by restoring those ancient sacrifices. Orestes and Pylades become Thoas' first victims, but their identities are soon discovered by Iphigenie and they plan to escape. At the right moment Iphigenie is seized with compunctions unknown to the Greek heroine and refuses to deceive King Thoas despite his barbarity. Iphigenie discloses the whole secret to King Thoas, appeals, and persuades him to let them depart. In this play, the character of Iphigenia is of moral significance, noble, humane and sentimental, and is more ethical compared to the Greek heroine of Euripides.

Gerhart Hauptmann was the first to combine the Oresteia with the whole Iphigenia legend which he completely reshaped, and the tetralogy is known as *Atridentetralogie* consisting of *Iphigenia in Delphi* (1942) which was to become the last play of the tetralogy but was written first while the other three plays dealing with the events which had gone before were written later between 1943 and 1945 and they are *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Agamemnon Tod* and *Elektra*. In his work, Hauptmann follows the Roman mythologist Hyginus' legend of Iphigenia which shows how Iphigenia along with Orestes and Pylades brings the image of Artemis to Delphi where she confronts Electra, and after a few dangerous episodes, the sisters recognize each other and all four return to Argos. Hauptmann changes the ending as in his work Iphigenia does not return to the human world but by sacrificing herself retains her somber divinity. Through the end of the play, Hauptmann sends a cryptic and pessimistic message that the death and fear inherent in the Hecatean world has not been completely dissolved in the humane but it always persists and is ready to break out anew. Many other changes have been introduced in the plot of the work by Hauptmann. In Hauptmann's work, Iphigenia becomes a mythical symbol of the existential problems of human history. Iphigenia is shown to be at the same time an Apollonian figure as well as a Hecatean deity.

Interpretive Community

Stanley Fish introduced the concept of "interpretive community". An interpretive community is comprised of a group of readers who share the same language and reading conventions. The interpretive

communities are usually spaced across a temporal dimension and a spatial dimension. They are influenced by the unconscious archive of ideas of a certain period in a particular culture.

Stanley Fish's affective stylistics is one among many alternative modes of interpretation that his earlier writings urged his readers to undertake to interpret the texts. He proposed that each strategy of the community of readers in effect "creates" the features of the text that are objective in nature as well as "creates" the "intentions, speakers, and authors" of the text. Thus, there is no universal "right reading" of any text; the validity of any reading, will depend on the assumptions and the strategy of reading that he or she shares with other members of a particular interpretive community (paraphrased from Abrams 271).

Therefore, the readers such as Aeschylus, Euripides, Gilbert Murray, H. D. F. Kitto, Käte Hamburger, A. E. Haigh, Philip Whaley (Harsh), Gilbert Norwood, Mary R. Lefkowitz, Eric Segal, Charles Walker, Goethe, Gerhart Hauptmann, and George E. Dimock, Jr. are authors, readers and critics belonging to different interpretive communities across wide temporal and spatial dimensions. Each author, reader, and critic is conditioned by a different unconscious archive of ideas based on a time continuum and a spatial dimension which gives rise to the politics of reception that changes on a temporal and a spatial continuum creating interpretive communities. Hence, Iphigenia can be viewed as a multidimensional mythical figure whose various traits have been used and appropriated by the Greeks as well as modern dramatists to propagate their ideas. The modifications made in the legend of Iphigenia by various dramatists show her in a new light every time a play based on her character is published. The character of Iphigenia in Greek literature represents a feminist consciousness in the embryo as her character was exalted from being a marginalized figure in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* to an important figure who is powerful and as having command over her situation in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* thereby giving her a valuable place in Greek literature and later in world literature.

Interaction, Identity, Meaning as Event, and Subjective Criticism

The legend of Iphigenia engages in dialogue or establishes a communication with the authors, readers, and critics leading to a chain of signification that never ends generating multiple meanings and giving rise to new plays based on the legend and various adaptations of the legend which give rise to further meanings that are encoded in newer texts. The readers have a subject position or a critical position that comprises their identities and they project their identities onto the texts for signification. It happens in the case of the

legend of Iphigenia as there are several versions to it in the form of plays written by several dramatists at several points in time. The expression "meaning as an event" refers to the generation of meaning/s because of the interaction between the reader and the text.

David Bleich in *Subjective Criticism* (1978) undertakes to show that a text that is read objectively produces a response that is not based on the personality of the reader. Norman Holland does a psychoanalytical reading of the text and uses Freudian concepts to explain the responses of a particular reader. A text in literature is a projection of the fantasies that are produced by the unconscious needs and defenses, anticipation, and wish-fulfilling fantasies of the reader. The reader transforms the content of the fantasy, "which he has created from the materials of the story his defenses admitted," into a unity, or "meaningful totality," which is a part of the reader's interpretation of the text. The universal meaning of a text is not viable. The readers will agree on an interpretation of the text if their subject or critical positions are alike, and one is able to fit his/her recreation of the text to his/her distinctive responses (paraphrased from Abrams 270).

Harold Bloom in his theory of reading uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical concept by adapting it to the defense mechanisms that worked against the realization of the consciousness of repressed desires. He used this concept to describe the process of reading as the application of "defense mechanisms" of the author whose text is being read against the "influence" or threat to the reader's imaginative independence. Harold Bloom applies Freudian concepts in a more complex way than Holland. He arrives at a parallel conclusion that there is no correct meaning of a text.

The reader's subjectivity permeates the production of meaning/s about a text. The text is rewritten time and again when a reader visits the text. Each time the meaning related to the legend of Iphigenia has changed such as some plays describing ancient Greece, its societal structure, its cultural pyramid, the position of women in the society, Iphigenia representing women as victims, as warriors etcetera. The depiction of Iphigenia's sacrifice in ancient Greek society and culture makes her a victim but also illustrates the position of women in modern societies and cultures through a distancing effect. The depiction of Iphigenia as a woman with agency illustrates the emancipated women of modern times.

Conclusion

The character of Iphigenia has been attributed to different dimensions by different readers with their subjectivities thereby projecting the character with nuances. The text is susceptible to the visitations of

the readers to impart its novel meaning/s. Thus, the diversities in the character of Iphigenia. The capitalization of loopholes in the text by the readers gives newer dimensions to the text and may also lead to the undermining of the original textual foundation to pave the way for a newer one. The legend of Iphigenia becomes a malleable and ductile raw material that is used for the creation and recreation of newer texts by the readers thereby displaying bricolage. The meaning/s of the texts are functional on a temporal and a spatial dimension and are governed by the unconscious archive of ideas so Aeschylus portrays Iphigenia as a victim but Euripides portrays her as a feminine and a feminist character with agency. The modern adaptations make Iphigenia look still more modern. This further highlights the politics of reception. The external reference of the text is highlighted by the connections it may have with the external world.

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