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Rusudan Tsanava (Tbilisi)

RITUAL AND FOLK ASPECTS OF EURIPIDES' IPHIGENIA

The ritual of human sacrifice was reflected in several of Euripides' tragedies: Macaria is sacrificed in the *Heraclesidae,* Polixenes in the *Hecuba*, Erechtheus' daughters in the *Erechtheus*, Menoeceus in the *Phoenician Women*, Iphigenia in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and Orestes and Pylades are to be offered as a sacrifice in the *Iphigenia among Taurians*. The cases of sacrifice (or pseudo-sacrifice) are included in Euripides' other tragedies as well; the 'offered' characters are Phrixus, Alcestis, Evadne, Laodamea, Megara, Protesilaus, Heracles, Andromache and others. Certainly, human sacrifices are highly important plots for Euripides' dramas; it is the only theme in some of the tragedies and an indispensable element in others. The problem of human sacrifice in Euripides' tragedies has been covered in several research works and papers, which offer diverse explanations of why the theme is so 'popular' in Euripides' works. Some attribute the fact to the author's intention to exercise an emotional impact on the spectator; some believe the use of the sacrifice theme is a distinctive property of Euripides' dramatic art while others consider it an attempt to accentuate the moral concept. Part of scholars studies the scenes with regard to the history of religion and offering ritual. In the present paper, I will reconcile mentioned viewpoints with my own opinion and will focus on several important aspects: upon whose will the sacrifice is offered; how the offering ritual is performed and what function it acquires.

In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the Greeks army stays on the island of Aulis whether bound. (It is necessary to invoke 'good' winds. According to seer Calchas, Greeks will not come across any obstacles on their way to Troy provided Iphigenia is sacrificed to goddess Artemis (Eur. I.A. 89-93)).

The drama does not specify why Artemis requires Iphigenia as an offering. The reason is given in other sources: according to Proclus' *Chrestomathy* and Euripides' *Orestes*, note 658, Agamemnon boasted he was a better hunter than Artemis. According to Euripides' *Iphigenia among*

Taurians, Agamemnon promised the goddess he would offer as a sacrifice ὅ τι γὰρ ἐνιαυτὸς τέκοι κάλλιστον (20-1). Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* does not give a clear motivation for offering Iphigenia as a sacrifice.[1] As Calchas interprets it, Artemis is furious with the Atreides because they plan to destroy Troy. In Sophocles' trilogy, it is chiefly the chorus that narrates about Iphigenia (Aesch. Ag. 224-7).

The chorus sings αἴλινος (a funereal song), and Agamemnon speaks of the necessity to implement the divine will (Aesch. Ag. 205-17). All these symbols converge in the seer's vision, which regards the Atreides as vengeful eagles (kites).

Some scholars believe Euripides reversed the chorus part in Aeschylus' Agamemnon that deals with ἀπορία and ἄπλοια and turned it into a drama.

According to Euripides, after Clytemnestra and Iphigenia learned why they were asked to arrive in Aulis, their ways diverged. At first, they both tried to alter Greeks' decision, but later Iphigenia changed her mind. Apparently, Achilles' words compelled her to do so; the hero told the women how eager and impatient Greek warriors were to sacrifice Iphigenia. According to W. Smith, Iphigenia was not only liked Achilles but in fact, she fell in love with him; consequently, she sacrifices herself to the welfare and ambition of her beloved for the sake of love. Inspired with the desire to render her name perpetual, Iphigenia starts to resemble Achilles; the son of Peleus was killed likewise young and unmarried; however, he gained everlasting glory. M. McDonald, who writes that Iphigenia dies rather for the sake of love that for the idea, shares Smith's opinion. The scholar appreciates this as a new kind of heroism.[2] Hence, Agamemnon showed a great deal of shrewdness when he named Achilles as Iphigenia's 'match'. In fact, the 'lie' accentuates the equivalence between the mythic images of Iphigenia and Achilles. This correlation is a successful example of how a symbol and metaphor work in a fiction.

Iphigenia puts forward arguments for why she should be sacrificed. All the Greeks are staring at her. Whether they will have a chance to proceed with the campaign and assault Troy – it all depends on Iphigenia. Foreigners carried away a Greek woman (Queen Helen) and they should not get away with it. Iphigenia's life is common for all Hellenes (κοινόν) (belongs to Hellenes). Iphigenia will open the way for Greeks and will gain an unfading

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[1] About the versions of Iphigenia's sacrifice see: Schreiber H. M., Ifhigenies Opfertod: ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Tragikers Euripides, Diss., Frankfurt am Main 1963, 66-71.

[2] Smith W. D., Iphigenia in Love. In: Arktouros: Studies Presented to Bernard M.W. Knox, Berlin 1979; McDonald M., Iphigenia's Philia: Motivation in Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis, in: Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica, 63, 1990, 69-84.

name (1377-86). She does not wish to become an obstacle for hundreds of armed warriors who are ready to die for the sake of Hellas. Neither does she want Achilles to sacrifice his life to a single woman (1392-3) as εἷς γ' ἀνὴρ κρείσσων γυναικῶν μυρίων ὁρᾶν φάος (1394). If Artemis wills to take Iphigenia's body, let her have it; a mortal woman cannot thwart a goddess. Iphigenia will give away her body to Greece (1395-7). Iphigenia's follows these words' call: sacrifice myself and destroy Troy. That will be my enduring monument, my marriage, my children and my name (cf. Macaria's words from Euripides' *Heracles*, 591-2).

As a farewell, Iphigenia bids her mother what to do and what not to do. Clytemnestra should not cut her hair; her household should not wear black (1437-1448). They should rear Orestes to manhood (1459-61). Clytemnestra should not follow Iphigenia to the place of the sacrifice and should not mourn. Iphigenia wants to persuade her mother of the secret significance of her death. Such a death cannot induce sorrow. Iphigenia will not have a tomb. Artemis' altar will become her μνῆμα (1442-4). She wants women (the chorus) to sing a hymn to Artemis' glory, and Greek warriors should keep sacred silence (1467-9). Iphigenia asks for items that are necessary for an offering ritual: a basket (for grains of barley), some spring water, and bright fire; and together with her father, she walks around the altar from left to right:

οὐκ ἐῶ στάζειν δάκρυ.
ὑμεῖς δ' ἐπευφημήσατ', ὦ νεάνιδες,
παιᾶνα τἠμῇ συμφορᾷ Διὸς κόρην
Ἄρτεμιν· ἴτω δὲ Δαναΐδαις εὐφημία.
κανᾶ δ j ἐναρχέσθω τις, αἰθέσθω δὲ **πῦρ**
προχύταις καθαρσίοισι, καὶ πατὴρ ἐμὸς
ἐνδεξιούσθω βωμόν· ὡς σωτηρίαν
Ἕλλησι δώσουσ j ἔρξομαι νικηφόρον (I.A. 1466-1474).

This scene is followed by a change in meter, which indicates Iphigenia's exaltation. She has said earlier it is necessary to be obsessed with μανία in order to be able to wish for death (125). And truly, Iphigenia is gradually gripped with μανία. She tells her father to lead her to the altar and asks him to give her flowers and adorn her with a garland. She decorates the altar with her curls and washes her hands with the sacred water. She asks the women of Calchis to give glory to Artemis through a ritual dance around the altar (I.A. 1476-86).

After the women (the chorus) start dancing, Iphigenia addresses her fatherland. With her last words the virgin bids farewell to the daylight χαῖρέ μοι, φίλον φάος (1509).

The women of Calchis sing of the deeds that will follow Iphigenia's sacrifice; they sing about the ritual to be performed (1512-18). They glorify Artemis and accentuate her taking delight in human sacrifices (I.A. 1521-1525).

Exalted Iphigenia offers Greeks the way out of the deadlock. She sacrifices herself not for the sake of Helen but for the sake of common Hellenic interests. Therefore, she performs the role, which the goddess, the fate (τύχη) and the myth allotted to her. According to H. Foley, owing to Iphigenia's heroic decision, the myth reacquires its traditional direction and hence performs the function of *deus ex machina*. Such a behavior can be linked to the general tendency of drama, in which human beings behave under the impact of irrational impulses.[3]

Agamemnon's and Clytemnestra's ideas and appreciations of Iphigenia's sacrifice are not alike. Agamemnon and Iphigenia have exactly the same stand. In Agamemnon's mind, the only alternative for the offering ritual is to dismiss the army. However, Greeks are so eager to go to war that they will not give up. They will kill both Agamemnon and Menelaus, and sacrifice Iphigenia anyway. If Agamemnon flees to Argos, they will pursue him and destroy the city. Therefore, Agamemnon regards Iphigenia as a sacrifice to Hellas (1271-2). The tandem of the father and daughter suggests that Iphigenia's emotional links with her father are stronger and closer that with her mother.[4]

Unlike Agamemnon and Iphigenia, Clytemnestra rejects the explanation of the sacrifice she is offered. She believes Iphigenia is sacrificed for Helen's sake, which is unfair and altogether appalling (1167-9, 385, 485). She even suggests Greeks an alternative way: that is to offer Artemis Menelaus' daughter. Let Menelaus sacrifice his own daughter or find somebody else himself (1200-2). Or let Hellenes decide whose child to slay – Agamemnon's or Menelaus' (1198-9). Clytemnestra came to Aulis not to have her daughter killed for the sake of an unfaithful woman but in order to marry her to an honorable and brave man.

Euripides uses two words to denote the sacrificial practice: θύειν and σφάζειν. Θύειν is used more frequently and means to place a ritual offering on the altar of an Olympian god. Σφάζειν means to place a bloody offering on a fire (ἐσχάρα) to seek the favor of chthonic powers as well as of rivers, the sea and the earth. The ritual was held before going to war and the shed blood was believed to appeal to the underworld gods and dead heroes.

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[3] Foley H. P., Ritual Irony. Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides, Ithaca and London 1985, 66.

[4] O'Connor-Visser E. A. M. E., Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides, Amsterdam 1987, 122.

Although θύειν and σφάζειν differ in function and ritual sense, they sometimes overlap. They both are used in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Iphigenia's sacrifice to Artemis is related to a custom widespread in Phocis, where human sacrifice used to be offered to Artemis Tauropola. The same is true about Artemis Munichеia in Pyrreah.

Having considered the material collected from all of Euripides' tragedies, O'Connor-Visser concluded that although θύειν and σφάζειν are not identical, the difference is not as obvious in the tragedy as some scholars assumed it. According to O'Connor-Visser, the most important thing is that σφάζειν was practiced when the sacrifice involved throat cutting and blood oozing – i.e. the blood of the victim was spilt on the earth. Such an offering was intended for chthonic gods. But since every victim was to be killed before placing his/ her body on the fire so that its smell could reach gods, σφάζειν can be regarded as part of θύειν. The latter stands for a complete sacrificial ceremony.[5] Now let us consider several opinions on human sacrifice with respect to Euripides' tragedies.

P. Roussel studies the volunteer sacrifice practice in Euripides' tragedies (Macaria, Menoeceus, the Erechthides and Iphigenia). The scholar analyzes the artistic images against their general context and offers the following explanation: to liberate the country from a pending disaster (νοσεῖ), the deity requires a volunteer φαρμακός, whose blood, when spilt on the earth, will function as the purifier. In the classical period, criminals (slaves and cripples) were forced to act as farmakos and therefore the word acquired a negative implication. However, it was different in the earlier period (the primordial community), when the king (the priest, the leader) considered it his personal commitment to ensure the welfare of the people and in due time acted as a farmakos himself. He either performed a self-sacrifice ritual, or sacrificed his own child. In Roussel's opinion, the instances of deliberate self-sacrifice presented in Euripides' tragedies reflect that very custom. It is also important to mention the following detail: the assent of the victim freed the executioners from responsibility. This was provided for by Ancient legislation as well. In particular, if the victim forgave the murderer, the latter was not due to legal punishment. None of the vengeful daemons would ever disturb the murderers unless the victim was reluctant to accept death.[6]

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[5] O'Connor-Visser. Ibid. 191-5.

[6] Roussel P., Le Thème du Sacrifice Volontaire dans la Tragédie d' Euripide, Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire, 1922, 237-240. About the volunteer sacrifice of a young person for the welfare of his/ her own nation (people) in a critical period, see also Schmitt J., Freiwilliger Opfertod bei Euripides. Ein Beitrag zu seiner dramatischen Technik. Giessen 1921; Roussel P., Le thème du sacrifice volontaire dans Euripide, Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire, 1922, I, 225-40; Strohm H., Euripides. Interpretationen zur dramatischen Form, Zetemata, 15, Munich

H. Foley suggested an interesting assumption on Euripides' concept about volunteer sacrifice. According to the scholar, the tragedian was evidently fond of the folk motif that involved self-sacrifice of a youth. None of the surviving dramas by other tragedians develop the same theme. And what accounts for it is that youngsters (children) and women were out of the political life of polis. Therefore, their involvement in ritual was deemed as a successful effort to escape the political crisis incurred by the male (men). In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and other dramas the source for the survival strategy is a woman – the character whose outlook and believes were fostered by poetic traditions (ritual, marriage) and not by politics. Admittedly, women's participation in the life of a Greek polis was limited to religion where they were particularly active.[7]

H. Förs distinguished between the sacrifice dramas and Dionysian Sparagmos although they both picture an unparalleled state of spirit. According to Förs, in the Dionysian tragedies the characters with state authority are obsessed with ecstasy; while in sacrifice dramas weaker characters are gripped with enthusiasm that eventually presents them as extremely brave individuals – which they had never been before. According to the scholar, in the sacrifice dramas Euripides presents divine love: Macaria dies for the sake of his brothers, Menoeceus – for his native city, Iphigenia – for Hellas. Heroic self-glorification starts with self-sacrifice, as it is a true heroism when a person is ready to die and lives solely for the welfare of his people. Euripides refers to the sacrifice theme to show a powerful spirit in a weak body.[8]

As stated above, H. Foley dedicated a monograph to the study of the function of ritual in Euripides' dramas.[9] In the first part of the work, the scholar offers the viewpoints of ancient authors on the function of sacrifice. He sums up sociological and mostly structuralistic definitions regarding the setting and the function of sacrifice in Greek religious system and the Classical Greek culture. Foley's own observations are presented in the chapter called *Poetry and Sacrifice*. According to the scholar, tragedy should not be regarded as a consistent depiction of a ritual. In Euripides' dramas, ritual is the communication means between the man and the divine, the

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1957, 50-63; Burnett A. P., Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal, Oxford 1971, 22-26; Vellacott Ph., Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning, Cambridge 1975, 178-204.

7 Foley H., Ritual Irony, 62, 91.

8 Förs H., Dionysus und die Stärke des Schwachen im Werk des Euripides, Diss., Tübingen 1964. Förs draws parallels between Christ and Dionysus. Dionysus lives among folk, like Christ, travels in the company of his disciples, fills the souls of his followers with inner piece, love and the feeling of divine servitude. According to the scholar, the self-sacrifice practice presented in Euripides' dramas alludes to what took place 400 years later on Calvary.

9 Foley H., Ritual Irony. Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides, Ithaca and London 1985.

personal and the social, the past and the present. Sacrifice certainly implies the interrelation between everlasting and self-sufficient times, and the ironical confrontation against the disorder in the human world. Myth and ritual offer similar fictions, which help humans, introduce order into their lives. This is fulfilled through the understanding of the processes such as birth, initiation, marriage, death and the experience of a very important emotion rendered through the term 'suffering'.[10] Tragedy and ritual are united with common requirements – that is to offer people therapy and immortality against the reality, which is discrepant from the existing circumstances. Consequently, Iphigenia's choice can freely be regarded as self-deception, while people can 'adopt' Iphigenia's, Heracles' and Alcestis' heroism into their lives through festivals and cults of heroes. As concerns Iphigenia's sacrifice, as mentioned above, she performs the function of *deus ex machina*. Thus, in his sophisticated rituals, Euripides is ironical, conflicting with the traditional religion and highly religious at the same time.

The reflection of human sacrifice in Euripides' dramas is analyzed in O'connor-Visser's doctoral dissertation on *Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides.*[11] The scholar analyzed four fully survived and one fragmental (the *Erechtheus*) tragedies that picture the cases of human sacrifice. Although sacrificial scenes are included in Euripides' other tragedies as well, the scholar chose only *Heraclesidae*, *Phoenician Women*, *Erechthides* (fragm.) and *Iphigenia at Aulis* because they present the cases of self-sacrifice. According to the scholar, all the four dramas are linked to the same concept: the sacrifice is performed under divine requirement and for the sake of social necessity.

The interpretation of the metaphor of Iphigenia's sacrifice is different in Aeschylus' and Euripides' tragedies. Euripides' version has already been considered above and it was mentioned that in Euripides' drama, Agamemnon has an opportunity to make a choice: The Greek army will enter Troy if Iphigenia is sacrificed – otherwise, they will have to return to their homes. According to Aeschylus, there is quite a number of serious reasons that compel Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia: Zeus' order to revenge Paris' violation of hospitality manners and abduction of Helen; Calchas' oracle about Artemis' will to have Iphigenia sacrificed; the yearning of the Atreide and the Greek army to assault Troy. Having these in mind, Agamemnon gives

[10] About rituals as the source of perception and a necessary lie see: Wolff C., Aspects of the Later Plays of Euripides, Diss., Harvard University 1969; Wolff C., The Design and Myth in Euripides' Ion, HSCP, 69, 169-94.

[11] O'Connor-Visse E. A. M. A., Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides, Amsterdam 1987.

up Iphigenia. She is not sacrificed of her own free will. Analyzing Aeschylus' concept, R. Girard concludes that in Aeschylus, the old sacrifice system is replaced with the new one.[12] According to Aeschylus' Iphigenia, the sacrifice practice of is not a crime. Agamemnon forces the victim to accept death. Anyway, in terms of sacrifice ritual Iphigenia is a preliminary sacrifice offered by the Greek army before assaulting Troy. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, all the cases of human sacrifice are bound with a single chain: those who perform it are united with the desire to revenge. Their feasts are cannibalistic (they either eat the flesh of the victim or express the wish to drink the victim's blood); the heroes resemble raptors who are eager to revenge and devour the flash of their enemy (Aesch. Ag. 109-20). This concept cancels the borders between the offered and the 'offerer', between human and animal.[13]

Apart from the description of the offering ritual, there is one more remarkable point that is present in Euripides' another drama as well – Iphigenia arrives in Aulis as a bride; till the very last moment, she considers herself a bride. H. Foley offers quite interesting ideas on the fusion of bridal and offering rituals in Euripides' tragedies.[14]

E. Garrison analyzes the metaphor of wedding and sacrifice rituals as well. He focuses on the phrase, which says Iphigenia is getting married to Hades. (I.A. 460-1). Through this sacral marriage, she loses her virginity.[15] The loss of virginity through a sacrifice ritual can be explained in several ways. This may result from a very strong emotional experience that resembles the passion excited by an erotic act.[16]

Both rituals require ablution, a garland as a head dressing, and a ritual dance and a song. The mythologem of marrying the death or of the death interpreted as marriage is quite widespread and old. Evidently, the version of Iphigenia's bringing to Aulis by a ruse is rooted in the epic tradition.[17] Such traditions point to the ancient model of a sacrifice ritual, which suggests that the 'bride-victim' directly becomes the property of a deity. This mythoritual

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[12] Girard R., Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, Paris 1978. Girard links Aeschylean concept to the ideas from the New Testament.

[13] Foley H., Ibid. 40-41.

[14] Foley H. P., Marriage and Sacrifice in Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis, Arethusa, 15, 1982, 159-80.

[15] Garrison E. P., Groaning Tears. Ethical and Dramatic Aspects of Suicide in Greek Tragedy, Mnemosyne, Leiden, New York, Köln 1995, 153.

[16] For the discussion over this question see: Loraux N., La gloite et la mort d'une femme, Sorciéres, 18, 1978, 51-7.

[17] Conacher D. J., Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme end Structure, Toronto 1972, 250-53; Schreiber H. M., Iphigenies Opfertod: ein Beitrag zur Verständnis des Tragikers Euripides, Diss., Frankfurt am Main 1963, 66-71; Henrichs A., Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion: Three Case Studies, in: Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité, Entratiens sur l'antiquité classique, 27, Geneva 1981, 195-203.

model is quite popular in fairy tales. According to O'Connor-Visser, the motif of sacrificing a youth of noble descent accentuated in Euripides' tragedies is not accidental. In the like cases, particular attention was paid to virginity. According to ethnology studies, the sacrifice of a virgin was practiced in Mexico, Polynesia and evidently in Greece. Virgins were sacrificed before going to war or hunting. The act was accompanied with a remarkable psychological impact – after the offering ritual, the armed campaign (or hunting) was perceived as a vengeance. This sensation was reinforced through limiting sexual desire that fostered aggression. The innocent, pure blood of noble children (Iphigenia, Polixenes, the Erechthides, Phrixus, Menoeceus, Macaria,) was a powerful catalyst to gain divine favor.[18]

Sacrificed Iphigenia proved the only innocent member of Agamemnon's cursed family. Ultimately, it will be Iphigenia who will wash off Orestes' sin of murdering their mother; i.e. Iphigenia starts and ends the string of bloody sacrifices in Agamemnon's family.[19] However, a lot was bound to happen before the circle closed up.

Iphigenia's artistic image was discussed from another perspective as well. According to Luschnig, Iphigenia is Helen's correlate. The scholar brings forth an interesting argument to support this idea: 1. Both have the epithet ἑλέπτολις – 'destroyer of the city' (this is a very important argument as concerns the parallels between mythic images). 2. Agamemnon, who finds himself in a horrible position (he regards the existing circumstances as ἀπορία-), tries to recall a person from the past who had found a way out of a similar situation. Such a person is Tyndareus, who was disturbed by Helen's suitors (Eur. I.A. 55-7).

Tyndareus wanted to prevent bloodshed among the 51 suitors; and he found a way out – he set several terms for them and bound them with an **oath**. Tyndareus managed to marry off her daughter in a peaceful way. Agamemnon mentions Tyndareus 13 times – anyway that was in the past. At

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[18] O'Connor. Ibid. 198, referring to Burkert W., Homo Necans, Berlin 1972, 77.

[19] In the Trojan Cycle, Iphigenia's image has another function as well. This becomes clear from the episode with Sinon in the *Aeneid* by Virgil. Sinon seems an insignificant character at first sight; however he acquires a very important function in the *Aeneid*. He has to persuade Trojans to take into the city the wooden horse left by Greeks and at the same time he has to survive himself in order to be able to open the door in due time and let out the nine Greek warriors locked up in the horse. Sinon tells the Trojans: many a time Greeks wanted to leave Troy and return home but the strong wind did not allow them to do so. They erected a huge wooden horse to gain god's favor but the tempest would not calm down. Then Apollo's prophet said **it was necessary to sacrifice a human being (Argolic)** and he named Sinon as an offering (Verg. Aen. II, 116-119). i.e. Greeks sacrificed Iphigenia (of Argos) before going to war and Sinon (of Argos) in order to return home – or rather, left him with the wooden horse to have him incur the wrath of Trojans. Hellenes left a Hellene to Trojans to have the latter fulfill the sacrifice ritual.

present, 52 selected Greek warriors have assembled at Aulis with their armies; they are thirsty of war; with weapons in their hands (ὅπλον μετα), they have even **made an oath** that they will destroy Troy and bring Helen back. Tyndareus gave her daughter to one Greek, while Agamemnon has to sacrifice Iphigenia to the will of all Greeks. It seems Helen is the cause of the war. Helen is 'wafted' away by 'the gentle gales of love'[20] (I.A. 69), and this is what accounts for all the mischiefs. The treachery, the law of Zeus, and the image of the Atreide as the revenge-seeker lead to the symbol of eagle – (an eagle – a kite is the symbol of two brothers, the vengeful Atreides in ancient drama).[21] Helen, who now has 'multiple' husbands, was once a virgin too, then she became a bride, i.e. what now Iphigenia is. The terms ἀπόρως(55) and ἀπορία (89) refer to the parallels between the situations at Aulis and in Tyndareus' household many years ago. In both cases, the cause of the confrontation is Helen. (53f; 77f...).

Iphigenia's talk with Agamemnon starts and ends with Helen. With her decision to give her body away to Hellas (δίδωμι σῶμα τοὐμὸν' Ελλάδι 1397), she in fact allows the war to start. This leads to the following conclusion: although Iphigenia's and Helen's motivations are different, they lead to the same outcome – to the inevitability to start war. After the war is over, Helen and Iphigenia become symbols.[22]

The above-stated assumption can be developed into another direction: when Helen was getting married, the aggression of the favored sons of Hellas was soothed with an oath that prevented the suitors from bloodshed. This aggression can revive unless Iphigenia is sacrificed. If the ritual is performed, the target for the Greek aggression will change to Troy. If it comes to destruction, let it afflict Troy rather than Hellas.

According to another viewpoint, Iphigenia' self-sacrifice is more of 'an epidemic madness' than romanticism. Iphigenia does not wish to die. However, she sees she has no chance to survive. She yields to the will of Greek people and is 'infected' with the same disease as the armed Greek warriors. From this very moment, she believes her name' Ιφιγένεια (the

[20] English translation by Potter R., The Plays of Euripides, vol. l, 63, in Everyman's Library, 1932, 288.

[21] About the symbols of eagle and serpent see: Fagles R., Stanford W. B., A Reading of the Oresteia. The Serpent and the Eagle, in: Aeschylus, The Oresteia, Viking Penguin, New York 1979.

[22] Luschnig C. A. E., Tragic Aporia: A Study of Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis, Aureal Publications 1988, 6-21, 37-56. The symbol of Helen's image is used in Euripides' other dramas as well. In the Orestes she was abducted against her will. Euripides in the Helen presents the version of 'two Helens': one is a real, physical person while the other is airy. Men struggle for both. In the Iphigenia at Aulis Iphigenia is also abstracted when she is replaced with a deer on the altar. The question comes up: what has survived? Iphigenia or her name, as the symbol of self-sacrifice, will later inspire others as well and call for heroic deeds. As a matter of fact, the cause of war is always the same, and 'heroic' self-sacrifice adds greater impact to it.

bearer of heroes) corresponds to her deeds (1496). The wonderful words of exalted Iphigenia turn into the glorifying abstraction. From that moment, Iphigenia becomes part of rhetoric. Wars start with rhetoric. Anyway, they require a name and perpetual existence in art. From this perspective, the start of war is not motivated by an outer cause or will. War starts itself. Likewise, the Trojan War was launched because it was predetermined so. War preparations set human minds to expecting and accepting the war, and therefore nothing will prevent it. P. Vellacott writes that what is shown in Euripides' drama is quite familiar to the modern world. It is evident that the destructive example of events once occurred proceeds on its own; War is 'nourished' with private interests of lots of individuals. Those interests do not provide for the existence or non-existence of rational motivations.[23]

The present paper analyzed the metaphor of Iphigenia's sacrifice in fiction. It offered several different and even conflicting ideas on the interpretation of the image: Some consider Iphigenia an exalted virgin obsessed with mania; some believe she is the heroine who sacrificed herself to the welfare of her people; some think she is a girl in love while others regard her as the instigator of war. Many viewpoints were avoided on purpose as they could have diverted the present research into a different direction.[24] All the ideas mentioned above have appropriate arguments. This once again points to the multidimensional character of mythic symbol images. They may imply much more than is evident at first sight. The image of Iphigenia, which has become a literary metaphor, suggests an ambivalent perception; neither does her sacrifice enjoy a single interpretation. This means that Iphigenia is a typical mythic image – good and bad, kind and evil, exemplary and deplorable. Mythic symbols certainly 'work best' in the creations of the literary celebrities (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) and are rendered in dramas in all their diversity.

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[23] Vellacott P., Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning, Cambridge 1975, 174.

[24] It is necessary to refer to several books and papers which, most regrettably, I could not mentioned in the present paper although they helped to build my opinion: Kitto H. D. F., Greek Tragedy, Garden City, NJ 1954; Knox B.M.W., Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulide, YCS, 22, 1972, 239-61; Lattimore R., Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy, Ann Arbor 1969; Lloyd-Jones H., Artemis and Iphigenia, JHS, 103, 1983, 87-102; Marwin W., Dimock G. E., Euripides: Iphigeneia at Aulis, Oxford and New York 1978; Rabinowitz N. S., The Strategy of Inconsistency in Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis, CB, 59, 1983, 21-26; Rossi S., Euripide, Iphigenia in Aulide, Toronto 1944; Snell B., From Tragedy to philosophy: Iphigenia in Aulis, in Segal E., 1982, 396-405; Wassermann F., Agamemnon in the I.A.: A Man in an Age of Crisis, TAPA, 80, 1949, 174-86.