

## Late Euripides and *Hypsipyle*

Scholars have given considerable attention to the *Hypsipyle* of Euripides, one of Euripides' last plays, not only to the problems of the papyrus and the reconstruction of the play, but to its interpretation (e.g. Lomiento, Battezzato, Chong-Gossard). Many of its elements belong to the familiar repertory of Euripidean plots: the heroine who is reunited with long-lost children, the aetiology of a hero-cult (one that is well-attested), the *deus ex machina*. If the scholarly consensus is right, it is simultaneously wildly original in bringing together *Hypsipyle* and the *Seven against Thebes* and in giving *Hypsipyle* twins instead of a single son so that Evenus can come to Athens as ancestor of the Euneidae, while Thoas could return to Lemnos and rule there. Its backstory, where the Argonauts visit Lemnos before the massacre of the men of the island and *Hypsipyle* flees after refusing to kill her father, also seems original (for the reconstruction, see Kannicht TrGF and Cropp 2004). It was also musically innovative (Simona 2020). Critics have noticed *Hypsipyle*'s "wistful memories" of her liaison with Jason (Hose 1990, 85). The chorus asks if she is again recalling her favorite theme, the *Argo* (ἤ τὰν Ἀργὸν τὰν διὰ σοῦ / στόματος ἀεὶ κληζόμεναν). And, indeed, she promptly responds to their suggestion that they go see the army by expressing her longing to see the *Argo*:

. τ[ά]δε μοι τάδε θυμὸς ἰδεῖν ἴε- (15)

ται, Δαναῶν δὲ πόνους

ἕτερος ἀναβοάτω.

In the preserved text, she does not focus on Jason and her song is not overtly erotic, yet it seems clear that desire underlies her obsession with the *Argo*. Her erotically-tinged memory is very different from *Creusa*'s memory of her rape by *Apollo*.

Hypsipyle's relationship was clearly voluntary on both sides. We do not know precisely how the placement of the Argonaut's visit to Lemnos before the massacre, when Hypsipyle's father, Thoas, was alive, affected the backstory, but fr. 759 TrGF provides the information that Jason took the boys to Colchis, that Jason died, that Orpheus reared them in Thrace, and that their grandfather Thoas then brought them to Lemnos. This suggests that Thoas approved of the union with Jason, which therefore may have constituted a marriage, although Aristophanes' parody of Euripidean lyrics (*Frogs* 1304–1328), may imply that the model, Hypsipyle, could be seen as a whore.

Euripides regularly used two themes. His "women in love," were many, usually transgressive: Phaedra or Sthenoboea (cf. Ar. *Frogs* 1043), or the Pasiphae of *Cretans* and the Canace of *Aeolus*. Mothers separated from their children were a distinct theme, for they were often victims of divine rape, like Creusa, Antiope, Danae, Alope, or Melanippe (in both plays named for her). They were entirely sympathetic. Hypsipyle was clearly in love with Jason, but she is also a bereft mother (who let Jason take the boys with him, 759a 92–3). Auge may have been another late Euripides heroine ("stilo... liberrimo" Kannicht) who was not raped; she scandalously defended giving birth in Athena's temple (fr. 265, 266). She may have been a parallel for Hypsipyle.

Euripides shows sympathy for enslaved women as early as *Andromache* in the 420s. I suggest that *Hypsipyle* reflects two realities of the later years of the Peloponnesian War: the presence of (Greek!) women enslaved after the Athenian massacres at Scione and Melos, and the shortage of men because of war casualties. Lysistrata refers to young woman who cannot marry because there are too few men (*Lys.* 590-97). Some sources claim that Athens permitted men to have two wives to alleviate the shortage (DL 2.26, Athen. 555d, Aulus Gellius *Noc. Att.* 15.20).

While Hypsipyle is not an exact parallel for any of the women who suffered because of the war, she is a mythical refraction of them—and the role of the Seven reminds the audience that their war will create more lonely women. The play also makes gives this woman-in-love a place in the mythical past of Athens.

#### Works Cited

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