

Hypsipyle's Intertextual Presence in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

In this paper, I examine how Hypsipyle's story ramifies outward from Book 2 of Valerius' *Argonautica*, a process whereby she remains present intertextually long after Lemnos fades from view (*tunc tenuis Lemnos, Arg. 2.431*).

While scholars have analyzed the Valerian Hypsipyle's allusive afterlife in Statius' *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* (e.g. Stover 2023, 81-6, 127-31, 151-3), far less attention has been paid to the recurrence of Hypsipyle's story in the later stages of the *Argonautica* itself. However, this is fruitful ground for new work on the Lemnian queen, as Zissos (2017) has demonstrated in an important recent study. I aim to build on Zissos' analysis by casting light on further instances of Valerius' dynamic recycling of Hypsipylean material.

A striking example of this process is discernible at *Arg. 2.300-3*. Here we discover that Thoas, after fleeing Lemnos, became a priest of Diana in Taurus: *ille procul trunca fugit anxius alno / Taurorumque locos delubraque saeva Dianae / advenit. hic illum tristi, dea, praeficis arae / ense dato*. This bizarre sequel to the events on Lemnos, unattested prior to this passage, offers the first replay of a moment from the Lemnian narrative proper, i.e. Hypsipyle's giving of a sword to her father during the massacre (*ensem / tu potius ... tene, 2.252-3*). The fact that Hypsipyle chose to arm her father with a sword rather than murdering him leads to his safe arrival in Taurus, where he becomes an important sword-wielding individual.

This narrative nexus is recalled in Book 6. Here we learn that the Iazyges, who have come to Colchis to participate in the civil war between Perses and Aeetes, have an interesting custom: *magnanimis mos ductus avis haut segnia mortis / iura pati, dextra sed carae occumbere prolis / ense dato, rumpuntque moras natusque parensque (6.125-7)*. The opening of verse 6.127

(*ense dato*) quotes the beginning of line 2.303, cited above (see Fucecchi 2006, 172). In fact, these lines represent the only uses of the phrase *ense dato* in extant classical Latin poetry, so the connection is strong. Evoking Hypsipyle and Thoas while noting the Iazyges' patricidal ways subtly reminds the reader of the Lemnian woman's refusal to kill her father. The bizarre piety of the Iazyges, which involves sons killing their fathers when they reach old age, is intertextually contrasted with proper, Roman *pietas*, which requires preserving the life of one's aged father (*senem*, 2.279), even if this involves great personal risk (on the Valerian Hypsipyle's *Romanitas*, see Hershkowitz 1998, 136-46).

Hypsipyle's pious devotion to her father also features prominently in passages that focus on Medea's behavior in the second half of the epic. For example, when Medea sneaks out of Colchis to deliver Jason the drugs he needs to defeat the fire-breathing bulls, she moves "through the silent darkness" (*per opaca silentia*, 7.389). There is only one other occurrence of the phrase *opaca silentia* prior to this one in extant Latin poetry, and it is used to describe Hypsipyle's nighttime movements while leading Thoas to safety (*huc genitorem altae per opaca silentia noctis / ... rapit*, 2.288-9; see Poortvliet 1991, 170). Whereas Medea, whose affair with Jason is subversive of her father (5.219-20, 7.254-5), goes to meet her lover "armed with potions against her own kingdom" (*contra sua regna venenis / induitur*, 7.371-2), Hypsipyle's nocturnal peregrinations save her father's life. Hypsipyle, like Medea, may be said to act against her own kingdom, but given the madness that has gripped Lemnos, this is a good thing.

Other allusive evocations of Hypsipyle in the second half of the *Argonautica* are found at 5.454 (cf. 2.274); 7.458-60 (cf. 2.244); 8.46 (cf. 2.290-1); 8.239-42 (cf. 2.275-6); 8.312 (cf. 2.212); and 8.392-3 (cf. 2.370-1).

In sum, this paper seeks to elucidate Hypsipyle's intertextual presence in the Flavian *Argonautica* well after the Argo has set sail from Lemnos. Valerius portrays Hypsipyle as a figure of remarkable exemplarity, one whose pious deeds will echo through the ages in Valerius' epic song (*non ulla meo te carmine dictam / abstulerint ... saecula*, 2.244-5). These echoes, I submit, begin as soon as the Lemnos episode has concluded. The Argo moves on to new ports of call, but the Lemnian queen is not forgotten. Like the island itself, Hypsipyle becomes harder to see (*tenuis*, 2.431), but she is still there.

Works Cited

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