

Holding the Baby: A Parody of Euripides' *Auge* at Philyllius Fr. 4

Euripides' tragedy *Auge* features a surprising scene in which Heracles enters, holding the baby Telephus, whom he has just discovered in the wilderness and comes to recognize as his own son. I argue that this scene was imitated by the early fourth-century comic poet Philyllius in his *Auge*. Philyllius' parody of this scene, previously unnoticed, offers further evidence for the relationship of early fourth-century mythological comedy with tragedy and satyr play.

In Euripides' play, Heracles' appearance with baby in arms marks a dramatic reversal in the action. Auge has been raped by a drunken Heracles, given birth in the temple of Athena, and hidden the child in the temple; Athena sends a plague, which causes the infant to be discovered; Auge's father orders the child exposed and Auge put to death. Enter Heracles, whose appearance holding the infant Telephus is attested by two fragments (Huys 1990). Fragment 272a is cited by Aelian (*Misc.* 12.15), who identifies the speaker as Heracles *παιδίον κατέχων*, "while holding a baby": *παίζω· μεταβολὰς γὰρ πόνων ἀεὶ φιλῶ*, "I am playing; for I always love changes from my labors." In fragment 272, Heracles says, *τίς δ' οὐχὶ χαίρει νηπίοις ἀθύρμασιν*; "Who does not delight in childish toys?" Not only is he holding the child, but he is having fun with it.

That Heracles holds and plays with the baby Telephus reinforces a satyric element already suggested by his drunken sexual assault. Scenes of satyrs holding and playing with a baby are common, both in art and in satyr play. The satyrs who find the infant Perseus in Aeschylus' *Dictyoulkoi* interact extensively with the little baby (fr. 47a, 786-820). In Sophocles' *Dionysiskos* (*Baby Dionysus*), a satyr describes giving food to baby Dionysus, who fondles the satyr's nose and bald head (fr. 171). Artistic representations of Papposilenos holding the infant

Dionysus begin in the fifth century and continue through the Hellenistic and Roman periods (*LIMC* VIII.1.480-81, VIII.2.378-79).

Fragment 4 of the comedy *Auge* by Philyllius imitates the baby-holding scene in Euripides' *Auge*: αὐτὸς φέρων πάρειμι πυρῶν ἐκγόνους τριμήνων/ γαλακτόχρωτας κολλάβους θερμούς ("I myself am present, carrying offspring of three-month wheat,/ milky-complexioned warm loaves"). The self-important speaker of this fragment mixes vocabulary appropriate to illegitimate babies with the comic language of food: ἔκγονος is mock-tragic; τρίμηνος has a double meaning, since -μηνος compounds are commonly used of pregnancies, especially in contexts where the suspicious length of the pregnancy casts doubt on the legitimacy of the child (e.g. *Hdt.* 6.69; *PCG adesp.* 926; *Men. Epitr.* 1116); γαλακτόχρωτας further evokes infancy.

This parody is similar to that of Aristophanes' repeated travesty of the scene from Euripides' *Telephus* in which the adult Telephus holds the baby Orestes hostage over an altar (*Ach.* 325-51, *Thesm.* 689-764; cp. Würzburg Telephus vase). In Philyllius fr. 4, too, a visually-striking Euripidean scene involving an infant is parodied by substituting something humorous for the baby. Characteristic of early fourth-century comedy is the emphasis on food and party provisions.

The role of Heracles in the Euripidean *Auge*, together with its echo of satyr play, likely encouraged interest in this plot in fourth-century comedy. Textual fragments and material remains indicate that Heracles was immensely popular in this period of comedy (Casolari 2003: 227-95; Green 1994: 70-76), and scholars have suggested that satyr play offered a model for mythological comedy (Nesselrath 1995; Shaw 2010). The baby-holding scenes in the *Auge* plays of Euripides and Philyllius show an intersection of these three genres.

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