

The Nurse's Tale: Other Worlds and Parallel Worlds in the Exposition of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Euripides' mythopoetics in what survives of the first quarter of his fragmentary *Hypsipyle*: prologue, parodos, and first episode. It examines Euripides' innovation in joining two myths (the Seven Against Thebes and the story of Hypsipyle and the Argonauts) into one, and the representation of Hypsipyle herself. In her private moments, the thoughts that preoccupy her mind are focused on other-places and other-times, in vivid contrast to the naturalistically presented world of the present where, as a slave, she must interact with men. Euripides uses the language of serving (θεραπεύειν) and doing a 'favour' (χάρις), as well as the word ἔρημος ('lonely,' 'deserted') and homoeophonic language (e.g. Argo and Argos) to indicate that, in helping the Argives, Hypsipyle repeats typologically her hospitality to the Argonauts. There is a circularity in Hypsipyle's story that creates suspense, since by doing a favour for the Argive leader, she is reunited with the sons she bore to Argonauts' leader, who themselves are sent to find her by their grandfather whom she saved; and by losing the infant in her care (Opheltes, later named Archemorus), she is reunited with her former infants. By the end of Hypsipyle's first conversation with Amphiaraus, Euripides has invented a theme of 'parallel worlds' that he will resolve at the play's end.

Keywords: Euripides, Hypsipyle, fragmentary, mythopoetics, Argonauts, reciprocity.

Euripides' fragmentary *Hypsipyle* dramatises, in a truly unique manner, the foundation myth of the Nemean Games: the accidental death of a child when the Seven Against Thebes marched through Nemea. The first quarter of *Hypsipyle* is a character study of the protagonist—a middle-aged, former princess of Lemnos who is now in slavery and exile in Nemea—and her circumstances which precede the arrival of the Seven. Euripides chose two myths that outwardly have little to do with each other, and seamlessly combined them into one. He could have narrated the foundation of the Nemean Games in an ordinary way, with a nameless negligent nurse as the cause of

the infant Archemorus' death. Instead, he made Hypsipyle that nurse, and by so doing, he opened up the dramatic possibility of that nurse becoming the focal point of the tragedy. It is as though Euripides began his project with the question, what would Archemorus' nurse have been like? Did she have a tale of her own? Could she have a happy ending? His play gives life to all these questions. The nurse of this play is a woman who, in her private moments, is sullen and fixated on the past; even her lullaby to the baby doubles as a lament for former times. She has friends among the local women of Nemea, but she refuses to let them comfort her, so much so that her insistence on focusing only on memories borders on rudeness. Her real life is that of a slave and nursemaid; the life that preoccupies her mind is that of a princess surrounded by Argonauts, and of a mother of twins. Yet the arrival of more Greek men stimulates her curiosity enough to tear her from her reverie and perform the duties of a woman and a slave. In addition to giving hospitality to two travelling strangers (Thoas and Euneus), she leads Amphiaraus and the Argive army to the sacred spring in Zeus' grove, which is the very action that causes the accidental death of the baby she tends.

This article analyses Euripides' mythopoeitics in what survives of the first 400 lines, roughly the first quarter of the play: prologue, parodos, and first episode. In particular, it examines Euripides' innovation in joining two myths (the Seven Against Thebes and the story of Hypsipyle and the Argonauts) into one, and how this is intertwined with the representation of Hypsipyle herself. These three short fragmentary scenes illustrate both Hypsipyle's role as a slave in the house of Zeus' priest Lycurgus, and her penchant for dwelling on her past life when alone or in the company of women. In these private moments, as early as the opening lines of the play, the thoughts that preoccupy Hypsipyle's mind are focused on other-places and other-times, in vivid contrast to the naturalistically presented world of the present where, as a slave, she must interact with men. In addition, Euripides uses the language of serving (*θεροπατεύειν*) and doing a 'favour' (*χάρις*), as well as the word *ἑρήμιος* ('lonely,' 'deserted') and homoeophonic language (e.g. *Argo* and *Argos*) to indicate that, in helping the Argives, Hypsipyle repeats typologically her hospitality to the Argonauts and even the saving of her father's life from the Lemnian massacre. Furthermore, Euripides constructs these acts of service and favour as virtuous acts that ultimately lead to a positive change of fortune.¹ There is a circularity in Hypsipyle's story that creates suspense, since by doing a favour for the Argive leader, she is reunited with the sons she bore to the Argonauts' leader, who themselves are sent to find her by their grandfather whom she saved; and by losing the infant in her care (Opheltis, later named Archemorus), she is reunited with her former infants. That is, by the end of

¹ Lomiento (2005) 66 argues that 'the profile of Hypsipyle in Euripides exhibits virtuous characteristics, clear traits of generosity and grace' (my translation of the Italian). According to Cropp (2004) 181, the play's 'confrontations were carefully calibrated in moral terms, showing good decisions contributing to good outcomes'.

Hypsipyle's first conversation with Amphiaraus, Euripides has invented a theme of 'parallel worlds' that he will resolve at the play's end.

In recent scholarship on this fragmentary play, the character of Hypsipyle herself has received much attention. Hypsipyle has been described by Martin Hose as engaging in 'wehmütigen Erinnerungen' ('wistful memories') in his book on the Euripidean chorus, and by Ruth Scodel as performing an 'erotic lament' in her study of the female spectator in Euripides.² My own book on women and communication in Euripides' plays argues that Hypsipyle's use of lyric meter, both in the parodos and in the recognition scene that closes the play, signifies both truth-telling and insistence.³ My chapter in Martin Cropp's *Festschrift* further analyses the theme of consolation throughout the play, notably in the parodos and Amphiaraus' defense speech of Hypsipyle. In her refusal to be consoled by the chorus women, Hypsipyle cleverly manipulates the conventions of tragic consolation itself by countering the chorus' mythological *exempla* with her own.⁴ Luigi Battezzato's paper on the play's parodos argues for the importance of Hypsipyle's refusal to join in the chorus women's song about the Argive army, in that it signals Euripides' innovation in combining two mythical strands, in what Battezzato describes as a 'gioco di incroci mitologici' ('a game of mythological crossings').⁵ Liana Lomiento discusses the play's theme of 'alterità' ('otherness') through the representation of different forms of exile—the slave's, the guest's, and the foreign army's.⁶ Not only is the Argive army whom Hypsipyle refuses to sing about a potential 'other' who is in fact on its way to invade a foreign state, but Hypsipyle herself, by virtue of being associated with the Lemnian Women, potentially possesses 'una estraneità prossima alla "barbarie"' ('an otherness close to "barbarism"').⁷ All of these studies focus primarily on the representation of Hypsipyle in the parodos, when the chorus of Nemean women invite Hypsipyle to observe the Argive army marching by. In fact, Hypsipyle's fixation on an idealised past, and the theme of 'otherness' pointed out by Lomiento, can be observed even in the play's prologue. It is therefore appropriate to consider how Hypsipyle's character is constructed in the play's fragments from the very start.

1. PROLOGUE (HYPsipYLE'S OPENING LINES)

One must begin at the beginning and ask, where in the world is the Euripidean Hypsipyle? From the first words that come out of her mouth, Euripides teases his audience about her identity and her concerns:

² Hose (1990) 85, Scodel (1997) 93.

³ Chong-Gossard (2008) 75–79, 96–98.

⁴ Chong-Gossard (2009) 13–17.

⁵ Battezzato (2005) 194.

⁶ Lomiento (2005) 65–68.

⁷ Lomiento (2005) 65.

Διόνυσος, ὃς θύρσοισι καὶ νεβρῶν δοραῖς
καθαπτὸς ἐν πεύκησι Παρνασσὸν κάτα
πηδᾶ χορεύων παρθένους σὺν Δελφίσιν...

HYPSSIPYLE: Dionysus who, girt with *thyrsi* and with fawns' skins, leaps among the pine-torches across Parnassus, dancing with Delphian maidens... fr. 752.1–3⁸

The compact sequence of images in these opening lines gives no clear indication of the identity of the old woman who is speaking. Instead, it is Dionysus' name that begins the play. Of course, it is not unusual for the speaker of a Euripidean prologue to begin with a god's name, lead into a genealogy, and only gradually reveal his or her identity.⁹ But although it is conventional, Euripides' choice of words is deliberate and unique to each dramatic situation. Hypsipyle evokes the god in terms that are immediately familiar to Athenians who understood his cult practices; yet these same terms are exotic because of their cult-specific dress and movement. Dionysus is ἐν πεύκησι ('among the pine-torches', fr. 752.2), which implies movement, since for proper use, torches must be lifted. Because torches provide light, a time of day for worship is also suggested: the night-time. Even a time of year can be inferred, for Dionysus Παρνασσὸν κάτα πηδᾶ ('leaps across Parnassus', fr. 752.2–3), specifically Mt. Parnassus where tradition held that he spent the winter months overseeing the Delphic oracle that was ordinarily the domain of his half-brother, Apollo. Altogether, the words evoke a mountainous location (Parnassus and Delphi) that is far away and the opposite topography of the play's actual setting (the plains of Nemea) and an activity (dancing) with people (Delphian maidens, the Thyiads) at a time of day (night-time) and season (winter) that are altogether the inverse of what is happening in the play, in which an old woman stands alone before the door of a priest's house in the day-time and, as the audience will soon learn, is baby-sitting and scarcely in the mood to dance. In a moment, an army will come marching through empty fields in search of water, and a military campaign is an activity for the summer, not the winter. Thus, this play's first three lines depict an other-world, an other-place, suggesting the possibility that the speaker of the prologue has a habit of invoking other-worlds and other-places.

Tantalisingly, it is not precisely known when the prologue speaker identifies herself as Hypsipyle, the former princess of Lemnos. This is because the rest of Hypsipyle's prologue survives only in fragments from two papyri. What remains of P.Hamb 118b (fr. 752a) are line-beginnings that are presumed to follow soon after the three opening lines. Some proper names

⁸ All translations are mine and are often quite literal. Greek text, when quoted, and numeration follow *TrGF* 5.2 (Kannicht 2004). Fr. 752.1–3 survives from textual sources, notably Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

⁹ Cf. the prologues of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Cyclops*, and fragmentary *Melanippe Wise*, all of which begin with the evocation of a deity.

can be presumed: perhaps *Staphylos* in line 1 of the papyrus, *Peparēthos* in line 2, *Hera* in line 5, *Dionysus* in line 6, *Dionysus* again in line 7, *Chios* in line 8, and finally—at line 10—*Lemnos* in the accusative (Λῆμνον). Cropp suggests that *Staphylos* (the personification of the grape-bunch) and *Peparēthos* are introduced as sons of *Dionysus*, that a third son is granted lordship over the island of *Chios*, and that the fourth son *Thoas* is given the island of *Lemnos*.¹⁰ If so, then *Hypsipyle* has spent a good ten lines explaining the genealogy of her grandfather *Dionysus* and the various lands given to her uncles and her father, *Thoas*, building up to introducing herself. Such a litany of royal genealogy and Aegean islands introduces an important theme: it will be revealed that she is now a slave in exile in land-locked *Nemea*, and the other-places of her family's history (*Delphi*, *Chios*, and especially her native *Lemnos*) are part of distant and happier life gone by.

All that survives of the remainder of *Hypsipyle's* prologue speech are the ends of a few iambic trimeters in P.Oxy. 852, col. 2 (fr. 752b), which Cropp notes accord to ~ lines 90–120.¹¹ Words like [ἀπ]όπτολιν ('away from home', line 1), τύχαις ('misfortunes', 2), φάος ('light', 6), ζυγῶ ('yoke', 7), and [Συμ]πληγάδων (5) are preserved. It is this last that stands out: the *Symplegades*, the mythical 'Clashing Rocks' through which *Jason's* ship *Argo* had to pass in order to reach *Colchis* and retrieve the *Golden Fleece*. In order to evaluate its significance, readers of these fragments must jump ahead to the play's end and reconstruct the lost beginning. The well-preserved recognition scene (fr. 759a.1591–632) where the mother is reunited with her long-lost sons reveals a particular sequence of events twenty-odd years in the past, after *Hypsipyle* gave birth to *Jason's* twins during the *Argonauts'* visit on *Lemnos*. *Euneus* (indicating his twin brother *Thoas*) explains: Ἀργώ με καὶ τόνδ' ἤγαγ' εἰς Κόλχων πόλιν ('The *Argo* brought me and him to the *Colchians'* city', fr. 759a.1614), and *Hypsipyle* replies in song: 'Yes, weaned from my breasts' (fr. 759a.1615). This was the last time that *Hypsipyle* saw her sons alive, and it was *Jason* who took them with him on his mission to fetch the *Golden Fleece*. Thus, the *Argonauts'* sojourn on *Lemnos* occurred before their arrival in *Colchis* and must have lasted a good two years for *Jason's* sons to be born and reach the age to be weaned. Since *Hypsipyle* relives for her sons' benefit her memories of the night of the *Lemnian* massacre when she spared her father's grey head, and the sons indicate no knowledge of it (fr. 759a.1591–600), the *Lemnian* massacre would have occurred after the *Argonauts* departed *Lemnos*. Whether there were any *Lemnian* men on the island during *Jason's* visit is not stated, but one presumes a version of the myth whereby the *Lemnian* men were all absent, returned after the *Argonauts'* departure, and were then killed en masse.

¹⁰ See Cropp (2004) 227 ad 752a.1–2 and 7–8. Cropp cites *Diodorus* 5.79 in which *Peparēthos* is an island (the modern *Skopelos*) that is given to *Staphylos*; the island of *Chios* is given to *Oenopion*, and *Lemnos* to *Thoas*.

¹¹ Cropp (2004) 186. Collard and Cropp's *Loeb* edition (2008), which provides 'approximate' line numbers in portions of the play, is cited with a tilde (~).

Hypsipyle also recalls her abduction by pirates on the Lemnian shore and sale into slavery at Nauplion (fr. 759a.1601–8), the harbour of the Argolid, close to both Argos and Nemea. It is impossible to know precisely which aspects (if any) of her past life she might have omitted in her prologue but revealed only in the recognition scene, and vice versa. But if it is a fair supposition about the prologue that she catalogued her past exploits, one must ask, how does Hypsipyle know about the Symplegades? They were traditionally located at the Bosphorus, the strait between Europe and Asia, leading into the Black Sea. The Symplegades were *between* Lemnos and Colchis. Euneus reveals at the end of the play that Jason took Hypsipyle's sons with him to Colchis, and Hypsipyle never saw them again, so it is unlikely that Jason visited Lemnos on his way back to Greece.

Euripides' well-known practice of revising myths, or at least highlighting that he has chosen one mythical tradition over another, displays itself in something as simple as a fragmentary [Συμ]πληγάδων. In the version of the myth adopted by Pindar in *Olympian* 4.19–27 and *Pythian* 4.252–58 (both composed about fifty years before *Hypsipyle*), the Argonauts come to Lemnos on their *return voyage*. *Pythian* 4 (dated confidently to 462 BCE) is explicit that Jason steals Medea, and then the Argonauts come to Lemnos (where the menfolk have already been murdered) and repopulate the island. In both *Olympian* 4 and *Pythian* 4, the Argonauts hold athletic games. In *Pythian* 4 Hypsipyle herself grants the prize to the winner of these games, which are apparently funeral games for her father Thoas (who at the end of Euripides' version will be revealed to be still alive). But Jason in Euripides' play surely did not first meet Hypsipyle on his return voyage with Medea, since the recognition scene indicates that Hypsipyle's children were weaned from her breast and went to Colchis, but Hypsipyle herself was abducted by pirates before ever seeing them (or Jason, or her father Thoas) again. So, how can Hypsipyle sing about the Symplegades? She might indeed have been aware that Jason would need to sail through them in order to achieve the *Argo's* mission, but in her prologue she very likely has no knowledge of whether he was ever successful. Martin Cropp suggested filling in the blanks as follows: 'Possibly Hyps. longs for Jason to return through the *Symplêgades* [...] bringing her **salvation** (or the **light** of freedom) and relief from the **yoke** of slavery' [Cropp's emphases].¹² If Cropp is correct, then Hypsipyle is longing for a return that is twenty-or-so years overdue.

2. PROLOGUE (THOAS AND EUNEUS, AND HYPSSIPYLE'S LULLABY, ~132–201)

After her now-vanished prologue, Hypsipyle withdraws into Lycurgus' house. Then her twin sons Thoas and Euneus arrive in search of their

¹² Cropp (2004) 227, ad 752h.5–7.

mother. As is confirmed at the play's end, Hypsipyle's father (also named Thoas) is still alive and conveyed her sons to Lemnos in search of her (fr. 759a.1624–26). The fragments do not preserve any details on how they followed her path to Nemea, but they apparently knock on the door of Lycurgus' house. In P.Oxy. 852, col. 3, it is Hypsipyle herself who rushes to the door to answer the men's knocking.¹³ It has apparently upset the baby, and Hypsipyle speaks to it about 'toys that will soothe your mind from tears' (fr. 752d.2–3, ~132–33). Hypsipyle's concern for her charge's comfort reminds the audience that she is a nurse and a slave, no longer a princess. Meanwhile she is so impressed by the men's good looks that she offers a conventional greeting that has dramatic irony: 'O blessed the woman who bore you two, whoever she was!' (fr. 752d.5, ~135). What follows is an exchange that is the height of Euripidean naturalism, the bargaining between potential guest and the host's servant. Hypsipyle asks the expected question, τί τῶ[ν]δε μελάθρων δε[ό]μενοι προσήλθετον; ('In need of what have you two come to these halls?', fr. 752d.6, ~136).¹⁴ Thoas is rather curt and to the point: they need to shelter for only one night, have all they need with them, and will not be a nuisance (fr. 752d.7–10, ~137–40). No mention is made of their quest to find their mother. Thoas' comment τὸ δὲ σὸν ὡς ἔχει μ[ε]ν[ε]ῖ (fr. 752d.10, ~140) is classic Euripides in its double meaning. Literally 'your circumstance will remain as it is', it is both an assurance of the guests' unobtrusiveness, and a nod to the fact that Hypsipyle's status as a slave who misses her long-lost sons and is nostalgic about her past life will not change immediately, since neither mother nor sons recognise the other. Yet the nod to this fact is itself a foreshadowing of the opposite: that this is indeed the day when Hypsipyle's situation will change completely, both for the worse and for the better.

It is universally agreed that Thoas and Euneus enter the house, with Hypsipyle thus unwittingly sheltering her long-lost sons. Significantly, there is no evidence that Hypsipyle explained who she was or alluded to her identity in a way that would create further dramatic irony. She does not talk about her former life when she is 'on the job' in front of young guests.

When the fragmentary text resumes at ~189, Hypsipyle is singing a lullaby to Opheltes, trying to entertain him εὐωποῖς ... θεραπειαις ('with kindly-faced tendings', fr. 752f.7, ~193). The baby is arguably an emotional substitute for the very long-lost sons she unknowingly let into the house. Two major themes permeate Hypsipyle's monody and the subsequent parodos: her wistful memories of Lemnos and the visit of the Argonauts,

¹³ I disagree with Taplin (1977) 341 n. 1, who is sceptical that the door is even knocked, or that Hypsipyle herself answers it.

¹⁴ I translate μελάθρων as 'halls' rather than 'palace', following Bravo (2018) 107 n. 38, who resists calling Lycurgus' house a 'palace', but also notes Andrew Stewart's personal comments that μέλαθρα 'does imply a house of some size, so that Lykourgos may be of noble rank'. Bravo insists that although Lycurgus in Euripides' play is the priest who holds the key to the temple of Nemean Zeus, he is nowhere referred to as a king.

and an intellectual search for the correct music that can alleviate her sufferings, if indeed any can be found. Hypsipyle's lullaby turns sad, and her words self-reference the content of her song, or more specifically, the content that is missing.

HYPISYPYLE: (*singing*) These are not, these are not (οὐ τὰδε ... οὐ τὰδε)
Lemnian consolations for the weft-thread and web-stretching shuttle that
the Muse wants me to cause to resound...¹⁵

fr. 752f.9–11, ~196–98

Collard and Cropp suggest that these weaving-songs were what Hypsipyle used to sing as a girl in her mother's household.¹⁶ I would add that she could just as easily have sung them as an adult.¹⁷ Hypsipyle's memory of a song that is distant in time triggers contrasts. When she was a princess on Lemnos—an island famous at various times for being female-only—all the women would have joined together in songs to encourage one another during the long hours of producing their own textiles, as they were expected to. Now her song has changed from a female community's hymn that inspires and is inspired by their work, to a lullaby for a single little individual, the infant who sleeps.¹⁸ It is too soon for an audience to tell from this brief song whether Hypsipyle is unhappy or even resentful that her life has so changed, but her word-choice is significant:

HYPISYPYLE: (*singing*) ...but that which for sleep or for a favour/joy (χάρην)
or for suitable services (θεραπέματα) is fitting for a little child—this tune-
fully I sing.

fr. 752f.11–14, ~198–201

Within a few lines she utters *θεραπείαις* (above, fr. 752f.7, ~193) and *θεραπέματα* (fr. 752f.12, ~199), both cognates of the verb *θεραπεύειν*, 'to serve', which is her function as a slave. Hypsipyle is composing lyrics that emphasise her new social role. *θεραπέματα*, 'services', in this context might be better rendered in English (like *θεραπείαις*) as 'care' or 'tending to the baby's needs', since in other contexts *θεράπευμα* refers to medical treatments.¹⁹ Hypsipyle also offers Opheltes *χάρις*, a word whose semantics will range from 'joy' or 'gladness' (as here) to 'a favour' later in the play.²⁰ These significant words—*χάρις* ('a favour') and *θεραπέματα* ('care')—are also

¹⁵ To arrive at this translation, I read Λήμνι' ἄ (Battezzato) for Λήμνια (P.Oxy.) at line 10 (see Battezzato [2005] 187), and θέλει (Morel) for μέλει (P.Oxy.) at line 11.

¹⁶ Collard & Cropp (2008) 267, n. 2.

¹⁷ Indeed, the women of the chorus of Euripides' *Ion* (who are not children) mention hearing tales of heroes like Iolaus told while they are at the loom (ὅς ἐμοῖσι μυθεύεται παρὰ πήναις, 'he whose story is told at my loom(s)', *Ion* 196–97).

¹⁸ See Wright (2018) 274–77 for a brief consideration of how this scene might have been performed, both in terms of music and props.

¹⁹ *LSJ* *θεράπευμα* A.II.2 and III.

²⁰ *χάρις* appears again at fr. 757.859, 758a.1101, 759a.1581, and 759a.1584.

exactly what Hypsipyle will offer the Argive army, and what she can be said to have shown the Argonauts when they sojourned on Lemnos, and to her own father when she saved his life. The words of Hypsipyle's own lullaby describe the manner in which she treats every man she meets, including the male infant in her charge.

3. PARODOS (192–318)

In the parodos, Hypsipyle is invited to gaze on the Argive army marching through the Nemean plain, but through song she stubbornly insists on remembering her former life with the Argonauts on Lemnos. In this way, as in the prologue, she focuses on an other-world and other-time that is at odds with the life of an elderly slave. But when performing a slave's duties and interacting with male guests of the house, she has the capacity to 'turn off' her fixations and do what she does best: come to the aid of men.

When the women of the chorus arrive, their initial questions continue the theme of Hypsipyle's servitude as expressed in her lullaby. Her last words compared what she used to do (sing Lemnian loom-songs) to what she does now (entertain an infant with a lullaby). As if they had overheard her, their first utterance is:

CHORUS: (*singing*) What are you doing by the doorway, friend? Are you sweeping the house's entryways, or are you casting water on the floor, such as a slave-woman does?

fr. 752f.15–18, ~202–5

The tasks that form this preamble are presumably ones they have seen Hypsipyle do before, and Euripides' emphasis is once again on the totality of Hypsipyle's slave status. When the women arrive and notice her outdoors singing, the first thing they expect her to be doing is singing while performing manual tasks, not singing a lullaby. It is as though they assume that Hypsipyle has invented a floor-washing song to accompany her work, like the loom-songs she herself remembers from Lemnos. But then Euripides adds a twist: the women's second expectation is that Hypsipyle might be routinely singing a familiar tale:

CHORUS: (*singing*) Or are you singing of the *Argo*, which is forever celebrated by your mouth, the fifty-oared ship, or are you singing of the golden-woolled sacred fleece that the dragon's eye guards on the oak tree's boughs, and are you remembering sea-girt Lemnos, which the encircling Aegean causes to echo as it beats it with waves?

fr. 752f.19–28, ~206–15

Clearly the women of the chorus and Hypsipyle have had this conversation before, and Hypsipyle has a reputation for dwelling on her past. They catalogue the *topoi* that could indeed be the subject of a nostalgic lament, if Hypsipyle wanted to perform one: the ship *Argo* which is *διὰ σοῦ στόματος αἰεὶ κληζομένην* ('forever celebrated by your mouth', fr. 752f.19–20), the

Golden Fleece that Jason and his Argonauts sought, the dragon that guarded the fleece, and Lemnos of which she was princess. They even emphasise that Lemnos was an island, encircled by the Aegean (Αἰγαῖος), in contrast to the land-locked groves of Nemea. They thereby offer a window into Hypsipyle's mind, as Martin Hose observed in his study of Euripidean choruses:

There is also an 'ethopoietic moment': the chorus characterises Hypsipyle—both in her position in the house of Lycurgus, as well as her inner mood, her wistful memories. This is quite significant as the chorus hereby assumes the role of the monody in demonstrating the factors that shape the life of the sufferer.

Hose (1990) 85 (my translation of the German)

The women offer their friend some distraction: 'Here, to the Nemean meadow! The whole Argive (Ἀργεῖον) plain is shining with bronze weapons!' (fr. 752f.29–31, ~216–18). This is major news for Nemea: an Argive army, the Seven Against Thebes themselves, summoned by King Adrastus, are marching through the plain. They are heading for Thebes, 'against the defence, the work of the lyre of Amphion' (fr. 752f.32–33, ~219–20), a reference to the legend of Amphion building the walls of Thebes with the aid of his lyre, making the stones move themselves to his music. The women's lyrics are full of sensual imagery, specifically brightness: the shining of bronze weapons, 'and golden bows' (fr. 752f.37, ~224), and the ποικίλα σάματα ('intricate decorations', fr. 752f.36, ~223) on the shields, which is one of the most traditional elements of the Seven Against Thebes myth. Sight and sound are both suggested by ποικίλα ('intricate'), an adjective often associated with the visual arts (as here of the shield decorations) and musical arts in Greek poetry.²¹ Rapidity of movement is suggested by ὠ[κυ]πόδας Ἄ[δρ]αστ[το]ς ('swift-footed Adrastus', fr. 752f.34, ~221), and μονοβάμονες ('single-treading', fr. 752f.38, ~225), referring to horses or one-horse chariots. This is eye candy that comes from the physical exploits of great men, not from nature. The women of the chorus are not admiring pretty flowers or lovely fabrics; instead, they are stunned by men and their warfare. In the words of Scodel in her study of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Hypsipyle*:

Whatever else it may be, the army—which in all three cases is encamped or preparing for battle—is a spectacle, and a beautiful, exciting one. [...] The woman's gaze, however, does not give her power. That makes women conveniently naive observers. Overwhelmed with wonder, fear, or admiration they are almost transparent.

Scodel (1997) 76–77

The women of the chorus set the theme, and Hypsipyle responds in kind; for all their excitement and encouragement, Hypsipyle rejects their advice. Her song confirms what the women had claimed about her in their entrance:

²¹ E.g., Orpheus is described as ποικιλόμουσος in a fragment of the *Persians* by the dithyrambic poet Timotheus of Miletus (a younger contemporary of Euripides) at *PMG* 791.221.

memories of the ship *Argo* are *always* celebrated by her mouth, and today is no exception. Like the women of the chorus, Hypsipyle is an avid spectator of martial men. All women, it would seem, have an appreciation for men at their physical best and enjoy telling other women how exciting or how dashing men look. The contrast here is that the women of the chorus are describing a land army marching here and now (albeit off-stage), with the implication that the men will pass by at any moment, on their way to a war that has not yet begun. But Hypsipyle's response is a competing description of a naval expedition that happened long ago, when the Argonauts passed by Lemnos:

HYPISYPYLE: (*singing*) [...] Thracian [...] leaping over the swell of the calm sea to fasten the cables, him of whom the river's daughter, Aegina, was ancestress—Peleus. And in the middle by the mast, the Thracian lyre cried out an Asian lament of *iē!*, singing the orders for the rowers for the long sweeps of their oars, now a swift stroke, now a rest for the pinewood blade. These things, these my spirit longs to see; but let someone else cry out the Danaans' labours.

fr. 752g.2–17, ~251–66

The elements of Hypsipyle's own tale are parallel, yet not identical, to those in the chorus' song. The chorus sees objects in the present—bronze weapons, golden bows, stunningly designed shields. Hypsipyle in her mind's eye sees not objects, but friends whom she mentions by name, and whose genealogies she can recite. The women of the chorus, for their part, do mention 'swift-footed' Adrastus by name, but he stands out because he is the king of Argos, and they have never met him. Hypsipyle counters this with an image of Peleus (grandson of the goddess Aegina, and father of 'swift-footed' Achilles) leaping to fasten the ship's cables, over water that is described as οἶδμα γαλανείας ('the swell of the calm sea', fr. 752g.4, ~253). Since the only reason a sailor would fasten a cable would be because the ship was landing at the shore, Hypsipyle's memory must be of the Argonauts' arrival at Lemnos (crossing the 'Thracian Sea' from Thessaly).

Hypsipyle also remembers the sounds that accompanied the Argonauts' arrival. The women of the chorus sing of the famous lyre that Amphion used to build a city; Hypsipyle counters with her own legend of a lyre, namely that of Orpheus (himself from Thrace). The oars of the ship had a musical tempo, too, a kind of *accelerando*: first long sweeps from afar, then swifter strokes as the *Argo* drew closer, and then finally a rest as the ship landed. From Hypsipyle's perspective, the music providing the rhythm for the rowers sounded strange and exotic, 'Asian' and 'a lament' (Ἀσιῶδ' ἔλεγον ἰήιον, 'Asian lament of ἰή', fr. 752g.9, ~257).²² Pace Kannicht who understood ἔλεγον ἰήιον to be a paean-song (ἰή παιάν) of thanks offered by the

²² Reading Ἀσιῶδ' (Beazley) instead of Ἀσιῶς (P.Oxy. 852, printed in Kannicht 2004) which would modify the lyre.

Argonauts for their safe landing,²³ the association that the word ἔλεγος ('lament,' 'plaint,' or 'elegy') had with grave inscriptions renders the mood of Hypsipyle's memory as much sorrowful as exciting. It is as though the Argonauts' arrival itself presaged the sadness of their eventual departure, or indeed the melancholy of Hypsipyle in remembering them so vividly, sailor by sailor, as if she had seen them yesterday. In her own words, *τάδε μοι τάδε θυμὸς ἰδεῖν ἴεται*, 'These, these my spirit longs to see' (fr. 752g.15, ~264). She echoes her own words from her monody, *οὐ τάδε πῆνας, οὐ τάδε κερκίδος*, 'These are not the weft-thread's, these are not the shuttle's (consolations)' (fr. 752f.9, ~196), and by this verbal echo emphasises what is continually absent. There is nothing in the present that could tempt her away from her private reverie. The chorus can never see these legendary Argonauts, so Hypsipyle delights in sharing her visions of them; but Adrastus and his Argive soldiers, whom the Nemean women delight in watching, are here right now, and Hypsipyle herself could gaze at them if she wished. Yet she refuses. Not only does she not want to see the Danaans (i.e., the Argives), she does not even want to sing of them. Repeating the sense of ἐβόα in fr. 752g.10, ~258 in the context of a lyre 'shouting forth' or 'crying out' a song for the rowers, Hypsipyle says someone else can 'cry out' the narrative of the Argive's (Δαναῶν) labours. The women of the chorus have, in fact, already done this, but Hypsipyle will have none of it herself, since the Argonauts' labours alone will suffice for her.

The chorus' response to Hypsipyle's reverie is worth examining because they take up a theme that Hypsipyle herself had raised in her lullaby, even though the chorus did not witness it. Hypsipyle had described the Lemnian loom-songs as παραμύθια ('consolations' or 'encouragements', fr. 752f.10, ~197). Now the women of the chorus bring back this theme by acting out consolation itself in their antistrophe and narrating the myths of two princesses who were abducted similarly to Hypsipyle (or so they think). First is Phoenix's daughter Europa, who was stolen from Tyre by Zeus and taken to Crete, where she bore him three children who ruled the land prosperously (fr. 752g.19–27, ~268–76). Second is Io, the Argive, who was turned into a cow (fr. 752g.28–31, ~277–80). The text of the latter *exemplum* is fragmentary, but a surviving element is that Io lost her κερασφόρον ἄταν ('horn-bearing affliction', fr. 752g.31, ~280) once she reached Egypt and bore Zeus' son, Epaphus. The women try to assure Hypsipyle of something; what survives is the protasis of a future more vivid condition, *ταῦτ' ἦν θεὸς εἰς φροντίδα θῆ σοι* ('If god puts these things into your mind' fr. 752g.32, ~281). The apodosis is lost, but they address Hypsipyle as a friend and perhaps suggest moderation: *ἴς δῆ, φίλα, τὸ μέσον* ('then indeed, friend, moderation...' fr. 752g.33, ~282). The rhetorical crux is that Hypsipyle should hope for good fortune, since even Europa and Io found happiness in the end by bearing sons to Zeus.

²³ Kannicht (2004) 751, n. 752g.9.

Hypsipyle's situation, however, is quite different,²⁴ and her own choice of *exemplum* is 'the huntress Procris, whom her husband killed' (fr. 752h.3, ~311), whom someone apparently 'lamented with songs' (fr. 752h.4, ~312). Her question to the chorus is, although a song could be found to mourn poor Procris, what song or lyre's music, even with the help of the Muse Calliope, could approach Hypsipyle's pains? (fr. 752h.6–9, ~315–18).

My own study of the theme of consolation in this passage revealed how Euripides prefigured many of the 'consolatory gestures' that would become canonical in later Graeco-Roman philosophical writings, especially the *consolatio* letters of Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch.²⁵ In my reading, Euripides thematised consolation itself by dramatising both a failure of the chorus to console Hypsipyle in the parodos, and Amphiaras' successful consolation of Eurydice in mid-play after the accidental death of Opheltes. I also focused on Hypsipyle's clever strategies for rejecting consolation, and the possibility that the *exemplum* of Procris, who was accidentally killed by her husband Cephalus, foreshadows Hypsipyle's own role in the drama as someone responsible for an accidental death.²⁶ Here I wish to add that both the chorus' strategy for consoling Hypsipyle, and her counter-strategy for resisting—namely, all of them appealing to female *exempla* of similar suffering—establish Hypsipyle's character as a woman who is not only fixated on her past, but equally insistent that her memories are accepted by others as real, and not as fabricated tales. The Nemean women evoke Europa and Io with the important disclaimer, 'From learned men I have heard the stories' (fr. 752g.18, ~267). This implies that the women interpret Hypsipyle's own memories in the same vein, as the tales of a storyteller. Furthermore, in keeping with the play's penchant so far for focusing on other-places, the women of the chorus associate a specific geography with their *exempla*, Io with Argos, Europa with Tyre and Crete, the latter of which they further describe in fr. 752g.24, ~273 as 'the nurse of the Curetes', who were Zeus' young male devotees. Might this imply that whenever Hypsipyle sings of Lemnos, Orpheus from Thrace, and the Golden Fleece in Colchis, the women think that she is fabricating a tale with equally romantic geography? Stories have a tendency to become legendary with the retelling. Europa and Io might or might not have been abducted by Zeus in reality, as far as the chorus knows; but their stories are celebrated enough to serve as models, in their estimation at least, for Hypsipyle's own situation. The very mention of such *exempla* requires Hypsipyle to convince the chorus that her own memories are indeed true, that they belong to a life that really

²⁴ Battezzato (2005) 197 argues that the mismatch between the chorus' *exempla* and Hypsipyle's actual situation is itself metatheatrical. 'The mythical examples contradict each other and, precisely because of their inadequacy, show how the development of the drama is unpredictable and new.' My translation of the Italian.

²⁵ Chong-Gossard (2009) 14–16, and (2013) 57–60.

²⁶ Chong-Gossard (2009) 17.

was lived. Hypsipyle's own past has the danger of becoming legendary through its constant retelling; the burden is on her to insist, to remind herself and others, that it actually happened. That she rejects the chorus' consolation with a mythical *exemplum* of her own, that of Procris whom she could hardly have known, is extremely clever in that it does the chorus one better. Because Europa's and Io's stories of abduction end rather placidly with the bearing of children, they sound like simple stories. But Procris' tale ends in an accidental death and a song of mourning that demand an emotional empathy that only a woman with real pain, like Hypsipyle, can feel.

4. FIRST EPISODE (319–392)

As soon as Hypsipyle's musical exchange with the chorus ends, the drama changes abruptly with the entrance of an older man and his mute companions, each wearing a knee-length sleeveless *chiton* that the women of the chorus describe as 'Dorian dress':

CHORUS: (*reciting anapaests*) O Zeus, keeper of the grove of Nemea here, for what business do I see these strangers approaching close by, distinctly dressed in Dorian clothing, marching towards this house through the lonely (ἐρημον) grove?²⁷

fr. 752h.10–14, ~319–23

Up to this point, the Argive army was merely passing by; now soldiers are entering their space. This would explain why the women of the chorus are so specific about their location, as if the lyric journey through the legends of the *Argo* and the Thracian sea, Europa and Crete, Io and Egypt, and Procris had made everyone forget where they really were. Their first words are an invocation of Zeus: ὦ Ζεῦ Νεμέας τῆσδ' ἄλλος ἐχων (literally, 'possessor/keeper of the grove of this Nemea', fr. 752h.10, ~319). In fact, the place-name Νεμέας is closest after Zeus' name, with the demonstrative τῆσδε, agreeing with 'Nemea' rather than the 'grove', providing the sensation that the chorus is asserting that, despite their musical reverie, they and Hypsipyle are still 'in Nemea—here'.²⁸ Then by referring to the grove, they remind the audience of the presumed geography, that although the *skēnē* is the house of the priest Lycurgus, it is adjacent to a grove sacred to Zeus, just beyond the *eisodos*, beyond the audience's view. Only then do the women of the chorus ask the important question about why the strangers

²⁷ P.Oxy. 852, both here and at fr. 759a.1603, preserves the properispomenon accentuation of ἐρημον, which is an 'older Attic' orthography according to Chandler (1881) 122 § 393. Kannicht in *TrGF*, following Bond, prints the 'later Attic' proparoxytone form ἐρημον. I follow P.Oxy. 852.

²⁸ I thank my anonymous assessor who suggested I point out that the Greek word order is not *metri gratia*. Euripides could have written, e.g., ὦ Ζεῦ Νεμέας ἄλλος τὸδ' ἔχων, which my assessor offered as metrical way to emphasise *this* grove, rather than *of Nemea which is right here*.

in Dorian dress are coming towards the house. They end their enquiry with another descriptor of place, for the strangers are walking ἐρημιον ἄν' ἄλσος, ('through the lonely grove', fr. 752h.14, ~323). Although it might be conventional for tragic choruses to describe things more than once, Euripides seems determined to have this chorus remind themselves (and the audience) again about this grove, which they mentioned not four lines earlier.

The audience has no way of knowing the identity of these Dorian-dressed strangers, other than that they must belong to the Argive army mentioned in the parodos. The opening monologue of the chief among them reveals an older man who is not exactly the grand Argive hero one might expect. Instead, he is a complainer:

How hateful to men are journeys abroad, and whenever a traveller, falling into need, sees fields deserted (ἐρημιους) and with solitary dwellings—no home, no guide, having no idea where to turn. And this hardship, this very one, has come upon me, and gladly I saw this house in Zeus' meadow in the land of Nemea.

fr. 752h.15–21, ~324–30

The man sounds fussy, making the kinds of complaints a person would make if he really has been travelling for a long time. The erotic dreaminess of the Argive army in the parodos, with its bronze weapons and glittering shields, is scaled down to practicalities. Soldiers need to be fed and watered. The march across a plain might be a spectacle for a woman who watches from afar, but it is no joy for the dusty soldiers who march it. The man describes what he has marched through (countryside that is deserted) and where he has arrived (a house in Zeus' meadow), as though Lycurgus' house were a shining oasis in the midst of a no-man's land. The man, the women of the chorus, and indeed Hypsipyle herself will all speak of a place that is ἐρημιος ('lonely,' 'deserted,' or even 'untended'), a word that implies areas devoid of human contact or care. In addition to the (ἐρημιον) grove of Zeus and the ἐρημιους fields of the countryside, Hypsipyle will remember at the very end of the play (line 1603) the beach of Lemnos where she took refuge after she spared her father's life during the Lemnian massacre, a beach that was the ἐρημιον refuge of birds. 'Loneliness' and 'emptiness' characterise all times and exterior places—Hypsipyle's past on Lemnos, the omnipresent Nemean grove just beyond the acting space, and the Argive army's present and future march to Thebes—as if Hypsipyle's space in front of Lycurgus' house is indeed an oasis, surrounded by a void. Hypsipyle has found herself on another island, another Lemnos, but this time she is encircled not by the beating waves of the Aegean, but by emptiness.

Having got his complaints off his chest, the man ignores the women of the chorus and addresses Hypsipyle:

So you—whether as a slave (δούλη) you stand before this house, or whether you do not have a slave's body/status (δούλον σῶμα)—I shall ask:

fr. 752h.22–23, ~331–32

There is bold word play with the semantics of *σῶμα* as both ‘body’ and ‘social status’.²⁹ The man takes a second look at Hypsipyle, uncertain whether some non-slave status lies behind her appearance, whether—as the audience now knows—the nurse has a tale of her own. He has still not introduced himself, so an audience might not yet know who he is; but of course he will be revealed to be the seer Amphiaraus, brother-in-law of King Adrastus of Argos, and this is the first indication of Amphiaraus’ own status as a *μάντις* (‘prophet’ or ‘seer’) who will later describe himself as *σώφρων* (‘discreet’, ‘moderate’, ‘self-controlled’). His care in assessing Hypsipyle’s body (and her status) contrasts with the preceding scene, when Hypsipyle’s own son failed to recognise her and was rather curt with her. It is also a prefiguring of his later self-description to Eurydice (Opheltes’ mother and Hypsipyle’s owner) at fr. 757.877, that it is in his nature *τὰ διαφέρονθ’ ὀρᾶν* (‘to see the things that make a difference’).³⁰

Amphiaraus’ next question is about the present location:

AMPHIARAUS: I shall ask: whose is this sheep-sustaining dwelling in Phlius’ land reckoned to be, o stranger?

fr. 752h.23–25, ~332–34

Although it is perfectly normal for characters in any play to indicate their location, it is nonetheless thematic that Amphiaraus belabours the geography—Phlius—when speaking to Hypsipyle, given her backward-looking attitude in the drama so far. His arrival forces her to engage with the reality of the here-and-now. She is no longer on Lemnos, entertaining the Argonauts; she is no longer imagining Mt. Parnassus, where her divine grandfather dances with maidens, nor the Symplegades, which she could never possibly have seen for herself; she is in Nemea, near Zeus’ grove and Zeus’ meadow, in the neighbourhood of Phlius, and nowhere else.

Amphiaraus’ question also compels Hypsipyle to defend the here-and-now. She retorts, *ὄλβια Λυκούργου μέλαθρα κλήζεται τάδε* (‘These are called Lycurgus’ wealthy halls’, fr. 752h.26, ~335). By reusing *μέλαθρα* (‘halls’), the same descriptor from line 137 when she welcomed Thoas, Hypsipyle signals that she is essentially reperforming the same actions as before, greeting male guests in front of the priest’s house, with the variation that now she presents the house with praise.

Amphiaraus explains what he wants, which is not to stay the night, as Thoas and Euneus did, but a different sort of hospitality, clean water:

AMPHIARAUS: [I would like] to obtain running water in pitchers, so we might pour unto the gods a [pure] libation. The small streams of stagnant

²⁹ Bond (1969) 81, § Fr. I iv 23.

³⁰ See Battezzato (2000) 353 for a discussion of how Amphiaraus’ Dorian dress accords with his qualities of moderation and temperance. Indeed, Amphiaraus’ distinctive costume advertises his ability to see the truth beneath Hypsipyle’s costume.

water are not clear, and they are all being churned up by the massiveness of the army.

fr. 752h.26–32, ~335–41

Importantly, the water is not for drinking, or for the army's horses, even though one would expect these to be the first concerns of any soldier whose first words were a complaint about marching through a deserted countryside. Instead, the water is for pouring a libation to the gods. At fr. 752h.30, POxy. 852 preserves only ὄ[], and two reconstructions have been proposed: ὄδιον, '(a libation) for the journey', was proposed by Murray in the *editio princeps* and supported by Bond, Cockle, and Diggle;³¹ ὄσιον, 'a pure (libation)', was proposed by Stengel and supported by Kannicht and Cropp.³² Those who support ὄσιον (as do I) point out that Amphiaraus' next two lines explain that the purity of water is essential, since every other water they can find has been muddied. Cropp clarified the situation vividly:

The water seeps from underground springs through the marshy plain, and has been made muddier by the Argive army. Recent excavations show that there is no natural river-channel through the Nemea valley; in the classical period the plain was marshy and a dependable natural supply of drinking-water lacking; hence the importance of the isolated spring to which Hyps. will guide the Argives.

Cropp (2004) 237

Thus, yet another layer of naturalism is added to this Argive army. The women of the chorus may have been excited by its beauty as a spectacle, but Amphiaraus reveals its drudgery, churning up mud as soldiers plow through the plains. The ultimate insult must be that the army itself destroys the very water it needs to make a libation for its own prosperity. After giving precise information about his people's ethnicity, ἐκ τῶν Μυκηνῶν [ἔσ]μεν Ἀργεῖοι γέν[ος] ('We are from Mycenae, Argives in race', fr. 752h.34, ~343), Amphiaraus explains that the libation is necessary because they are crossing the border into a new land and need to make a pre-sacrifice for the army (fr. 752h.35–36, ~344–45), to test whether there are good omens to continue the march. Such διαβατήρια ('crossing-over') sacrifices are important elements in the army narratives of Thucydides and Xenophon.³³ These sacrifices are crucial to the play's plot, since if one could pinpoint a moment when the disastrous fate of the child Opheltes begins, it is here. It is Amphiaraus' request for water to make the sacrifice that sets all the events in motion; and the fact that the child dies in order that the sacrifice can take place, is itself the omen that such sacrifices are

³¹ Murray in Grenfell & Hunt (1908) 90 ad 29–30, Bond (1969) 82 ad 30, Cockle (1987) 69, and Diggle (1998) 142.

³² Stengel (1909) 373 n. 1, Kannicht (2004) 755, Cropp (2004) 237.

³³ E.g., Thuc. 5.54.2, 5.55.3, 5.116.1, Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.3, 3.5.7.

designed to test. The dramatic irony is that the baby Opheltes himself is on stage at the moment when Amphiarus asks for the water. Opheltes is a silent witness to the request that will cause his death. Hypsipyle was singing to the infant before the chorus arrived, and there is no break in the *parodos* for Hypsipyle to take the child indoors, and no mention is made of anyone coming outside the house to take the infant away from her nurse. Given the lack of stage directions, Hypsipyle could even be holding the infant whose death will happen this day, in front of the very man whose request for water will kill it.

In the fragments that remain, it appears that Hypsipyle herself asks for confirmation that the Argive army is headed for Thebes (alias Κάδμου πύλας, 'Cadmus' gates', fr. 752h.37, ~346), which is the rumour she heard from the Nemean women. Amphiarus appears to confirm this. It is Hypsipyle who enquires as to their motive, and she does so with politeness: λε[γ', εἴ τί σου θέμι[ς μ]αθεῖν ('say whether it is right to learn it from you', fr. 752h.39, ~348).³⁴ Amphiarus recounts the traditional grounds for the Argive expedition—the restoration of the Theban prince, Polynices, who had been exiled from his homeland. The line is fragmentary, so it is uncertain how much detail Amphiarus is omitting; and he has not yet even introduced himself. He does so two lines later at fr. 752h.42, ~351, an entire twenty-seven lines after his entrance, with the poorly preserved words: 'the son of Oicles Amphiarus'. Hypsipyle's response ὦ μεγάληα ('O great...', fr. 752h.43, ~352) could be an indication that she has heard of his reputation, and Amphiarus' even more fragmentary reply πῶς δ' ('And how...', fr. 752h.44, ~353) could be the start of a simple question, 'But how do you know me?' The next twenty lines are virtually lost, so we do not know her answer.

Two significant fragmentary words survive among the line-beginnings preserved in column 4 of P.Oxy. 852. The first, ὄνομα[('name', or the first half of 'to name', fr. 752i.3) is attributed to Amphiarus, and the second, ἡ Λημ[ν ('the Lemnian (woman)' or 'the Lemnian (land)', fr. 752i.4) is attributed to Hypsipyle. The most obvious interpretation is that Amphiarus asks Hypsipyle her name (since he has already introduced himself), and she identifies herself as coming from Lemnos. If this is indeed the case, Hypsipyle tells Amphiarus more about herself than she did a moment ago to the strangers (her own sons, it will turn out) whom she welcomed into her master's house.

There are several missing lines in which Amphiarus appears to have explained the origin of the Argive expedition, beginning with a genealogical narrative not unlike the one with which Hypsipyle began the play. Polydorus (Πολύδωρος, fr. 752k.9, ~380) was the descendant of a goddess (Θεᾶς φῦ[ς, 10, ~381), that is, Aphrodite was his grandmother. Polydorus' descendants (τούτου δὲ πατ[ρ, 11, ~382) include Polynices. By the end, Hypsipyle is inspired to help Amphiarus, an act which she explains in fr. 753, δεῖξω

³⁴ The line is supplemented in this way by Diggle (1998) 142.

μὲν Ἀργείοισιν Ἀχελφούρου ῥόον ('I will show the Argives a stream of Achelous'), which Cropp argued 'probably belong(s) within the next thirty lines' after the Δ marking for the play's 400th line.³⁵ In fact Hypsipyle leads Amphiaraus into the sacred grove of Zeus towards a spring (κρήνη, fr. 754a.1); but in keeping with the characters' focus on genealogies (Hypsipyle's own, that of Argonauts like Peleus, Polydorus and the royal house of Thebes), what survives in fr. 753 is a reference to Achelous, the ultimate source of the spring. Euripides uses 'Achelous' (Greece's largest river) as metonymy for 'water' elsewhere (*Bacch.* 519 and 625, *Andr.* 167), but in this play that has referenced faraway places so regularly, it is not insignificant that the Achelous is in northwestern Greece, not in the Peloponnese, and certainly not a river that the Argives would have passed on their journey from Argos to Nemea.³⁶

5. PARALLEL WORLDS

By stopping here and reflecting on what has survived of the first 400-or-so lines of *Hypsipyle*, one can observe how much Euripides has achieved by putting in the same place two stories whose mythologies otherwise have nothing to do with each other—Hypsipyle and the Argonauts, and Amphiaraus and the Seven Against Thebes. Euripides' trademark habit of constructing connections between the myths of his characters continues to excite. In this case, when Amphiaraus and his mute companions arrive at line 319, he brings Hypsipyle out of her daydream and into a new situation that is presented as familiar, at least typologically. Euripides achieves this with the repetition of carefully chosen vocabulary and similar-sounding words.

One connection between Hypsipyle and Amphiaraus is perhaps the most obvious: the name 'Hypsipyle' itself. The word ὑψίπυλος ('with high gates') is used in the *Iliad* as an epithet of both Troy and Thebes, the latter of which is Amphiaraus' destination.³⁷ Hypsipyle's question to him at line ~346, about the gates of Cadmus (Κάδμου πύλας), is a subtle pun on the 'gate' half (the *-pyle* half) of her own name, but applied to Thebes. The pun is a natural one to make, but its impact is evidenced by the fact that the physical involvement of Hypsipyle ('Miss High-gated-woman') with the myth of the

³⁵ Cropp (2004) 198. Fr. 753 does not survive in P.Oxy. 852, but is quoted in Macrob. *Sat.* 5.18.2.

³⁶ The assignment of the name 'Achelous' to the river in northwestern Greece is attested as early as Hdt. 2.10.

³⁷ Hom. *Il.* 6.416 (Thebes), 16.698 (Troy). Also compare Bacchylides' *Ninth Epinician*; written for a victor in the Nemean Games, it begins with the story of Amphiaraus, the Seven against Thebes, and the death of Archemorus as the origin of the games. Bacchylides uses ὑψίπυλος in his poem to describe not Thebes, but Troy (ὕψιπύλου Τροίας, 9.46) in a catalogue of places associated with descendants of the river Asopus. Bacchylides *floruit* c. 481–452 BCE, a couple of generations before Euripides' *Hypsipyle*.

Seven Against Thebes ('the high-gated city') begins not in the parodos, but with the arrival of Amphiaraus—innocently, but disastrously for her.

In addition, it is surely no accident that Jason's sailors manned a ship called Ἀργώ, and the women of the chorus admire soldiers marching from similar-sounding Ἄργος. It is also surely deliberate that the women of the chorus describe the island of Lemnos as encircled by Αἰγῶϊος ('the Aegean'), whilst in the here-and-now the Ἀργεῖον plain is flashing with men whom Amphiaraus claims are Ἀργεῖοι in race. *Argō*, *Argos*, *Aigaios*, and *Argeion/Argeioi* all pun with each other, so that an evocation of one invites the recollection of another. Even Aegina (Αἴγινα), the grandmother of the Argonaut Peleus, can be added to this list of homoeophones. All these names are neatly assigned to opposing temporal and spatial frames; the sea-voyaging *Argo*, the Aegean, and Aegina belong to Hypsipyle's former life, Argos and the land-locked Argive plain to her immediate future.³⁸

As if the *Argos/Argo* pun were not enough, there is also a pun between *Danaoī/Danaides*. At fr. 752g.16, ~264, Hypsipyle herself was the first to describe the Argive army as Δαναῶν ('Danaans') whose labours she suggested be celebrated by someone other than her. Argives are 'Danaans' in reference to their ancestor Danaus. But Danaus was also the father of the Danaides, who (like the Lemnian Women) murdered all their husbands on a single night, except for one woman, Hypermnestra, who (like Hypsipyle) spared one man. And lo and behold, Hypermnestra also happens to be, according to the mythographer Hyginus, the name of Amphiaraus' mother.³⁹ And when at fr. 752h.36, ~345 Amphiaraus describes the Argive army, he uses the words στρατοῦ ... Δαναϊδῶν ('the army of the Danaides'). The word *Danaides* here is specific to the Argives, and Christopher Collard argued that the word (which appears also in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and *Hecuba*) is a Euripidean invention.⁴⁰ But certainly any audience encountering *Danaides* to refer to Amphiaraus' people, must also reflect on the *Danaides* as a metonymy for the Lemnian women, Hypsipyle's people. Hypsipyle herself, and the Argives' ancestors, have endured the same horror—wives killing husbands en masse—in their past.⁴¹

³⁸ On the other hand, Io is also described as Argive (Ἀργεῖαν, fr. 752g.28, ~257) by the chorus women, a counter-example of the adjective *Argeios* referring not to the immediate future, but to the romantic legend of an abducted princess.

³⁹ Hyg. *Fab.* 70, 73, in which Amphiaraus is son of 'Hypermnestra, daughter of Thestius, of Pylos.'

⁴⁰ Collard (1975) 143 ad 130 argues that *Danaides* 'was an invention of E[uripides] and appears first at *Hecuba* 503 Ταλθύβιος ἤκω Δαναϊδῶν ὑπηρέτης, where Δ. = Homeric Δαναοί, the Greeks generally.'

⁴¹ Interestingly in his *Heracles*, Euripides refers to the Danaides as 'the daughters of Danaus' (τῶν Δαναοῦ παίδων, *HF* 1018) in a choral stasimon whose theme is family murders. This stasimon also contains the word ὑπίπτουσι to describe the house of Heracles, whose doors are being opened (*HF* 1030). Euripides' choice of ὑπίπτουσι could trigger an association with the Lemnian women, thus re-invoking the myth of the Danaides mentioned twelve lines previously.

Euripides thus constructs a parallelism between the histories of Amphiaraus (brother-in-law of the king of *Argos*, and leader of the *Argive* army) and Hypsipyle (ex-lover of the captain of the ship *Argo*, queen of Lemnos in the *Aegean*). This parallelism even has a certain circularity; Hypsipyle the nurse is a slave in exile, yet her current home and current events are eerily familiar to her. The names have changed only slightly. Hypsipyle's memories of the past and the realities of the present are connected with subtle verbal word play. Orpheus' lyre has been replaced by Amphion's lyre, the Lemnian women are evoked by the Danaides/descendants of Danaus, the *erēmos* seashore of Lemnos has become an *erēmos* grove, and the infant Opheltes has substituted for the twins who were weaned from Hypsipyle's breasts. What is more, *Argo* has become *Argos*, and Hypsipyle transfers her affections from the great male expedition of the past (the Argonauts) to the great male expedition of the present (the Argives).

CONCLUSIONS

In his *Hypsipyle*, Euripides has made the nurse his protagonist, and the Nurse's Tale is one of inconsolable longing for friends from a faraway time and place. The play began with an unidentified Hypsipyle relating dreamy images of her ancestor, the god Dionysus. The choral parodos continued in this vein, challenging Hypsipyle to focus on the spectacle of an army in the present, and thereby reinforcing her own rejection of their advice to abandon her fixation on her past. To quote Scodel's study of the tragic female spectator of armies, 'Sometimes, refusing to look is more meaningful than looking'.⁴² Yet in the midst of this, Hypsipyle demonstrates her acceptance of her role as slave and nursemaid—she entertains the baby, and greets guests at the entrance of her owner's house—and about these particular tasks, she makes no complaint. What, then, is the dramatic effect of such a characterisation in this first portion of a very long play?

Initially, an audience realises something about Hypsipyle herself. Although she was wrapped up in her memories at first, by line 342 she is inquisitive and wants to know what is going on. She asks for confirmation that Amphiaraus is marching against Thebes, which is what the women of the chorus told her; even when she receives confirmation, she wants to know more, hence the negatively polite 'say whether it is right to learn it from you' (~349). Earlier she sang that there was no music that could approach her pains, and someone else should sing about the labours of the Danaans; yet here she is, basking in the details of those labours! Yet, unlike the chorus, she is not interested in being a spectator. The women of the chorus described the sights and sounds of the army, as a spectacle to be lingered upon like an artwork. Hypsipyle, however, is interested in

⁴² Scodel (1997) 77.

motives, history, story. The precise referent of her exclamation ὦ μεγάληλα ('O great...') does not survive, but the import is that she recognises a famous name. She may not want to sing the Danaans' labours, but she wants to know about the cause of their misfortune.

The character of Hypsipyle is revealed as one who behaves differently among men than she does among women. She is nostalgic when alone, and in the company of other women she is almost sullen, yet as soon as men arrive, she aligns herself with her status as slave. This ability to 'turn off' her private fixations is both convenient to her role as slave, and also an indispensable element of her personal ethics. In other words, Hypsipyle begins the play with a history of coming to the aid of men in need. It is surely no coincidence that Euripides chose the woman whose mythology included entertaining the entire crew of the Argo and saving the life of the only man (her father) who survived the Lemnian massacre, to be the nurse who agrees to aid the Seven Against Thebes in their desperate search for water, and to give hospitality to two strangers (Thoas and Euneus) in need of shelter. Doing a favour for men in need, especially men on an expedition, is what Hypsipyle does best. And there is no better place to put her than in front of a priest's house which Amphiarus depicts as the only site of civilisation in the midst of a desert.

Euripides thus uses the exposition of his tragedy to establish Hypsipyle in the role of the helpful woman, with a history of helping men in the past (something that the chorus women allege she continually sings about), and this help—the χάρις that she shows to men—raises the equally important expectation for reciprocity. For after Opheltes is killed and Hypsipyle is bound and pleading for her life to the child's mother, Hypsipyle calls upon the absent Amphiarus: διὰ γὰρ σὴν ἀπόλλυμαι χάριν ('for I die because of my favour to you', fr. 757.859). A moment later, Amphiarus arrives and freely admits that he did well by her, and it would be shameful for him to do nothing in return (757.872–73). At the play's end, Amphiarus repeats the language of reciprocity:

AMPHIARAUS: Woman, you are receiving the favour (χάριν) that was owed from me; and since you were generous to me when I made a request, I as well have repaid you generously as regards your two sons.

fr. 759a.1584–86

Now the play and this study have come full circle. Hypsipyle's initial fixation on memories of the Argonauts is not only an aspect of her character; it is a foretaste of the events of the play, since the same hospitality that she showed in the past to sailors prefigures the hospitality that she shows to soldiers in the present, and the reciprocity which will, in fact, reunite her with her past. Accepting the risk to care for others, it seems, is the essential feature of the Nurse's Tale.

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