

AMPHION IN EURIPIDES' *ANTIOPE*

Amphion emerges as an intriguing figure from the fragments of Euripides' *Antiope*. He is not only a musician, but also a philosophical thinker who, after being chided by his twin brother Zethus, justifies his life of tranquility and contemplation. Such an espoused way of living, however, is said to be contradicted by the reconstructed latter half of the play, where he disbelieves the true identity of his mother Antiope, participates in the killing of Dirce, and eggs on his family to hunt down Lycus. It is commonly held that Amphion's erratic change of behaviour, from philosophical ponderings to aggressive courses of action, can be attributed to his paradoxical concession to Zethus.¹ No one till now has doubted this view, but I will endeavour to do so; for, although, as will be seen, there is external evidence for this theory, a reading of the fragments in the reconstructed order of events suggests that there might have been no concession at all, and that what seems to be erratic behaviour can be explained as consistent and logical.

From the remains of the play one can surmise that Amphion probably had a greater dramatic role than his brother.² Dramatic dominance is first suggested by his monody that followed sometime after the prologue of the herdsman (F 179–82).³ This monody seems to have dealt with the creation of the cosmos and the history of the lyre (F 182a, 190, 192),⁴ epic themes evoking the probable

1) C. Collard, M. J. Cropp and J. Gibert, *Euripides. Selected Fragmentary Plays Vol. 2* (Oxford 2004) 262, 266–8; J. Kambitsis, *L'Antiope d'Euripide* (Athens 1972) xxiii–xxiv; B. Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama* (Berkeley 1964) 73–4, 89–90; T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 208.

2) For the numbering of the fragments, I follow R. Kannicht, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta Vol. 5* (Göttingen 2004). For a detailed commentary on the fragments, see Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 259–325; M. Huys, *The Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth in Euripidean Tragedy: A Study of Motifs* (Leuven 1995) 104–7, 150–1, 177–81, 313–6, 346–8; J. Kambitsis (above, n. 1).

3) Amphion's monody probably occurred sometime in the parodos. See Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 262 and Kambitsis (above, n. 1) xii–xiii.

4) I follow Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 299 in placing F 190 and 192 in the monody. Kannicht (above, n. 2) 283, 291 follows Nauck, Snell, and Webster in placing these fragments in the agon, on the grounds that their contextual am-

portrayal of Amphion as a traditional bard. Here one can imagine that the topic of the lyre must have not only presaged his future role of miraculously building the walls of Thebes, but also precipitated his argument with Zethus, who later arrives to rebuke him for idleness and inactivity stemming from his musical pursuits. After their debate, Amphion seems to become the leading spokesman of the two, for he is clearly the one who converses with their mother Antiope in what is believed to have been the next episode (F 204–10);⁵ and in a later reconstructed episode suggested by Hyginus (*Fabulae* 8.7), Pacuvius (*Antiope* 12),⁶ and the ascription of Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3317 to this play,⁷ he is probably the unidentified speaker addressing Dirce and threatening to remove her from the sanctuary situated in the herdsman's cave. At the reconstructed end of the play that is provided by Papyrus Petrie 1–2 (F 223), he is probably the speaker who admits his and his family's role in killing Dirce, and who calls on Zeus to protect them in their attempt to kill Lycus. Zethus, in this part of the play, is presumably present but mute.⁸

It was in the play's agon where the brotherly debate occurred and of which we possess a substantial amount of fragments (F 183–202). The agon is believed to have reflected two opposing contemporary views on leading one's life, *vita activa* supported by Zethus and *vita contemplativa* supported by Amphion.⁹ From the frag-

biguity makes placement difficult. Yet dramatic sense demands that we place them in the monody, for the topics of the cosmos and lyre help characterise the figure of Amphion from the play's onset and lay the groundwork for the coming debate between him and his brother.

5) In F 210 Amphion is identified as the speaker by Clem. Alex. Strom. 5.14.111.2: "Amphion is speaking to Antiope."

6) For these and other relevant passages from Hyginus and Pacuvius, see Kannicht (above, n. 2) 274–80, and Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 261–2.

7) Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3317 = Euripides' *Antigone*, F 175 in Kannicht (above, n. 2). In ascribing this papyrus to Euripides' *Antiope* instead of his *Antigone*, I follow Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 282–4, 311–2 and J. Diggle, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta Selecta* (Oxford 1998) 87.

8) Although Zethus has no speaking part in Papyrus Petrie 1–2, his presence is inferred by the fact that Hermes addresses and orders him to rule Thebes along with Amphion (86–90). Because there is already a maximum of three speaking roles (Amphion, Lycus, and Hermes), Zethus, by tragic convention, must remain as a mute figure. For further discussion see Snell (above, n. 1) 74.

9) This agon was famous in antiquity and was even cited by Plato in his *Gorgias* 484d6–e. For the resonance of this agon on Plato's *Gorgias* see A. W. Night-

ments belonging to the debate, one can conjecture that this clash was meant to be seen not as an isolated event but a recurring one: Zethus has always viewed with suspicion Amphion's pursuit of music, and when he comes on stage and sees him indulging in what he considers harmful activities, he cannot but chide him. Music is derided for its serious ill effects; it makes one lazy, fond of wine, neglectful of personal affairs, and incapable of aiding friends and city (F 183, 187). Unmanliness and the deterioration of mind and body are other negative consequences of music:

ἀμελείς ὧν δεῖ σε ἐπιμελεῖσθαι.¹⁰

ψυχῆς φύσιν (γὰρ) ὦδε γενναίαν (λαχῶν)
 γυναικομίμῳ διαπρέπεις μορφώματι·
 κοῦτ' ἂν δίκης βουλαῖσι πιθανὸν ἂν λάκοις
 (× – ∪ – ×) κοῦτ' ἂν ἀσπίδος κύτει
 (× –) ὀμιλήσειας οὔτ' ἄλλων ὑπερ
 νεανικὸν βούλευμα βουλευσαίό (τι)

F 185

Here Zethus' aristocratic tendencies are revealed, and traditional sentiments concerning martial prowess and rhetorical skills are evoked as embodying the best things an individual can hope to possess, and of which Amphion has deprived himself. In the *Iliad*, a brave warrior is ranked according to his skills both in the assembly and on the battlefield, and these are the very qualities Zethus finds lacking in Amphion due to his endeavours.

To remedy his shortcomings, Zethus advises his brother to discard the lyre and apply himself in hard work, such as farming and herding:

ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ πιθοῦ·
 παῦσαι ματάζων καὶ πόνων εὐμουσίαν

ingale, Plato's *Gorgias* and Euripides' *Antiope*: A Study in Generic Transformation, *ClAnt* 11 (1992) 121–41; L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford 1986) 163–73; S. R. Slings, *The Quiet Life in Euripides' Antiope*, in: *Fragmenta Dramatica* (Göttingen 1991) 137–51. For the political overtones in these agon-fragments, see A. J. Podlecki, *Had the Antiope of Euripides Political Overtones?*, *AncW* 27 (1996) 131–46, and for the religious overtones see P. Wilson, *Euripides Tragic Muse*, *ICS* 24/25 (1999/2000) 440–9. For other discussions see Kambitsis (above, n. 1) xxii–xxx, Colard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 267–8; Snell (above, n. 1) 82–90.

10) Verse 1 of F 185 is paraphrased by Plato in *Gorgias* 485e–6a.

ἄσκει τοιαῦτ' ἄειδε, καὶ δόξεις φρονεῖν,
 σκάπτων, ἀρῶν γῆν, ποιμνίοις ἐπιστατῶν,
 ἄλλοις τὰ κομψὰ ταῦτ' ἀφείς σοφίσματα,
 ἐξ ὧν κενοῖσιν ἐγκατοικήσεις δόμοις

F 188

Musical imagery evoked by πόνων εὐμουσίαν ἄσκει reinforces Zethus' sarcasm and taunting of a way of life he deems inferior and demeaning.

Amphion retorts by defending his art and philosophical quietude. Like Ion in Euripides' *Ion* (595–606), he stresses that it is wiser to choose a peaceful life over one that is reckless and bold, for a man who is not overly ambitious brings the most benefit to his friends and city, and the man who is too ambitious and bold brings only harm (F 193, 194). Yet, somehow later in his speech, Amphion seems to have contemplated relinquishing his solitude when there was need of offering advice in political and military affairs. Here his wisdom is seen to prevail over brute strength and to enhance all aspects of the polis, from the home to the state, from the political arena to the battlefield:

τὸ δ' ἀσθενές μου καὶ τὸ θῆλυ σώματος
 κακῶς ἐμέμφθης· εἰ γὰρ εὖ φρονεῖν ἔχω,
 κρείσσον τόδ' ἐστὶ καρτεροῦ βραχίονος

F 199

γνώμαις γὰρ ἀνδρὸς εὖ μὲν οἰκοῦνται πόλεις,
 εὖ δ' οἶκος, εἷς τ' αὖ πόλεμον ἰσχύει μέγα·
 σοφὸν γὰρ ἐν βούλευμα τὰς πολλὰς χέρας
 νικᾷ, σὺν ὄχλῳ δ' ἀμαθία πλείστον κακόν

F 200

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ἄδοιμι καὶ λέγοιμί τι
 σοφόν, ταρασσῶν μηδὲν ὧν πόλις νοσεῖ

F 202

One can infer from these fragments that Amphion is not a strict advocate of *vita contemplativa*: the fact that he suggests that his wisdom and good judgement can be useful in political and militaristic contexts reveals his willingness to go beyond mere inactivity and quietude. A mixed approach to living is proposed, one that alternates between solitude and activity, and one that still involves the making of music, which, as can be inferred from another fragment, enriches one's life (F 198). It should be noted that Amphion's readi-

ness to engage in public service differentiates him from Zethus' *vita activa*, which is restricted solely to agricultural labour and military service. Amphion envisions activity in terms of leadership and advising that precludes manual labour as defined by his brother.

There are those who maintain that some sort of reconciliation results at the end of the agon, namely, that Amphion, after some resistance, eventually yields to Zethus' way of thinking and living.¹¹ This theory is based on the evidence of Horace, who says *fraternis cecisise putatur moribus Amphion* (Epistles 1.18.41 ff.). Such an assumption, however, about the brotherly debate seems to clash with what we know about agones, especially those of Euripides. Lloyd has convincingly shown that, in the extant plays of Euripides, agones never resolve anything resolutely.¹² Characters who confront each other in these scenarios always remain rooted in their particular trains of thought and can never be persuaded to accept the opposing views; and in some cases hostility is even heightened and increased by the end of the discourse.¹³ The evidence provided by the debate-agonies of Euripidean extant plays would strongly urge us to imagine that Amphion and Zethus probably did not reach a resolution by the end of their agon. And such a viewpoint ought not to be contradicted by Horace's remark, which needs to be interpreted in the context it arises. Before the idea of concession is brought up in Horace's epistle, there appears a phrase that tells of Amphion silencing his lyre because of his brother's dislike of it (Epistles 1.18.40). Therefore the idea of concession, which appears right after this remark, must refer to the giving up of music and the lyre, and not to the acceptance of an active life. It should also be noted that Horace never explicitly mentions Euripides or his play *Antiope*, and because of this, may be drawing his material from another version of the myth about which we know nothing, or may be inventing the element of concession for thematic reasons.¹⁴

11) Webster (above, n.1) 208; Kambitsis (above, n. 1) xxiii–xxiv; Snell (above, n. 1) 73–4, 89–90; Podlecki (above, n. 9) 140; Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 262, 266–8.

12) M. Lloyd, *The Agon in Euripides* (Oxford 1992).

13) In the agon of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Polynices and Eteocles are unable to resolve their quarrel and even decide to engage each other in hand-to-hand combat once hostilities commence (621–2).

14) The *Antiope* myth seems to be used paradigmatically in Horace's epistle: as the lyre of Amphion was given up due to the protestations of Zethus, so should

Amphion's mixed approach to living is again evident in the fragments that are placed after the agon and deal with his encounter with Antiope, who has apparently taken refuge at the herdsman's cave (F 203–11). Here he discounts his true parentage, and the probable reason for his behaviour is that he has suddenly met a strange woman, who claims that she is his mother and Zeus his father. One can further conjecture that he is naturally hesitant and requires proof, for all this time he and his brother have lived with the herdsman, who has presumably never made mention of Antiope or Zeus. From Hyginus (8.7–8) we can hypothesise on the subsequent action, occurring either onstage or offstage. Amphion, disbelieving his mother, allows her to be captured and led to her death by Dirce and her bacchants, who arrive shortly afterwards. The herdsman, having learnt of the impending crime and wishing to stop it, is forced to reaffirm the truth of the brothers' origins, whereupon they hurry off and rescue their mother.

It is at this point of the action where one can place Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3317. From the papyrus we can infer that Dirce, intent on escaping capture and punishment after her unsuccessful attempt in killing Antiope, has taken shelter at a shrine situated within the herdsman's cave.¹⁵ Amphion, eager for revenge and yet still in control of his rational faculties, points out that it would be shameful for her to be dragged away by force; rather, she should yield without resistance (1–8). She seems to agree and is presumably led to her doom (9–15). Here Amphion's behaviour can be explained dramaturgically. Earlier he disbelieved Antiope, allowing her to be captured and led to her death; and although he and his brother learned the truth in time and were fortunate in saving her, desire for revenge remains. Perhaps he might also have learned from his joyful reunion with his mother that Dirce was responsible for her past sufferings, knowledge that would have, no doubt, further exacerbated his vengeful behaviour.¹⁶ All these hypothet-

Lollius, the addressee in the epistle, give up his artful and musical life in favour of hunting (45–7). Here the element of concession ties the mythic allusion to the main subject matter, and here the element of the hunt may also be a Horatian invention, because no reference to it can be found in the fragments of Euripides' *Antiope*.

15) This is corroborated by F 203, which tells of "a column decorated with ivy". This detail suggests that there is some sort of simple shrine dedicated to Dionysus within the cave. See Collard, Cropp and Gibert (above, n. 1) 281, 308–9.

16) See Hyginus, *Fabulae* 8.6.

ical comments, however, ought not to be seen as unfounded or exaggerated, for we have clearly seen how Amphion's willingness to give counsel in war bespeaks of his readiness to take aggressive action.

From the evidence of Papyrus Petrie 1–2, it is clear that he, along with Zethus, does kill Dirce in a rather cruel fashion¹⁷ (4–6); and we even see him confessing his desire either to murder her husband Lycus, or, in a heroic and Homeric fashion, to die in the attempt (7–9). These contemplated courses of action, however, do not show Amphion as intent only on vengeance: the fact that he contemplates dying with honour reveals that he is still rational and logical. The papyrus also reveals how his musical skills, which Zethus so abhorred, produce the welfare of the city. Before the twin brothers can kill Lycus in the herdsman's cave (19–66), Hermes makes a sudden appearance and ends any further bloodshed with a truce. The brothers' true parentage is affirmed, while Lycus is ordered to prepare a funeral pyre for Dirce and yield the throne to Antiope's sons, who will henceforth become the new joint rulers of Thebes. As far as can be ascertained from the tattered text, Zethus is ordered to become the city's defender, whereas Amphion, in text that is quite clear, is commanded to build the walls of Thebes in a miraculous fashion, the playing of his lyre, which will enchant the stones to raise themselves from the ground and construct the walls (67–95).

It has been argued that the raising of the walls is paradoxical, for Amphion, in a sense, becomes Zethian when he is commanded to arm himself with the lyre and thereby enter public service, an arena for which he had shown overt disdain.¹⁸ Yet such a command ought not to be seen as paradoxical, nor should Amphion be viewed as a sudden mirror image of Zethus and his partner in *vita activa*. In actuality, the raising of the walls by the lyre and the newly won kingship reflect what Amphion had advocated and upheld earlier – a life mixed with contemplation, music, and advising. In the agon he had championed his wisdom and its effectiveness in political and militaristic matters, and had spoken of music's cultural aspects. Now this theorising is allowed to be put into practice by

17) F 221 corroborates the traditional details of Dirce's punishment, namely, that she was tied to a bull by her hair and dragged to death.

18) Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (above, n. 1) 266–7.

Hermes, who commands him to use all his skills and intelligence for something far-more reaching and greater – the bettering of the state and its citizens. There can be no doubt that Amphion would have understood these commands as such and would have embraced them with awe and zeal. At this point in the drama the original audience would have probably viewed Zethus' earlier protestations against music as erroneous and unfounded by this coming, crowning achievement of Amphion's lyre.

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