

The ‘trial by water’ in Greek myth and literature

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the theme of casting ‘unchaste’ women into the sea as a punishment in Greek myth and literature. Particular focus will be given to the stories of Danaë, Augè, Aerope and Phronime, who are all depicted suffering this punishment at the hands of their fathers. While Seaford (1990) has emphasized the theme of imprisonment which occurs in some of the stories involving the ‘floating chest’, I turn my attention instead to the theme of the sea. The coincidence in these stories of the threat of drowning for apparent promiscuity or sexual impurity with the escape of those girls who are innocent can be explained by the phenomenon of the ‘trial by water’ as evidenced in Babylonian and other early law codes (cf. Glotz 1904). Further evidence for this theory can be found in ancient novels where the trial of the heroine for sexual purity is often a key theme. The significance of chastity in the myths and in Athenian society is central to understanding the story patterns. The interrelationship of mythic and social ideals is drawn out in the paper.

This paper examines the punishment of ‘unchaste’ women in Greek myth and literature, in particular their representation in Euripides’ fragmentary *Augè*, *Cretan Women* and *Danaë*. My focus is on punishments involving the sea, where it is possible to discern two interrelated strands in the tales.¹ The first strand involves an angry parent condemning an errant daughter to be cast into the sea with the intention of drowning her. The so-called ‘floating chest’, a box in which a mother and illegitimate child are enclosed before being cast into the sea, is a prominent theme in this strand. The second strand involves an unchaste girl being given to a merchant to sell overseas. Occasionally the first strand overlaps with the second, when the merchant is asked to drown a girl but elects instead to give her in marriage overseas. Before turning to an examination of the two different strands outlined here in myth and fragmentary tragedy, I will consider the significance of chastity in Athenian society and its connection with the sea theme.

1. Chastity and the sea

In this paper two different groups of women come under consideration. The first group comprises girls who lose their virginity before marriage, while the second is made up of wives who are unfaithful to their husbands. Both sets of women are criticised for their lack of obedience to their male relatives. The unmarried girls are considered disobedient and disloyal to their fathers, while married women are often felt to have displeased both their husbands and their

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own natal kin. Of central importance in driving the criticism of these women are concerns surrounding the legitimacy of infants.² Since a bride was brought into a family chiefly as a way for a man to have children, it was very important that she be faithful to him in order to ensure that any offspring were his own. Women who were thought unable to exercise sexual restraint and to avoid premarital sex or adultery during marriage could not be relied upon to bear legitimate children to their husbands. Chaste women, on the other hand, were especially valued because their children were assuredly legitimate. The traditional modest behaviour of Greco-Roman brides, who put on a show of reluctance to leave their fathers' homes and sang songs about their unwillingness to lose their virginity, was perhaps in part a public demonstration of their ability to be chaste.³ The statue-like pose of the bride on the Attic red-figure *loutrophoros* in Berlin, who does not mount the chariot herself, but is lifted in by the groom, might represent this modest behaviour and reluctance in art.⁴

That chastity was considered a most important virtue in a woman can be deduced from the prominence of the theme in Greek literary texts spanning many centuries. In many of the texts the theme of chastity is coupled with the idea of obedience to a parent, especially a father. An example of this appears in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, where the Danaids are taught by their father to value chastity more than life (A. *Supp.* 1012-13, τὸ σωφρονεῖν τιμῶσα τοῦ βίου πλέον).⁵ In the Greek novels, where remaining chaste in taxing circumstances is central to the genre,⁶ mothers are depicted stressing the importance of chastity to their daughters.⁷ This preoccupation with chastity in the novels leads naturally enough to tests of the central characters to ensure that they have not strayed during their perilous journeys.⁸

Unmarried girls who failed to remain chaste could expect harsh punishments at the hands of their fathers or brothers. In a fragment from one of Euripides' *Melanippe* plays, a speaker urges men to make an unchaste woman pay (τείσσασθε τήνδε)⁹ and not to hold back because of kinship (E. fr. 497 Kannicht).¹⁰ A father

² See further in McHardy (2008) Ch. 2. Cf. Chew (2000) 64; Foley (1981); Gardner (1989) 51-3; Harrison (1968) 38; Just (1989) 213-14; Ogden (1997) 25; Ormand (1999) 21; Roisman (2005) 33-4.

³ Cf. Seaford (1987) 106, 111. For cross-cultural examples, see Abu-Lughod (1987) 216; Durham (1928) 199; Watts (1988) 23-4.

⁴ The *loutrophoros* dates from the mid-fifth century (Staatliche Museen, Berlin F2372). See Oakley and Sinos (1993) fig 73. Jenkins (1983: 137-8) offers a different interpretation of the bride's pose.

⁵ Cf. Rademaker (2006) 116-17. On wifely modesty, see also A. *Xantriae* fr. 168 Radt = P.Oxy. vol. 18, 2164; E. *IA* 568-72; *Hipp.* 400-32.

⁶ Cf. Burrus (2005) and Chew (2000) for the preoccupation with chastity combined with the idealization of marriage in Greek novels. North (1966) finds a change of meaning for σωφροσύνη from self-restraint to chastity in Achilles Tatius. Schwartz (2000-1: 95, 98) notes that Achilles Tatius plays with the standard valorization of marriage in Greek novels.

⁷ M. Anderson (1997); Rattenbury (1926) 63.

⁸ Rattenbury (1926: 63-4); cf. Chew (2000) 64. See further pp.9-10 below.

⁹ See Miller (2006: 68-9) on the metaphor of payment in expressions relating to punishment and revenge. Cf. McHardy (2008) 4.

reacted fiercely in part out of anger at his daughter's lack of obedience, but also because a girl with a bad reputation was unlikely to find a suitable husband.¹¹ If a woman could not be given in marriage, and thereby create a good alliance for her family, she lost her worth and became an economic burden for them instead.¹² It therefore makes sense to punish the worthless girl by killing her or casting her out. An alternative is to seek a marriage for the girl with the man who originally attacked her, a common story pattern in comic plotlines.¹³ Married women who committed adultery faced divorce from their husbands and an uncertain future. In Athens, husbands did not kill their adulterous wives themselves, but they divorced them and returned them to their fathers ([Dem.] 59.87; cf. Lys. 14.28).¹⁴ In myth husbands are sometimes said to kill their wives and sometimes they are said to return them to their fathers.¹⁵ Comparative evidence suggests that when the woman's father and brothers discovered the reason for her divorce, they could choose to kill her because of the shame she had brought to the family and because of the important alliance she had lost them.¹⁶ However, anecdotal examples from recent times reflect the unwillingness of a father to kill his errant daughter.¹⁷

There is only one clear example of killing of this type attested in the Athenian evidence—the tale of an Athenian citizen who walled up his seduced daughter in an empty house with a horse to kill her (Aeschines 1.182).¹⁸ The scholia on this passage maintain that the man who did this was Hippomenes, a descendant of the mythical Athenian king, Codrus. The mythical nature of the example and the fact that Aeschines does not cite any more contemporary case suggests that this type of killing was not the norm.¹⁹ However, Aeschines' rhetoric certainly demonstrates that there was a keen interest in employing even the most extreme methods to ensure the chastity and fidelity of Athenian women and to deter them from fornication and adultery.²⁰ According to Plutarch it was also possible under Solonian legislation for Athenian fathers to sell unchaste girls into slavery (*Sol.* 23.2). There are difficulties with this description of the legislation, as it does not seem to be particularly Solonian in character and there is no historical evidence

¹⁰ Cropp (Collard, Cropp and Lee (1995) 277) speculates that this speech belongs to *Wise Melanippe*.

¹¹ Cf. Hypereides' *In Defence of Lycophron*, esp. 1.6-7, 12-13.

¹² Porter (1986: 217) notes that rape is like property theft as a girl loses her economic value.

¹³ Cf. Ogden (1997) 26 n.7; Omitowaju (2002) 128-30; Sommerstein (2006) 233.

¹⁴ Harrison (1968) 35; MacDowell (1978) 88, 125; Todd (1993) 279.

¹⁵ See Apollodorus (*Epit.* 7.38-9) for different versions of the story of Odysseus and Penelope. Cf. Burnett (1998) 142.

¹⁶ Deliyanni (1985) *Mani* 42; Durham (1928) 69; Whitaker (1968) 270.

¹⁷ Hasluck (1954) 215; Seremetakis (1991) 144-52. Seremetakis notes that some believed the reluctant father and the angry kin were influenced in their reactions by financial motives (inheritance and property).

¹⁸ Cf. also Dio Chryostom 32.78; Diod. Sic. 8.22; Heracleides *Epitome* fr. 1; Nic. Dam. 90 F 49; *Suda* Π655 (παρίππον καὶ κόρη).

¹⁹ Ogden (1997: 28) notes the mythical nature of the tale. Fisher (2001: 331) suggests Aeschines edited the tale for his own purpose.

²⁰ Fisher (2001: 332) notes the admiration shown demonstrates that the Athenians took *sophrosyne* seriously. Cf. also Hoffman (1990) 33-48.

for men who took advantage of it.²¹ However, it is notable that the two trends outlined here as possibilities are reflected in the myths which appear in Attic tragedy. Aeschines' story of an unchaste girl whose angry father kills her by imprisoning her is a theme which appears in tragedy,²² and it seems likely that this tale derives more from tragic myths where kin-killing abounds than from reality.²³ The concept of selling an unchaste girl overseas also appears in tragedy, as will be discussed in detail in section 3 of this paper. Likewise it seems that Plutarch's interpretation of Solonian law could derive from the story pattern of girls who are sold overseas because of their lack of chastity.²⁴ There exists a complex relationship between concepts of ideal behaviour and the mythic pattern involving drastic responses as depicted in tragedy, since mythic and social ideals clearly feed on one another. The most important question is not whether Athenians killed their daughters, but whether they prioritised chastity to the point where death could be seen as a suitable punishment for those who violated the ideals of chastity. Such a prioritisation could be seen as a way of building social norms and controlling the behaviour of women.

A third possibility which appears in the story patterns is the punishment of unchaste women through drowning. Although there is no evidence of the association of drowning with unchaste women in Attic oratory, there is some evidence for drowning at sea as a means of punishing the guilty, as discussed further on pp.6-7. The association of drowning and lack of chastity also appears in non-legal texts and in legal texts from other places.²⁵ The association is made clear in Herodotus' tale of a Cretan girl named Phronime who was falsely accused of fornication by her step-mother. In Herodotus' story her angry father Etearchus asked his guest-friend Themison, a merchant, to take the girl out to sea and cast her in (4.154.2). This tale demonstrates clearly the two strands outlined at the beginning of this paper (the notion of drowning as a punishment for an unchaste woman and the theme an unchaste woman being taken overseas by a merchant), since Themison declines to drown Phronime, although he does dip her into the sea so as not to break his oath to her father, but instead he takes her overseas where she becomes concubine to Polymnestus at Thera.²⁶ This story has much in common with tragic plotlines and it is difficult to assess to what degree Herodotus' version of the tale drew inspiration from myth and tragedy rather than traditional practice. However, the use of drowning and sale overseas in this tale

²¹ MacDowell (1978: 80) speculates that Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries were unlikely to take such a step; cf. Ogden (1997: 28); Roy (1997) 13; Scafuro (1997) 273.

²² See Seaford (1990) for a full discussion of this theme.

²³ Fisher (2001: 331) notes that the response of Hippomenes is elsewhere depicted as tyrannical—a depiction which would fit well with tragic representations of similar stories. Cf. Scafuro (1997) 274, 475; Seaford (1994) 345.

²⁴ Moreover, as Scafuro (1997: 273) notes, 'it does suggest a tradition of paternal rejection of unwed, pregnant daughters'.

²⁵ In Babylonian law, drowning is cited as a punishment for adulterous wives. If the woman was not drowned when she jumped into the water, she was proved innocent of the accusation of adultery (*Code of Hammurabi* 129, 132, 133, 143). See further pp.8-10 below on ordeals of chastity.

²⁶ Corcella (1993) on 4.154.3 suggests that the punishment mentioned in this story could have originally taken the form of an ordeal. See further pp.8-10 below.

and in the story of Aerope, also a Cretan girl, perhaps suggests that these were at one time traditional punishments for unchaste and disobedient women in Crete.²⁷

The story of Scylla, who betrayed her father Nisus out of love for Minos, also hints that the punishment of transgressive women by drowning was particularly associated with Cretans. Although Scylla does not enter into a sexual relationship with Minos, her behaviour is driven by her lustful feelings for him. In Pausanias' version Minos orders the Cretans to throw Scylla into the sea for her treachery to her father and she is drowned (2.34.7). Apollodorus describes a different form of punishment in which Scylla was tied to the prow of Minos' ship and drowned (3.15.8).²⁸ In Hyginus' version (*Fab.* 188) Scylla is said to have thrown herself into the sea following Minos' defeat of her father and to have been transformed into a fish. Hyginus depicts graphically the anger of Scylla's father at his daughter's lack of loyalty and it is he who pursues her into the sea in the form of a sea-eagle: 'Today, if ever that bird sees the fish swimming, he dives into the water, seizes it, and rends it with his claws.' In this version the theme of forces of nature pursuing a guilty woman are highlighted.

In the myths and stories under consideration in this paper issues surrounding the innocence or guilt of the woman involved come to the fore, in particular whether the woman has been seduced or forcibly attacked against her will.²⁹ Notably, male relatives are portrayed as being extremely reluctant to accept claims that a girl has been raped and tend to punish her harshly despite her professed innocence.³⁰ Sommerstein has argued convincingly on the basis of the evidence of Euripides' *Hippolytus* that there was a qualitative difference between rape and seduction in ancient thought, in that Phaedra's claim to have been raped by Hippolytus makes no sense unless she hoped this claim would demonstrate her own innocence.³¹ However, it is possible that this distinction might have made little difference in reality because even a forced sexual attack on a girl could harm her reputation, especially if she gave birth to a child outside of wedlock.³² In *Hippolytus* Phaedra elects to starve herself because she feels shame about her unchaste feelings towards Hippolytus (400-32, 682-8, 715-21, 767-75) and believes that it is best for her to die. She later hangs herself to produce the impression that she is acting out of a sense of shame following the alleged sexual attack by her step-son,³³ perhaps suggesting that it was not easy even for an

²⁷ See further pp.14-16 below for discussion of Aerope.

²⁸ Huys (1995: 20 n.38) has suggested that tying a woman to a ship to see if she survived the passage constituted a test of a woman's chastity, but the historicity of the ordeal cannot be proved.

²⁹ Often it is vague whether the girls were raped or seduced (Sommerstein 2006: 237; cf. Ogden 1997: 32; Scafuro 1990).

³⁰ Omitowaju (1997: 1) notes that rape is notoriously hard to prove and that victims are often doubted or deemed to be complicit. Cf. Sommerstein (2006: 242) who argues: 'a woman counted as a rape victim only if her *kyrios* believed she was one.'

³¹ Sommerstein (2006) 235-6.

³² Scafuro (1997: 274) argues that fear of paternal sanction is the key motivating factor for girls who have been raped or seduced and hence the nature of the attack is not significant for them.

³³ Sommerstein (2006: 237 and n.29) notes that the suicide must seem credible. Nevertheless Theseus acts without full proof and Artemis criticises him for doing so (1283-1324). See further pp.8-9 below on the difficulty for women of establishing proof of their innocence.

innocent woman who had been raped to find sympathy rather than being associated with disgrace.³⁴

Of particular interest in *Hippolytus* is the metaphorical use of sea imagery by Euripides in reference to Phaedra's feelings, a topic which has been thoroughly examined by Charles Segal. He notes that in the play Phaedra is compared to a shipwreck (131-40) and to a drowning swimmer (469-70).³⁵ Here, the link is made in the imagery between a woman who is not pure of heart and a person floundering at sea and drowning.³⁶ The role of the gods in bringing about her fate is also made explicit. Images of the sea as a destructive force are frequent in Greek texts, but the imagery can be ambiguous, combining ideas of sexual temptation and eroticism with notions of death and destruction.³⁷ The sea is associated with Aphrodite and through her to erotic love (cf. *Hipp.* 415),³⁸ but at the same time the sea is commonly seen as a destructive force threatening human mariners.³⁹ Part of this dual image is the idea of the destructive force of Aphrodite both as powerful goddess and as symbol of dangerous erotic relationships among humans, as is brought out in *Hippolytus*. From here it is possible to understand the association of the sea with punishing those who transgress sexually. While flowing water from rivers and streams is associated with purity (*Hipp.* 653-4) and fertility (schol. on *E. Pho.* 347),⁴⁰ the sea is connected to lust and is a dangerous force which the gods use to punish transgressors.

2. Drowning the guilty

The idea that those who have displeased the gods will be drowned while voyaging at sea is apparent in a number of myths. The punishment is associated in particular with those who have insulted the gods in some way, but it is also connected to sexual offences. Prominent examples from myth include the destruction of the Greek fleet returning from Troy (*A. Ag.* 646-70; *E. Tro.* 65-97; *Od.* 3.130-5) and the obliteration of Odysseus' companions after they have killed the cattle of the sun (*Od.* 12.327-419). In both examples the gods are angered by the insulting behaviour of mortals and they choose to take revenge by wrecking their ships in storms at sea. In *Trojan Women* Athena's anger at the rape of Cassandra in her shrine—an insult to the gods as well as an impure sexual act—

³⁴ Phaedra's guilt or innocence in this play is difficult to establish, especially because of the role of the gods in the plot. In other versions of the tale Phaedra is less complicatedly guilty of attempting to seduce her step-son. See Sommerstein *et al.* (2006: 249-89) for summaries of the different plots and an evaluation of Phaedra's role in the different versions.

³⁵ Segal (1965) 122, 127.

³⁶ It is worth noting that Phaedra too is Cretan—perhaps another hint at a Cretan tradition associating sexual infidelity with drowning. See above at n.27.

³⁷ Cf. Segal (1965) 120. Cf. also Constantinides (1988) on the dual nature of sea imagery in modern Greek literature.

³⁸ Segal (1965) 118.

³⁹ Cf. Glotz (1904) 13.

⁴⁰ 'Bridegrooms were accustomed in the days of old to bathe in local rivers and to sprinkle themselves symbolically with waters from rivers and springs, praying for fertility, since water is life-giving and productive' (trans. Oakley and Sinos (1993) 15).

leads to her desire to drown those she deems responsible.⁴¹ Because of their failure to punish Locrian Ajax, all the Greeks are condemned by Athena and many men are drowned as a consequence. In the *Odyssey*, particular focus is placed on the destruction of Locrian Ajax himself who is drowned after boasting that the gods cannot kill him (4.499-511). On the other hand it is made explicit that Odysseus survived the storm in which his men drowned because he took no part in killing the cattle and was therefore innocent of offending Hyperion (12.338, 366, 371-3).⁴² The suggestion here is that the gods intend to punish those who are guilty with drowning, but to spare those deemed innocent.⁴³

The idea that the gods punished the guilty by drowning them at sea appears to have been current in classical Athens, although it is feared that one guilty man can endanger every passenger when he travels by sea (Antiphon 5.82; cf. A. *Seven* 602-4). Both Antiphon and Andocides employ the argument that their innocence can be proved by the fact that the gods have never wrecked them during their sea voyages.⁴⁴ Andocides (1.137-9) claims that if he had wronged Demeter and Kore, they would have taken revenge on him by drowning him in this way. He adds that legal dangers are mortal, but the dangers of the sea are divine. Euxitheus, the defendant in Antiphon 5 (*On the Murder of Herodes*), claims that the gods would have drowned him at sea had he been guilty of murder (5.81-4). He refers to the 'signs from heaven' (5.81, 84) which he claims are 'strong proof' (5.83) that the prosecution is unfounded. Scholars have tended to view the arguments of these orators sceptically, suggesting that they would not have carried much credence with a sophisticated Athenian jury.⁴⁵ However, the fact that the arguments are made in court at all suggests that belief in the anger of the gods and their desire to punish mortals at sea must still have been current.⁴⁶ Further, the link to ideas expressed in tragedies written at approximately the same time as these speeches can surely be made.

The speakers here do not suggest that the courts should test them by an 'ordeal' at sea to prove their innocence, although they do come close to this by suggesting they have already undergone such an ordeal and passed it. It is usually held that such ordeals are absent from the Athenian legal system, although present in other ancient legal systems.⁴⁷ However, the implication of the orators' arguments is that 'signs from heaven' derived from an 'ordeal' at sea could be accepted as evidence in court at least by some Athenians. Certainly ordeals appear outside of legal contexts and are meant to provide proof where no other evidence

⁴¹ Her harsh revenge is supposed to serve as a deterrent to others. Cf. McHardy (2008) on the deterrent quality of revenge.

⁴² See McHardy (2008: 72-3) for further discussion of the divine revenge in this story.

⁴³ Cf. Glotz (1904) 58-9, 67. Griffin (1977: 46) argues rather that Homeric heroes do not drown as it is an ignoble end, but he is forced to make an exception for Locrian Ajax.

⁴⁴ Cf. also [Lys.] 6.19. Similar notions are expressed in the story of Jonah and the whale (*Jonah* 1.5-16).

⁴⁵ Edwards (Edwards and Usher 1987: 117) suggests the arguments are tired and that their position at the end of the speech indicates they are not central to the case. Cf. also Gagarin (1997) 214.

⁴⁶ Edwards (Edwards and Usher 1987: 117) makes a similar point.

⁴⁷ Gagarin (1990) 27; Glotz (1904) 2-3. See above on Babylonian law (n.25).

is available.⁴⁸ A striking example occurs in Sophocles' *Antigone* (264-5) when the guard declares that the soldiers are all ready to suffer ordeals (holding hot irons or walking on fire) and swear oaths to the gods that they are innocent of burying Polynices. The idea of the oath is certainly a prominent one in both mythical stories and in legal cases and it is perhaps this that takes the place of other more exotic trials (as described here) in the law courts at Athens.⁴⁹ Demosthenes (54.40) perhaps hints at the relationship between ordeals by fire and oaths in court, although the text is problematic.⁵⁰ Underlying the ancient oath is the notion that a man who is forsworn will be destroyed by the gods along with all his offspring (Dem. 54.40; [Dem] 59.10; Paus. 2.18.1), as occurs in the case of Glaucus as told by Herodotus (6.86).⁵¹ This again suggests a level of belief in the power and the willingness of the gods to act against the guilty in cases such as these. The use of oaths is also attested in parallel with an ordeal to test a woman's chastity in the Old Testament (*Numbers* 5.11-31). The test involves a woman accused of infidelity by her husband swearing an oath of her innocence and drinking 'bitter water' which will cause her body to swell and rot if she is guilty. The text confirms that such a test becomes necessary when there is no evidence of the woman's infidelity and no witnesses.⁵²

In Greek texts too ordeals are frequently associated with tests of a woman's chastity. The reason for this has been suggested above—that female chastity was highly valued by men, but was difficult for them to prove.⁵³ By making the women undergo an ordeal, men could ask the gods to reveal whether or not the women were chaste.⁵⁴ A line that appears in the text of Pausanias (καταδύονται δὲ ἐς θάλασσαν γένους τοῦ θήλεος αἱ καθαρῶς ἔτι παρθένοι, 10.19.2) shows the association between virginity and the ability to dive into the sea, and can perhaps be seen as a note explaining how an ordeal of chastity by jumping into the sea works. Moreover, as Billault has argued, such a test provides visible evidence to all present that the accused is innocent or guilty.⁵⁵ As Sophocles' description of an ordeal makes clear, divine intervention would be required to prove innocence as a man who held hot irons would ordinarily be burnt.⁵⁶ Likewise in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* Charicleia demonstrates her chastity by

⁴⁸ Glotz (1904) argues that the ordeal was an ancient custom in Greece. Cf. Versnel (1994) for evidence found at Knidos that could point to ordeal procedures.

⁴⁹ See Mirhady (1991) on the 'oath-challenge' in Attic law and elsewhere. Cf. Gagarin (1990) 26; Gernet (1955) 107-12; MacDowell (1963).

⁵⁰ Carey and Reid (1985) note that reference to walking through fire could be part of an oath formula. Cf. also Ar. *Lys.* 133.

⁵¹ Mirhady (1991) 82. See Kitts (2005: 175-6) on the Trojans' broken oath at the duel of Paris and Menelaus (*Il.* 3.298-301) and Burnett (1998: 200) on Jason's broken oaths to Medea. See also McHardy (2008: 40-1) on Polymestor's destruction following his broken oath to Priam in E. *Hecuba*. See Perlman (1995: 162-3) for an example from Crete.

⁵² Gagarin (1990: 28) notes that use of oaths to settle matters at Gortyn was normally reserved for cases where no evidence was available.

⁵³ See Scafuro (1997: 276) on the difficulties for pregnant girls of producing proof of their innocence.

⁵⁴ 'The principle of ordeal is that god will defend the right' (Rattenbury 1926: 64).

⁵⁵ Billault (1991) 216.

⁵⁶ Cf. Strabo 12.2.7 where priestesses are said to be able to walk over burning coals without pain.

stepping on a gridiron (10.7-9).⁵⁷ Divine intervention to protect the innocent was also expected in other examples. For example Pausanias (7.25.13) refers to a chastity test in which prospective priestesses were tested by drinking bull's blood (a substance believed to be poisonous by the Greeks).⁵⁸ The gods are portrayed as undertaking a similar trial to prove their oaths by drinking the water of the Styx, thought to be poisonous to those who break their oaths (Hes. *Th.* 793-806; cf. *Il.* 15.37-8; Hdt. 6.74). Although gods cannot die, they are punished severely if they are found to have perjured themselves. As we shall see in the discussion of the plays in section 3, the same principles apply for the hapless women cast out to sea in a chest. It is expected that they will die either of exposure or by drowning, but instead the gods intervene to save them.

Achilles Tattius appears to play with these ideas in his depiction of an 'ordeal by water' towards the end of *Cleitophon and Leucippe*. The novelist explains that the test came into being when Rhodopis (a Hippolytus-like character) dedicated herself to Artemis and chastity, but broke her vow through the machinations of Aphrodite and was changed by Artemis into a spring at the place where she lost her virginity.⁵⁹ In the test of chastity a woman placed an oath tablet round her neck and entered these waters.⁶⁰ If the woman were lying, then the waters would seethe and drown her. If she were telling the truth she would be spared (8.12).⁶¹ In the plot this test is undertaken and passed by Melite after her husband accuses her of committing adultery in his absence (8.11, 14). Commentators have noted the irony of the situation created by the novelist in that the oath made by Melite during her ordeal confirms only that she did not commit adultery while her husband was away. This is true enough; but the reader knows that she did commit adultery with Cleitophon after her husband had returned. Notably the ordeals depicted in the novel are sanctioned in a legal context (8.11) and the outcome of the ordeals is accepted as proof of innocence by all involved (8.14-15).⁶² Interestingly, though, the reader is left aware of the guilt of both Melite and Cleitophon at the end of the novel and uncertain about whether justice has been done. Schwartz sees this ending as a 'subtle, yet profound subversion of the genre's sense of justice', because the hero has committed adultery with Melite.⁶³ The novelist appears to compound this sense of irony by showing a strangely twisted chastity test in which the miraculous intervention of the gods is not

⁵⁷ Rattenbury (1926: 65) notes that she is also a priestess of Artemis. Theodoros Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (1.372-404) depicts a test by fire similar to that in the *Aethiopica*.

⁵⁸ Cf. Aelian *On Animals* 11.16 and Propertius 4.8 for a chastity test by serpents.

⁵⁹ See Segal (1984: 83) on the significance of Aphrodite and Artemis in the novel.

⁶⁰ Rattenbury (1926: 68) makes a connection between the oath mentioned here and the oath of the gods by the water of the Styx noted above.

⁶¹ In Eustathius Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, the heroine's virginity is tested in Artemis' springs and she is proven chaste (11.16.1; cf. 8.7). See Nilsson (2001: 220-2) for discussion of the test. *Hysmine and Hysminias* is modeled on Achilles Tattius' novel, but is not identical to it. Cf. Alexiou (1977); Beaton (1996) 60; Magdalino (1992) 197; Nilsson (2001); Rattenbury (1926) 68.

⁶² However, it is by no means clear that this text can be used as evidence of the acceptability of ordeals either in legal or non-legal contexts.

⁶³ Schwartz (2000-1) 110. Chew (2000: 64) argues convincingly that the author is ridiculing the treatment of chastity in romances.

needed to rescue the accused woman from certain death and in which the dangers of the sea do not play a part.⁶⁴ On the other hand, divine intervention is required for Leucippe to prove her virginity in her test—she is imprisoned in a cave and music plays to demonstrate her virginity (8.13-14).

The novel clearly shares with earlier texts the association of water and imprisonment with the punishment of unchaste women—in particular the novelist appears to have drawn heavily on tragic themes and associations in depicting the tests. Although Rattenbury has speculated that the test of chastity depicted in this novel drew on anecdotes about chastity ordeals such as those which appear in Herodotus' *Histories* (2.11.1) and Ovid's *Fasti* (4.305-44),⁶⁵ it seems to me that the treatment of allegedly unchaste females in myth as it appears in tragic plotlines provided a greater influence for the presentation of these ordeals by Achilles Tatius. Further, I suggest, only through an understanding of this influence can the full irony of Melite's 'trial by water' be perceived.

3. The sea theme in Euripides' *Danaë*, *Augè* and *Cretan Women*

Stories involving the so-called 'floating chest' appear widely in myth, folktale and literature.⁶⁶ The theme has been examined in detail by Holley, who focuses on the element of the chest, which is interpreted as a tree, but neglects the significance of the sea in the stories.⁶⁷ Seaford in his discussion of the 'floating chest' stories focuses on the theme of imprisonment within the chest, but has little to say about the significance of the sea.⁶⁸ Huys has offered a substantial treatment of the theme in Euripides, but his focus is on the boy hero rather than on the mother and his treatment covers all Euripidean instances of exposed children, not only those exposed at sea.⁶⁹ The theme has also been explored by Glotz, who argues that the 'floating chest' as it appears in tragic plotlines is representative of an 'ordeal by water' in which a woman who gave birth to a child out of wedlock could be tested by her father to see whether she had been seduced or raped.⁷⁰ An innocent girl who had been raped (by a hero or god) would be saved, but a girl who had allowed herself to be seduced would drown. At the same time the infant placed in the box with his mother underwent a perilous ordeal at sea before returning as a hero to reclaim his rightful inheritance.⁷¹ By this reading, the sea is depicted as a force of nature or a divine force which is thought to kill the guilty. I

⁶⁴ At the same time, the ordeals are a way for the author to extricate himself from the legal morass in which he has become entangled, as Schwartz (2000-1: 109) has noted.

⁶⁵ Rattenbury (1926) 64-5.

⁶⁶ Glotz (1904) 18.

⁶⁷ Holley (1949). Huys (1995: 27) criticizes Holley's approach.

⁶⁸ Seaford (1990).

⁶⁹ Huys (1995). Burkert (1979: 6-7) also focuses on the importance of the emergence of the boy hero in the story pattern he called the 'girl's tragedy'.

⁷⁰ Glotz (1904) 16, 55-8.

⁷¹ Huys (1995) 20-1; cf. Holley (1949). It is possible to read the sea journeys depicted in ancient novels in a similar way. See Reardon (1969) 305, (1976) 127. Cf. Merkelbach (1962). Cf. also Beaton (1989: 257) on the sea journey representing a 'rite of passage' in modern Greek literature. Glotz (1904: 17, 26) has suggested that tests of a child's legitimacy by placing it in water are also reflected in these myths.

shall focus particularly on this reading of the plays in my examination of Euripides' *Danaë* and *Augē*.

The story of Danaë and Perseus featured in a number of tragedies, all now fragmentary.⁷² The sources suggest a relatively high degree of consistency in the tale, although there are some possible variants.⁷³ Danaë is first imprisoned or segregated by her father Acrisius who wishes to prevent her from becoming pregnant because he fears being killed by his daughter's child.⁷⁴ However Zeus or a mortal (perhaps Acrisius' brother Proetus, Apollod. 2.4.1) manages to rape Danaë and impregnate her.⁷⁵ When Acrisius discovers that Danaë has given birth to a son, he encloses mother and child in a box (λάρναξ) and casts them into the sea.⁷⁶ The method of punishment chosen by Acrisius reflects both his fear of his grandson and his anger with his daughter for her lack of chastity.⁷⁷ The chest is carried safely to the island of Seriphos and is fished out of the sea by Dictys.⁷⁸

There are difficulties in deciding which of these elements featured in Euripides' plot. Although an ancient hypothesis attributed to Euripides' *Danaë* exists, it is strongly debated whether or not it is authentic. Debate has focused particularly on the role of the Nereids suggested by the hypothesis—a storyline shared in the ancient sources only with Lucian, who depicts Doris and Thetis agreeing to push the box to safety so that Danaë and Perseus do not perish at sea.⁷⁹ Most of the sources suggest that Zeus was the one to save Danaë and Perseus. In Simonides' poem it is to Zeus that Danaë appeals when she feels they will be drowned (μεταβουλία δέ τις φανείη, Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἐκ σέο). Her appeal makes sense as Zeus might be expected to have a particular interest in the well-being of Danaë and his son, but Lucian's choice of the sea goddesses as protectors of innocent human life cast out on the waves is certainly not inconsistent with other Greek texts on the theme of the sea. In any case, there is no discrepancy in the accounts over the central theme of the 'floating chest', which appears in all the sources, including the putative hypothesis, and we are informed by John Malalas that Euripides' play dealt with this theme. Given the difficulties of staging such a scene, it seems implausible that Danaë's journey in the box (and consequently her rescue by the gods and Dictys) would have formed any part of the action.⁸⁰ Rather

⁷² The plot of A. *Phorkidai* is unclear. Sophocles' *Danaë* is sometimes identified with his *Acrisius* and seems to have dealt with the punishment of Danaë. On E. *Danaë* see Jouan and van Looy (2000) 47-71; Webster (1967) 94-5.

⁷³ The sources used here are: Apollodorus 2.4.1; Hyginus *Fab.* 63; Lucian *Dialogues of the Sea* Gods 12); Pausanias 2.16.2-3; Pherecydes 3F10 Jacoby (schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1091, 305.12 Wendel); Simonides fr. 543 PMG; Strabo 10.5.10.

⁷⁴ Huys (1995:13) argues that the oracle must have been part of Euripides' play.

⁷⁵ Zeus is said to transform himself into a golden shower. Cf. Menander *Samia* 766-9; Ovid *Met.* 4.610-11; Pindar *P.* 12.17.

⁷⁶ Malalas (2.34.19 Dindorf) has ἐς κιβωτίω.

⁷⁷ Huys (1995) 109, 229, 259.

⁷⁸ The subject of Aeschylus' *Dictyoulci*, a satyr play.

⁷⁹ Kannicht (1992) rejects the hypothesis because it mentions the Nereids, but Luppe (1991) and (1993) argues that it is authentic. Like Luppe, Huys (1995: 109-10) believes that Lucian based his tale on Euripides' play.

⁸⁰ Her rescue, but presumably not her voyage, was depicted in *Dictyoulci*.

it is most likely that these details would have been described by a messenger or in a *deus ex machina* speech.⁸¹ Rein postulates that Thetis would be a possible candidate for this role and this would neatly explain Lucian's choice of the goddess in his dialogue.⁸²

The story of Augē also features the theme of the floating chest in some versions, but there is a greater degree of inconsistency between the versions of this myth and in some versions the floating chest is not mentioned at all.⁸³ This discrepancy has led to a considerable amount of scholarly debate concerning the plot of Euripides' *Augē* and not a little confusion over its details. One constant element of the story is that Augē was raped by Heracles and bore Telephus. The variants also share the anger of Augē's father Aleus when he discovers that his daughter has given birth to a child. However, in other details the versions differ widely. According to Hyginus (*Fab.* 99) Augē exposed her son on Mount Parthenius where he was suckled by a doe before being rescued by shepherds.⁸⁴ Augē herself fled her father's wrath and was taken in as a daughter by Teuthras. In this version there is no mention of the floating chest theme (or even the notion of drowning) and the baby is exposed by his mother rather than by his grandfather. She acts out of fear at the repercussions rather than in the hope that the infant will die. In a variant on this theme Augē is condemned to be drowned when her father sees that she is pregnant and as she is being taken to the sea, she gives birth and hides the baby on Mount Parthenius (Diod. Sic. 4.33.8-9). Since it appears that in Euripides' plot Augē angered Athena by giving birth in her temple (perhaps causing a plague),⁸⁵ these variants cannot derive directly from Euripides' *Augē*.

Moses Chorenensis' version (*Progymn.* 3.3) also mentions the exposure of baby Telephus and the fact that he was suckled by a deer, but in his version Aleus is said to have been responsible for exposing him because he was angry that the child had been born out of wedlock (cf. Apollod. 2.7.4, 3.9.1). Simultaneously Aleus planned to drown his daughter to punish her lack of chastity. However, we are told that the pair was saved by Heracles who recognised his son by a ring he had given to Augē when he raped her. Afterwards Teuthras is said to have married Augē and to have adopted Telephus as his son. This version contains the association of drowning for unchaste women, but still does not mention the 'floating chest'. Moses' account is particularly significant as it is frequently used by commentators in their attempts to reconstruct Euripides' play.⁸⁶ His version does not contradict the very fragmentary hypothesis in which it is said that Augē was made priestess of Athena in Tegea by her father (perhaps as a means to prevent her pregnancy), but it is not the same as Strabo's version (13.1.69) which

⁸¹ Huys (1995: 229) thinks that Euripides could have staged Danaë getting into the box or speaking from it.

⁸² Rein (1926) 124; cf. Huys (1995) 324.

⁸³ The sources used here are: Alcidas *Od.* 14; Apollodorus 2.7.4; Diodorus Siculus 4.33.7-12; Hyginus *Fab.* 99; Moses Chorenensis *Progymn.* 3.3; Pausanias 8.4.9; Strabo 13.1.69.

⁸⁴ Huys (1995: 189) suggests that the doe theme could have belonged to Sophocles' *Alceae* rather than to Euripides' play.

⁸⁵ Apollodorus 2.7.4; schol. Aristoph. *Frogs* 1080. Cf. Webster (1967) 239.

⁸⁶ See e.g. Wilamowitz (1875) 189; cf. W. Anderson (1982) 166; Huys (1995) 189; Sommerstein (2006) 238; van Looy (Jouan and van Looy, 1998) 309-28; Webster (1967) 238-41.

states explicitly that it recounts the plot of a Euripidean play. According to Strabo, Aleus placed Augē and Telephus in a chest (εἰς λάρνακα) and threw it into the sea. Mother and child were saved from the sea by Athena and rescued by Teuthras who married Augē and adopted Telephus. This version is much the same as that cited by Pausanias, who says his source is Hecataeus (8.4.9).

Commentators have mostly come unstuck at trying to reconcile the version of Moses with the outline given by Strabo, and have concluded that in the plot Telephus must first have been exposed and suckled by deer, then rescued by Heracles, and lastly cast out to sea with his mother in a chest. Rather than such a conflation, it seems better to choose just one summary as the basis of Euripides' play. Anderson has suggested that the problems can most easily be overcome by rejecting the version of Moses Chorenensis mainly on the grounds that Strabo's version refers explicitly to Euripides.⁸⁷ He argues convincingly that Moses' account refers to a comedy. Moreover, although Wilamowitz thought Strabo referred to the prologue of *Telephus*, the prologue lines of *Telephus* (discovered in 1935) contradict Strabo's summary (E. fr. 696 Kannicht).⁸⁸ This means that Strabo's summary most likely refers to the *Augē*. Anderson further suggests that Heracles was not a character in the play and explains that the fragment attributed to Heracles (fr. 272b Kannicht, 'Wine drove me out of my mind; I admit I did you wrong') belongs in fact to a speech by Augē in which she recounts what Heracles said to her.⁸⁹ Huys has argued against this view, suggesting that Heracles was a significant character in the drama. His reconstruction therefore favours the version of Moses and he tends to downplay Strabo's version.⁹⁰ However, if we believe that Strabo is right in attributing the chest theme to a Euripidean play, then it seems more plausible to me that Anderson's interpretation is correct.

The sources suggest that there are two separate traditions in the Telephus story—one in which Telephus is exposed and suckled by a deer and another in which he and Augē are cast into the sea in a chest. The second tale-type (recounted by Strabo) is similar to the story of Danaë, in which mother and child suffer the same fate and are rescued from a watery grave by the intervention of the gods. There also appear to be two strands in Augē's story—one in which she is condemned to be drowned by her father for giving birth out of wedlock and the other in which she is given to a merchant to be sold overseas (Apollod. 2.7.4). The two types are sometimes conflated when Augē is given to Nauplius to be drowned, but he gives her to Teuthras in marriage instead (Alcidamas *Od.* 14; Apollod. 3.9.1; Diod. Sic. 4.33.7-10).⁹¹

In both *Augē* and *Danaë* it seems that the association of the sea with the punishment of unchaste women was central. The notion of exposure of an illegitimate grandson was also at the heart of Euripides' plots. Both these ideas are

⁸⁷ W. Anderson (1982) 168, 177.

⁸⁸ W. Anderson (1982) 166; Jouan and van Looy (2002) 98; Webster (1967) 238; cf. Sommerstein (2006) 238.

⁸⁹ W. Anderson (1982) 170-1.

⁹⁰ Huys (1990); cf. (1995) 115.

⁹¹ Cf. Paus. 8.48.7 for another version, in which Augē gives birth as she is being carried off to be drowned by Nauplius.

encapsulated neatly in the theme of the floating chest which was certainly a part of the *Danaë* and (if Strabo is right) seems to have featured in *Augë* too. Seaford has suggested that the theme of the 'floating chest' combines the idea of exposure, (often inflicted upon unwanted and threatening infants) and enclosure (usually inflicted on unruly women) in that the mother and child are enclosed in the box before being cast out into the 'unbounded space of the sea.'⁹² This is a nice interpretation, but the punishment perhaps reflects better the association with drowning at sea for unchaste women combined with exposure for unwanted infants. At the same time, as Glotz has suggested, this myth might reflect an early 'ordeal by water' to test whether unmarried mothers had been seduced or to test the legitimacy of children. In such an ordeal, there is a clear role for the gods in deciding whether or not to spare mother and child from drowning and it is therefore telling that the sources indicate divine intervention in the rescue of both *Danaë* and *Augë*.

However, there is also a second thread to these stories. The women are carried overseas where they find a new home (*Danaë* with Dictys and *Augë* with Teuthras). In one variant of the myth of *Augë*, this is expressed as being 'sold' overseas by Nauplius. The two possibilities were earlier signalled in the tale of Phronime who was given to a merchant to be drowned, but was instead given in marriage overseas. Here the sea represents both the space of merchants and traders and a barrier separating loved ones from one another.⁹³ In attempting to sell or send their daughters overseas, the irate fathers in these myths appear to be trying to create distance between themselves and their unchaste girls.

The themes of drowning and selling overseas also occur in the story of another Euripidean character—Aerope. According to a scholion to Sophocles' *Ajax* 1297, in Euripides' *Cretan Women* Aerope was sent to be drowned by her father for having sex with a slave, but the man charged with drowning her decided instead to give her in marriage overseas.⁹⁴ The description contains several familiar elements from one of the variants of the myth of *Augë* and from the tale of Phronime. Aerope's father Catreus is said to have acted out of anger on discovering that his daughter had been seduced and to have given her to Nauplius to be drowned. However, Nauplius elected to give her in marriage to Pleisthenes instead of drowning her. It is possible that Nauplius' reaction to Catreus' request is preserved in fr. 466 Kannicht (ἐγὼ χάριν σοῦ παῖδα σὴν κατακτενῶ ...).

Once again there are considerable difficulties in reconstructing the plot of this play. Debate has revolved particularly around the location of the drama (Mycenae or Crete?) and around the involvement of certain characters (do Atreus and Thyestes appear?).⁹⁵ The scholion mentions only Aerope's marriage to Pleisthenes

⁹² Seaford (1990) 81.

⁹³ This literary use of the sea is clear in the *Odyssey*, where the hero must traverse the sea in order to reach home. The ancient novelists also make much of this aspect of the sea. Cf. Beaton (1989: 255-6) on the literary use of the sea as a metaphor for separation.

⁹⁴ In Apollodorus' version (3.2.1-2) Aerope is also given to Nauplius to sell overseas, but this is because of an oracle which predicts Catreus' death at the hands of one of his children. Cf. p.11 and n.74 on *Danaë*.

⁹⁵ Collard (2005) 52-7; Jouan and van Looy (2000) 291-6.

and suggests a dramatic location in Crete, but Aerope is more famous for her marriage to Atreus in Mycenae and her adultery with his brother Thyestes (e.g. Apollod. *Epit.* 2.10-14; E. *El.* 720-3; *Or.* 1090-10; Hyg. *Fab.* 86).⁹⁶ Commentators have therefore looked for ways to incorporate in their reconstructions of *Cretan Women* Aerope's seduction in Crete by a slave, her subsequent marriage to Pleisthenes, her adultery with Thyestes and her punishment for this crime.⁹⁷ This leads to reconstructed plots in which Aerope is twice seduced and twice threatened with drowning. As in the case of Augè, it seems likely that only one of these plotlines should be considered as the basis of Euripides' play, although Wilamowitz ingeniously suggested that Euripides could have combined the two different infidelities into one by making Thyestes the slave in disguise by whom Aerope was seduced in Crete.⁹⁸ Although the scholion on Aristophanes *Acharnians* (433) implies that Thyestes was a character in the drama, this evidence is not conclusive and van Looy has shown that it is possible that Thyestes took no part in the action.⁹⁹

The role of Atreus is also a matter of considerable debate. The scholion to Aristophanes *Wasps* 762f. refers to Atreus making or being about to make a judgement in relation to Aerope (schol. 763a Koster, ἐν Κρήσσαις Εὐριπίδου ὁ Ἄτρεὺς πρὸς τὴν Ἀερόπην “κρινεῖ ταῦτ”). However, by emending the scholiast's Ἄτρεὺς to Κατρεὺς as Wilamowitz suggested, this evidence too could point to a plotline in which Aerope was condemned by her father to drown, but was rescued by Nauplius and married into the house of Atreus (perhaps to Pleisthenes, as the scholion to Sophocles' *Ajax* suggests).¹⁰⁰ Certainly the representation of angry Atreus condemning his daughter to be drowned at sea for her lack of chastity would be consistent with the other Euripidean plays considered here. Athenian evidence suggesting that husbands divorced their wives and returned them to their fathers rather than killing them also supports this suggestion. Whoever spoke the fragmentary line (<Ἄιδης> κρινεῖ ταῦτ' ... = E. *Cretan Women* fr. 465 Kannicht), it suggests that the fate of Aerope was to be removed in some way from human hands and left to the gods to decide.¹⁰¹ This points once again to the notion of a 'trial by water' in which the allegedly unchaste woman was thrown into the sea and it is left to the gods to decide her fate. Teucer's slur on Agamemnon and Menelaus in Sophocles' *Ajax* (1295-7: αὐτὸς δὲ μητρὸς ἐξέφυς Κρήσσης, ἐφ' ἧ / λαβὼν ἐπακτὸν ἄνδρ' ὁ φιλύσας

⁹⁶ Atreus' anger at his brother's betrayal causes him to feed Thyestes the flesh of his own children. The plot of Euripides' *Thyestes* is uncertain, but possibly focused on this feast. Cf. Jouan and van Looy (2000) 175-7; Webster (1967) 113-15. For an extant dramatic version of Thyestes' feast, see Seneca's *Thyestes*.

⁹⁷ Webster (1967) 37-9. Webster suggests that the scholiast recounts details from the prologue of *Cretan Women*.

⁹⁸ Wilamowitz (1875) 255. Cf. Collard (2005: 55) who emphasises that the evidence is insufficient to be certain of the plot. See Jouan and van Looy (2000: 289) for the complexities involved in this plotline.

⁹⁹ Jouan and van Looy (2000) 293-4.

¹⁰⁰ Kannicht (2004) note on *Cretan Women* fr. 465. Cf. Collard (2005) 56; Jouan and van Looy (2000) 294.

¹⁰¹ If 'Hades will judge these matters' is correct, as the context in Aristophanes implies. See Collard (2005) 56.

πατήρ / ἐφῆκεν ἔλλοις ἰχθύσιν διαφθοράν) implies that in some versions at least adulterous Aerope's guilt condemned her to drown, although the sources are strangely silent on this subject. At any event all the versions of this story refer to sexual infidelities by Aerope and to the threat of drowning associated with her lack of chastity.¹⁰² The lack of any divine intervention to save her in extant sources is perhaps telling, suggesting her own complicity, but in some versions she is spared from drowning by being given in marriage overseas instead.

4. Conclusion

This brief analysis of the three fragmentary plays by Euripides in comparison to other Greek literary sources reveals that the sea was frequently connected to ideas both of eroticism and of death by divine means, making it an ideal symbol to associate with the punishment of sexually unchaste women. At the same time the sea also signified transition, especially by means of trade, and hence it is used metaphorically to express the life journey of an unmarried mother who moves from her natal home to married status with her 'foreign' husband.

While it is possible to follow Glotz in suggesting that the tragic story patterns originated in actual practice, what is perhaps more important to stress is the link between the popular view of the sea and the influence that the mythic patterns and tragic plotlines had over this view. It seems that the tragic plotlines concerning the drowning of unchaste women and their sale overseas influenced not only later literary texts (such as the Greek novel), but also contemporary social and even legal conceptions of the themes, perhaps causing authors to attribute social norms and laws to Athenians when they were not in fact normal. At the same time the preoccupation with these themes in myth and tragedy emphasises the common concern about female chastity which is clearly apparent in other Athenian sources of the time.

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¹⁰² It is said that Euripides presented Aerope 'like a whore' (schol. Aristoph. *Frogs* 849b).

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