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The *Odyssey* and Conventions of the Heroic Quest

PROBLEMS OF METHOD: ODYSSEY AND ARGONAUTICA

BOOTH HOMERIC epics presume, not always correctly, that their audience is intimately familiar with a vast body of epic material. Certainly, those reading, for the first time, the Catalogue of Heroines in the *Nekuia* might well wish that they knew more about the characters passing so eerily before them. At times, the narrative may call our attention to some parallel tradition—the death of Agamemnon acts as a backdrop throughout the *Odyssey*; Heracles himself appears in the *Nekuia* and reminds us of his *Katabasis*—but the poetic background to the *Odyssey* does not merely serve to gloss the poem's allusions. The adventures of a Heracles or a Perseus can, for example, shed surprising light on Odysseus on Thrinacia. This paper will compare aspects of the *Odyssey* with similar Greek heroic traditions and will then use this comparison to shed light primarily on the *Odyssey*, but also on Greek heroic traditions in general.

Many scholars have, of course, already pondered the relationship between the *Odyssey* and other epic traditions. Let us therefore begin by considering how one particular problem, the relationship between our *Odyssey* and the Argonautica traditions, has been treated. Of all the Greek heroic traditions related to the *Odyssey*, those concerning Jason and the Argonauts have probably received the most attention, and generated the most fruitful debate. Already in the nineteenth century, Adolf Kirchhoff argued that the Argonautica traditions had strongly influenced our *Odyssey*,¹ and Paul Friedländer, in discussing the possible form of early Argonautica traditions, could almost take this influence for granted,² but it was Karl Meuli who produced the classic study of how the *Odyssey* and the Argonautica related to one another.³ The

1. Adolf Kirchhoff, *Die Homerische Odyssee* (Berlin 1879) 287–90; repr. Georg Olms Verlag (1973). For a summary of nineteenth-century scholarship on the Argonautica traditions in general, see Otto Jessen, “Argonautai,” in *RE* 3.1.785.

2. Friedländer 1914, 302.

3. Meuli 1921.

aged Wilamowitz nodded approvingly at this work; Ludwig Radermacher referred to it with guarded approval; Peter von der Mühl confidently referred to a “vorodysseische Argonautica.”⁴ For the later analysts, Meuli’s work had a particular significance: Reinhold Merkelbach opened his book on the *Odyssey* by observing that the great Homeric analysts, Bethe, Schwartz, and Wilamowitz, had left a legacy of controversy rather than any *communis opinio*. Meuli’s work, Merkelbach continued, had, almost alone, proven convincing to others. Denys Page begins his *Homeric Odyssey* by recapitulating the main conclusions in *Odyssee und Argonautika*, and G. S. Kirk echoed this approval.⁵ Few propositions in the study of Homeric poetry have enjoyed such general acceptance.

Yet many of Meuli’s individual arguments have been either disregarded or seriously challenged. Some have doubted that the Sirens, as Meuli believed, were drawn from the Argonautica and that Orpheus already belonged to the tradition at this early period.⁶ Merkelbach⁷ takes issue with Meuli’s interpretation of the episode on Thrinacia. Both Page and Kirk cite the “geographical” argument put forward by Meuli, but some have doubted the foundation on which this argument is based: the belief that we can use the four winds as accurate signs of direction.⁸ The general acceptance of his overall conclusion, that the Argonautica influenced our *Odyssey*, owes more, perhaps, to Circe than to Meuli’s own argumentation. Circe, in describing the path that Odysseus must take, recalls how the famous Argo alone had successfully passed through the Symplegades:

πλαγκτὰς δὴ τοι τὰς γε θεοὶ μάκαρες καλέουσι.
τῇ μὲν τ’ οὐδὲ ποτητὰ παρέρχεται οὐδὲ πέλειαι
τρῆρωνες, ταί τ’ ἀμβροσίην Διὶ πατρὶ φέρουσιν,
ἀλλὰ τε καὶ τῶν αἰὲν ἀφαιρεῖται λῖς πέτρῃ
ἀλλ’ ἄλλην ἐνίησι πατὴρ ἑναρίθμιον εἶναι.
τῇ δ’ οὐ πῶ τις νηῦς φύγεν ἀνδρῶν, ἢ τις ἴκηται,
ἀλλὰ θ’ ὁμοῦ πίνακας τε νεῶν καὶ σώματα φωτῶν
κύμαθ’ ἄλως φορέουσι πυρός τ’ ὄλοιο θύελλα.
οἴη μὴ κείνη γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηῦς
Ἄργῳ πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ’ Αἰήταο πλέουσα
καὶ νῦ κε τὴν ἐνθ’ ὄκα βάλεν μεγάλας ποτὶ πέτρας,
ἀλλ’ Ἥρη παρέπεμψεν, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἦεν Ἴησων.

Od. 12.61–72

4. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* (Berlin 1924) vol. 2, 236; L. Radermacher, *Mythos und Sage bei den Griechen* (Munich 1943) 166; Von der Mühl 1940, 728f.

5. Merkelbach 1969, vii; D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford 1955) 2; G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 234–36.

6. See St. P. Kyriakides, Παρατηρήσεις εἰς τὴν Ὀμηρικὴν Νέκυϊαν, Ἄριστοτ. Πανεπιστημ. Θεσσαλον. Ἐπιστημ. Ἐπειτ. 7 (1957) 283ff.; Eisenberger 1973, 194.

7. Merkelbach 1969, 206.

8. See W. Marg, *Gnomon* 42 (1970) 227f.; also Eisenberger 1973, 201; Bona 1966, 94ff.; A. Lesky, *Homeros* (Stuttgart 1967) 113f.

This is, as at least one scholar has observed,⁹ about as clear a “source marker” as one could want. Circe herself, as Aetes’ sister, links the two epics. The only question is not whether but *how* the *Argonautica* relates to our *Odyssey*.

Unfortunately, this question will always remain largely unanswered, for we will never fully understand to what extent the poetic traditions of the *Argonautica* influenced our *Odyssey*. The greatest problem is simple: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* represent only a tiny fraction of the epic tradition. We have no versions of the *Argonautica* that pre-date—or are even contemporary with—these poems,¹⁰ and we can hardly speak with confidence about how this tradition influenced either epic.

Even if, miraculously, a pre-Odyssean version of the *Argonautica* were to reappear, we would still be at a loss. The whole complex system of formulae, extending from fragments of a line to whole scenes, freed a poet from having to memorize a single, canonical document. The poet could expand, contract, add, delete, and rearrange to suit the audience and the occasion at hand. Thus, the written text of an epic represents, so long as the oral techniques retain their vitality, no more than a snapshot, capturing a specific moment in the long and continuous life of that epic tradition: a single poet might, before diverse audiences, sing the same tale at varying lengths and coupled with different stories. Whoever composed our *Odyssey* surely did not, like an Apollonius, work from a library of texts. Conventional approaches to the author and his sources would not be appropriate to such a fluid tradition, because they presuppose a finite number of written source materials.

Nevertheless, the complex formulaic system of which our *Odyssey* is a product does compensate, in part, for the difficulties that confront the student. Oral poetry is in some ways actually less fluid and flexible than literary poetry. A poet working within an oral tradition will not create anew the typical scenes out of which his poems are built: a feast scene in a song about Heracles might, during the course of his career, differ only slightly from a similar scene in an *Argonautica*. The poet would have a generalized feast-scene ready for use in any song and would adapt this typical scene to the needs of the moment. A preexisting pattern would exist for every standard event—a hero arming himself, arrival scenes, sacrifices.¹¹

Yet, such typical scenes do not consist solely of feasts and arming. How would a poet describe the *Katabasis* of Heracles and of Theseus? What about

9. Friedländer 1914, 302.

10. The earliest reference outside of Homer is Hesiod *Theog.* 992–1002, the date and authenticity of which are subjects of dispute; see West on *Theog.* 881–1020.

11. There are many useful studies of such typical scenes. Among the best are Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933); Bernard Fenik, “Typical Battle Scenes in the *Iliad*,” *Hermes Einzelschriften* 21 (1968); see also Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard 1960) 68–98, where the large-scale patterns of oral poetry are discussed as “themes”; and M. N. Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley 1974) 68–98, who discusses the phenomenon at length in the light of linguistic theory.

a quest for the Gorgon's head or for the Apples of the Hesperides? Greek heroic traditions were shaped in a formulaic system that encouraged poets to compose different poems out of standard components. You do not have to be a disciple of Propp to recognize that heroic adventures from all cultures follow recognizable patterns. In Greek heroic tradition, however, typical scenes and other aids to rapid composition have regularized universal patterns even further. After all, if a snake guards the Apples of the Hesperides and the Golden Fleece, why not use many of the same formulae to describe both?

We can, in some measure, still trace these conventions as they appear in Homeric poetry. The smallest formulae out of which heroic poetry was composed were largely dependent on meter and vanished quickly, but the larger structural building blocks that shaped stories as a whole were not so fragile and could continue to exert their influences beyond the hexameter and even beyond poetry. Archaic poets such as Simonides or Pindar and even late prose compilers such as Pseudo-Apollodorus preserve much that took shape in an earlier period.

Conventional patterns, however, impose their own rules upon the poetry. The more stylized the medium, the more expressively a poet can vary conventions and manipulate expectations. The repeated scenes and actions of Greek heroic adventure to some degree developed a language and syntax of their own that enrich Homeric poetry. This paper investigates some of these conventional patterns, examining the ways they are used in and outside of Homeric poetry.

To do this, we will compare passages in the *Odyssey* with similar events that appear in other traditions, particularly those surrounding the Argonauts and the labors of Heracles. The question of how our *Odyssey* relates to specific traditions such as the *Argonautica* must remain open. Instead, we will focus upon general thematic patterns that appear throughout Greek heroic tales, and we will use these patterns to investigate the *Odyssey*. First, we will compare Medea with various Homeric figures and trace how the *Argonautica* and the *Odyssey* used similar traditional themes. Then we will move on to the adventure on Thrinacia, discussing its relationship to the *Odyssey*, to the wider background of Greek myth, and to the *Argonautica*. This will, in the end, shed light not only on both the Homeric epic and the heroic tradition, but on the way Greek poetic tradition could shape and manipulate the tales that formed its subject.

I. THE WANDERER AND THE PRINCESS: NAUSICAA AND MEDEA

In *Odyssey* 7, when Odysseus has just appeared unforeseen and unknown among the Phaeacians, Alcinoos makes an astounding suggestion:

αἶ γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον,
τοῖος ἔών, οἴός ἐσσι, τά τε φρονέων ἄ τ' ἐγὼ περ,

παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν ἐχέμεν καὶ ἐμὸς γαμβρὸς καλέεσθαι,
αὐῶι μένων' οἶκον δέ κ' ἐγὼ καὶ κτήματα δοίην.

Od. 7.311–14

“The prayer is, they say, bizarre,” the scholiast on v. 311 informs us. “Not knowing who this is and without putting him to any test, he [Alcinous] prays to receive him [Odysseus] as his lifelong companion and to make him his son-in-law!”¹² The good Aristarchus, marveling at Alcinous’s behavior, wondered whether vv. 311–16 were genuine and suggested that, Homeric or not, these lines did little for the poem.¹³ Still, the scholiasts cast about for some way to explain this behavior. Perhaps Alcinous is testing Odysseus to see whether he indeed rejected Calypso: if Odysseus snaps at the chance to marry a mere mortal such as Nausicaa, he surely is not the sort of man to pass up an offer of immortality.¹⁴ On the other hand, such suspicion is mean and does not suit Alcinous’s royal nature: he is a simple, straightforward soul, as those who enjoy good fortune from their birth often are.¹⁵ Furthermore, the old heroic Greeks did care more for ἀρετή (or, at least, ἡ ἀρετὴ τῆς ὄψεως)¹⁶ than for mere wealth, and customarily married their daughters off to outstanding ξένοι—consider the cases of Bellerophon, Tydeus, and Polynices.¹⁷

It is easy to sympathize with the scholiasts as they wrestle with this passage. Certainly, by any normal standards, Alcinous’s suggestion is stunningly swift, and the scholiasts evidently appreciated the strangeness of this passage better than have some modern critics.¹⁸ But if Alcinous’s proposition is sudden, it is not qualitatively unexpected. Nausicaa’s marriage, initially as a general idea and then specifically with Odysseus, has been part of the narrative since we first saw Nausicaa at the opening of Book 6. Athena, appearing in a dream to Nausicaa, disguised as one of her friends, reminds Nausicaa, three lines into her speech, that her marriage is near (*Od.* 6.27ff.). She will not long remain

12. *Schol. T ad Od.* 7.311: ἀτοπος, φασίν, ἡ εὐχὴ μὴ γὰρ ἐπιστάμενος ὅστις ἐστὶ μηδὲ πειραθεὶς εὐχεται σύμβιον αὐτὸν λαβεῖν καὶ γαμβρὸν ποιήσασθαι.

13. *Schol. T ad Od.* 7.311: τοὺς ἔξ Ἀρίσταρχος διστάζει Ὀμήρου εἶναι. εἰ δὲ καὶ Ὀμηρικοί, εἰκότως αὐτοὺς περιαιρεθῆναι φησι. His reasoning is summarized: πῶς γὰρ ἀγνοῶν τὸν ἄνδρα μνηστεύεται αὐτῷ τὴν θυγατέρα καὶ οὐ προτροπώμενος, ἀλλὰ λιπαρῶν.

14. *Schol. T ad Od.* 7.311; *V PQ ad Od.* 7.313.

15. *Schol. PQ ad Od.* 7.313: ἡ τοῦτο κακῆθες καὶ οὐ βασιλικὸν, οὐδὲ κατὰ τὸ Ἀλκινόου ἦθος. ἀπλοικῶς γὰρ μάλιστα εἰσάγεται, ὅπερ συμβαίνει περὶ τοὺς ἐκ γενετῆς εὐτυχοῦντας.

16. *Schol. T ad Od.* 7.311.

17. *Schol. T ad Od.* 7.311; *PQ ad Od.* 7.313.

18. Schwartz (1924, 23), citing the scholiasts, simply declared *Od.* 7.298–316 to be an addition by B. Mattes (1958, 95) says of this wish: “aber nun verliert er [i.e., Alcinous] fast wieder das Mass nach der anderen Seite hin: Der Gast möge sein Schwiegersohn . . . werden.” Eisenberger (1973, 117) stresses the good qualities that Odysseus displayed in defending Nausicaa at 7.302ff. and asks: “ist es da unverständlich, ‘mehr als kuriös,’ dass Alkinoos, der in seinem Gast einen reifen Menschen von gleicher Sinnesart wie er selbst erkennt, aus einer reaktiven starken Regung von Sympathie heraus den momentanen Wunsch empfindet und impulsiv ausspricht, ihn als Gemahl seiner Tochter zu sehen?” Fenik (1974, 109) passes quickly over this passage: “Alcinous impulsively offers him his daughter’s hand in marriage . . . he waxes grandiose and expansive.”

unmarried; already the best of the Phaeacians have begun to seek her in marriage. Later, Nausicaa shyly refrains from mentioning her imminent marriage to Alcinous, but he understands, we are told, her real thoughts (66f.). Odysseus, when he throws himself upon Nausicaa's mercy, declares the parents and siblings of such a girl "thrice-fortunate" (τρεισμάκαρο), but the most fortunate figure of all will be the man who loads her with marriage gifts and takes her home with him as his wife (153ff.). A bath in the river and the attentions of Athena restore to the battered Odysseus some of his good looks, and Nausicaa, immediately pointing out the change to her companions, prays that her husband, whoever he may be, will resemble this stranger (244f.). Finally, Nausicaa herself tells Odysseus that he may accompany her as far as the outskirts of the city, but no farther: she fears that people, seeing this handsome stranger behind her, will gossip, thinking that she has scorned her native suitors and picked some foreigner to be her husband (273–85). Nausicaa herself does not approve of young girls who, without their parents' consent, associate closely with men before marriage (286–88).

Later, when Odysseus has arrived in the city and been accepted at the palace, he admits that Nausicaa had come to his rescue. Alcinous disapproves of his daughter's behavior, not because she helped Odysseus, but because she did not bring him to the palace herself (*Od.* 7.299–301). Odysseus, bending the truth on Nausicaa's behalf, replies that she had wanted him to accompany her, but that he, bearing in mind that we mortals are all a suspicious lot (δύσζηλοι, 303ff.), had refused her offer. At this point, Alcinous suggests that Odysseus marry Nausicaa, a suggestion that, after all the hints of the previous book, surprises not because it comes, but because it comes so quickly.

Book 8 of the *Odyssey* continues and concludes the theme begun in Book 6. As often in Homer, the narrative moves simultaneously in two different directions. Odysseus is, on the one hand, an honored guest of the Phaeacians, waiting to return home and, in the meantime, enjoying their hospitality. Athletic contests are held as an exhibition of Phaeacian talents. On the other hand, the narrative provides the backdrop for a very different story: that of the stranger who must prove himself and will win the daughter of the king in marriage.¹⁹ The Phaeacian nobles assemble to inspect the newcomer (10ff.). Athena makes Odysseus physically more impressive so that he can perform the many ἄεθλοι that the Phaeacians will impose on him:²⁰

19. On the "romance" between Odysseus and Nausicaa, see especially W. J. Woodhouse (1930, 64–71); see also R. Lattimore, "Nausikaa's Suitors," in *Classical Studies Presented to Ben Edwin Perry: Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* (Urbana 1969) 88ff.

20. This can only mean that the Phaeacians will impose some series of tasks upon Odysseus so that they can test his mettle. The fact that Odysseus performs in only one event does not change the meaning of these lines.

The difference between ἄεθλος as "contest" and ἄεθλος as "ordeal" (see G. P. Rose, *TAPA* 100 [1969] 401; Eisenberger 1973, 121n.23) is a problem of English translation. The two English terms touch upon different and generally inextricable aspects of an ἄεθλος. This lexicographical

ὥς εἰπούσ' ὄτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸν ἑκάστου.
καρπαλίμως δ' ἔμπληντο βροτῶν ἀγοραὶ τε καὶ ἔδραι
ἀγρομένων πολλοὶ δ' ἄρα θηήσαντο ἰδόντες
υἴδν Λαέρταο δαΐφρονα. τῷ δ' ἄρ' Ἀθήνη
θεσπεσίην κατέχευε χάριν κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ὤμοις
καὶ μιν μακρότερον καὶ πάσσονα θῆκεν ἰδέσθαι,
ὥς κεν Φαιήκεσσι φίλος πάντεσσι γένοιτο
δεινός τ' αἰδοῖός τε καὶ ἐκτελέσειεν ἀέθλους
πολλούς, τοὺς Φαίηκες ἐπειρήσαντ' Ὀδυσῆος.

Od. 8.17–24

The narrative subsequently takes a different direction: Alcinous declares that the stranger will be returning home. Later, Odysseus watches the games as a spectator. He only competes when one of the younger Phaeacians inhospitably taunts him, but compete he does, not in “many” contests but in one, the discus. This proves to be enough, for Odysseus easily outdoes his hosts, and no one takes up his challenge to compete in any event except running (the sea had taken the spring out of his legs). Odysseus remains a spectator, his participation the result of Euryalus’s momentary rudeness, but still the narrative, drawing him momentarily into the competition, shows off his heroic mettle.

Such narrative sleight of hand is typical of Homeric poetry, and the underlying pattern with which the *Odyssey* here plays was well understood. Odysseus could have won the king’s daughter and remained in honorable splendor with his young new wife, but, again, as on Ogygia, he rejects a materially superior fate in order to return to his own, less grand, home. In the evening, after demonstrating his prowess, Odysseus enjoys a warm bath and meets Nausicaa, but only to end, delicately, the relationship.

In this case, the process is particularly successful: critics with no sense of the larger pattern to which the narrative alludes (some of the scholiasts among them) could, as we have seen, perceive in Alcinous’s offer of his daughter’s hand an action that chimed well with his overall character: he is a “straightforward” fellow (*Schol. PQ ad Od.* 7.313: ἀπλοϊκός), and he treats Odysseus with the greatest kindness throughout his stay. As soon as Odysseus appears, Eche-neos insists that the Phaeacians show their accustomed hospitality (*Od.* 7.155ff.). We hear that all wanderers had received a friendly reception and passage home from the Phaeacians (*Od.* 13.172ff.). Even when he offers his daughter to Odysseus in marriage, Alcinous emphasizes that Odysseus may freely continue on his way home. When called upon, the Phaeacian nobles are

question leads to the more general problem of how to define the relationship between athletic contests and the more general contests of heroic warfare. The connection is central to all Greek athletics, at least as seen through the prism of archaic poetry.

Zenodotus (*Schol. HQ ad Od.* 7.22), not surprisingly, athetized this passage on the grounds that Odysseus performed only one, not “many,” ἀέθλοι.

generous in their gifts. Even the rash Euryalus graciously apologizes for his behavior (*Od.* 8.406). The poem carefully shows the Phaeacians in an attractive light.

On the other hand, the narrative suggests at times a less amiable picture of the Phaeacians.²¹ Nausicaa anticipates that her countrymen would resent her marriage to an outlander (*Od.* 6.273–84). When Odysseus approaches the city, Athena hides him in a mist so that none of the Phaeacians will see him and ask him his identity:

καὶ τότε Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄρτο πόλινδ' ἵμεν' ἀμφὶ δ' Ἀθήνη
πολλὴν ἤερα χεῦε φίλα φρονέουσ' Ὀδυσῆϊ,
μή τις Φαιήκων μεγαθύμων ἀντιβολήσας
κερτομέοι τ' ἐπέεσσι καὶ ἐξερέοιθ' ὅτις εἴη.

Od. 7.14–17

Such a meeting could be dangerous. Athena herself, disguised as a small girl, meets Odysseus, just before he enters the city, and warns him not to talk to anyone else:

ἀλλ' ἴθι σιγῇ τοῖον, ἐγὼ δ' ὄδον ἠγεμονεύσω,
μηδέ τιν' ἀνθρώπων προτώσσεο μηδ' ἐρέεινε.
σύ γὰρ ξείνουσ οἱ γε μάλ' ἀνθρώπους ἀνέχονται
σύδ' ἀγαπαζόμενοι φιλέουσ', ὅς κ' ἄλλοθεν ἔλθῃ.

Od. 7.30–33

The *Odyssey* contains a close parallel to this situation. The catastrophic meeting with the Laestrygonians represents an alternate version of the arrival among the Phaeacians.²² Odysseus's men meet the daughter of the king (Nausicaa), who is outside the city drawing water (Nausicaa is washing clothes). They ask her who rules the land, and she shows them (as Athena, also in the guise of a young girl, shows Odysseus) the home of the king. In Laestrygonia, the meeting with the queen openly assumes the importance to which Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.303–15) and Athena (*Od.* 7.75–78) attribute the meeting with Arete: Odysseus's men took no liking to the queen of the Laestrygonians, so, instead of befriending them, she called her husband out of the marketplace, and a general slaughter of Odysseus's men began. The more compact story of the Laestrygonians reveals what could lie under the humane surface of the Phaeacians. The narrative, though it chooses to present this encounter in a pleasant light, touches gently upon the alternatives at its disposal.²³

21. See Rose (*supra* n.20) 387–406, for a vigorous (and at times excessive) discussion of this sinister aspect; G. J. de Vries, *Mnem.* 30(1977)113–121, argues against this position.

22. Fenik (1974, 128) argues that the tension between the actual friendliness of the Phaeacians and the hostility attributed to them serves to focus attention upon Queen Arete's question at *Od.* 7.237ff.

23. See Fenik (1974, 128).

The romance between a wanderer and a princess of some mysterious land is a universal theme, of which the Argonautica provides a further Greek example. Phaeacia and Aea (Medea's home, not to be confused with Aeaea, the home of Circe), being both fabulous lands on the edge of the world, qualitatively resemble one another. The overall similarity between Medea and Nausicaa—each a young princess in a distant, mysterious land and ready for marriage—is clear enough. In particular, we might compare the “many” ἄεθλοι with which the Phaeacians will supposedly test Odysseus with the ἄεθλοι that Aeetes actually does impose upon Jason. The suggestions of Phaeacian unfriendliness fit not only the Laestrygonians, but the people of Aea (probably not yet Colchians in the time of our *Odyssey*)²⁴ as they appear to us. Nausicaa, of course, comes to the aid of Odysseus, as Medea does for Jason. The liaison that began on Aea between Jason and Medea became, of course, one of the most famous parts of the Argonautica tradition in its long passage through Western literature. The Homeric narrative repeatedly touches upon the idea of a separate, romantic involvement between Nausicaa and Odysseus, and the sexual element in the meeting between the two is very strong.²⁵ The adventure on Phaeacia almost presents us, in fact, with a simplified and happier Argonautica, stripped of fleece and Argonauts, and with a friendly Aeetes.²⁶

If Odysseus's experiences on Scheria draw on the same types of tradition that we see in the Argonautica traditions, comparing the two does not simply shed light on the dark hints about the Phaeacians. Consider the problem that Medea's character poses to readers of Apollonius: how can the helpless, innocent girl who so readily falls in love with Jason also be the hard, resourceful sorceress who rescues Jason and later precipitates the murder of her own brother, Apsyrtus? There is a distinct tension between the two sides of her character—as Apollonius himself realized.²⁷ Medea's first appearance in the

24. On Aea generally, see Lesky 1948.

25. See Nagler (*supra* n.11) 45ff., esp. 47.

26. Consider the story of Bellerophon as told at *Il.* 6.155ff. His trip to Lycia resembles Jason's voyage to Phasis. Proitos sends Bellerophon to Lycia in the hope that Bellerophon will never return, just as Pelias sends Jason to Aea in the hope that Jason will perish. Both heroes have two adversaries, first Pelias/Proitos, then Aeetes/the king of Lycia, and in each case the second adversary imposes his own set of labors upon the hero. In particular, the trials imposed on Bellerophon (killing the Chimaira, battling the Solumi and Amazons, and the ambush that awaits Bellerophon) all have parallels in the Argonautica tradition—at least as it appears in Apollonius. Taming the fire-breathing bulls, sowing the field of Ares, and killing the rising warriors clearly belong to the same class as the battle with Chimaira. The Argonauts also offer to earn the fleece from Aeetes by doing battle with the Sauromatae, just as Bellerophon must make war upon the Solumi and Amazons. Finally, when Jason has succeeded in his tests, Aeetes tries to ambush him together with the Argonauts. In the *Naupaktika*, Aphrodite only prevents Aeetes from burning the Argo by instilling in him an uncontrollable passion to sleep with his wife (fr. 8 Kinkel=*Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.86). In both cases the end result is similar: the hero marries the king's daughter. Jason kidnaps Medea, however, whereas the Lycian king, finally recognizing Bellerophon's worth, freely offers him his daughter in marriage.

27. Already stressed by Erwin Rohde, *Der griechische Roman* (Leipzig 1900) 112.

Argonautica deliberately presents both the innocent and the formidable side of her character,²⁸ and subsequent scenes carefully show both sides at once.²⁹ Apollonius may or may not, from a literary perspective, have successfully portrayed the complex character of Medea, but the tension within this character is clear.³⁰

Nausicaa is the innocent Medea, stripped of her magical powers and her eerie rapport with Hecate. The narrative may hint at Phaeacian hostility and may subtly suggest a reception similar to that which Jason received at the hands of Aetes, but no such hints darken our picture of Nausicaa. She, like Medea, quickly accepts the wanderer and gives him such help as she can.

Nausicaa may be a simpler character, lacking the internal tension that has troubled students of Medea, but she never achieved the popularity of the more complex figure. To use one simple measurement, a search of the 160 or so authors currently released by the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* finds 269 occurrences of Medea's name, as opposed to 29 appearances of the name Nausicaa. Other characters in the *Odyssey*, however, are connected with Medea. Circe is Aetes' sister and therefore Medea's aunt (*Od.* 10.137). She, together with Medea, became in Greek tradition a proverbial witch. Not only does she change men into beasts, she lists the rites that Odysseus must perform in the Underworld. She ultimately predicts the path that Odysseus will follow as he leaves Aea to return home. She tells him the name of Scylla's mother, Cratais, who will keep Scylla from attacking a second time (*Od.* 12.124–26).

Yet, neither Medea nor Circe is simply a witch. Circe has strong connections with Persephone and with the Near East.³¹ Circe, like Calypso, is a goddess who lives far off on the edge of the world. Calypso explicitly offers immortality on her beautiful island.

The scholia to Apollonius inform us that in both Ibycus and Simonides, Achilles married Medea in Elysium.³² This story reappears in Apollonius (4.809ff.) and again in Lycophron (174, 798 with Tzetzes' scholia). Albin Lesky, who shed as much light on Medea and on the Argonautika traditions as

28. Her first appearance in the poem (see *Arg.* 3.247–52) nicely encapsulates her character: Hera has kept her at home from her duties as a priestess of Hecate—a sinister role. But there is nothing sinister in the spontaneous outburst that follows at vv. 253–56.

29. Note the shifts from emphasis on the youth and innocence of Medea's twelve handmaidens (*Arg.* 3.838–40) to the eerie scene with the Promethean φάρμακον (vv. 843–66), then back to the young girls as they leave the city (vv. 871–83). Nausicaa and her handmaidens in *Odyssey* 6 clearly provide the primary model for this scene in Apollonius, but the later poet gives this picture (at vv. 883–86), a sinister note entirely lacking in Homer.

30. For discussions of Medea's character, see the summary in Hans Herter's article "Apollonios," in *RE* suppl. 13 (1973) 37–39.

31. See Gregory Crane, "Calypso: Stages of Afterlife and Immortality in the *Odyssey*," diss. Harvard, 1985, 56ff.

32. *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.814f. = Ibycus 291 *PMG* = Simonides 560 *PMG*. See A. Lesky, "Medeia," in *RE* 15.1.48: "ganz aus dem Rahmen aller hier entwickelten Sagenzusammenhänge fällt die Nachricht von dem Zusammenleben Medeas mit Achill nach dessen Tode auf den Inseln der Seligen."

anyone,³³ threw up his hands in despair before this item; he could see no way to connect a Medea in Elysium with the Medea of the Argonautika. Far from complicating the issue, however, Medea's life with Achilles in Elysium brings out a fundamental aspect of her character. Medea belongs to a larger class of semi-divine female figures (of which Calypso and Medea's niece Circe are examples) who live on the edge of the world and who may accompany more fortunate heroes in an endless, blissful existence in Elysium or on an Island of the Blessed. Medea, however, unlike Circe or Calypso, does not remain in her distant and mysterious home but, lured (as early as Pindar) by the charm of Hellas (*Pyth.* 4.218ff.), she accompanies Jason back to Greece. In this more familiar milieu, magic becomes more prominent, and Medea ultimately acquires a bloody character differing from that of such related figures as Circe and Calypso. Nevertheless, she retains distinctive traces of her grander nature: according to some sources, Medea rejuvenates Jason, or Jason's father, Aeson,³⁴ or tricks Pelias into a bloody death with the promise of rejuvenation³⁵—a temporary return to youth that supplants the more elusive gift of immortality.³⁶ If Nausicaa parallels the innocent Medea, the roots of the formidable Medea, full of power for good or evil, lie in figures such as Circe and Calypso and in the Medea who accompanies Achilles in Elysium forever.

Medea of the Argonautika fuses in a single character aspects which the *Odyssey* distributes between Nausicaa on the one hand and Circe/Calypso on the other. This fusion explains in part the strange relationship between Medea and Circe. Normally, such similar figures might appear as sisters, but Medea, as a princess, receives a powerful father to whom she must be subordinate. Aetes therefore intervenes in the family tree,³⁷ and we find that he, rather than Medea, is Circe's sibling.

Let us turn back to the *Odyssey* to consider the order of Odysseus's adventures. First Calypso offers Odysseus immortality and, then, in the following adventure, Alcinoos offers him the hand of a princess. The adventures on Ogygia and Phaeacia that follow one after the other in the *Odyssey* present two classic and parallel goals for a Greek hero. Each offer, because it is typically desirable, highlights Odysseus's fixed resolve to return home. The Argonautika (at least in the forms that we have it) explicitly offers neither of these fates, but Medea inextricably combines the mysterious princess with, as noted above, the idea of immortality. The Argonautika fuses two themes which the *Odyssey*

33. See Lesky 1948.

34. The Hypothesis to the *Medea* tells us that according to both Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 fr. 113) and Simonides (*PMG* 548) Medea rejuvenated Jason, but that according to the *Nostoi* (fr. 6 Allen) she rejuvenated Aeson. On the issues of mythical rejuvenation see R. Scodel, "Hesiod Redivivus," *GRBS* 21 (1980) 306ff.

35. Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.28; for references see Scodel, *GRBS* 21 (1980) 307n.15.

36. Compare the offer to Gilgamesh of rejuvenation as a secondary prize, when immortality itself proves unattainable.

37. Aetes as brother of Circe, *Od.* 10.137; a fuller genealogy at Hesiod *Theog.* 956–62.

presents in separate adventures one after the other. Further, the heterogeneous character of Medea reminds us that Homeric narrative was not unique in its ability to combine disparate themes (such as *Nekuomanteion* and *Katabasis* in the *Nekuia*). Apollonius's Medea had inherited the strange mixture of helplessness and power that she portrays in his epic, and the Euripidean Medea, at once vulnerable and ruthless, did not spring *ex nihilo*.³⁸

II THRINACIA

No single adventure in the *Odyssey* is more important to Odysseus than Thrinacia: Odysseus's behavior there decides whether he will or will not return home alive. Teiresias tells him this at length during the *Nekuia*; Circe repeats the point in her more detailed instructions in book twelve. In some sense Odysseus is always fated to return home, but the narrative singles out Thrinacia as the turning point for Odysseus. After Thrinacia—but not before—his return is inevitable. Thrinacia occupies an important position in the *Odyssey*; it poses the one test that the hero must—and does, in fact—pass.

Yet, no comparable adventure in the poem has received less attention. Naturally, most have sought to assign this episode to an “author” or “stage” of the *Odyssey*³⁹; the strong similarities between the wraths of Helios and Poseidon suggested to many that one wrath was an imitation of the other.⁴⁰ The poem mentions Thrinacia alone among all of Odysseus's adventures, but these lines have also distracted scholars, in part because the opening of the poem apologizes for the loss of all Odysseus's men. Their death does not reflect well upon their leader, and the *Odyssey* carefully exonerates Odysseus from any responsibility for the completeness of the catastrophe (*Od.* 1.5–9).⁴¹ The Companions and their failure on Thrinacia have exerted a disproportionate influence on discussions of this episode.⁴² Some, like the young Wil-

38. For a somewhat different and more general discussion of Phaeacia's role in the poem, see now T. Krischer, *Hermes* 113 (1985) 9–21.

39. See Radermacher 1915, 23ff.; Reinhardt 1960, 111–15; Von der Mühl 1940, 730; Merkelbach 1969, 194, 206.

40. Woodhouse (1930, 29–40) discusses both wraths (along with the wrath of Athena); Fenik (1974, 208–32) considers the wraths of Poseidon and Helios at length, with references to earlier positions; of these, the most readable (though not the most accessible) is in Rudolf Pfeiffer's review article in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 48 (1928) 2361–63, on Eduard Schwartz, *Die Odyssee* (Munich 1924) and Wilamowitz, *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus* (Berlin 1927).

41. Though, had Odysseus followed the advice of his men, none would have died at the hands of Polyphemus, and, in ignoring Circe's advice regarding Scylla, he unnecessarily risks additional lives.

42. See, for example, Schadewaldt 1960, 861–76; Fenik 1974, 211–18, with further references. The *Odyssey* makes no attempt to present an “ordered moral universe” in which the actions—or, rather, our feelings toward the actions—of a man necessarily match his fate. Even when the gods warn mortals, Zeus laments at the poem's outset, they don't listen; instead, they add to their troubles unnecessarily. Thrinacia illustrates Zeus's speech perfectly: the Companions know that if they harm the Cattle of the Sun, they will die. Mitigating circumstances, such as starvation, are irrelevant (see, for example, Adkins 1960, 62–65; Clay, 1983, 230).

amowitz⁴³ or Merkelbach,⁴⁴ simply did not see much of interest in the role that Thrinacia plays in the poem as a whole.⁴⁵ This following discussion will not focus on the wrath of Helios or the disaster of Odysseus's companions, but on the significance of Thrinacia for Odysseus. We will look at Thrinacia in relation to other heroic adventures, for Greek heroic tales provide the primary background against which all Greek epic should be judged. The *Argonautica* will prove particularly important, but other traditions are also significant. In the end, however, Thrinacia proves to be an adventure, similar to those which other Greek heroes experience, but also perfectly suited to Odysseus and Odysseus alone.

THRINACIA AND THE PRIZE AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Seven herds, each with fifty cattle—three hundred and fifty in all—live on Thrinacia. Their number never varies, we are told, for these cattle neither die nor reproduce. In the previous century “solar” interpretations of mythological phenomena enjoyed a popularity that they have now, justifiably, lost, but these cattle may indeed, as Aristotle and others already in antiquity supposed, reflect the days of the lunar year.⁴⁶ Thrinacia has no monopoly on Cattle of the Sun: we find them at Taenaron already in the *Hymn to Apollo* 411–13. Herodotus (9.93f.) tells a story about the Cattle of the Sun in Apollonia. Servius refers to Cattle of the Sun at Gortyn in Crete.⁴⁷ According to one source, Hermes stole the cattle of Helios.⁴⁸ In some traditions, Augeas is the son of Helios and his innumerable cattle are a gift from his father.⁴⁹

Thrinacia, unlike the other sites at which Cattle of the Sun can be found, is an island in the midst of the Oceanus, on the edge of the world. It belongs to the same class as the island home of the Hesperides: when Zeus and Hera were married, Ge presented them with Golden Apples. These so delighted Hera that she planted them in the Garden of the Gods (the θεῶν κήπος) near Atlas. She made the Hesperides and a huge Serpent guardians of these apples.⁵⁰ This

Of course, Thrinacia does disengage Odysseus from his men, making him the lonely castaway who finally returns to Ithaca, but this episode is not simply, or even primarily, a narrative device to achieve this end. The Companions only appear so that they can die, burst into tears, be comforted, rebel, or provide some convenient service to the narrative. Odysseus determines his fate through his own actions on Thrinacia. Thrinacia is his turning point; the Companions are incidental to this.

43. Wilamowitz, 1884, 168.

44. Merkelbach 1969, 194, 206.

45. Contrast, however, Bona (1966, 32–34), who opens his book on the *Odyssey* with a discussion of Thrinacia.

46. See *Schol. ad Od.* 12.128, 129; see also Cook, *Zeus* 1.410, who cites Welcker, *Gr. Götterl.* 1.405f.

47. *Serv. ad Eclog.* 6.60, commenting on *stabula ad Gortynia vaccae*.

48. *Schol. ad Dionys. Thrac.* 2, in Bekker *Anecdota Graeca* 2.752.

49. Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.5; Theoc. 24.118f.

50. Already in Hesiod *Theog.* 215f., also 275, 334f.; a brief but important account at Euripides *Heracles* 394f.; Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 fr. 16a [= *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.1396a]; fr. 17 [= *Schol. ad Ap.*

garden appears in slightly different forms: Sophocles mentions the Διὸς κήποι,⁵¹ the same meadow in which Zeus lay with Hera. Aristophanes was surely thinking of this garden, when, in the *Birds* (1757f.), Pisthetaerus declares, as he leads Basileia off as his wife, that he will bring her ἐπὶ δάπεδον Διὸς καὶ λέχος γαμήλιον. The idea of a Garden, far away at the edge of the world, was applied to other divinities as well. In the *Clouds*, the “gardens of father Oceanus” appear as one of the possible locations in which the Clouds, addressed as divinities, might be found.⁵² In a fragment of Sophocles, we find Oreithyia carried off to the “ancient garden of Phoebus,” a place on the far edge of the world, somehow associated with the Hyperboreans.⁵³ Here, Boreas sleeps with Oreithyia in this beautiful garden of Apollo, just as do Zeus and Hera in their own garden. Hesiod tells us that Poseidon lay with Medusa in a lovely meadow next to the Oceanus, but he does not describe this scene as the property of any one god (*Theog.* 276–78).

Compare, in particular, two of these sanctuaries at the edge of the world, Thrinacia and the θεῶν κήπος associated with Hera. Minor female deities preside over both: the Hesperides watch over the Apples of Hera, just as the Heliades, Lampetie and Phaethousa, watch over the Cattle of Helios. Each site, however, has its own special patron: Helios in the case of Thrinacia, while the island of the Hesperides belongs to Hera. Both may, however, possess some general significance for the gods. In the Garden of the Hesperides, according to Euripides, near the the place where Zeus lay, where the holy, wealth-giving land increases the prosperity of the gods,⁵⁴ springs of ambrosia run. Wilamowitz suggested that without such springs of ambrosia even the gods would grow old.⁵⁵ Cattle and Apples are not functionally so very different: one later writer, the Hellenistic historian Agroitas,⁵⁶ reinterpreted the Golden Apples as marvelous cattle that were called “golden” and the snake guarding them as a shepherd who had earned the epithet *snake* because of his harsh temper. Of course, heroes (Heracles on the one hand, Odysseus and his men on the other) visit both islands.

Yet, even if mortals visit both Thrinacia and the Garden of the Gods, their actions and purpose differ vastly. Odysseus and his men must utterly refrain

Rhod. 4.1396]) offers the most extensive early description of this adventure still extant. See also *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 4.1396ff.; for later sources see Frazer’s notes on the account at Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11.

51. Soph. fr. 320: ἐν Διὸς κήποις ἀροῦσθαι μόνον εὐδαίμονας ὄλβου.

52. Aristoph. *Clouds* 271: Ὠκεανοῦ πατρὸς ἐν κήποις.

53. Soph. fr. 956: ἡ Ὠρείθυια ἀναρπαγείσα ὑπὸ Βορέου ἐκομίσθη/ὑπὲρ τε πόντον πάντ’ ἐπ’ ἔσχατα χθονὸς/νυκτὸς τε πηγὰς οὐρανοῦ τ’ ἀναπτυχάς,/Φοίβου παλαιὸν κήπον. The direction is—as always in such never-never lands—vague: Boreas points to the north, but symbols of night and day belong on an east-west axis.

54. Eur. *Hipp.* 748–51: κρηναί τ’ ἀμβρόσσια χέον/ται Ζητὸς μελάθρων παρὰ κοί/ταις, ἴν’ ἄ βιόδωρος αὔ/ξει ζαθέα/χθὼν εὐδαμονίαν θεοῖς.

55. Wilamowitz, *Euripides Hippolytos* (Berlin 1891) 218.

56. *FGrH* 762 fr. 3 [=Schol. ad *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 4.1396–99a].

from harming the Cattle of Helios, but Heracles carries off the Apples sacred to Hera—in some sources,⁵⁷ he even kills the Snake that Hera had established as her guard. More than one of Heracles' twelve labors are directed against the creatures associated with a divinity. Hera reared the Hydra, according to Hesiod, specifically to annoy Heracles (*Theog.* 313–15). Hera also reared the Nemean lion (though not with Heracles in mind) and placed it herself in the groves of Nemea, where it terrorized the nearby inhabitants (*Theog.* 326–32). The lion is therefore, if not technically “sacred” to Hera, nevertheless her creature. The Cerynitian Hind, however, was indeed sacred to Artemis. According to Pindar, Heracles, in seeking this beast, penetrated to the ends of the earth, passed beyond the blasts of the cold north wind, and visited the Hyperboreans.⁵⁸ The connection between the hind and Artemis was problematic: according to Pseudo-Apollodorus, Heracles pursued the hind for over a year and finally, perhaps in desperation, shot it with an arrow. Apollo and Artemis confronted him as he brought the hind back, and only with difficulty could Heracles mollify their anger and temporarily keep the hind (*Bibl.* 2.5.3).

In some traditions, Heracles maintains an even less humble and submissive attitude toward the gods: in some versions of the *Katabasis*, Heracles evidently thrashes Hades himself (*Il.* 5.395ff.). In his journey to Geryon's island, Heracles threatens Helios with violence and extorts from him the Golden Cup in which Helios crosses Oceanus (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11). Generally, however, the traditions surrounding Heracles carefully circumscribe any action against a divinity. Heracles does venture into Hades and carry off Cerberus, but then, after showing the beast to the terrified Eurystheus, he dutifully returns Cerberus to Hades (*Bibl.* 2.5.12). In any event, fighting with Hades, the Lord of the Dead, clearly disturbed early Greek sentiment less than an offense against Artemis.⁵⁹

The adventure with Geryon shows how myth can soften the confrontation with a god, for the Cattle of Geryon are closely linked to the Cattle of Hades.⁶⁰ Menoites pastures the Cattle of Hades on Erytheia, the same island where Geryon and his cattle live. Menoites warns Geryon that Heracles has killed his herdsman, Eurytion, and is stealing the cattle (*Bibl.* 2.5.10). Later, during the *Katabasis* (*Bibl.* 2.5.12), when Heracles slaughters one of Hades' Cattle, Menoites turns out to be the herdsman of Hades, and fights (unsuccessfully) against Heracles. The adventure with Geryon is, in fact, closely related to the *Katabasis*, but the antagonist is Geryon rather than Hades and, in killing Geryon, Heracles' action is correspondingly more extreme.

57. Eur. *HF* 394–99; Ap. *Rhod. Arg.* 4.1396ff.

58. Pindar *Ol.* 3.13–32.

59. Cf., for example, the enthusiastic description of Heracles' battle with Thanatos in Euripides' *Alcestis*.

60. See J. H. Croon, *The Herdsman of the Dead* (Utrecht 1952); Vermeule (1979, 243n.47) briefly summarizes his argument and provides additional references.

The Argonautica also demonstrates how Greek tradition can distance a hero from the divinity into whose realm he penetrates. Jason can, because Aeetes is in the story, journey to the edge of the world, visit the fabulous land of the Sun, and steal the Golden Fleece, but still carry this prize off from Helios's son rather than from Helios himself. The distinction is fundamental and helps explain why the appropriate behavior of a Jason differs from that of Odysseus and his men. Thrinacia, like Aea, is a distant land, on the edge of the world, that is sacred to Helios, but on Thrinacia there is no Aeetes with independent existence and property from whom Odysseus can steal. The nymphs serve Helios directly. Any action against their flocks touches Helios himself. Furthermore, if indeed the cattle reflect, by their fixed number, the days of the year, then their safety and well-being possess an importance that the Hind of Artemis or Apples of the Hesperides lack: harm to these cattle justifies Helios's threat to leave the heavens, go down to Hades, and shine among the dead. In other traditions, Erytheia was home not only to the Cattle of Geryon and of Hades, but to the Cattle of Helios: Alcyoneus precipitated the catastrophic war between the Gods and Giants by stealing the Cattle of Helios from Erytheia.⁶¹

Greek heroic myth often walks a narrow line. On the one hand, the hero must overcome the greatest possible obstacles and perform the greatest possible feats. A task becomes considerably more formidable if it somehow involves defying a god, but such defiance cannot be pushed too far. Diomedes in *Iliad* 5 can wound Aphrodite (318ff.) and, with Athena at his side, Ares (846ff.), but he backs down before Apollo (432ff.). Various intermediaries (such as the Hesperides and their Serpent, or Aeetes) can enter the tale, thus preventing the hero from coming into direct conflict with a god. A semi-divine being can replace the more notable divinity (thus Geryon replaces Hades). The hero can also, if this suits the purposes of the tale, make restitution for his acts: Heracles makes a separate arrangement with Artemis to keep temporary possession of the Cerynithian Hind; even the fairly abbreviated narrative of Pseudo-Apollodorus informs us that Heracles returned both the Apples of the Hesperides and Cerberus. In another conflict, Zeus intervenes to settle the fight that breaks out between Heracles and Apollo, when the former tries to carry off the god's tripod at Delphi (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.6.2).

The *Odyssey* makes no such attempt to soften the connection with Helios. Any offense to the cattle directly offends Helios. The narrative makes none of the standard compromises that could have defused such a situation. Odysseus and his men cannot steal, but must kill, the cattle, and the cattle are irreplaceable. Conventionally, the Cattle of the Sun, on their island at the edge of the

61. *Schol. ad Pind. Isthm.* 6.47b: βουβόταν δὲ τὸν βουκόλον φησί, παρόσον τὰς Ἥλιου βοῦς ἀπῆλασεν ὄθεν καὶ ὁ πόλεμος θεῶν πρὸς τοὺς Γίγαντας; Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.6.1. See also C. Robert, "Alkyoneus," *Hermes* 19 (1884) 482.

world, should be a suitable prize for heroic larceny, but the *Odyssey* chooses instead to emphasize the prerogatives and dignity of Helios: adventure becomes sacrilege.⁶² This is not the only typical situation on Thrinacia that receives an atypical slant.

AEAEA TO THRINACIA: A JOURNEY HOME, OR INTO THE BEYOND?

Consider Odysseus's journey after he leaves Aeaea. The storm at the opening of book nine had dragged Odysseus on a random, untraceable path far beyond the world that we know. Ultimately, the Phaeacians with their magic ships miraculously carry him back. The Planktai and the strait flanked by Scylla and Charybdis represent alternative barriers that separate one world from the other.⁶³ Such barriers are a common feature of the quest into the Beyond. To the pedestrian hero, such as Perseus or Heracles, Oceanus itself presents a single, discrete obstacle.⁶⁴ Clearly, Odysseus must pass these barriers if he is to escape from the Beyond and return home. Yet, passing this barrier brings Odysseus and his men to a classic otherworldly site: an island in Oceanus. A journey past the Sirens, between Scylla and Charybdis, and on to Thrinacia would suit a Greek adventurer, such as a Perseus or a Heracles, questing outward. The journey to Thrinacia possesses features of a heroic quest, but the narrative utterly forbids the heroic cattle raid that such a quest would imply. The Homeric narrative sets the stage for a course of action (a heroic quest) that it then does not take.⁶⁵

Πολύτλας Ὀδυσσεύς: THE ARISTEIA OF A PASSIVE HERO

Heroic ἀεθλοὶ are generally straightforward (if daunting). The hero must perform some tremendous feat: perhaps he must journey into the Great Beyond; perhaps he must battle super- and semi-human opponents. Success depends on his own abilities—and, perhaps, on a special relationship with some divinity. A command is imposed upon the hero. He must either fulfill that

62. See Reinhardt 1960, 114f.; followed by Eisenberger 1973, 208.

63. So, for example, Radermacher (supra n.4) 219; Gustav Türk, "Symplegades," in *RE* A7.1170. The Pillars of Heracles also represent a barrier between this world and the next. For Pindar, these were already a clear, geographic phenomenon, but they still represented a convenient metaphor for the limits of human activity (*Nem.* 4.69). According to Strabo, some confused the *Planktai* and *Symplegades* with the Pillars of Heracles, *Geog.* 3.5.5: καὶ τὰς Πλαγκτὰς [δὲ] καὶ τὰς Συμπληγάδας ἐνθάδε μεταφέρουσι τινες, τὰτας εἶναι νομίζοντες σήλας, ἃς Πίνδαρος (fr. 256 Sn-M) καλεῖ πύλας Γαδειρίδας, εἰς τὰτας ὑστάτας ἀφίχθαι φάσκων τὸν Ἡρακλέα.

64. Perseus must extort winged sandals from the Graiai in order to reach the Gorgons (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2). Similarly, Heracles intimidates Helios and thus gets temporary access to the Bowl of the Sun. Heracles crosses the Oceanus with this vehicle in his voyages both to Geryon (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.10) and to the Hesperides (2.5.11).

65. Compare, for example, the abortive courtship of Odysseus and Nausicaa, discussed above; consider also the meeting of Odysseus and Penelope in *Odyssey* 19. Man and wife go through the same motions as if they had recognized one another and together planned the destruction of the Suitors, but Odysseus never actually reveals himself to Penelope. The narrative shows us a conspiracy scene, but the actors do not actually conspire.

command or die—there is no choice—but success in such an enterprise lends a normal man the stature that sets him apart from his fellows.

Thrinacia fits the pattern of a heroic ἄεθλος in at least one crucial respect: the hero knowingly faces an absolute “either-or.”⁶⁶ First Teiresias, then Circe impresses upon Odysseus that he must not harm the Cattle of the Sun. Odysseus knows in advance that if he fulfills this command he will survive, and ultimately return home, no matter what happens to his companions. If he harms the cattle, he will die. Odysseus cannot escape Thrinacia, but his behavior there—and, consequently, his fate—lies entirely in his own hands. For Odysseus, Thrinacia clearly represents a critical test.

But if Thrinacia tests Odysseus, is it also properly a “heroic” test, the kind of ἄεθλος that often defines a Greek hero? If so, Thrinacia is unusual; rather than a burst of energetic activity and active toil, it demands that Odysseus remain passive and idle. Only extraordinary efforts allow Perseus and Heracles to reach a Medusa or a Geryon. Odysseus, on the other hand, does not want to visit Thrinacia—he struggles vigorously to avoid it—but he has no choice. Odysseus’s course irresistibly drags him past the ill-fated island, and his companions force him to land. Still, this is typical: later authors could view with some irony the reluctant hero who, compelled by pressures outside himself, performs the deeds for which he is remembered. The hero may pursue the laborious path before him unwillingly, but follow it he does, and his subsequent greatness is undiminished. Eurystheus, of course, commands Heracles to perform his labors.⁶⁷ Pelias orders Jason to bring him the Golden Fleece. Perseus’s foolish boast allows Polydectes to send him off in search of the Gorgon’s head (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2). The Trojan War is a more complex form of ἄεθλος than a quest to the end of the world—in military adventures, for example, a hero can win κλέος even if he does not survive, but a hero who perishes in the Great Beyond vanishes without a trace and without glory.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the mightiest and the cleverest of the Greeks, Achilles and Odysseus, tried as best they could to avoid the war.⁶⁹ In some measure, the *Iliad* portrays an Achilles almost reluctantly fulfilling his heroic destiny, forced to kill Hector and doom Troy—and himself as well. Motive counts for little. Only success matters in the end.

66. See, for example, Reinhardt 1948, 111f.

67. Note how Isocrates contrasts the adventures of Heracles with those of Theseus at *Helen* 24–25.

68. Cf. the complaints of Telemachus (*Od.* 1.234–44) and of Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.365–71) that Odysseus, rather than dying a glorious death at Troy, had simply vanished without κλέος (ἀκλειῶς) from the face of the earth. Compare with this Hector’s consolation, if he dies during the duel in *Iliad* 7.81–91.

69. On Achilles, brought up as a girl to keep him from going to Troy and ultimately detected by Odysseus, see Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8, with Frazer’s notes; already in the Proclus summary of the *Cypria* (p. 103 Allen), we find Odysseus feigning madness to avoid war and forced by Palamedes to admit his sanity.

Yet, this reluctance does not affect the vigor with which the various adventures, once begun, are pursued, nor does it detract from the fact that such adventures, unlike Thrinacia, require action. Thrinacia, atypical as it may in this way be, nevertheless serves the underlying purpose of every heroic task; it elicits from the hero those qualities that set him apart from ordinary men. The strangeness of Thrinacia merely reflects the strangeness of Odysseus's character, for Odysseus's character determines the nature of the test imposed on that island. Of course, Odysseus cannot honorably appear as a weakling: his physical prowess is clear on Phaeacia and in the great battle of the Hall, but physical prowess, though it may distinguish Odysseus from more ordinary men, did not give Odysseus an outstanding position among his fellow heroes. Odysseus embodies, besides intelligence, toughness and endurance. The epithets show this: *πολύτλας* describes Odysseus alone in both the Homeric narratives,⁷⁰ and even in later tradition this epithet seems to have been associated solely with Odysseus.⁷¹ In book four of the *Odyssey*, during the long banquet at Sparta, Helen and Menelaus tell stories that illustrate the tough, adaptable endurance which characterizes Odysseus. Only Odysseus would defile himself so that he could slip inside Troy as a spy (*Od.* 4.242ff.).⁷² Only Odysseus could resist the trick by which Helen almost betrays the Greeks in the Trojan horse (*Od.* 4.269ff.). And, of course, only Odysseus would after twenty years return home in disguise, test the members of his family and household, endure humiliation as a beggar in his own house, and restrain himself until the proper moment for vengeance arrives.⁷³ The deeds that distinguish Odysseus are not only unusual but often represent actions that his fellow heroes might disdain to perform.⁷⁴ The ordeal on Thrinacia draws on Odysseus's most idiosyncratic quality: his ability to adapt and to do whatever he must, regardless of his heroic dignity and heedless of the self-deceptions in which his companions on Thrinacia indulge. The imagery of a heroic quest (the distant property of a god, the island on Oceanus, the journey past the barrier into the Beyond) does, therefore, suit the action of book twelve, because Thrinacia tests those qualities of endurance and self-control that particularly characterize Odysseus as a hero. At the same time, such standard imagery, in rendering Thrinacia similar to more typical heroic quests, highlights the difference between Odysseus and more typical heroes.

70. Five times in the *Iliad*, thirty-seven times in the *Odyssey*.

71. See Soph. *Ajax* 956; *Anth. Graec.* 11.379.9. Outside of Homer and Eustathius, these are the only places in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (as it is available in the summer of 1985) where this epithet occurs.

72. *Od.* 4.245: αὐτόν μιν πληγῆσιν ἀεικέλῃσι δαμάσσας.

73. The fate that Agamemnon encounters when he openly arrives home recurs throughout the *Odyssey* (e.g., *Od.* 1.28ff., 3.193ff. (Aigisthos's death); 4.512ff.; 11.405ff., esp. 430–4, 453–56; 24.192ff.) and offers a studied contrast to that of Odysseus.

74. Contrast the sentiment with which Achilles opens his speech at *Il.* 9.312–13. Note also that Achilles addresses these words primarily to Odysseus.

SCYLLA AND THE LIMITS OF HEROISM

The encounter with Scylla, which immediately precedes the adventure on Thrinacia, prepares for—perhaps even justifies—the passive ordeal that follows. When Odysseus learns from Circe that Scylla will kill at least six of his men, he declares that he will defend his crew—the natural reaction of any hero:

“εἰ δ’ ἄγε δὴ μοι τοῦτο, θεά, νημερτὲς ἐνίσπες,
εἴ πως τὴν ὄλοσὴν μὲν ὑπεκπροφύγοιμι Χάρυβδιν,
τὴν δέ κ’ ἀμυναίμην, ὅτε μοι σίνοιτό γ’ ἑταίρους.”
Od. 12.112–14

Circe reacts to this strongly and at length:

“σχέτλιε, καὶ δὴ αὖ τοι πολεμήϊα ἔργα μέμηλε
καὶ πόνος, οὐδὲ θεοῖσιν ὑπεἴξειαι ἀθανάτοισιν;
ἢ δέ τοι οὐ θνητή, ἀλλ’ ἀθάνατον κακὸν ἔστι,
δεινὸν τ’ ἀργαλέον τε καὶ ἄγριον οὐδὲ μαχητὸν
οὐδέ τις ἔστ’ ἀλκή· φυγέειν κάρτιστον ἀπ’ αὐτῆς.
ἦν γὰρ δηθύνησθα κορυσσόμενος παρὰ πέτρῃ,
δείδω μὴ σ’ ἐξαῦτις ἐφορηθεῖσα κίχησι
τόσσησιν κεφαλῆσι, τόσους δ’ ἐκ φώτας ἔλθαι.
ἀλλὰ μάλα σφοδρῶς ἔλααν, βωστρεῖν δὲ Κράταιϊν,
μητέρα τῆς Σκύλλης ἢ μιν τέκε πῆμα βροτοῖσιν
ἢ μιν ἔπειτ’ ἀποπαύσει ἐς ὕστερον ὀρμηθῆναι.”
Od. 12.116–26

The term *σχέτλιε*, perhaps affectionate at *Od.* 12.21, is not so playful here. If Odysseus wastes time fighting, he risks not only the lives of additional men but his own life as well. He must simply flee as fast as he can, and call upon Cratais, Scylla’s mother, who may prevent a second attack. Always, Circe complains, Odysseus thinks that he can win by strength of arms, but in this case fighting is useless. Human strength cannot prevail against an “immortal trouble” (*ἀθάνατον κακόν*, 118) and can only exacerbate the situation. In the end, however, Odysseus forgets Circe’s advice. As the ship approaches Scylla, Odysseus deliberately minimizes the danger and suggests that he will, by his own abilities, bring them through this danger alive.

“ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γάρ πώ τι κακῶν ἀδαήμενές εἰμεν
οὐ μὲν δὴ τόδε μείζον ἔπι κακόν, ἢ ὅτε Κύκλωψ
εἴλει ἐνὶ σπηῖ γλαφυρῶ κρατερῆφι βίηφιν
ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνθεν ἐμῇ ἀρετῇ βουλή τε νόω τε
ἐκφυγομεν, καὶ που τῶνδε μνήσεσθαι ὄϊω.”
Od. 12.208–13

Forgetting Circe’s advice, he arms himself and waits for Scylla to appear. His action does not have the consequences that Circe had feared: no additional men are lost, and Scylla does not turn her attention to Odysseus himself. The

psychological effect, however, is devastating. The narrative describes at length how Scylla seizes and devours the men. Odysseus calls this the most terrible thing that ever came before his eyes during the whole of his disastrous wanderings. Meanwhile his defense against Scylla is impotent: Odysseus cannot even see her as she attacks.

Circe argues that Scylla is “not mortal, but an immortal bane” (118); against such an opponent the hero’s strength, to which he so readily turns, is useless. Of course, Circe proves to be correct. Circe speaks to Odysseus about a specific encounter, but her basic argument is categorical: a mortal cannot contend with an immortal monster such as Scylla; he can only flee as fast as he can (120). Other traditions provide some support for this statement: Perseus kills only Medusa because she, alone of the three Gorgons, is mortal (Hes. *Theog.* 276–79; Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2). The Hydra had eight mortal heads and one immortal one. After dispatching the mortal heads, Heracles simply cut off and buried the immortal head (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.2). All the monsters that confront heroes are in some fashion divine, though not necessarily immortal. The snake that guards the Apples of the Hesperides was, according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 333f.), the child of Keto and Phorkys—perhaps for this reason, in one tradition (represented by Pherecydes),⁷⁵ Atlas retrieves the Apples on behalf of Heracles. According to other sources, Heracles kills the snake and carries off the prize himself.⁷⁶ In Stesichorus, Geryon himself wonders whether he is immortal; he will find out by seeing whether Heracles can kill him.⁷⁷ In the *Iliad*, Chimaira is θεῖον γένος, οὐδ’ ἀνθρώπων (*Il.* 6.180) but is evidently not immortal, and Bellerophon kills her.⁷⁸

Greek mythology includes many encounters between a hero and a monster, and the traditions that described these encounters were certainly well developed long before our *Odyssey*. Scylla herself, like Echidna, belongs to the mainstream of Greek monsters.⁷⁹ Circe’s advice to Odysseus also follows in this tradition: Bellerophon overcomes Chimaira because he had “obeyed the signs of the gods.”⁸⁰ Hermes and Athena show Perseus how to trick the Graiai, and then use the Winged Sandals and the Kibisis to kill Medusa (Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2). Circe tells Odysseus how he must act but, unlike other helpers, she cannot tell Odysseus how he can avoid or defeat Scylla. She only tells him how to minimize the danger and the damage that he will suffer. No hero fares as badly against a monster as Odysseus does against Scylla and lives to tell the tale.⁸¹

75. *FGrH* 3 fr. 17 [= *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.1396b]; see also Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11.

76. This is the version followed evidently by Euripides (*Heracles* 394ff.) and then by Apollonius (*Arg.* 4.1396ff.); Pseudo-Apollodorus also mentions this tradition (*Bibl.* 2.5.11).

77. Stesich. fr. S 11; see D. L. Page, *JHS* 93 (1973) 149f.

78. *Il.* 6.183: καὶ τὴν μὲν κατέπεφνε.

79. Compare the description of Scylla at *Od.* 12.85–100, to that of Echidna at *Theog.* 295–305, another immortal, grotesque monster in another distant cave.

80. *Il.* 6.183: θεῶν τεράεσσι πιθήσας.

81. See Merkelbach 1969, 194; Schwartz 1924, 269; Reinhardt 1948, 68.

The participants are conventional, but the impotence of the hero is not. This encounter defines the relationship between the narrative and the traditions that lie behind it. Circe's statement that Odysseus only cares about "war and struggle" (*Od.* 12.116f.) suits Odysseus less than almost any other hero. Odysseus adopts an uncharacteristic pose when he opposes brute force against Scylla, because the narrative comments here on heroism is general. Odysseus has reached a situation where heroism is useless and obstructive, his courageous resistance pathetic. This is not, however, a failure of Odysseus—neither Achilles nor Heracles or Bellerophon nor any other hero could fight an enemy they could not see—but of heroism is general. The meeting with Scylla defines the limits of heroism. The futility of a traditional heroic stance prepares for the passive ordeal that immediately follows on Thrinacia and that shows Odysseus's peculiar qualities to such advantage. The *Odyssey* does not celebrate an Achilles or a Heracles, but Odysseus, and, in this poem, the qualities of Odysseus set a standard for heroism.

THE COMPANIONS ON THRINACIA

Most students of the *Odyssey* have felt considerable sympathy for Odysseus's companions,⁸² softening and even arguing against the poem's opening statement that the Companions perished because of their own ἀτασθαλίαι.⁸³ Of course, the men, disregarding an explicit warning and killing the cattle of Sun, doomed themselves, as they knew. When Aegisthus disregards the warnings the gods openly send him (*Od.* 1.32–43), Zeus himself can only shake his head. The *Odyssey* describes a hard world in which good intentions count for little. Yet, the narrative extensively describes the predicament of the Companions, providing them with desperate motives that neither Aegisthus nor the Suitors could claim. They live on their provisions, while these last, then despite their best efforts to leave the island or to feed themselves by fishing, they find themselves slowly starving to death. For some time they watch the well-fed Cattle of Helios shamble back and forth. Ultimately, they break down and, abjectly promising Helios restitution, slaughter just enough of the cattle to stave off their gnawing hunger. Still, the men know the significance of their actions: they formally decide that they would rather die at sea than starve to death on Thrinacia (*Od.* 12.348–51). Their wish is fulfilled.

The Companions play a particularly important role on Thrinacia, precisely because the task before Odysseus is neither glamorous nor typical of the ordeals that other heroes undergo. The Companions are simply ordinary men. Their behavior sharply contrasts with, and brings out, the tenacity and resolution that characterize Odysseus. Worn down by gradual starvation, the Companions lose their collective resolve and delude themselves into believing that

82. See Schadewaldt 1960, 865; Eisenberger 1973, 202; Bona 1966, 29.

83. Recently, Eisenberger 1973, 202f.; Fenik 1974, 209ff.

they may escape the retribution that has been promised. Anyone can understand and sympathize with such behavior, because almost anyone would, under similar circumstances, act the same way. Epics do not, however, celebrate the ordinary. In the *Iliad*, innumerable minor figures fall before the main heroes, simply so that they may show us the greatness of their more famous opponents. In his own epic, Odysseus has his Companions.⁸⁴

THRINACIA AND AEA

On Thrinacia, then, the poem puts Odysseus through a trial that suits Odysseus, but few other heroes. The narrative reinforces this point by juxtaposing this ordeal with trappings of a more conventional heroic deed: a quest past the barrier between this world and the next, into the Great Beyond to some exotic island in Oceanus, where a divinity keeps its treasure. The abortive struggle with Scylla introduces—and dismisses—the theme of a hero battling a monster. In the end, the Companions cannot meet the demands made upon them. Their failure underlines Odysseus's success and the gulf that separates him from ordinary mortals such as his men.

Much was said earlier in this paper about Karl Meuli's *Odyssee und Argonautika*. Later critics have challenged almost every specific reconstruction that Meuli offered, but almost all have endorsed the overarching idea of his book, that the Argonautica traditions deeply influenced the *Odyssey*. Circe is responsible for this, for she explicitly tells Odysseus that the Argo passed between the Planktai as it sailed from Aetes (70, παρ' Αἰήταιο πλέουσα). Somehow the Argonautica cast its shadow over this portion of the poem—the Planktai, as Circe describes them, explicitly connect the voyage of Odysseus with the voyage of the Argo (just as Heracles, appearing in the *Nekuia*, connects Odysseus's trip into the Underworld with his own *Katabasis*).

Of course, we will never be able to reconstruct with any degree of reliability the Argonautica as it existed at the time of our *Odyssey*, but Circe's description, brief as it is, raises at least one interesting question. She tells us that the Argonauts passed the Planktai on their way *from* Aetes. If we turn to later sources, such as Apollonius, we find these rocks on the Argo's return home, just as Circe described them.⁸⁵ Yet, the great rocks that rush together and smash any ship that comes between them clearly belong at the *beginning* of the Argonautica, as Jason and his men proceed outward toward their goal.

Students of mythology have generally argued that the Symplegades (the Clashing Rocks) and the Planktai (the Wandering Rocks) are, in origin, wholly

84. Odysseus, not the companions, should form the focus of our attention. Odysseus' companions matter only insofar as they relate to him. Sympathy for the poor companions should only highlight the greater tenacity of their leader. Even in the prologue, the loss of the companions (which was their own fault) simply augments a more important theme: the harsh νόστος of Odysseus.

85. E.g., Ap. Rhod. 4.786ff.; Pseudo-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.25.

separate,⁸⁶ but no such distinction appears in our earliest Greek sources. In Pindar, the Argo clearly passes some form of clashing rocks en route to Phasis, but, typically, describes them with a periphrasis: if there was a distinction between Symplegades and Planktai, Pindar does not tell us—he uses neither term, though his description of the two “living” rocks would better suit the Planktai.⁸⁷ According to Herodotus, the straits at the Bosphorus, the Κυνάει, the Dark Rocks (which correspond to the Symplegades) were formerly called the Πλαγκταί.⁸⁸ The Homeric scholia, commenting on *Od.* 12.69 and citing Asclepiades as the source, describe how the Argonauts passed the Planktai on the outward journey. There is no reference to the Symplegades or to the *nostos* of the Argonauts. Herodorus, perhaps responding to this very difficulty, perhaps merely simplifying the tale, has the Argonauts return along the same route by which they came.⁸⁹ Apollonius, who closely follows Homer, first clearly distinguishes between the Clashing and the Wandering Rocks.⁹⁰ Even in Apollonius, the doves that pass between the Symplegades/Planktai—one of the few details that Circe explicitly associates with the Planktai—appear during the outward voyage and in connection with the Symplegades (2.325ff., 555ff.). The Rocks that rush together and smash the unwary ship firmly belonged in the outward voyage,⁹¹ but the *Odyssey* connects the Argonautica with Odysseus’s *nostos*, and the moving rocks are attributed to the return of the Argonauts. Great as the authority of the *Odyssey* became, the Clashing Rocks were too firmly associated with the outward voyage to change their position in the tradition. Eratosthenes, in the third book of his *Geography*, called these rocks the Συνομάδες, and argued that they were the source for the Planktai.⁹² Strabo, writing after Apollonius, also believed that the Planktai were derived from the Symplegades and seems unaware that clashing rocks appeared anywhere except during the outward voyage of the Argonauts.⁹³ The Planktai,

86. See Preller-Robert 2.802ff., *esp.* 825–7; F. Gisinger’s article on “Planktai,” *RE* 40.2.2187–99; Türk (supra n.63) 7.1170f.; Radermacher (supra n.4) 218f.

87. *Pyth.* 4.207–212: ἐς δὲ κίνδυνον βαθὺν ἰέμενοι / δεσπότην λίσσοντο ναῶν, / συνδρομὸν κινήθμον ἀμαιμάκετον / ἐκφυγεῖν πετρῶν. δίδυμαι γὰρ ἔσαν ζωαί, κυλινδέσκοντό τε κραιπνότερα / ἢ βαρυγούπων ἀνέμων στίχες ἄλλ’ ἤδη τελευτὰν κείνος αὐταῖς / ἤμιθέων πλόος ἄγαγεν.

88. Herodotus 4.85: Darius reaches the Bosphorus and then sails ἐπὶ τὰς Κυνάειας καλεομένας, τὰς πρότερον πλαγκτὰς Ἑλληνές φασιν εἶναι.

89. *FGH* 31 fr. 10 (= *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.259).

90. See *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 4.786ff.; our best sources for earlier versions of the Argonauts’ return voyage may be found in the *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 4.259 and 282; these two sources may be viewed synoptically as Hesiod fr. 241 M-W, where they are printed side by side: besides Pindar, these sources mention Herodorus, Hecataeus, Artemidorus, Timagetus, Hesiod, and Antimachus by name. The reference to the Planktai in Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibl.* 1.9.25 depends upon Apollonius.

91. E.g., *Eur. Medea* 1–2; *Androm.* 792–95, 864f.

92. See *Schol. ad Eur. Med.* 2: οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι τὰς παρ’ Ὀμήρῳ Πλαγκτὰς ὑπονόησαν εἶναι; also Tzetz. *Ad Lycophr.* 1285.

93. Strabo 1.2.10; 3.2.12: ταῖς δὲ Κυνάειαις ἐποίησε (i.e., Homer) παραπλησίως τὰς Πλαγκτὰς, αἱε τοὺς μύθους ἀπὸ τινων ἱστοριῶν ἐνάγων. χαλεπὰς γὰρ τινος μυθεύει πέτρας, καθάπερ τὰς Κυνάειας φασίν, ἐξ οὗ καὶ Συμπληγάδες καλοῦνται διόπερ καὶ τὸν Ἴασονος παρέθηκε δι’ αὐτῶν πλοῦν.

therefore, no later than Apollonius, assumed an independent existence and entered the traditions of the Argonauts' return. Still, the Planktai, though they assumed the position that Circe had assigned to them, remained a pale duplicate of the Symplegades.

Remove both the goddess at the edge of the world and the mysterious princess, and a voyage out to a land of the Sun and a quest for some distant prize remains. Thrinacia would, in fact, be a perfect setting for a simplified Argonautica. Our earliest sources emphasize that Aea is a land of the Sun. Manipulating a story in this fashion is certainly problematic, but, in early Greek literature, formulae extend beyond the level of the individual line or even the "type scene," and the same traditional patterns serve as the building blocks for various stories. Thus, the Argonautica contains distinct elements from three different types of story, each of which has its own independent existence and traditions: (A) the quest for an otherworldly prize; (B) everlasting life with a goddess on an island at the edge of the world;⁹⁴ (C) marriage with the wealthy princess. In the *Odyssey*, Calypso and Nausicaa are instances of B and C; A serves as the foundation for the adventure on Thrinacia. It is as if the Homeric poem has extracted from the Argonautica traditions three of its basic components.

We might even go a step further and wonder whether there was a simplified Argonautica, which lacked Aeetes and Medea and resembled the journey to Thrinacia. Certainly, our *Odyssey* refers to Aeetes, and this implies a developed Argonautica.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Ibycus and Simonides could portray a Medea abstracted from the Argonautica and make her Achilles' consort in Elysium. Poets could therefore, still in the sixth and fifth centuries, recognize and recombine the components out of which a Medea was composed. If these components retained their individual vitality and the poetic tradition could split them up or recombine them at will, then the existence of a "simplified" Argonautica is not an issue: the fact that Thrinacia represented one aspect of the Argonautica would have been clear enough.

The last three labors of Heracles illustrate this type of composition. All three of these adventures carry Heracles, just as the Argonautica does Jason, out of this world and into another. The three are closely related. The relationship between Geryon and Hades has already been mentioned. The connections between the journeys to the Hesperides and to Geryon are, however, also strong and the two adventures unabashedly share some of the same components. Both Geryon and the Hesperides live far in the west on Oceanus—Heracles even uses the same vehicle, the Bowl of the Sun, to cross Oceanus in both journeys.⁹⁶ If, as seems likely, Stesichorus S 8 (*POxy.* 2617 fr. 6) comes

94. See the discussion of Medea, Circe, and Calypso in "The Wanderer and the Princess," above.

95. See also Hes. *Theog.* 992–1002.

96. Jacoby objected to the repetition (see his comments on Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 fr. 17, *FGrH* Part 1, commentary, p. 395).

from his *Geryoneis*, then the island of the Hesperides actually appears in this poem. Geryon's herdsman, Eurytion, may even be the son of a Hesperid.⁹⁷ The Hellenistic historian Agroitas, doubtless using the fact that μήλα can mean both "cattle" and "fruit," actually rationalized the story of the Hesperides into another cattle raid.⁹⁸ Each adventure had its own separate place and existence within the tradition, and their fundamental similarity renders their juxtaposition more appropriate. Heracles' three final adventures form a unit that is distinct from the earlier adventures.

Thrinacia, with its herds sacred to Helios guarded by Heliads, Phaethousa and Lampetie, has already been compared to Hesperia, with its Garden of the Gods guarded by the Hesperides. The garden of the Hesperides, however, also resembles Aea and, in fact, presents us, in some ways, with a different version of the same story. Hesperus, "the Evening" and the father of the Hesperides, belongs to the same loose mythological group as Dawn, Night, Day, and Helios. His family is almost a western counterpart to that of the Sun, who lives in the distant east. Medea and the Hesperides both, as has been argued above, belong to the same general class of goddesses on the edge of the world. Medea has strong associations with immortality and rejuvenation; modern interpreters have generally seen in the apples of the Hesperides the Apples of Life.⁹⁹ The quests for the Apples and for the Fleece suggest, but do not overtly describe, quests for eternal life. The serpents that guard the Apples of the Hesperides and the Golden Fleece are for all practical purposes indistinguishable. Though the snake guarding a treasure may have become a *topos*, this theme appears only in these two myths and underlines their general similarities.¹⁰⁰ We might summarize the relationship between the Hesperides and the Argonautica by recalling the themes outlined above: the quest for the Apples of the Hesperides possesses elements *A* and *B*, but not *C*. This is not a simple question of *origines*: segmenting adventures in this way gives to the details of these adventures their proper significance.

Consider now the sequence of events in the *Odyssey*. Thrinacia, Ogygia, and Phaeacia follow one after another. Ogygia and Phaeacia represent two classic, alternative fates for the lucky hero: marriage with a goddess and immortality, or marriage with a princess in a mysterious, wealthy kingdom. These fates become available to Odysseus immediately after he successfully fulfills on Thrinacia the commands that Teiresias and, later, Circe impose upon him. The sequence of events strongly implies a causal connection: the two fates become rewards that Odysseus has earned, but he turns down both and instead chooses to return home.

This interpretation has several consequences. First, it clarifies the rela-

97. See M. Robertson, *CQ* 19 (1969) 207ff.

98. See *Schol. ad Ap. Rhod.* 3.1396–99a.

99. See G. W. Bond on Euripides *Heracles* 394–99 (Oxford 1981).

100. See M. P. Nilsson, *AJP* 68 (1947) 302–9, who gathers the evidence and attempts to derive this belief from the cult of Asclepius, on which see West's remark at *Theog.* 334.

tionship between the adventures on Thrinacia and those on Ogygia and Phaeacia, providing a thematic link that binds them together. Second, it emphasizes the relationship between the *Odyssey* and non-Homeric heroic narrative. The same kinds of themes, combined according to the same general principles, provided the foundation not only for the *Odyssey* but for the adventures of other heroes such as Jason, Perseus, and Heracles. Since the Homeric audience surely possessed an intimate knowledge of all these traditions, this knowledge could influence the way the *Odyssey* should be understood. Poetic traditions changed during the course of antiquity, but Homeric poetry no more stood in a vacuum than did the *Aeneid*. Finally, however, this interpretation brings out a strand that runs throughout the poem. Odysseus, in rejecting both Ogygia and Phaeacia, does not merely reject attractive temptations but turns away from well-marked paths which another hero would have happily—and honorably—followed. The more conventional these paths were, the more singular is Odysseus's behavior. Nothing could bring out more powerfully and subtly the all-consuming yearning for home and family that so characterizes this extraordinary hero.

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