

STESICHORUS' *GERYONEIS* AND ITS FOLK-TALE ORIGINS*

'More light is thrown on the poetic art of Stesichorus by the papyrus-text of his *Geryoneis* than by all his other fragments together.'¹ This verdict continues to be as true now as when it was first enunciated. But we are also in the fortunate position of being able to infer much of value about what we may term the pre-history² of the legend which the poet took as the basis for his composition. And a key document within this process turns out to be a text that is not preserved upon papyrus, that is not, indeed, included as part of any edition of the poet, and which has been the object of some very serious misconceptions. The relevant section consists of a phrase only three words long, but it is difficult to underestimate their importance, once they are rightly understood.

Paradox. Vat. 33 (p. 110 Keller (*Rerum Naturalium Scriptores Graeci Minores*)): παρ' Ὀμήρῳ Πρωτεύς εἰς πάντα μετεμορφούτο (*Od.* 4.455ff.) καθὰ Θέτις (Rohde: *καθατις*) παρὰ Πινδάρῳ καὶ Νηρεὺς παρὰ Στρεψιχόρῳ.

The above fragment of Stesichorus was first published in 1871.³ But it has proved almost as elusive and resistant to capture as Nereus himself. It failed to be included in the fourth edition of Bergk's *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, and although Wilamowitz thereafter advertised its existence,⁴ as did several other scholars,⁵ it fared no better when Page's *Poetae Melici Graeci* arrived on the scene (1962). R. Kassel then drew scholarly attention to it once more,⁶ but this still did not suffice to ensure its inclusion in *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* or its *Addenda* (1974). This is all the more unfortunate because, when rightly understood, the fragment casts important light on the original significance of Heracles' quest for the cattle of Geryon and the way in

* This article accommodates material and views originally formed within the context of my forthcoming commentary on Stesichorus but not appropriately developed or elaborated there. The *Geryoneis* is referred to by Page's numeration in *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* (Oxford, 1974), epic fragments by that of my *Ep(icorum) G(raecorum) F(ragmenta)* (Göttingen, 1988).

¹ D. L. Page, *JHS* 93 (1973), 138.

² I recognise that the 'pre-history' of a legend may be a problematic term and concept. Consideration of the related idea of the 'Urfabel' as discussed in the 'Biographisches Nachwort' (by Franz Jung) to K. Meuli's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Basel/Stuttgart, 1975), ii.1198ff. may clarify matters. Further (comparative) light may be cast by the remarks of D. R. Barnes, *Speculum* 45 (1970), 417ff. esp. 432 on the difficulty of extrapolating the basic folk-tale structure from a poem such as *Beowulf* (cf. below n. 39). As he observes, 'no-one would deny that the poem bears obvious traces of conscious literary artistry', and the same is certainly true of Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, in particular the unexpectedly noble characterisation of Geryon himself. But as I hope to show, it is still possible to detect, beneath the surface of the artistic structure imposed by the poet, original folk-tale patterns, and below these in turn a still more primitive layer in which, for instance, Geryon's equivalence to a death-demon (see below n. 16) can be discerned.

³ By E. Rohde in *Acta Societatis Philol. Lipsiae* I.1 (1871), pp. 25ff. It is attributed to the *Geryoneis* on p. 29. Keller's text appeared in 1877. See now A. Giannini, *Paradoxographorum Graecorum Reliquiae* (Milan, 1966), p. 340.

⁴ Euripides *Herakles*² (1895), I, p. 23 n. 45 ('Stesichoros, natürlich in der *Geryoneis*').

⁵ E.g. P. Friedländer, *Herakles* (Berlin, 1907), p. 37 n. 1, E. Kunze, *Olympische Forschungen* 2 [(*Archaische Schildbänder*) Berlin, 1950], p. 109 n. 1.

⁶ *Rh. Mus.* 116 (1973), 100 n. 14.

which folk-tale motifs have been fashioned into poetry. Though the fragment is now common knowledge,⁷ the central issue still remains to be grasped and the right consequences drawn for interpretation of the story.

Walter Burkert has pointed out how neatly the details of Heracles' search for the cattle of Geryon mesh with the scheme identified by Vladimir Propp as characteristic of the folktale's tradition of the heroic quest:⁸ 'the hero, by order, sets out on the quest (functions 9–11), meets a helper, reacts to him, succeeds in getting the object he needs (12–14); reaches the place of destination (15), begins a fight with the possessor (16), defeats him (18), gets the cattle (19), returns (20).' Now in the context of the story as treated by Stesichorus, the object required by the hero Heracles is the golden cup of the Sun, needed to convey him from the coast of Spain to Geryon's island of Erytheia. We know that Panyassis in his *Heracleia* brought in Nereus as intermediary (fr. 7a EGF: Πανύασις...παρὰ Νηρέως φησὶ τὴν τοῦ Ἑλίου φιάλην κομίσασθαι)⁹ and that Pisander in his epic of the same name used the same device, except that Oceanus was substituted for Nereus (fr. 6 EGF). We also know that the motif of Heracles' struggle against a shape-changing Old Man of the Sea occurred in other authors in connection with Heracles' search for the apples of the Hesperides: see in particular Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 16a: αἱ νύμφαι Διὸς καὶ Θέμιδος οἰκοῦσαι ἐν σπηλαίῳ περὶ τὸν Ἑριδανὸν ὑπέθεντο Ἑρακλεῖ ἀποροῦντι μαθεῖν παρὰ Νηρέως πού ἔληι τὰ χρύσεια μήλα· καὶ λαβεῖν αὐτὸν βίαι, πρῶτον μὲν μεταμορφούμενον εἰς ὕδωρ καὶ πῦρ, εἶτα εἰς τὴν παλαιὰν ὄψιν καταστάντα καὶ δηλώσαντά φησιν (F 17 follows immediately). In such contexts as these the general description 'hero meets a helper, reacts to him' might be thought rather inadequate or even misleading. Though the Old Man of the Sea does fall within the very broad Proppian category of the folktale 'helper' (more accurately 'donor' or 'provider'), he really represents a special (antagonistic) sub-class, as his metamorphoses (and Heracles' consequent resort to force) make clear. Before we can finally decide the significance of Nereus' role in Stesichorus (and the title of the poem in which he featured) we must clarify our minds about a central issue, the ultimate significance of the story of Heracles' encounter with Geryon.

What needs particular emphasising is that the story of Heracles' mission to fetch the cattle of Geryon, like the tale of his descent to Hades to fetch Cerberus, is (though in more oblique form) a *Jenseitsfahrt*, a heroic journey to the land of the dead. In fact both legends, together with the further labour to bring back the golden apples of the

⁷ See, for instance, W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Los Angeles, 1979), pp. 185f. n. 13, M. L. West, *JHS* 99 (1979), 145 n. 89, P. Brize, *Die Geryoneis des Stesichoros und die frühe griechische Kunst* (Beitr. zur Archäol. 12 [1980]), pp. 66f. and pp. 121f., R. Glynn, *AJA* 85 (1981), 122 n. 10.

⁸ Burkert, sup. cit. [n. 7], p. 84. The reference is to the famous study first published in Russian (in 1928) and translated into English as *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (second, revised, edition, University of Texas Press, 1968; I cite by the page numbers of this). It would be more accurate, from the point of view both of Propp's study and Nereus' rôle, to define the latter as a 'donor' or 'provider' (see in particular Propp, pp. 39ff., 79ff.), constituting the subcategory of 'antagonistic donor'. 'Helpers' as generally understood in the world of folk-lore and in Propp's study in particular, and as exemplified by (*inter al.*) Jason's Argonauts, are significantly absent from Heracles' quest after the cattle of Geryon and, indeed, most of his labours. See K. Meuli, *Hermes* 70 (1935), 170 = *Ges. Schr.* ii.871 n. 1, and cf. Propp, pp. 82f. on such absence of helpers.

⁹ 'Stesichorus did not name any intermediary' claims V. J. Matthews *ad loc.* (*Panyassis of Halikarnassos – Text and Commentary* (Mnemos. Suppl. 33 (1974)), 58).

Hesperides,¹⁰ represent variations upon the theme of the hero's attainment of immortality and triumph over death. It has even been argued, indeed, that the labours involving Cerberus and the Hesperides are recent in origin compared with the tale of Geryon and his cattle.¹¹ Let us briefly consider each proposition in turn.

The labour as a journey to the Otherworld and triumph over Death:¹² Heracles' encounter with Geryon recalls other clashes with monstrous beings that are capable of similar interpretation.¹³ Compare, for instance, his wrestling with Thanatos in Euripides' *Alcestis*¹⁴ or with personified Old Age on various Greek vases.¹⁵ Geryon in turn has many of the characteristics of a death-demon, of a deity initially the equivalent of Hades.¹⁶ The herd of cattle he owns may have originally symbolised the

¹⁰ For this interpretation of the Hesperides story see, for instance, Wilamowitz (sup. cit. [n. 4]), p. 56, B. Schweitzer, *Herakles* (Tübingen, 1922), p. 134 n. 1, Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), p. 178 n. 9, and (in particular) M. K. Brazda, *Zur Bedeutung des Apfels in der antiken Kultur* (Bonn Diss., 1977), pp. 89ff. On the Cerberus labour see Schweitzer as cited.

¹¹ Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), pp. 152ff. followed by, for instance, Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 8]), pp. 168f. = pp. 870f.

¹² For a good bibliography (up to 1920) of studies that recognise this link see Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), p. 87 n. 4. Little of value has been added since (cf. Burkert, sup. cit. [n. 7], p. 179 n. 2). Burkert's own discussion (pp. 83ff.) provides a useful synthesis, with due reference to the 'shamanistic' associations of Heracles' journey to the Otherworld, which were already stressed by Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 11]).

¹³ By far the most helpful and comprehensive treatment of these related combats is to be found in J. Fontenrose's *Python* (Los Angeles, 1959), Ch. 12. This deals with Heracles and Thanatos (pp. 323ff.), Heracles' worsting of Hades at Pylos (pp. 327ff.), his wrestling bout with Antaeus (and Busiris) (pp. 330ff.), his encounters with Geryon and Cacus (pp. 334ff.), with Laomedon (pp. 347ff.), and with Achelous and Nessus (pp. 350ff.). Note also Heracles' battle with the twin sons of Actor (cf. Schweitzer, sup. cit. [n. 10], p. 121; 'Geryoneus und die Aktorione waren...als Geschöpfe und Vasallen des Unterweltsherrn zum mindestens zur Hälfte ihres Wesens grausige Unterweltdämonen'), and with the many-headed Hydra (cf. Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), pp. 133ff., and Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), pp. 80ff.). On the question of Heracles' contest with Cacus see further below p. 287.

¹⁴ See A. Lesky, *Alkestis, der Mythos und das Drama* (*Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Kl.* 203.2 (1925)), pp. 60ff.; cf. L. Radermacher, *Das Jenseits im Mythos der Hellenen* (Bonn, 1903), p. 42, J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle* (*Studien der Bibliothek Warburg* 20 (1932); repr. Darmstadt, 1963), pp. 373ff.

¹⁵ See F. Brommer, *Herakles II: die unkanonischen Taten des Helden* (Darmstadt, 1984), p. 79; cf. Radermacher (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 145ff., Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 375. B. E. Richardson, *Old Age among the Ancient Greeks* (Johns Hopkins, 1933; repr. 1969), pp. 72ff. has some interesting comments. Particularly relevant from our point of view are the similarities observed in the depiction of this topic and the related themes of Heracles' encounter with the Old Man of the Sea, Hades etc.

¹⁶ Note in particular that 'Cerun' (= Geryon) appears beside Hades and Persephone in the Tomba dell' Orco at Corneto from the second half of the fourth century B.C. (D 25 in Brize's forthcoming *LIMC* article s.v. 'Geryon' [vol. IV]): cf. Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace *Odes* 2.14.8. See, in general, J. H. Croon, *The Herdsman of the Dead* (Utrecht, 1952), pp. 27f. and 67ff., Fontenrose (sup. cit. [n. 13]), pp. 334ff. Aeneas beholds Geryon in his visit to the Underworld (Vergil, *Aen.* 6.289). Further, Hes. *Th.* 294 locates Geryon *κραθμῶν ἐν ἡρόεντι*. The epithet is strange ('because outside the world of man' is West's (unconvincing) explanation *ad loc.*) but Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 390f. and p. 391 nn. 1-3 observes how often in antiquity the Underworld is associated with darkness (see further Kroll, *Personen- und Sachregister* s.v. 'Finsternis, Unterwelt als Stätte der'). The name *Γηρύων* means 'roarer', and O. Gruppe variously suggested that it was to be connected with Geryon's status as a chthonic deity whose power is manifested in the earthquake (*Gr. Myth.* 1 (Munich, 1906), p. 459 n. 1) or in his relationship to his bellowing herds (*RE Supplbd.* s.v. 'Herakles' (3 (1903)), 1066.48ff.). Cerberus and other hounds of hell are traditionally pictured as loudly barking (see West on Hes. *Th.* 311). Note also Pind. fr. 143.2f. Sn: βαρυβόαν | πορθμὸν πεφευγότες Ἀχέροντος.

herds that are the dead.¹⁷ They are located on an island¹⁸ situated in the far West¹⁹ where the Sun himself sinks to the earth every day; and are to be reached only with the help of the Sun's own bowl.²⁰ The 'red' island (Erytheia)²¹ is set apart by a large expanse of water – an element which frequently symbolises the boundary separating the living from the dead.²² When Heracles approaches the cattle, he has to encounter

¹⁷ So, for instance, O. Gruppe, *Gr. Myth.* 2 (Munich, 1906), p. 1327, Weicker, *RE* s.v. Geryoneus (7¹ (1912)), 1290.2ff., Croon (sup. cit. [n. 16]), p. 67. Very important in this context is the observation made by Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 375 n. 4: 'Für eine Reihe von Ausprägungen der alten Todesmacht, die zu blossen Sagenfiguren degradiert worden sind, ist der Besitz von Rinder – oder Pferdeherden – das sind ursprünglich die Toten – charakteristisch, z.B. für Oinomaos, Neleus, Admetos, Laomedon; der *Ἀϊδης κλυτόπωλος*'. It is striking that in the Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh (as was pointed out by A. D. Nock in his review of Kroll's *Gott und Hölle* (AJP 55 (1934), 182 n. 1)) the cattle god Shakkan/Sumuqan is pictured as being in the Underworld, together with the Queen of the Underworld and the deity who keeps the book of Death (cf. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*³ (Princeton, 1969) (iv) p. 87 line 49 (tr. E. A. Speiser)). Since (as Dr S. Dalley warns me) others whose presence is hard to explain are also pictured there (especially Etana, the king of Kish) we should proceed with caution, bearing in mind that Shakkan's presence may be explicable in terms of a once well-known and very specific story. Cf. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* K 1784.2 for an Irish tale of huge oxen guarded by a giant on an Otherworld island.

¹⁸ Cf. Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]), E 481.2.0.1 ('Island of the Dead'), F 129.4.4 ('Voyage to Isle of the Dead'), F 134 ('Otherworld on Island') etc. Britain was plausibly regarded as an Island of the Dead by the Byzantine historian Procopius (*Gothic Wars* 4.20). On the related question of the Islands of the Blest and their situation beyond the sea see, e.g., Nilsson, *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*² (Lund, 1950), pp. 622ff., J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Greece & Rome* 16 (1947), 122ff. (both arguing for Egyptian influence).

¹⁹ For Hades and the Underworld as located in the West see, for instance, O. Gruppe, *RE Supplbd.* s.v. Herakles (3(1903)), 1065.14ff., Croon (sup. cit. [n. 17]), p. 57, Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), *Personen-und Sachregister* s.v. 'Westen als Totenland' (p. 555), Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]) E 481.6.2 ('land of dead in west'); cf. M. L. West, *Hesiod Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), General Index s.v. 'underworld...not clearly distinct from world's edge' and Pinney and Ridgway, *JHS* 101 (1981), 141ff. on a lecythos by the Sappho Painter showing Heracles at the ends of the Earth and the mouth of the Underworld.

²⁰ Mentioned in S 17 of our poem. In the *Jenseitsfahrt* represented by the expedition of the Argonauts (see below n. 27), the Sun plays a very important role. The goal of the expedition is his island in the East (cf. Lesky, *WS* 63 (1948), 22ff. = *Ges. Schr.* pp. 26ff.), Aietes is his son, the Argo itself takes its name from a word meaning 'bright', and so forth (cf. P. Philippson, *Thessalische Mythologie* (Zurich, 1944), p. 179). For a like connection between the Sun and death in other cultures it is sufficient to quote Egyptian analogues (the idea that the Sun sinks daily into the Underworld): cf. Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 184ff., and *Personen-und Sachregister* s.v. 'Re Fahrt ins Totenreich', M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 46f., etc.) and Babylonian notions (an annual descent of the Sun into the Underworld: see Kroll, pp. 205ff., West, General Index s.v. 'Sun...as goal of the dead') etc. For Egyptian links between Heracles and the Sun cf. Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 41 (*moralia* 367d) and J. Gwyn Griffiths *ad loc.* (p. 457). See more generally Kroll, *Personen-und Sachregister* s.v. 'Descensus Motive...Licht'. Note finally Propp's cautious suggestion (sup. cit. [n. 8]), p. 107 (cf. p. 116 n. 5) that the frequency of magical means of travel in folk-tale quests, especially magical boats, 'reflects notions about the wandering of souls in the other world'.

²¹ Red because so coloured by the rays of the setting sun. But red is claimed as a colour associated with Paradise by A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 25f., Radermacher (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 42f., Gruppe (sup. cit. [n. 19]), 1066.12ff. The passages they cite seem to me inadequate as proof. Note, however, Pind. *Thren.* 7.3 (= fr. 129 Sn.): *φοινικορόδοις δ' ἐνὶ λεϊμώνεσσι πρόστιον αὐτῶν* (cf. H. Thesleff in *Gnomosyne* (W. Marg Festschrift [Munich, 1981]), pp. 35f.). Red as an Otherworld colour is noted as a motif in Irish legend by Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]), F 178.1.

²² So, e.g., Croon (sup. cit. [n. 17]), p. 58. See in general Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]), E 481.2 ('land of dead across water'), F 93 ('water entrance to lower world') etc. Also

Eurytion, a figure who has been identified with the mythical Herdsman of the Dead.²³ The hero despatches not only this herdsman but his dog Orthus, the 'brother' of Cerberus and originally (can it be doubted?) his *Doppelgänger*, a hellhound in exactly the same mould.²⁴ Even if some of these arguments appear weaker than others, their cumulative impact is surely overwhelming.

Now for the question of the relative antiquity of the three labours variously symbolising Heracles' victory over death: here the important work has already been done by Bernhard Schweitzer,²⁵ but it seems in danger of being overlooked or forgotten.²⁶ On the simplest and most basic level one may observe that the labours involving the Hesperides and Cerberus stand last in lists of the twelve labours and are explicitly signalled as Eurystheus' arbitrary additions to an initial concept envisaging ten labours.²⁷ This suggests that the labour involving Geryon's cattle originally stood last (another index of its function as symbol of Heracles' triumph over death). Besides, if we now limit ourselves to the labour involving Cerberus, this is very closely

Radermacher (sup. cit. n. 14), pp. 72ff., and Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), *Personen- und Sachregister* s.v. 'Meer als Unterwelt'. Cf. *Plutona...qui ter amplum | Geryonen Tityonque tristi | compescit unda* at Hor. *Odes* 2.14.7ff. with Nisbet and Hubbard's note *ad loc.*; Meuli (as cited in n. 29 below) p. 16 = p. 604 on the significance of the crossing of water in the Argonauts' *Jenseitsfahrt*; and the comparative material assembled to illustrate the idea of a barrier of water between living and dead by R. H. Terpening, *Charon and the Crossing: Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Transformations of a Myth* (London, 1985), pp. 15f. (cf. J. Kühn in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. Fährmann (4.785ff.)).

²³ See in particular the work of Croon cited in n. 16 above. There is some evidence that Geryon himself was (originally?) conceived of as pasturing his own cattle: see Croon, p. 32 n. 17). Cf. also (among earlier studies) Dieterich (sup. cit. [n. 21]), p. 25 n. 1. Note that at Apollod. 2.5.12 Heracles is described as wrestling (while in Hades to fetch back Cerberus) with the tender of Hades' cattle, Menoetes, who is said to be the son of Keuthonymos (rightly described by Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 374 n. 4 as 'ein sprechender "Hades" – Name'). We cannot fail to recall how in Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* the herdsman Eurytion is said to have been born *ἐν κευθμῶνι πέτρας* (S7). Cf. Eur. *Hec.* 1f. *ἦ κω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότον πύλας | λιπῶν, ἴν' Ἀΐδης χωρὶς ὠικιστὰι θεῶν*, and Kroll, *Personen- und Sachregister* s.v. 'Höhle...Unterwelt als'. It now seems likely that Apollodorus' detail of Menoetes observing and reporting back to Geryon the death of his herdsman (2.5.10) derives from Stesichorus (cf. Page (sup. cit. [n. 1]), p. 145).

²⁴ Orthus' status as doublet of Cerberus is particularly stressed by Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), pp. 87f. They are both the offspring of the Echidna (Hes. *Th.* 309), and Apollod. 2.5.10 and Servius on *Aen.* 7.662 give Orthus two heads, a feature shared with Cerberus (according to some sources: see West on Hes. *Th.* 312, Pinney and Ridgway, *JHS* 101 (1981), 143). For a general study of the motif of the 'hound of hell' (cf. Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17], A 673) see C. Mainoldi, 'Cani mitici e rituali tra il regno dei morti e il mondo dei viventi', *QUCC* 8 (1981), 7ff., A. Hultkrantz, *The North American Indian Orpheus Tradition* (Stockholm, 1957), p. 80 and nn. 59–60.

²⁵ Sup. cit. (n. 10), pp. 132ff. esp. pp. 135ff. One argument invoked is the Oriental influence visible in the labours involving the Hesperides and Cerberus (e.g. the links between the garden of the Hesperides and the Paradisiacal garden of the Gilgamesh epic). On this see further Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 11]), p. 168 = p. 870 n. 3, Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), pp. 80ff.

²⁶ No mention of the considerations raised by Schweitzer in, for instance, Brommer's *Herakles, die zwölf Taten des Helden in antiker Kunst und Literatur*² (Cologne, 1979) = *Heracles, The Twelve Labors of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature* (1986).

²⁷ Note, in particular, Apollodorus 2.5.11: *τελεσθέντων δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἐν μηνὶ καὶ ἔτεσιν ὀκτώ, μὴ προσδεξάμενος Εὐρυπύχους τὸν τε τῶν τοῦ Αὐγέου βοσκημάτων καὶ τὸν τῆς Ὑδρας, ἐνδέκατον ἐπέταξεν ἄθλον παρ' Ἑσπερίδων χρύσεια μῆλα κομίζειν*. The labours involving Augeas' stables and the hydra, together with that involving Geryon's cattle, are argued to be the oldest of all by Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), p. 146. It seems further to be the case that the Cerberus labour itself eventually failed to register as an actual triumph over death, and came to be regarded as a mere daring adventure to bring back a savage brute of a dog, and that the Hesperides labour was regarded as the final conquest of death: see Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 375f. and n. 5, p. 428 and n. 1.

tied to the character of Eurystheus. The same is not true of the abduction of Geryon's cattle, and this is a further indication of early origin.²⁸

On a slightly more sophisticated level we may observe (following Schweitzer) that if the story of Cerberus predated that of Geryon, it is inconceivable that the killing of Orthus (as outlined above) would have been added as a subsidiary episode in one tale derived from the main episode of the quelling of Cerberus in another. Such reduplication in a minor detail would be totally without point – unless (what no other consideration remotely suggests) the Geryon story originated at so late a stage that the equivalence of Cerberus and Orthus had been forgotten and no motif-transference was involved. Therefore the reverse relationship is to be envisaged: the Geryon story is the older, as the very obliqueness of its status as a *Jenseitsfahrt* suggests: only when its original significance had been obliterated by the passage of time, did it need to be supplemented by a more explicit journey to the Otherworld. This is, surely, the only coherent way of viewing the problem: why should anyone wish to anticipate an overt visit to the Underworld by a pale doublet full of tantalising hints, none of which is fully worked out?

A *Jenseitsfahrt* has been thought to underlie several other Greek myths, in particular the voyage of the Argonauts. In his classic treatment of this question, Karl Meuli²⁹ pointed out how frequently the hero bound on a journey to the Otherworld has a sort of 'preliminary adventure' (*Vorabenteuer*) involving his encounter with a demon or demon-like being.³⁰ This is no merely incidental adventure, however, for the being in question is endowed with relevant knowledge concerning the hero's route, and this must be extracted from him against his will, by force or cunning. Perhaps this was the original function of Peleus' struggle with Thetis;³¹ Perseus'

²⁸ For the linking of the various labours of Heracles with Eurystheus as relatively recent see Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), p. 175. One naturally expects the individual exploits to have existed independently and even in isolation for some time before they were artificially strung together and associated with Eurystheus as their inspirer. Eurystheus is directly connected with the Cerberus labour by virtue of the comic sequel involving his cowering in a jar, which is itself a duplicate of his reaction to the Erymanthian boar (cf. Brommer, sup. cit. [n. 26], pp. 44f. = p. 46).

²⁹ *Odysee und Argonautika* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 15ff. = *Ges. Schr.* 2.604ff. (for further references see Index I of *Ges. Schr.* s.v. 'Jenseitsfahrt'). For more recent interpretations of the story of the Argonauts along these lines see e.g. Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 35 n. 3 (Jason's encounter with the dragon symbolises his victory over death: see further Kroll's *Personen- und Sachregister* s.v. 'Drache'); J. de Vries, *Betrachtungen zum Märchen* (Helsinki, 1954), pp. 96f. and A. K. Coomaraswamy, in *Studies and Essays in Honor of G. Sarton* (New York, 1944), pp. 465ff. on the Symplegades as symbolising the gates to the Underworld; cf. Fontenrose (sup. cit. [n. 13]), pp. 478ff., who points out that 'every steersman, lookout, builder, seer, and guide of the *Argo*, proves to have manifold connections with demonic powers of sea, land, and underworld. It is likely that every one is a form of the boatman of the dead Charon' (p. 485). Some suggestive remarks on the symbolism of ships and the dead in H. Rahner, *Gr. Mythen in Christlicher Deutung* (Zurich, 1957), pp. 292ff. See also the material on the boatman of the dead quoted above n. 22. The Argonauts encounter the Sirens for whose associations with the Underworld see Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey* (Harvard, 1973), pp. 86ff., 126ff. On the 'shamanistic' associations of Orpheus both in this episode and as an Argonaut more generally see E. Schwartz *ap. HSCP* 89 (1985), 241f.

³⁰ Sup. cit. [n. 29], pp. 101ff. = pp. 664ff. Further parallels for this folk-tale motif of asking the way preliminary to a miraculous journey (especially to the Otherworld) are cited in Radermacher's note on Arist. *Ran.* 38–165 (itself an adaptation of the device). Comparable (though not identical) is the case of a figure who helps and advises at the start of a *katabasis* (e.g. the Sibyl of Cumae: cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Maia* 19 (1967), 224f.).

³¹ If so, the motif has been disguised by the superimposing of Chiron's rôle as the 'helper' (see, e.g., Lesky, *RE* s.v. Peleus (19 (1938)), 286.42ff., 289.40ff.).

encounter with the Graeae has all the signs of falling within the same framework;³² and this is also the original significance behind Phineus' role within the Argonautic legend, according to Meuli. In our fullest and most familiar accounts, Phineus does indeed encounter the Argonauts at an early stage of their journey and does provide helpful information as to their route, but he does so voluntarily, out of gratitude, because the Boreads have rid him of the threat posed by the Harpies. There are traces, however, of a less benevolent relationship between the Argonauts and Phineus, especially in the tragedians;³³ and Meuli may well be right to extrapolate an original version in which the information was forcibly extracted from a much less humane – or human – Phineus.³⁴

Meuli also, of course, cites the rôle of Nereus in Heracles' search for the apples of the Hesperides, but for reasons explained at the start of this article, he was not in a position easily to quote the relevant fragment of Stesichorus. Would he have needed to? After all, Burkert assumes that Stesichorus' Nereus was giving advice concerning the location of the golden apples of the Hesperides,³⁵ just as in Pherecydes' account. But our fragment does not mention the Hesperides, and there is no evidence that the quest for their apples featured in any poem by Stesichorus.³⁶ Brize, by contrast, talks in terms of a 'transference' of the motif of Heracles' struggle with Nereus from the Hesperides' tale to that of Geryon.³⁷ Now even if there were no external evidence as to the relationship between these two labours, the alternative possibility that the motif

³² It is suggestive, for instance, that apart from being shown the way by the Graeae, Perseus receives from them the cap of Hades. The Graeae are daughters of Phorcys, another Old Man of the Sea (see West on Hes. *Th.* 237), which further confirms the comparison here drawn, and the Gorgons of course, like the Hesperides, Geryon *et al.*, live in the far West (Hes. *Th.* 275f. etc.).

³³ See e.g. Radt, *Tr.G.F.* 3 (Aeschylus), pp. 359ff., 4 (Sophocles) pp. 484ff.

³⁴ Meuli observes that a frequent motif within German folktales of heroes who start out on a quest, is that they encounter at some early stage a demon who attacks their comrades and contaminates their food. The hero himself gets the better of the creature and forces from him information concerning the route of the quest (sup.cit. [n. 10], p. 102 = p. 664). This is all very suggestive for the original form of the Phineus episode – as is the rôle played by the Harpies in Vergil, *Aen.* 3.209ff., where, though eluding the attack of Aeneas and his men, they deliver a malicious prophecy about Aeneas' journey. There is a potentially close parallel in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* for the alleged phenomenon represented by Phineus – a kindly helper displaying vestiges of a more hostile attitude: see the article by T. A. Shippey cited below (n. 39), p. 8.

³⁵ Sup. cit. (n. 7), pp. 185f. n. 13 ('Heracles forced "Nereus" to lead the way to the Hesperides: Pherecydes...following Stesichorus'). The same interpretation is advanced (more tentatively, explicitly, and long-windedly) by C. Brillante, *QUCC* 12 (1982), 17ff.

³⁶ The reference to the Hesperides in *S* 8.3 is not to be connected with the quest for their apples (see, e.g., Page, sup. cit. [n. 1], p. 148). We do not know the name of every poem Stesichorus composed (as the Lille Papyrus has recently reminded us) but it seems unnecessarily perverse to invoke the existence of an otherwise unknown work merely to house the present fragment, especially when this seems to offer us a motif ('das Vorabenteuer mit dem wissenden Dämon' in Meuli's words) so at home in the context of the *Jenseitsfahrt* that the *Geryoneis* has independently been taken to reflect. The notion that Nereus might have appeared in any other known poem of Stesichorus is laboriously excluded by Brize (sup. cit. [n. 7]), pp. 68f. and pp. 77f.

³⁷ Sup. cit. [n. 7], p. 76. Brize also supposes (pp. 66ff. and 100) that Stesichorus has 'transferred' a capacity for metamorphosis from Homer's Proteus (*Od.* 4.435ff.) to Nereus. This is an unnecessary complication: both Nereus and Proteus fall within the wider category of creatures (like Thetis *et al.*) whose connection with that changeable element the sea explains their predilection for metamorphosis. See Frazer's Loeb Apollodorus ii.67f. n. 6 and Appendix 10 (pp. 386ff.), M. Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten* (*Philol. Suppl.* 14 [1921, repr. 1960], pp. 138ff. And appropriately prophetic powers are often attributed to gods of the sea (cf. West on Hes. *Th.* 233, Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace *Odes* 1.15.5).

was transferred from the Geryon labour to that of the Hesperides would have to be allowed at least equipollent weight. But since we have seen good cause to suppose that the Geryon story is the older of the two (above p. 281), the latter eventuality must in fact be considered the more likely. Brize stresses the connection of Nereus with the Hesperides and the occident in general, but the occidental link makes him equally akin to Geryon in his positioning on the margin of the Western world, and he may owe his introduction into the story (as may Menoetes) to his status as a further *Doppelgänger* of Geryon. Old men of the sea in general³⁸ and Nereus in particular, keep herds of seals which, like the herds of cattle tended by Geryon and Menoetes, symbolise the dead. We have already observed how the sea in Greek myth often functions as a boundary between the living and the dead. And Heracles often wrestles with a *ἄλιος γέρων* just as he wrestles with Menoetes in Hades and fights Geryon on the island of Erytheia. Even without the help of the fragment we have been discussing, scholars like J. H. Croon had seen the Old Man of the Sea as an analogue of Geryon.³⁹

In the treatment of the *Jenseitsfahrt* already quoted, Meuli⁴⁰ ingeniously produced a surprisingly illuminating parallel from Norse myth: the well-known account of Thor's visit to the Giants' citadel of Utgard as preserved in the *Prose Edda* and by Saxo Grammaticus.⁴¹ It will be worth the while briefly to inspect this tale again here,

³⁸ On the general phenomenon of 'Meergreise' see e.g. Lesky, *Thalatta. Der Weg der Griechen zum Meer* (Vienna, 1947), pp. 107ff. Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), p. 185 n. 13, Brize (sup. cit. [n. 7]), pp. 67f. Heracles' wrestling with the Old Man of the Sea is a popular subject in art. See, apart from the remarks of Brize and Glynn [sup. cit. n. 7], G. Ahlberg-Cornell, *Herakles and the Sea-Monster in Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painting* (Stockholm, 1984). In this context one should also, perhaps, cite the ferryman Charon, on whom see (in addition to the studies mentioned above n. 22) C. Sourvinou-Inwood in *LIMC* s.v. (III.1.210ff.), since he too is a figure connected with water that acts as a barrier to the land of the dead; he too is generally conceived as an old man (Sourvinou-Inwood, p. 221; cf. Richardson (sup. cit. [n. 15]), pp. 83ff.); and he too comes into conflict with Heracles (Seneca, *Herc. Fur.* 769ff., Verg. *Aen.* 6.392 and Servius *ad loc.*; cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Maia* 19 (1967), 222).

³⁹ Sup. cit. [n. 16], pp. 58ff. In a sense, the encounter and struggle with the Old Man of the Sea represents an anticipation (in a minor key) of the climactic encounter with the monster symbolising death. This too is a common pattern of folk-tale: one thinks, for instance, of Beowulf's encounter with Grendel in the upper world and then with Grendel's more formidable mother in her underground cave. (For the likelihood that *Beowulf* too was originally a story of triumph over death, with Beowulf occupying the shaman's rôle (cf. above n. 12), see, for instance, T. A. Shippey, *Notes & Queries* 214 (1969), 11. On the poem's particular susceptibility to Proppian analysis see Shippey, pp. 3ff.; cf. K. Ostheeren in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. 'Beowulf' (2.123ff.).) For other instances of this pattern of climax, the second encounter being more formidable and *on the creature's own ground*, see Fontenrose (sup. cit. [n. 13]), pp. 525ff. Thor's visit to Utgard (considered below pp. 285f.) provides a further instance. For the (related) general tendency of the 'villain' figure to appear twice, on two separate occasions, in a folk-tale quest see Propp (sup. cit. [n. 8]), pp. 84f. etc.

⁴⁰ Sup. cit. (n. 29), pp. 106ff. = pp. 668ff.

⁴¹ The best up-to-date edition of the former is to be found in *Snorri Sturluson Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (Oxford, 1982). The passage that concerns us begins at section 44 of *Gylfaginning* or *Gylfi's Deception* (pp. 36ff. of this edition). There is an English translation in the Everyman Classics series (1987) by Faulkes himself (pp. 37f.). The corresponding voyage of 'Thorkill' in Saxo Grammaticus' *Historiae Danicae* (written at the end of the twelfth century A.D. and published in 1514) 8.164f. (cf. Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey* [Harvard, 1973], pp. 82f. and p. 126 n. 19; for an English translation of Saxo's text see P. Fisher (London, 1979)) represents a rationalising and Christianising treatment of the tale (for its relationship to Snorri's narrative see A. B. Rooth, *Loki in Scandinavian Mythology* [Lund, 1961], pp. 81f. (cf. pp. 64f.)) which makes it perfectly clear and explicit that the land of Utgardloki is identical with Hell. For a bibliography of general studies of the story see Rooth as cited above pp. 80f. It is interesting for our viewpoint that Saxo's narrative includes a cattle-raid (cf. Page as cited above pp. 82f.).

since it provides comparative material not only for the *Geryoneis*' reworking of the motifs of folk-tale, but also for the relationship between Geryon and Nereus that we have just been examining. Thor, it will be recalled, sets out with Loki as companion and stops at a farm-house for food. The episode which follows is not directly relevant to our enquiry and may be omitted. Note, though, its ultimate consequence, which is that Thor and Loki set out on foot for Utgard, taking Thialfi, son of the farmer and the swiftest of men,⁴² with them. Also Roskwa, Thialfi's sister and Thor's destined servant, who, however, soon drops out of the narrative.⁴³

They cross the sea by boat and finally take shelter in the darkness and cold of an open countryside within a strange building. This is revealed the next morning to be the glove of the giant Skrymir, who is waiting in the vicinity to escort the company to Utgard. They journey on together and in the evening the giant takes a nap – which is unfortunate for Thor and his companions since he has also taken their provisions and placed them in his bag whose strap cannot now be opened. On three separate occasions Thor brings his hammer crashing down upon the giant's skull, only to elicit drowsy complaints about falling leaves, acorns, or bird-droppings.

Skrymir then takes his leave and Thor's party reach Utgard at midday. They squeeze into the giant's castle through the bars of a closed iron grating,⁴⁴ and find themselves amid feasting giants whose king Utgardloki invites them to display their individual prowess. Loki essays an eating contest and Thialfi a foot-race: they are both roundly beaten. Thor is invited to drain a drinking horn in one draught and finds that, even after three, much liquor still remains. He also fails to lift the king's cat from the floor, and (worst of all) in a wrestling-match with the king's decrepit old nurse he is brought to his knees.

Next morning, having escorted his discomfited guests from the castle, Utgardloki reveals all: he himself was the escorting giant Skrymir who tied up their food with impenetrable iron fashioned by trolls. Thor's three mighty blows were evaded by the strategem of rolling aside and letting the mountain receive their terrible impact. In the contests at Utgard, Loki was matched against Fire and Thialfi against Thought in the eating and running contests – hence their inevitable defeat. Thor's drinking horn was joined to the undiminishable sea; the cat he could not lift was the world-encircling Midgard Serpent;⁴⁵ and the withered crone Old Age itself. The giant-king ends by

⁴² Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 29]), p. 109 = pp. 669f. reasonably interprets this detail as a vestige of the motif of the superlatively endowed helpers who accompany and aid the hero on his quest (in Greek myth one thinks at once of the Argonauts, though cf. de Vries (sup. cit. [n. 29], pp. 96f.)).

⁴³ The detail of Roskwa is again interpreted by Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 29]), p. 110 = p. 670 as a possible vestige, this time of the princess or maiden whom the hero often brings back as prize from his quest (including the quest to the Otherworld): see below n. 68.

⁴⁴ The entrance to the Otherworld is frequently said to be narrow and difficult of access. See e.g. de Vries (sup. cit. [n. 29]), p. 96 ('Der Eingang zur Unterwelt ist...ein enger Durchgang, den man nur in grösstes Eile durchschreiten kann') citing several examples including the Symplegades within the Argonautic tale (see above n. 29); H. Wagenvoort, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden, 1956), pp. 110ff. on the *Orci fauces* as implying a narrow, crevice-like entry to Hell; and Hes. *Th.* 727 with West's note *ad loc.* See in general Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]), F 150ff. on various difficult or dangerous entrances to the Otherworld.

⁴⁵ Thus the episode in question constitutes a sort of travesty of the hero's encounter with a serpent symbolising death as the climax of his visit to the Otherworld (see above n. 29). One may note in passing that an Attic red-figure cup by the painter Euphronios and dating from the end of the sixth century (Munich 2620: *ARV*² 16f. and 1619 (17): Brize (sup. cit. [n. 7], Plate 4.2)) depicting Heracles' encounter with Geryon, gives the latter's dog Orthus a snake's tail as well as two heads.

expressing the hope that Thor will not return,⁴⁶ and he and his castle dissolve into thin air.

Meuli is surely right to discern beneath the surface distortions of this tale an original journey to the Otherworld: it shares with the story of Geryon an approach by sea to the kingdom of the dead and an identification of the powers of that kingdom with giants. Thor and Heracles have often been compared,⁴⁷ and here the resemblances are close. The main distortions are caused by our version's original and idiosyncratic attitude, which almost perversely seeks to travesty or denigrate heroic cunning and valour, indeed the whole quest: for instance, with the aid of the parallel motif supplied by Heracles' conquest of *Gēras*, it would not be difficult to reconstruct a rather different treatment of Thor's encounter with the crone. Even within the framework imposed by this idiosyncratic reworking, one can still detect the underlying motifs that most concern us. Thor's triple failure to overcome the sleeping Skrymir is later paralleled by the series of humiliations experienced by his companions and himself within Utgard. The parallel is all the closer because the same giant-king orchestrates both sets of reversals. But just barely discernible as vestiges of the original pattern are the sequences appropriate for what Meuli termed 'Das Vorabenteuer mit dem wissenden Dämon'. In this version he is Skrymir⁴⁸ the giant, who certainly knows the way to the Otherworld, and originally, perhaps, conformed more closely to the basic pattern of the demonic creature forced (by Thor's hammer blows?) to reveal the route. Even more to the point, the Norse version emphasises still further the continuity between the two stages of the story, the preliminary adventure and the climactic encounter with the death-demon: for *it is the same figure in both*, Skrymir turns out to be Utgardloki in disguise. The resemblances outlined above between Nereus and Geryon here become a matter of equivalence and identity.

But in fact the Geryon story is crammed full of doublets and Doppelgänger. So far we have said nothing of the sequel to Heracles' successful abduction of the cattle: their partial purloining by Cacus as Heracles conducts them through Italy.⁴⁹ There is no evidence whatsoever that this episode featured in Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*,⁵⁰ and I

⁴⁶ It is commonly stressed in accounts of visits to the Otherworld that once the mortal visitor has left he can never return or find his way back. See, e.g., E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*² (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 221ff. on the instances of the motif provided by the idea that King Arthur lies hidden in a cave which, once visited, 'can never be found again' (p. 223).

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Fontenrose (sup. cit. [n. 13]), General Index s.v. 'Thor, combats with dragons and monsters'.

⁴⁸ And the way in which he stows away the company's provisions so that they are inaccessible is reasonably interpreted (by Meuli, sup. cit. [n. 29], p. 109 = p. 670) as a vestige of the motif whereby the demon with knowledge of the route contaminates the food of the hero's comrades (see above n. 34).

⁴⁹ The fact that this further elaboration of the story conforms with Propp's scheme (above n. 8) of the heroic quest is observed by Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 8]): 'even the repetition that the hero loses his prey and must endeavour a second time to get and keep it is in Propp's pattern (8–15 bis)'.

⁵⁰ Usener (*Jhb. für Philol.* 139 [1889], 369 = *Kl. Schr.* 1.330) argued from the *Geryoneis*' mention of Pallantium (*S* 85) that Evander was depicted in the poem as entertaining Heracles when he returned through Italy with the cattle (so several late authors such as Paus. 8.43.2, Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 1.40 etc.). This is most uncertain, and an identification of Pallantium with the Arcadian town of that name (Paus. 5.1.8, 8.43.1 and 3) has seemed preferable to most scholars (Heracles' visit to the centaur Pholus, which we know to have been mentioned in the *Geryoneis* (*S* 19), is regularly set in Arcadia). On the whole question of whether Cacus is a relatively late figure hardly known before Vergil, or a much more primeval figure, see Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), p. 86 and p. 181 nn. 6–11; cf. D. F. Sutton, *CQ* 27 (1977), 391ff. and J. P. Small, *Cacus and Marsyas in Etrusco-Roman Legend* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 3ff., E. Mavleev, *LIMC* s.v. 'Cacu' (III.1.175f.), J. Arce, ib. s.v. 'Cacus' (177f.).

shall therefore be brief. But it is impossible fully to understand the parallelism of Geryon and Nereus without considering that of Geryon and Cacus. And the interpretation of Heracles' conquest of Geryon as a heroic triumph over death becomes clearer when we realise that Heracles' conquest of Cacus originally had exactly the same significance.

Fortunately the resemblances are easily stated. With the help of Vergil's treatment in *Aeneid* 8.190ff.⁵¹ we recall that Cacus inhabits a cave;⁵² that it and he are associated with the darkness⁵³ so characteristic of the Underworld; and that the grim abode is given the otherwise inexplicably grandiose appellation of 'palace' (*regia*) in consequence of Cacus' associations with the kingdom of the dead. The entry to the cave is as formidable and difficult of access as that to the Otherworld,⁵⁴ and when Hercules forces an entry, Vergil himself employs a simile that explicitly signals the comparison (243ff.: *non secus ac si qua penitus vi terra dehiscens | infernas reseret sedes et regna recludat | pallida, dis invisa, superque immane barathrum | cernatur, trepidant immisso lumine manes*). It is needless to go into further elaborations. But one final telling detail may be stressed: when Hercules bursts into Cacus' abode, the latter bellows loudly (248: *insueta rudentem*), like the cattle he himself has stolen. One cannot fail to be reminded of the etymology of the name Γηρύων (the 'roarer').⁵⁵

By now, Geryon's possession of three bodies may seem an apt metaphor in view of his correspondences with Nereus in the 'preliminary adventure' and with Cacus in what one may term the postlude. In fact there are yet further analogies to be observed: of the trio Geryon, Alcyoneus and Cacus, Wilamowitz⁵⁶ observed with characteristically pithy intuition that they are 'wol differenziierungen derselben urform'. The various traditions concerning Alcyoneus are fragmentary and contradictory,⁵⁷ but he is often connected with cattle and regularly regarded as a giant: Pindar refers to him as τὸν βοῦβόταν οὐρεῖ ἱκόν... Ἀλκυονῇ (*Is.* 6.32f.). Σ *ad loc.* (3.254f. Drachmann) allude to a tradition that he drove off the Sun's cattle, and that this became the cause of the war between gods and giants. Pind. *Nem.* 4.25ff. mentions his killing in the context of the sack of Troy by Heracles and Telamon, and Σ *ad loc.* (3.71 Drachmann) explain that he attacked Heracles and his men with a stone which Heracles lobbed back at him with his club, thus bringing about the giant's death.⁵⁸ Another tradition preserved by Σ supplies an alternative origin for the

⁵¹ The clearest summary of Cacus' associations with the Underworld as they emerge from Vergil's account is in Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 389ff., a treatment that has notably failed to impress itself upon recent commentators on *Aeneid* 8.

⁵³ Cf. above n. 16.

⁵⁴ Cf. above n. 44.

⁵² Cf. above n. 23.

⁵⁵ Cf. above n. 16, *ad fin.*

⁵⁶ Sup. cit. (n. 4), p. 45 n. 74.

⁵⁷ For a useful recent survey of the relevant literary and artistic evidence (with bibliography) see R. Olmos and L. J. Balmaseda in *LIMC* s.v., I.1.558ff. Carl Robert, *Gr. Held.* 2.512f. and 564f. is still crucial.

⁵⁸ Underlying this odd detail is the sort of folk-tale motif represented by the figure of the giant who can only be killed with his own club or sword (cf. Stith Thompson (sup. cit. [n. 17]), Z 312.2). Giants often have their lives protected in analogous ways: compare the giant who is immortal so long as he touches the land of his birth (Thompson D 1854), a motif also applied to Alcyoneus (see next note) and more famously to Antaeus, that other adversary (see n. 13 above) of Heracles; the giant who has an external soul; and so forth. Geryon's three bodies obviously constitute an equivalent to this sort of protection. As regards the propriety of a stone for a weapon, we recall that Heracles lobs one at Geryon to knock off one of his helmets in Stesichorus' poem (S15; 13ff.: cf. Page (sup. cit. [n. 1]), p. 151); that the same hero uses stones against Cacus in *Aen.* 8.250; and that a now lost sixth-century Corinthian cup depicted Heracles in the Underworld as brandishing a stone against Hades (Brommer (sup. cit. [n. 26]), p. 44 = p. 46. The uncertainty there stated as to whether the object is a stone or something else may perhaps be resolved in the light of the evidence adduced in this note): cf. Boardman, *JHS* 95 (1975), 7.

war of the gods and giants: Alcyoneus tried to steal the cattle which Heracles had brought from Erytheia.⁵⁹ A number of vases depict the encounter between Heracles and Alcyoneus: some show cattle, others the winged figure of Hypnos putting Alcyoneus to sleep, in which defenceless position Heracles assails him.⁶⁰ The similarities with Geryon and Cacus are inescapable.

Even the names Geryoneus and Alcyoneus are similar, and as names, Geryon and Electryon are not so very different either. But (much more significantly) Electryon too has associations both with Heracles and with cattle.⁶¹ In the narrative given by Apollod. 2.4.6, Electryon, king of Mycenae, has his cattle filched by the Taphians, who kill some of the sons when they try to resist. The Taphians hand over the cattle for safekeeping to the Elean king Polyxenus ('durch seinen Namen eine ganz durchsichtige Hadeshypostase', as has been observed)⁶² from whom Amphitryon, father of Heracles, ransoms them. Electryon plans to avenge his sons' death, but first entrusts his kingdom to Amphitryon together with his daughter Alcmena who is, however, to stay a virgin until her father's return.⁶³ But while handing back the cattle, Amphitryon accidentally kills Electryon with a club aimed at a charging cow and rebounding from its horns. Amphitryon is therefore exiled. Here, too, the correspondences with the stories of Geryon and Alcyoneus are very striking, though partially disguised by the displacement of responsibility for the theft on to the Taphians and for the killing of the cattle-owner on to the bouncing club.⁶⁴

One could add a further allusion, to the Sun as possessor of herds, by emphasising the etymology of the name Electryon ('the shining one').⁶⁵ That this is no adventitious feature can be seen if we adduce the similarly significant name of the most famous mythical owner of cattle: Augeas.⁶⁶ We have already noted the

⁵⁹ In the Gigantomachy at Apollod. 1.6.1 the two mightiest giants are said to be Porphyryon and Alcyoneus: 'Ἀλκυονεύς ὃς δὴ καὶ ἀθάνατος ἦν ἐν ἡπείρ ἐγεννήθη γῆι μαχόμενος. οὗτος δὲ καὶ τὰς 'Ηλίου βόας ἐξ 'Ερυθείας ἤλασε. Robert (sup. cit. [n. 57]), p. 513 n. 1 believes that ἐξ 'Ερυθείας 'auf einer Kontamination mit der jüngeren Sagenform beruht'. F. Vian, *La Guerre des Géants* (Paris, 1952), p. 219 n. 2 prefers to supplement τὰς 'Ηλίου βόας <τὰς> ἐξ 'Ερυθείας to bring the passage into line with the tradition alluded to in Σ Pind. *Nem.*

⁶⁰ See Olmos and Balmaseda (sup. cit. [n. 57]), p. 563. Killing a sleeping giant may seem a distinctly unheroic ploy, but one recalls that in the *Geryoneis* Heracles deliberates whether to attack his adversary openly or by stealth (*S* 15 i 5ff., esp. 8: *λάβραι πολεμεῖν*) and proceeds, in fact, to take him unawares (see above n. 58). The Old Man of the Sea requires similar handling: Menelaus had to attack Proteus while he is napping (*Od.* 4.414) and for the mastering of Thetis in similar circumstances cf. *Ov. Met.* 11.238ff.

⁶¹ See Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), p. 153.

⁶² Schweitzer, sup. cit. (n. 61). For this word and other similar epithets euphemistically applied to Hades see Richardson on *H. H. Dem.* 9 (*πολυδέκτης*); cf. Usener, *Kl. Schr.* 3.440ff.

⁶³ The underlying implication, of course, is that the daughter is a reward for the cattle. See below n. 68, and cf. Meuli, *Die Antike* 17 (1941), 205 = *Ges. Schr.* ii.902.

⁶⁴ The odd mode of death by rebound inevitably reminds one of the manner of Alcyoneus' death (above n. 58). The result in each case is that the hero (Heracles or his father) is not technically the killer.

⁶⁵ Compare Electryone, daughter of Helios (Diod. Sic. 5.56.5, Σ Pind. *Ol.* 7.24 g [1.204 Drachmann]) on whom cf. Wilamowitz, *Hermes* 14 (1879), 457ff. = *Kl. Schr.* 5² 1ff. In view of the considerations here adduced, Wilamowitz (p. 458 = p. 2) may be wrong to rank Electryon among those shadowy mythical persons whose only function is to beget and die ('zu zeugen und zu sterben').

⁶⁶ See Schweitzer, sup. cit. (n. 61), Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), p. 95 and p. 185 nn. 8–9. In the epic *Telegony*, according to Proclus' summary (*EGF* p. 72), Odysseus sailed to Elis to examine the byres of Augeas (τὰ βουκόλια: see A. Severyns, *AC* 31 (1962), 15ff.), was entertained by Polyxenus, and presented with a wine bowl upon which (see Severyns, sup. cit. pp. 19ff.) was shown the story of Trophonius and Agamedes and Augeas. Polyxenus (on whose name see above n. 62) is grand-son of Augeas and here too (as in the Geryon tale) we may be dealing with

particularly primeval status among Heracles' labours of the tales involving his stables and Geryon's cattle.⁶⁷ It may be thought that the actual story involving Augeas bears little resemblance to that of Heracles' encounter with Geryon or the other opponents listed above. But it should be noted that Heracles does eventually kill Augeas the cattle-owner; and the otherwise surprising detail preserved in Apollod. 2.7.8 that Heracles had a son by Epicaste, daughter of Augeas, may be a vestige of the questing hero's abduction of his opponent's child.⁶⁸

A final question needs to be answered in the area of equivalence between cattle and the dead. Walter Burkert has convincingly argued that the Geryon story as literally interpreted makes sense in the context of a nomadic culture: 'It is a major problem for herdsmen that their animals may get lost or stolen; if an animal disappears, this is readily ascribed to the action of some demon who hides them. It is Hercules who overcomes these adversaries of the Cacus type and retrieves the animals.' And at a later stage

The Indo-European nomads, it seems, have become possessors of animals themselves, they have no need to plead with some power of the Beyond again and again. The primordial helper now appears to be the hero who has definitely transferred the mastership of animals from the Beyond to man; his exploit becomes in fact a 'cattle raid'...In the further development of Greek civilisation, the heroic aspect had to recede in turn. For the anxieties of emerging individualism, the really important achievement of Heracles was that he could overcome Old Age and Death; the animal stories turned into 'survivals', an ornamental background.⁶⁹

But in fact the story of Geryon continues to exist alongside the *katabasis* to Hades. This is partly a tribute to the world-wide popularity of cattle-rustling as a motif of story-telling.⁷⁰ Perhaps this popularity and persistence requires explanation not merely in terms of nomadic culture but also with a view to the equation of cattle and the dead. If we trace the equation to its logical conclusion we are confronted with a story in which a hero penetrates the otherworld and brings back a number of dead souls. Even in the alternative *Jenseitsfahrt* represented by the quest for Cerberus, one soul is retrieved, Theseus. But with the more ambitious rescuing of the numbers aptly symbolised by the cattle of Geryon, we would seem to be confronted with a veritable 'harrowing of Hell' for which the best parallel is Christ, who, to quote one passage

cattle that have associations both with the Sun and Death. For Odysseus as hero of a *Jenseitsfahrt* both in his general wanderings and in the more particular episode of his journey to the land of the Thesprotians (context for his visit to Polyxenus) see Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 11]), pp. 167f. = pp. 868f. For his shamanistic resemblances to Beowulf (cf. n. 39) see, e.g., A. T. Hatto, *Essays on Medieval German and other Poetry* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 123.

⁶⁷ See above n. 27.

⁶⁸ Cf. Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), p. 153. The motif of the king's daughter, whose hand is won by the questing hero, survives in the person of Medea within the Argonauts' legend, and may even be vestigially present in the journey of Thor to Utgard (see above n. 43). The otherwise incomprehensible statement *ap. ps.-Aristotle* *περί θавμ.* 133 that Erytheia was Heracles' bride, is perhaps to be explained in the same way, as Weicker, *RE* s.v. 'Geryoneus' (7¹ (1912)), 1289.63ff. supposed. For the tendency of folk-tale quests to end with the hero's marriage cf. Propp (sup. cit. [n. 8]), pp. 63f., 92 and (Alan Dundes' introductory remarks) p. xiii. *περί θавμ.* 133 = Preger, *Inscr. Gr. Metr.* 95 (cf. Huxley, *GRBS* 8 (1967), 88ff.).

⁶⁹ Burkert, sup. cit. [n. 7], p. 97.

⁷⁰ Within Greece particularly associated with the West Peloponnese which is where Geryon may originally have been located (cf. Schweitzer (sup. cit. [n. 10]), pp. 153ff. etc.). Popular in ancient Greece and indeed the whole world over from earliest times. For a very useful and wide-ranging survey see A. T. Hatto's Foreword to H. F. Morris, *The Heroic Recitations of the Bahima of Ankole* (Oxford, 1964), pp. vff. (the book deals with a Ugandan tribe's literature). See further K. Kailaspathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), p. 194 and Subject Index s.v. 'Cattle-stealing', B. Lincoln, 'The Indo-European Cattle-Raiding Myth', *History of Religions* 16 (1976), 42ff. etc.

out of literally hundreds, *κατέβη εἰς τὸν αἶδην...καὶ ἀνῆγαγεν νεκρούς*,⁷¹ and robbed the devil of his booty.⁷² The motif of a god or hero's visit to the Underworld, and his freeing or redemption of the dead, is primeval and world-wide, but the closest parallel to the inferred original form of the Geryon story remains Christ's harrowing.⁷³ The juxtaposition of the names of Heracles and Jesus Christ may seem jarring to some classical scholars, but it has a lengthy and not undistinguished history behind it, even if (inevitably) it has also attracted more than its fair share of eccentric and idiosyncratic interpretations.⁷⁴ But this is not the place to consider that question, striking though some of the correspondences are.⁷⁵ Better to end by asking why the original form of the Geryon story was so easily replaced by the symbolic surface. This is also to ask (*inter alia*) why the Heracleian *katabasis* and triumph over death becomes a mere adventure to bring back a monstrous dog (and a single soul),⁷⁶ or why Heracles' conquest of *Gēras* does not feature at all in Greek literature.⁷⁷ It is also to ask why the folk-tale explaining the circumstances in which mankind forfeited the immortality once intended for them by the gods plays so relatively small a rôle in Greek literature and thought.⁷⁸ Even if this too is a rather larger topic than can be accommodated here, an answer can be sketched in terms of Greek capacity for bearing the reality of existence, and the corresponding refusal to be satisfied with simplistic explanations of death's origin or with fairy-tales as to how it can be cheated or overcome. When that begins to fade, it is easier for Heracles to be replaced by Christ, and the redemption of thousands to oust the saving of one or the rescue of 'much cattle'.

I said at the beginning that the Stesichorean fragment mentioning Nereus had proved almost as elusive as Nereus himself. Nereus in particular, it will be remembered, and Old Men of the Sea in general, are to be captured by guile or force, but when mastered they speak the truth. I trust the handling of evidence and argument in this article has exhibited neither guile nor force, and that the resulting conclusions are fit to stand beside the pronouncements of *Νηρεὺς ἀψευδής*.

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⁷¹ Eusebius, *hist. eccles.* 1.13.20 (some MSS. have *ἀνῆγειρεν* for *ἀνῆγαγεν*, which does not materially affect the issue at stake). For similar phrases used of Christ's achievement by Christian writers see Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 103 n. 1.

⁷² For this sort of imagery used of Christ's journey to Hell see Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), pp. 146ff., 277 and p. 354 n. 5. In the last of these passages the phrase τοῦ Ἰδίου κυκλομεμένου in the *Testament of Levi* 4.1 (cf. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* 2 (Oxford, 1913), p. 307; Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1 (London, 1983), p. 789 (who gets the phrase wrong)) is convincingly defended and explained along these lines and with reference to Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 833 where the phrase *tertia regem spoliare sortis* is used of Heracles' descent into the Underworld.

⁷³ See Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), *passim*, esp. *Personen- und Sachregister* s.v. 'Descensus Motive...Befreiung der Gefangenen'.

⁷⁴ For bibliography see Kroll (sup. cit. [n. 14]), p. 445 n. 1, who represents the more hostile attitude of classicists to the equation. More recent references in Burkert (sup. cit. [n. 7]), p. 186 n. 21. Add, e.g. H. J. Rose, *Harvard Theological Review* 31 (1938), 113ff., W. L. Knox, ib. 41 (1948), 229ff., M. Simon, *Hercule et le Christianisme* (Paris, 1955).

⁷⁵ To cite but one detail, the mothers of both Christ and Heracles are miraculously spirited away from the tomb after their death (Alcmena by Hermes: cf. *Ant. Lib. Met.* 33, Paus. 9.16.7; H. Herter, *Rh. Mus.* 119 (1976), 213 n. 74). Cf. Rose (sup. cit. [n. 74]), pp. 124f.

⁷⁶ See above n. 27.

⁷⁷ Unless Eur. *Her.* 649f. alludes to it (see, e.g., Bond *ad loc.*).

⁷⁸ See my article 'The Ancient Greeks on Why Mankind does not Live Forever', *Mus. Helv.* 44 (1987), 65ff.