

SHORTER NOTES

A NOTE ON THE STAG: *ODYSSEY* 10.156–72

On the morning of the third day on Circe's island of Aeaëa, Odysseus takes sword and spear in hand and leaves his demoralized and exhausted crew to seek out some sign of habitation. Eventually, from the height of a rocky point, he spies smoke rising in the distance. After debating with himself whether or not to investigate immediately, he determines first to return to his ships, in order to see about his comrades' dinner (10.144–55). Returning to the beach, he encounters an enormous stag, which he takes to have been sent by a god who pitied him (10.157–9) and which he kills, binds with a makeshift rope of brushwood and willow branches, and drags back to the camp (10.160–72).

An intriguing interpretation of this elaborate and lengthy episode – sixteen lines for the sighting, killing and binding of the stag – is offered by Edward Schmoll, who suggests that the scene is consistent with the motif of transformation of man to beast, often effected through the agency of a sorceress, found in folklore ranging from India to South America, and a recurrent motif in the *Odyssey* itself.¹ According to Schmoll, 'Homer has reversed the typical transformational process by changing the stag into a seemingly human opponent for Odysseus'. Drawing attention to the military language reminiscent of the *Iliad* that is used to describe Odysseus' assault and conquest of the stag, Schmoll postulates that 'Odysseus is not simply encountering a stag, but is pitted against a warrior in panoply of horn and hoof'.² According to Schmoll, this battle, in which no human enemy is killed, serves both to bolster Odysseus' confidence as an Iliadic hero at a crucial moment and, related as it is within the context of his long narration to the peaceful Phaeacians, to symbolize his transition from the 'destructive, self-regarding heroism' of the archaic world of the *Iliad*, to the world of his future, 'pervaded by *xenia*, and a peaceful concourse among men'.³

While Schmoll rightly discerns that motifs of folklore are evident in this interlude, a less complicated explanation of their significance can be demonstrated.⁴ I would like to suggest that the stag episode is a displaced element from a widely attested folk-motif that is typically characterized by certain important features of the Circe-episode in the *Odyssey*. In this 'Circe-type' motif, the hero is led to the 'Otherworld' in the course of hunting a wild beast,⁵ the Otherworld being either Fairyland (as Stanford

¹ Edward A. Schmoll, 'Odysseus and the Stag: The Parander', *Helios* 14, no. 1 (1987), 22–8. His note 1 gives a summary of the few instances in which this episode has been treated in scholarly literature.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ Other folk motifs in the *Odyssey* are discussed by A. Heubeck and J. B. Hainsworth in *A Commentary on the Odyssey* (Oxford, 1989): see Hainsworth's introductions to Book v, i.249–51, on the characterization of Calypso, to Book vi, i.29 on Nausicaa; and Heubeck's discussion of Circe, as a type of witch familiar to folklore, ii.50–1, with reference to 10.133–574.

⁵ Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (rev. ed., Bloomington, 1955) classifies the appearance of this motif in its various related forms: F159.1, Otherworld reached by hunting animal; G402, pursuit of animal to ogre's house; N773, adventures from following animal to Lower World; N774, adventures from pursuing enchanted animal. Carl Pschmidt's dissertation, *Die Sage von der Verfolgten Hinde* (Greifswald, 1911), is an attempt to discover the 'alter agentypus' underlying the hunted-hind motif so common in the romantic literature of the middle ages, and gives a descriptive catalogue of the motif's occurrence in a range of literatures. See especially his section 'Die Hinde lockt den Helden ins Wunderland', pp. 45ff.

has called Circe's realm),⁶ or the Underworld itself, where he comes under the power of a sorceress before being allowed to return safely to his own realm. The motif as a whole is weakly motivated in the *Odyssey*, but the essential element of the hero's hunt – here Odysseus' killing of the stag, shortly before entering Circe's realm and thralldom – was put by Homer to excellent use: the stag hunt provides Odysseus' crew with a much-needed dinner and, as George Dimock has recently suggested, the subsequent feast re-establishes community among the demoralized warriors.⁷

The motif is particularly prevalent within Celtic folklore.⁸ The legend of *Lugaid Láigde* relates the pursuit of a magic fawn by six brothers who enter the wilderness and are caught in a fall of snow. One of the brothers goes off alone to look for shelter, and comes upon a great and wonderfully provisioned house, in which resides a sorceress – in this case an old foul hag.⁹ She offers the hero a bed for the night, on the condition that he sleep with her. He refuses, and goes back to his brothers, who one by one make their way to the house and one by one refuse the hag's request. Lugaid Láigde alone complies, and the hag is transformed into a beautiful maiden.¹⁰

A story from *The Adventures of Lomnochtan of Sliabh Riffe* relates how as the company of Fianna Eireann is making ready to depart from the King's court and sail to Erin, word is brought that a marvellous dappled stag, with golden horns and silver feet, has been seen on the green. The heroes set out with their hounds in pursuit of the stag, and follow it into the trackless mountains, where they become lost in a mist. Eventually, they are drawn into a dark wood, in which they spy three castles. Approaching the nearest one, they are met by the fairest maiden they have ever seen and are advised that the owner of the castle is their enemy. The maiden also warns them that once they enter into the castle, they must not taste a drop of any drink that is offered to them. Inside, they come upon a wrinkled hag, who offers them a sweet drink, which their great thirst prompts them to accept. When the last man has drunk, the arms of each of the men fall from their shoulders. The hag laughs and tells the company that they are doomed unless their leader, the hero Conán, rescues them. Eventually, with the guidance of the beautiful maiden, Conán finds his companions and restores their arms to them with another magic drink. The hag, hearing word of this, 'longs to have Conán', but is slain by one of the company.¹¹

In the body of courtly romances, and particularly Arthurian legends, derived from

⁶ W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London, 1947), i.365 n. 1.

⁷ See George Dimock, *The Unity of the Odyssey* (Amherst, 1989), pp. 123f. Dimock suggests that Odysseus' determination to give his men a meal 'turns out to imply re-creating from the beginning the capability of joint action which succeeded against Polyphemos'. According to Dimock, Odysseus' return to his ships with the carcass of the stag, and invitation to his men to 'feast and return to life with all the feelings of a supremely successful hunt', dissipate the despair caused by the company's encounters with Aiolos and the Laistrygonians. He accounts for the detailed and lengthy treatment of the killing of the stag by the fact that it 'is an instance of the predatory act, the opposite of lotus-eating, which signifies the Man of Pain', i.e. Odysseus.

⁸ 'It is a commonplace in Irish tales to find a hero guided, or enticed, to the Otherworld by a supernatural being (whether in the shape of a man or a beast) whom he pursues', T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), p. 127.

⁹ Just as dangerous sorceresses like Calypso and Circe 'combine the beautiful and the terrible', so the *féé* in Celtic folklore can be either beautiful or hideous. Arthur C. L. Brown, *Origins of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, MA, 1943), p. 23.

¹⁰ W. Stokes and E. Windisch, *Irische Texte*, third series, Part II (Leipzig, 1891), pp. 318–21. For a discussion of the relation of the *amour* of Odysseus and Circe to the folk-motif of trial by sleeping with a sorceress, see Andrew Dyck, 'The Witch's Bed but Not her Breakfast', *Rheinisches Museum* 124 (1981), 196–8.

¹¹ 'The Adventures of Lomnochtan of Sliabh Riffe', *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* 9 (1899), 294–316.

Celtic mythology, the luring of the hero to the domain of the fairy by a messenger 'disguised as some tempting victim for the huntsman's dart, usually a stag, a boar, or a bird', is also commonplace.¹² In the thirteenth-century romance *Partonopeu*, for example, the young knight becomes separated from his companions while hunting a boar, enters a forest, and wanders through it until he comes to the sea, where a magic boat awaits him to bear him away to the fairy princess, Melior, with whom he shares his bed.¹³

While in the *Odyssey* the appearance of the stag is in part responsible for drawing Odysseus away from the palace towards the beach (by reinforcing his determination to provide his crew with dinner before investigating the smoke from Circe's palace), it may be that this god-sent portent once led him in the opposite direction. It is not difficult to envisage an earlier rendition of Odysseus' arrival at Circe's court in Aea that paralleled the *exempla* cited: Odysseus, taking his leave of his companions, goes off to hunt for food for their supper. He wanders into a wood whereupon he comes upon a stag of wondrous size.¹⁴ He then tracks the stag (or strikes the stag and follows the wounded animal)¹⁵ to Circe's palace.¹⁶

An especially intriguing possibility is raised by reference to the motif as it is found among the Efé pygmies of the Ituri forest – which of all the examples cited most closely resembles the episode in the *Odyssey* – namely that the Otherworld reached by Odysseus through the agency of the stag may have been specifically the Underworld Land of the Dead. According to the pygmy version, the hero Efé goes hunting in the forest near the Mountains of the Moon, where he comes upon a giant black hog, which he chases into the animal's den, a dark hole leading into a long, winding cavern. At length he fells the animal, but the hog is so immense that he is unable to lift it to carry it outside the cave. Going outside, he cuts a liana rope and returns to the animal with the intention of dragging it away. To his astonishment, he finds that the hog has disappeared, although a trail of blood leads away from the spot where he left it. Following the trail, Efé is led deeper and deeper into the earth until at length he comes to a mighty river and dense forest and banana groves. Hearing the sound of someone cutting wood, he goes to investigate and finds the ghost of a sorceress, in the shape of a hideous dwarf. The sorceress asks him to sleep with her, but Efé refuses, whereupon she forcibly leads him to her house, with Efé protesting vainly, 'I am not

¹² Lucy Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (New York, 1903), p. 15.

¹³ *Partonopeu de Blois*, ed. Joseph Gildea (Pennsylvania, 1970), vol. II, part 2, verses 499–1062. See also *La Romance en prose de Tristan*, ed. E. Løseth (Paris, 1891), paras. 323–35; the lay of *Guigemar*, Marie de France, verses 69ff. While not parallel in every respect, all contain the dominant motif of a hero lured to the Otherworld in the course of hunting a boar or stag in the woods. For a discussion of the variations of the motif in these particular cases see Paton, op. cit. (n. 12), pp. 15–18; 64–9.

¹⁴ W. B. Stanford's remark that Odysseus' unusual pride in his kill is shown by his emphasis on the size of the stag (Stanford, op. cit. (n. 6), p. 370) was taken by Schmoll to be 'a poetic affirmation of his heroism' (Schmoll, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 25); the animal's wondrous size, however, would be consistent with its role as a portent.

¹⁵ See examples below.

¹⁶ The relationship between the *Odyssey* and a prototypical *Argonautika* is examined by Karl Meuli, *Odyssee und Argonautika* (Berlin, 1921). For his discussion of the 'Helfermärchen', the motifs of which the Circe episode shares, see pp. 97ff. At 112ff., Meuli speculates on Circe's possible role in an older saga. See also his discussion of the 'Abenteuer im Waldhaus' folk-motif at pp. 102ff., in which, among other trials, the hero engages the resident demon in battle, wounds him and tracks him to the underground lair to which he has escaped by following his trail of blood. For a discussion of the common folk motifs in the Circe episode, see Heubeck, op. cit. (n. 4), ii.50–2.

dead!' At her house, he eats a banana the sorceress offers him, and is subsequently told that he is now bound to stay with her for a certain period of time. While held in her thrall, Efé entertains the dead with stories and songs, before being led back to the upper world, accompanied by a train of porters who bear gifts. He is met by rejoicing in his village, where he had been mourned as dead.¹⁷

It is tempting to speculate that in an earlier version of the *Odyssey* stag hunt, Odysseus may have been led to Circe's palace located in the Underworld.¹⁸ Many of the features of Circe's Fairyland are also characteristic of the Underworld of folklore.¹⁹ The enigmatic location of Aeaea at a region of the earth where one knows neither west and east, nor where the sun sets or rises (10.190–2);²⁰ the appearance of Hermes to Odysseus as a kind of psychopomp;²¹ the strange death of Elpenor in Circe's realm;²² Odysseus' year of virtual amnesia in Circe's thrall; the awkward displacement of the Underworld scene, which interrupts Odysseus' sojourn with Circe; the fact that, although the ostensible object of Odysseus' journey is to gain advice from Teiresias, the seer is less helpful than is Circe;²³ and finally, that it is Circe alone who both motivates and directs the Underworld journey – all indicate the possibility that at one time Circe may have been less ambiguously established within the Nether Realm. In this respect too, Odysseus' first words to his companions on his

¹⁷ Paraphrased from Jean-Pierre Hallet, *Pygmy Kitabu* (New York, 1973), pp. 187–9. Less striking, but still noteworthy, are the Indonesian folktales in which a hero is led Underground in the course of following his prey. In one version of this tale, a man spear-wounds a wild boar which has entered his garden. Seeking to reclaim his spear, which has remained fixed in the animal's side, the man follows the wounded animal's trail of blood to a crevice in a cliff. Entering it, he follows the trail to the Underground world of Earthsprites (Jan de Vries, *Volksverhalen uit Oost-Indië* [Zutphen, 1925–8], ii (47), 217–19). In another version, the youngest of seven sons wounds a Woodspirit, who similarly bears away the spear. The spirit vanishes down a hole in the earth, and the son follows, by way of a liana rope. Once at the bottom of the hole, he discovers that he has wounded the chief of the Underworld dwellers (N. Adriani and A. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes*, part III, 'Taal en letterkundige schets der Bare'e taal en overzicht van het taalgebied', no. 74, pp. 409ff.).

¹⁸ See Douglas Frame, *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* (New Haven, 1978), pp. 40ff. Frame discusses in detail the close relationship of Circe's realm to Hades, although he does not locate it within Hades itself. Most recently, Gregory Crane has suggested that Odysseus' journey to Circe's realm 'borrows elements from *Catabasis* literature', and that the encounter between Circe and Odysseus' men reflects a meeting between Persephone and the newly arrived dead: G. Crane, *Calypso: Backgrounds and Conventions of the Odyssey*, Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie, Band 191 (Frankfurt, 1988), pp. 31ff.

¹⁹ For other examples of a confusion between Fairyland and the Land of the Dead see, for example, James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York and Edinburgh, 1913), ii.689ff.; Arthur C. L. Brown, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 15ff., 89. Further references are given in Tom Peete Cross, *Motif Index of Early Irish Literature*, Indiana University Publications Folklore Series no. 7 (Bloomington, 1952), p. 236.

²⁰ Frame suggests that this geographical ambiguity is explained by Circe's dual role in the *Odyssey*: as she both ushers Odysseus into the underworld and receives him again on his return, she represents both death and darkness and light and life. Frame, *ibid.*, pp. 47ff. While 'Aeaea' is normally associated with *Aia* and *Aiétés* (Bruno Snell, *Lexikon des Frühgriechischen Epos* (Göttingen, 1979)) Dimock relates it to *ai*, thus 'Isle of Wails' (cf. Cocytus). He also draws attention to the fact that Circe is the 'daughter of Helios the Sun and the nymph Perse, whose name like Persephone's suggests death' (op. cit. (n. 7), p. 122).

²¹ Cf. Hermes' role at *Od.* 24.1ff.

²² 'Elpenor's death in Circe's house accompanies Odysseus' journey to the Underworld', J. H. Finley, Jr., *Homer's Odyssey* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), p. 14.

²³ See, for example, Douglas Stewart, *The Disguised Guest* (London, 1976), p. 57. Page interprets both the displacement of the Underworld scene, and Teiresias' failure to tell Odysseus 'the path and measured stages of his journey home', as evidence of the *Odyssey's* multiple authorship: D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 21ff.

return to his ships with the carcass of the stag have an ironic ring, spoken as they might have been on the verge of their descent to the land of the dead:

Dear friends, grieving though we are, we shall not yet go down
into the house of Hades, until our appointed day is come

(10.174–5).

Columbia University

CAROLINE ALEXANDER

EURIPIDES, *MEDEA* 486–7

Πελίαν τ' ἀπέκτειν', ὥσπερ ἄλγιστον θανεῖν,
παίδων ὕπ' αὐτοῦ, πάντα τ' ἐξείλον δόμον.

487 τ' LP: δ' BOCDEAV || δόμον LP et ⁷²Σ^b: φόβον BODEAV

So Diggle's recent text and *apparatus criticus*; so too its predecessor in the Oxford series (Murray). Advocates of πάντα δ' ἐξείλον φόβον have, however, been in a considerable majority, and include Porson, Elmsley, Bothe, Weil, Wecklein, Nauck, Paley, Verrall, Meridier, and, more recently, Schiassi (1967) and Ebener (1972).¹ But Page's objection (*ad loc.*) cannot be lightly dismissed: 'With φόβον here, σοῦ must be understood; and the ellipse seems intolerable.' To this I would add what appears to have been largely disregarded, namely that the contextual and thematic significance of δόμον is an even stronger argument in its favour. Medea is ἀπολις (255, cf. 645–53 [ἀπολις 646], 386), having lost not only her home in Colchis (31–5, 166–7, 798–801) but also her new home in Corinth (139, 275–81, 359–60, 435–8).² In a sense the fate cruelly forced upon the daughters of Pelias by Medea (487 πάντα τ' ἐξείλον δόμον) is now visited upon Medea herself, who finds herself deserted and alone (513). This isolation brings with it the realization that to those to whom she should be φίλη she is now ἐχθρά (her family in Colchis, 506–8), while those whom she should be able to regard as φίλοι are now ἐχθροί (Jason, 467; even her children, 36, 112–14, 116–17; cf. the pointed, programmatic νῦν δ' ἐχθρὰ πάντα καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα in 16).³ Her response? As Medea had done in Iolcus, so δόμον τε πάντα συγχέασ' Ἰάσονος | ἐξεῖμι γαίης κτλ. (794–5; cf. 114 πᾶς δόμος ἔρροι).

Diggle's text is far preferable. But the existence of variants so different in meaning as δόμον and φόβον seems problematic. Page, quoting E. *Antiope* iv.B.9 von Arnim (= Page, *Select Papyri* iii.64, line 33) πάλιν ἔν' αἰρωσιν φόβον, and *Ph.* 991 πατρός ἐξείλον φόβον, suggested that the origin of φόβον in *Med.* 487 may have been due to a scribe's familiarity with a stereotyped verse end. This is certainly possible.⁴ But the frequency with which disyllables are elsewhere confused at line-end provides a simple explanation for the variants in our passage.⁵ Confusion of disyllabic synonyms or

¹ φόβον is assumed in the translations of Warner, Coleridge, and Hadas-McLean, while G. Zuntz in his study of the textual tradition of Euripides (*An Inquiry into the Transmission of the Plays of Euripides* [Cambridge, 1965], p. 267) seems also to accept φόβον as the true reading.

² For the thematic use of οἶκος, δόμος, and πόλις in *Med.* see now Emily A. McDermott, *Euripides' Medea: the Incarnation of Disorder* (University Park, PA, 1989), pp. 81–106.

³ On the use of this theme elsewhere in tragedy see A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus, Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986), p. 103 (on line 234), and his general index under 'relationships: of φίλος treated as ἐχθρός'.

⁴ On this kind of corruption see M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (Stuttgart, 1973), p. 21.

⁵ On the confusion of disyllables in general (not necessarily at line-end) see G. W. Bond, *Euripides, Heracles* (Oxford, 1981), on lines 80, 484, 548; also R. Renehan, *Greek Textual Criticism* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), p. 18 (confusion at line-end).