

SHORTER NOTES

THE TEMPTRESS THROUGHOUT THE AGES: FURTHER VERSIONS OF HERACLES AT THE CROSSROADS

In 'The Judgements of Paris and Solomon',¹ having compared² Paris' story with Heracles at the Crossroads, I recalled Dornseiff's further comparison between (i) Heracles' encounter with Pleasure and Virtue and (ii) Folly and Wisdom calling to passers-by at Proverbs 8–9.³ Now this latter piece of Old Testament wisdom literature illuminates other passages of ancient poetry. Note especially 9.18, quoted by me: the gullible man, lured into Folly's house, 'knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell'. Commentators observe that the last phrase is more accurately translated 'the hollows of Sheol',⁴ but seem uninterested in the precise picture. Gaster⁵ was surely right, however, to deduce from similar passages 'a . . . tale . . . of a Fairy Mistress who lures her mortal lovers into a subterranean (or submarine) palace . . . whence they cannot escape'.

Gaster's principal paradigms of the story-pattern involve two actual poets: Thomas the Rhymer from Scotland⁶ and the German minnesinger Tannhäuser.⁷ And I compared the Judgement of Paris to the Muse-encounters of two 'actual poets': Hesiod and Archilochus. So the Judgement of Paris has been compared with Heracles at the Crossroads, which has been compared with the picture of Wisdom and Folly in Proverbs; and the latter has independently been explained by invoking stories, two of which involve poets who encounter a female Otherworld figure reminiscent of the females encountered by Heracles, Paris, Hesiod, Archilochus. More correspondences emerge from the stories of the two non-Greek poets.

Both display tripartite structure, with the hero (i) lured to the Otherworld by a female, and (ii) homesick after seven years. Allowed to return home temporarily, he (iii) returns finally and permanently to the Otherworld. So Thomas meets a green-clad

¹ M. Davies, *CQ* 53 (2003), 32–43. Hereafter 'Davies'.

² Following Athenaeus 510c, and, most notably in modern times, Reinhardt (Davies, 33, n. 5).

³ See Davies, 40–1. Cf. C. R. Fontaine, *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs and Performance in Biblical Wisdom* (Sheffield, 2002), esp. 142.

⁴ For whose meaning see P. S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester and Downers Grove, 2002).

⁵ T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (London, 1969), 801–2, actually quoting only Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 2.18–19 (the stranger woman's 'house inclineth unto death/ And her paths unto the dead'), and 7.27 (the woman dressed as harlot: 'Her house is the way to hell/ Going down to the chambers of death'). But our passage clearly belongs here. Further references and bibliography on the Fairy Mistress's palace: Gaster, 865, n. 4 (cf. 22–3, 331); F. Wolfzettel in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* [= *EM*] (1984), s.v. 'Fee, Feenland' (4.945ff.), esp. sections 6.953, '[F]ee[n]liebe, Tabu, [F]ee[n]reich' and 7.956, 'Fata Morgana', a Fairy Mistress (see Gaster, 23), often (cf. Wolfzettel, 958–9) linked with the Venusberg.

⁶ K. M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk-tales in the English Language* B1.374 and 394, gives type- and motif-references. Further bibliography: W. E. Richmond, *Ballad Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London, 1984), index, s.v. Thomas Rhymer.

⁷ See J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Los Angeles, 1959), 540–4 and D.-R. Moser, *Die Tannhäuser-Legende: eine Studie über Intentionalität und Reception katechetischer Volkserzählung zum Buss-Sakrament*. *Fabula* Suppl. 4 (1977).

lady⁸ under the Eildon Tree who takes him to the Eildon Hill. Before entry, but after a taboo on food⁹ proving their destination the Otherworld or Paradise, the female shows three paths variously identified in the source-ballads¹⁰ as the roads to the gates of Hell (or of wickedness), to 'the heaven hie' (or of righteousness), and to fair Elfland. The first two, otiose as the story now stands, recall: (i) the similarly contrasted paths of Heracles at the Crossroads and related paths in other contexts; (ii) other tales symbolizing choice between incompatible lifestyles, one leading to glory, the other to destruction; (iii) the notion of easy or difficult entrances to the Other- or Underworld.¹¹

Tannhäuser's tale displays a small vestige of (ii), contrasting life-modes. Lured to the Hurselroch on the Hurselberg or Venusberg by the love-goddess¹² and refused permission, after seven riotous years, to return to this world, he prays to the Virgin Mary¹³ and is magically released. He then seeks absolution, which only the Pope can grant, and he refuses unless his staff sprouts shoots. The miracle occurs, but too late: Tannhäuser, completing the above tripartite scheme, has returned in despair to the Venusberg—forever.

Venus' power broken by the Virgin reflects the antithesis between female personifications in Proverbs 9 and Heracles at the Crossroads. When Wagner's libretto for *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg* adds the motif of a singing contest, its judge, the saintly Elisabeth, becomes a counterbalance to Venus, preserving the significance of the original story-pattern's two contrasting female personifications. Indeed, Wagner was not, as regularly claimed,¹⁴ combining two separate stories, but presenting two variants of one and the same story. Tannhäuser's choice between

⁸ For green and the Other- or Underworld, see Davies, *Rh.Mus.* 147 (2004), 149. The source-ballads (see n. 10) open with the hero lying on a bank of grass, perhaps implying what follows is a dream-vision, appropriately for such an encounter: see Davies, 42–3.

⁹ Ban on eating in Other- or Underworld: Davies, *WS* 115 (2002), 31, n. 111; Wolfzettel (n. 5), 953ff. Such taboos are idiomatic in *testing* a hero (Lutz Röhrich in *EM*, s.v. Bewährungsprobe [2.278]): for such tests and the stories of Paris, Heracles, Christ in the wilderness, and so on, see Davies, 34–6. Compare the ban on speaking in Act Two of *The Magic Flute*, a quest opera (see Davies, 37, n. 32).

¹⁰ Edited by F. J. Childs, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (London, 1882, repr. 1957, 1996), i.317ff. (the roads : texts A stanzas 12–14, B 10–12, and C 11–13). Also in J. Kinsley (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Ballads* (Oxford, 1969), no. 4 (7ff.), from Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (on which see S. B. Hustvedt, *Ballad Books and Ballad Men* [Harvard, 1930], 27–8).

¹¹ On (i) and (ii) see Davies, 33, n. 6 and 38, n. 33, on (iii), slender or wide entrances, *Prometheus* 18 (1992), 217–20. For two roads, broad and narrow, sighted by the Otherworld-bound hero, see e.g. Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Los Angeles, 1946, repr. 1977), 147. Sometimes one bridge replaces two roads: cf. G. Petschel in *EM*, s.v. Brücke zur anderen Welt (2.835). A tenth-century A.D. Irish narrative has one bridge (over a fire), whose breadth grows or decreases to help or hinder the *boni valde*, the *boni sed non valde*, and the *mali valde* (these last plunge into the fire): K. Ranke in *EM*, s.v. Brücke (2.829–30). Cf. *ibid.* 831 on transition from this *Seelenbrücke* of the Underworld (segregating good from bad) to dangerous Otherworld entrance as heroic *test* (n. 9).

¹² Venus' role here (interesting, given the Judgement of Paris) anticipates her part in later stories of a Fairy Mistress and a mortal.

¹³ 'Heilig Maria, reine maydt, I nun hilff mir von den weyben!' (text A verses 16–17 of the relevant ballad: see Moser [n. 7], 19ff.). Tannhäuser's original crime (Moser, 91–2, etc.), was breaking his vow of celibacy to the Virgin. Thomas initially mistakes his Fairy Mistress for her (texts A and C stanza 3 [n. 10]) and (see Coulter [n. 20], 52–3) Odysseus professes to mistake Nausicaa for Artemis at *Od.* 6.151.

¹⁴ So e.g. D. Borchmeyer, *Das Theater Richard Wagners* (Stuttgart, 1982) ≈ *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre* (Oxford, 1991), ch. 15 (224 and 227 of the translation).

Elisabeth and Venus, sacred and profane love, is mirrored in the central act by Elisabeth's dilemma between Tannhäuser and Wolfram, each embodying a half of that dichotomy.¹⁵ Jungian theory (such stories externalize the stresses of a divided soul)¹⁶ illuminates here as in the Judgement of Paris.

Returning to Greek literature, recall that both Tannhäuser and Thomas spend with their enchantress seven years—the time Odysseus passed with Calypso (*Od.* 7.259).¹⁷ Commentators show no particular interest in this number, which, for example, Hainsworth finds 'formulaic', comparing *Od.* 3.304 and 14.285, and Garvie 'a convenient device for filling up a large part of Odysseus', doubtless traditional, ten years of wandering' (he cites the theory that Calypso has been invented for precisely that purpose). But Calypso was probably a goddess of the Other -or Underworld originally,¹⁸ and Odysseus' sojourn with her has been compared¹⁹ to Tannhäuser's with Venus. If Odysseus, like Thomas, Tannhäuser, and the victim of Lady Folly in Proverbs, was originally lured, as mortal by fairy mistress, to a place whence he could not escape, several details gain significance. Odysseus, as first seen in the epic, vainly longing for home, is remarkably like Tannhäuser and other folktale heroes kept back involuntarily in the Fairy Mistress's palace.²⁰

The more specific comparison with Tannhäuser recalls Heracles at the Crossroads. In choosing not to stay with Calypso, Odysseus elects to return to Penelope, just as Heracles opts for Virtue over Pleasure. Crucial life-choices are central to Homer: in the *Iliad*, Achilles' decision to stay on (and die) at Troy,²¹ and, less obviously, Hector's decision, in *Iliad* 6, to do his duty (and die), which derives from his brother Paris' contrasted choice.²² In a manner also deriving subtly and indirectly from the world of folk-tale, Odysseus makes a decision that rejects Calypso's offer of immortality—an acceptance of death.²³ The contrast with Thomas or Tannhäuser,²⁴ who return forever to their Fairy Mistress,²⁵ is immense. None the less, the choice of Odysseus between two females ultimately derives from the world where men choose between Folly and Wisdom, Pleasure and Virtue, Venus and her rivals—the world of folk-tale. Odysseus,

¹⁵ Actually, Elisabeth has a *third* contestant: Walter von der Vogelweide. For variation between two and three in such tales and for contests or 'disputations' between contrasting occupations or world-views, see Davies, 33–4 and 38 with n. 36. Elisabeth herself is the prize in Wagner's treatment: Borchmeyer (n. 14), Eng. trans. 247.

¹⁶ See Davies, 35 and n. 21.

¹⁷ For seven in folk-tale, see Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of Folk-literature* 6.688–9; Roscher, *Sieben-und Neunzahl im Kultus und Mythos d. Griechen*. Abhandlung d. phil.-hist. Kl. d. Königl. Sächs. Gesell. d. Wiss. 2 (1) (1904); Burkert in *I poemi rapsodici non omerici e la trad. orale* (Padova, 1981), 44 = *Kl. Schr.* 1.161. Its relevance for *Od.* 7.259 was seen by C. G. Coulter, 'The happy otherworld and Fairy Mistress theme in the Odyssey', *TAPA* 56 (1925), 43.

¹⁸ See Davies (n. 9), 35–6, and for the association of Calypso's name with death, cf. A. H. Krappe, 'Who was the Green Knight?', *Speculum* 13 (1938), 211.

¹⁹ See e.g. Radermacher, *Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akad. der Wissenschaften in Wien phil.-hist. Kl.* 176 (1916), 49–50.

²⁰ See Coulter (n. 17), 37–40. Calypso inhabits a cave, and the Venusberg is an *immane horribleque antrum*: Moser (n. 7), 107ff., esp. 109. Such caves can represent Hell (M. Davies, 'Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* and its folk-tale origins', *CQ* 38 [1988], 281, n. 23, 287) and further recall Lady Folly (Proverbs 9.18) with 'guests . . . in the depths of hell'. See also Fontenrose (n. 7), 541.

²¹ See e.g. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (Stuttgart, 1965³), 234ff. ≈ G. M. Wright and P. V. Jones, (edd.), *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation* (Oxford, 1997), 143ff.

²² See Davies, 38.

²³ See Davies (n. 9), 36–7.

²⁴ In the Christianized Tannhäuser tale, the hero originally returned to where he had sinned, to atone—a point later misunderstood (see Moser [n. 7], 25–7, 91–2, etc.). But its basic and initial folk-tale pattern seems as here stated.

unlike Thomas or Tannhäuser, does not stray back to the Otherworld. And yet Dante and Tennyson's restless hero had some precedent: the Cyclic *Telegony* made Odysseus briefly leave home to visit the byres of Augeas—no heroic quest, it seems; but it is possibly²⁶ the vestige of a journey to the Other- or Underworld, with the folk-tale hero who finally returns there from this world the inspiration.

Now in the *Odyssey*, the hero does not return to his mistress. If I say that, in rejecting Calypso, he prefers wife to temptress (or enchantress or seductress), I say something simple and intelligible. But the word 'temptress' has a more esoteric, technical sense: 'ambivalent female helper figure who actually hinders the hero at an early stage of his quest'.²⁷ A prototype occurs in the Norwegian folk-tale quoted²⁸ in my article, with the ancient pattern of three questing brothers,²⁹ the two eldest distracted from their task by a crone.³⁰ They consequently fail, while their youngest brother resists the hag's allurements and wins through.

Here, then, is one temptress for three brothers, whereas the Judgement of Paris, by the folk-tale process of 'trebling',³¹ produces three temptresses for one brother.³² For the same pattern with variation of number, one temptress of one hero³³ near the start of his quest to 'liquidate a lack',³⁴ note the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: that deity, seeking a locale for his oracular shrine, encounters the eponymous nymph Telphusa, who sends him on to Delphi . . . and Python. The narrative mentions her sinister motives, but she is alluring and seductive³⁵ in an ambivalent way.³⁶ For two temptresses of one hero near the start of the quest that is life (or rather one temptress and one genuinely helpful figure) compare again Heracles at the Crossroads and Proverbs 8–9. And for three temptresses of one hero near the start of his life or quest note the

²⁵ The comparative approach also illuminates stanza 2 of a post-Reformation, Catholic version of the Tannhäuser ballad (Type D in Moser [n. 7], 20, text, 102–3): the enchantress met in a wood where (verse 8) *ein Jar war inen ein Stunde*. This associates the locale with the Otherworld (see Davies [n. 9], 19, n. 62), but the wood is also a suitable backdrop for encounters with ambivalent helper-figures: see Davies (n. 8).

²⁶ See Davies (n. 20), 288, n. 66 on Proclus' summary (*EGF* p. 72). Cf. Davies (n. 9), 38.

²⁷ This formulation matches Meuli's 'preliminary adventure' (*Vorabenteuer*: see Davies [n. 26], 278, n. 7), Propp's idea (*Morphology of Folktale*, 74–5) of the hero's early encounter with donor or helper (278, n. 8), and (though more extensive in application) Fontenrose's 'temptress episode of the combat myth' (n. 7), 544 (cf. his 'Th(eme) 8Di' at 582). Fontenrose so interprets Tannhäuser's Venusberg adventure, where the temptress episode becomes 'an independent story'.

²⁸ See Davies, 35, n. 17.

²⁹ See Davies, 34–5.

³⁰ A crone is a paradoxical temptress, but many temptresses are death-demons (n. 37), and many are *Mischwesen*—e.g. the Sirens (see n. 38) or Heracles' Echidna (see Fontenrose [n. 7], 97–8). Compare Wagner's Kundry in *Parsifal* (see n. 33), where dishevelled hag becomes radiant temptress (for links between Holy Grail and sensual paradise within a mountain, see Fontenrose [n. 7], 540–1).

³¹ See Propp (n. 27), 74–5 for such trebling, especially of what he calls the 'donor' and I more generally the 'helper', precisely the figure here.

³² For comparable switches of number, see Davies, 33–4.

³³ One temptress of one hero also in Genesis, if (Gaster [n. 5], 22–3) Eve is 'the Beautiful Fay or Fairy Mistress . . . in tales of journeys to the otherworld or to the Earthly Paradise . . . the Femme Fatale of the Enchanted Isle'. Compare the seductive lady in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Davies [n. 8]) and Kundry in Wagner's *Parsifal*, for whose similarities to Eve (and the whole work's resemblance to *Tannhäuser*) see Borchmeyer (n. 14), ch. 19.

³⁴ See Propp (n. 27), 35–6, 53–4, etc.

³⁵ Fontenrose (n. 7), 371: 'Apollo was attracted by her lovely and pleasant surroundings . . . he found the spring, i.e. the nymph herself, charming.'

³⁶ On the crucial issue of 'ambivalence' in helper figures and, *a fortiori* in temptresses, cf. Davies, 36 and n. 27.

Judgement of Paris. Ignore 'the start of his life or quest' and there is also Odysseus: Calypso, Circe, and Nausicaa are his temptresses, separated and stationed at successive stages of his adventures,³⁷ while the Sirens³⁸ represent the temptresses reassembled and reunited back at one place and time.³⁹ 'Come hither to rest' are the words of the Sirens to Odysseus (12.184),⁴⁰ of the Norwegian crone to the two elder brothers, of Folly ('whoso is simple, let him turn in hither') at Proverbs 9.16.⁴¹ The cry of the temptress throughout the ages.

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³⁷ On this aspect of these three figures, see Davies (n. 9), 24–6 and 32–4. Calypso is the *one* temptress when contrasted with Penelope. Cf. Coulter (n. 17), 53.

³⁸ Talking of the Argonauts, Fontenrose (n. 7), 486 observes: 'the Sirens . . . come to much the same thing as the death-dealing mistress'. He calls the relevant episode within his combat myth 'the Siren theme' (see n. 27). In Greek, Siren meant 'a female of dangerous and deceitful charm': see D. L. Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 85 and 127, n. 22. For Sirens' connections, alongside Calypso, Circe, and Nausicaa, with the Other- and Underworld, see Davies (n. 9), 26. Like Echidna (n. 30) they are *Mischwesen*, but they also resemble the Muses: for both aspects see Page, 86–8 and 126, n. 20, for the latter L. E. Doherty, *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 61 and 135–7 with nn. 20 and 25. In their use of ἵδμεν in anaphora at *Od.* 12.188ff. to emphasize their wide knowledge, the Sirens resemble the Muses of Hes. *Theog.* 22–4 (Heubeck on the Odyssean passage supposes Hesiod took this device from it). For the more ambivalent side of Muses, see Davies, 43, n. 60 and cf. G. Luck, *Horizonte der Humanitas, Walter Wili Festschrift* (1960), 88 = *Ancient Pathways & Hidden Pursuits*, 73. In their use of ἵδμεν in anaphora the Sirens also resemble those other helpers, the three Libyan Heroines of Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.1305ff.

³⁹ The Sirens 'inhabited three island rocks' (Page [n. 38], 85 and 127 n. 30), whence three Sirens (Hesiodic *Catalogue*: fr. 27 MW). But Homer and Sophocles fr. 861 present two, others more: Frazer's Loeb Apollodorus 2.290.

⁴⁰ Odysseus, overcoming the Sirens' temptation, succeeds where all have failed, a pattern in other tales of temptresses thwarted: e.g. the Norwegian story (n. 28) or Wagner's *Parsifal*. This is genuine folk-tale, as Meuli saw (n. 27): he compared Odysseus and Circe with the *Waldhaus* episode from the Bearson tradition (see M. Davies, 'Rumpelstiltskin and Greek mythology', *Prometheus* 28 [2002], 3, n. 10). There too, the hero succeeds against the demon *where his comrades failed* and extracts help, confirming (cf. n. 27) the paradoxical near-identity of our temptress with the demonic, ambivalent helper in the hero's quest.

⁴¹ See too the Flower Maidens in Act Two of *Parsifal*: *Komm, komm, holder Knabe! Komm, komm, lass mich dir blühen*. For Sirens and flowery meadows, cf. Page (n. 38), 128, n. 36.

APOLLO'S HAWK AT ARISTOPHANES, *BIRDS* 516¹

Πε. ὁ δὲ δεινότατον γ' ἐστὶν ἀπάντων, ὁ Ζεὺς γὰρ ὁ νῦν βασιλεύων
αἰετὸν ὄρνιν ἔστηκεν ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς βασιλεὺς ὢν, 515
ἢ δ' αὖ θυγάτηρ γλαυχ', ὁ δ' Ἀπόλλων ὥσπερ θεράπων ἱέρακα.

Peisetairos. And what is the most dreadful thing of all, is that Zeus, who is king now, is shown standing with an eagle on his head because he's king, and his daughter likewise with an owl, and Apollo, like a servant, with a hawk.²

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Dr C. W. Marshall of the University of British Columbia for frequent and invaluable advice throughout the preparation of this paper.

² Trans. A. H. Sommerstein, *Birds* (Warminster, 1987), 75.