The Hero's Handmaid:
Female Helpers in the Homeric Epics
and the Mahabharata

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1 Introduction

The female characters of the Homeric epics have always had an enigmatic position, simultaneously central and marginal. From divine Thetis to clever Penelope to the treacherous Clytemestra runs an entire spectrum of women and goddesses. At times they steer the plot actively as Thetis and Athena do, or passively as Helen and Briseis do, or as Penelope does, in both ways. They may threaten or help the heroes, or they may simply wait, grieve and fear the inevitable. One of the most confusing aspects of their presentation is the degree of overlap in their roles; Circe is reminiscent of Calypso, who resembles Eidothea, who resembles Leukothea, who resembles Thetis; Penelope, Helen, and Clytemestra are repeatedly compared and contrasted with one another. The present work seeks to add to our understanding of women in Homer through a comparison with a similar set of female characters from the *Mahābhārata*. In particular, it focuses on variations of a role common to both traditions: the hero's female helper. Side-by-side analysis reveals that the Homeric epics and the *Mahābhārata* share the same set of patterns of advice and assistance given to heroes by female characters. "Patterns" is the operative word here, specifically thematic patterns, which are the primary pieces of evidence examined in this dissertation. Like DNA, clusters and ordered sequences of themes wind through oral narratives, structuring

their development and evolution. Though oral epics are constantly changing, their poets rely on thematic groupings as a framework to maintain narrative continuity, and this gives these groupings a certain durability.[1] The result is that detectable patterns of similarities can be identified in these two epic traditions, in spite of the time and space which have separated them. The dissertation handles six pairs of episodes, categorized by type. The first of these is the hero's encounter with a powerful demi-goddess, represented by Circe (and to a lesser degree, Calypso) in the *Odyssey* and Hiḍimbā in the *Mahābhārata*. The second type is of the helpful, water-dwelling, and often theriomorphic female and comprises two pairs: Leukothea and Ulūpī, and Eidothea and Vargā. The "Encounter with the Young Princess" treats Nausicaa and Citrāngadā, and Athena and Gangā provide our examples of the powerful goddess who steps in to drive the hero's chariot in battle. Finally, the Cyclops is paired with the *Mahābhārata*'s Baka to provide a counterpoint to the examples of female helpers, and in support for my contention that the parallels found in the helper-episodes are not the product of universal archetypes governing male-female relations, but the result of descent from a common source.

Treating and discussing characters according to type is one of the luxuries of the study of constrained, formulaic epic, and the propensity of these texts to favor doublets has long been a standard of Homeric studies.[2] But the Homeric corpus provides only a limited number of examples and these have

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[1]Lord 1960, Ong 1982, Foley 1988.

[2]Wilamowitz 1884:115, Powell 1977, Nagler 1980, Even Beye 1974:95 "Most critics, nonetheless, seem to be talking of types or typical female roles; this is good, for it is consonant with epic narrative practice."

been scrutinized for centuries. In the *Mahābhārata* we find a parallel set of female characters, in a text for which there is compelling evidence for shared origins. As we will also see, the majority of the episodes to be treated here have been labeled by prior classical scholars as having been adopted from folktale or *Märchen* and reshaped to suit the requirements of the epic,[3] and corresponding evidence from folklore has offered nothing to contradict this theory. Page, one of the foremost proponents of the folk-tale model of composition, describes his view of the epic:

> Now the treatment of the folk-tale in the *Odyssey* is curiously complex. Into the framework of the main theme, the folk-tale of the Returning Hero, are fitted certain other folk-tales which, before their inclusion in the story of Odysseus, had nothing whatever to do with that theme. The stories of Circe and of Polyphemus, for example are themselves (like the story of the Returning Hero) Weltmärchen, universal folk-tales independent of each other and of the main theme of the *Odyssey*.[4]

Analysis of the Sanskrit evidence adds a new dimension to the picture. If episodes which were previously perceived to be adoptions from folklore can be shown to exist in the Indic tradition as well then the folktale-source hypothesis must be altered to accomodate this fact, particularly in cases where the two epic versions share motifs which the folktales do not contain. This would alter the sequence of composition which most scholars have taken for granted; that Homeric poets working within an inherited high-culture "Saga" tradition began systematically to incorporate folktales into their material until the epics had become a thorough mixture of the two. Parallels with the Indic material suggest that the blending of Saga and folklore either occurred in the

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[3]Wilamowitz 1884, Meuli 1921:65–70 (on Polyphemus), Woodhouse 1930, Carpenter 1946, Page 1955, 1973.

[4]Page 1955:1–2.

most nascent stages of Indo-European epic, or that the entire Saga/Märchen dichotomy is illusory. Borrowing between the two epics cannot account for the shared features; the *Mahābhārata* tradition is unlikely to have influenced the development of Greek epics, and vice versa, once the two began to evolve separately. And the supposition that the two traditions could have independently absorbed identical sets of Weltmärchen into their frameworks is similarly untenable. There is no reason to dispute the claim that the Homeric epics and folktales must have counter-influenced one another at times when they circulated within the same society.[5] But episodes which share parallels with the *Mahābhārata* on the order of those discussed here demonstrate that these particular episodes can lay claim to being actual Indo-European relics. If they were adopted from folktale, this must have occurred before the Greek and Indic traditions split.

While it is my contention that these figures are reflexes of common ancestors, and were inherited through proto-epic material that existed long before either tradition crystallized into the versions we possess today, ascertaining genetic relationship is not the only aim of this study. The examination of parallel traits in different branches of Indo-European language and literature can not only lead to a clearer understanding of their shared heritage, but also highlight the unique character of each tradition. In particular, application of the comparative model to the study of women in the Homeric epics provides a new approach to an area of growing interest to Classicists. Viewed through the lens of the role women came to have in later Greek literature, female

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[5]For example, Hansen 1990 makes a compelling case for the Homeric adoption of the folktale of "The Sailor and the Oar."

characters in the Homeric epics have been perceived as threatening and dangerous. While the germs of this attitude are certainly present in the Homeric texts, and even in some cases (as with the Clytemestra story) prominently displayed, they are not the last word on the majority of Homer's female characters. The fact that scholarship has, up till very recently, focussed primarily on what could be termed the negative aspects of Homer's presentation of women does not imply that the research is without merit; it has uncovered many hidden facets of Homer's portrayal of women, and every piece of the Homeric puzzle is precious. But if the larger project is to move forward, the focus must be expanded. A number of female figures in the *Mahābhārata* present better comparanda for certain Homeric female figures than do the women of Classical Greek literature. The resulting collection of narrative pairs not only provides us with a productive genetic and literary comparison, they open up for scrutiny the intersection point of gender studies and oral theory.

1.1 Comparison of Greek and Sanskrit Literature

The fields of Indology and Indo-European comparative philology were born simultaneously in the late 18th century, through the work of philologists trained in Greek and Latin who realized the value of explicit comparison of Sanskrit language and literature with the Greek and Latin classics.[6] Since

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[6]See further discussion in Watkins 1995:3, Beekes 1995:13.

that time, Indo-European Diachronic and Comparative Linguistics has remained an active field of inquiry, as has Comparative Mythology. Interest in the comparative study of Greek and Sanskrit literature, however, has faded, to the point that one recent comparativist introduces his efforts with the statement that, "If there was once a time in America and Western Europe when the value of comparing Greek and Indian classics seemed self-evident, that time is no more."[7] As Indology became a substantial field in its own right, with its own methodologies and concerns, philological work spanning both disciplines never had a chance to fill in the gaps between the two extremes of Linguistics and Comparative Mythology and turn its attention to literary, or narrative, comparison. Recent years, however, have seen the appearance of a number of books[8] and articles[9] on comparative topics, many of which argue that the Greek epics should be studied alongside the ancient literature of other Indo-European languages, particularly Sanskrit. Nagy, a strong advocate of comparative work, expresses this idea emphatically, stating that "Whatever distinctness we may find in Homer cannot be formulated, let alone explained, without the rigorous application of a comparative perspective."[10] Another ardent comparativist, Jamison, puts forward her case with charming frankness:

> Reading the *Odyssey* as an Indologist immediately suggests comparisons and

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[7] Alles 1994:2.

[8] Baldick 1994, Frame 1978, Doniger 1999, Nagy 1980, 1990, Watkins 1995.

[9] Davidson 1980, de Jong, J.W. 1985, Jamison 1994, 1997, 1999, Littleton 1970, Mayrhofer 1987, Sick 1996, Suter 1987, Walsh 1999, Ward 1968.

[10] Nagy, G. 1996:136. Nagy goes further than most in his zeal for comparison, and adduces evidence gathered from cognate parallels to explicate what we find in the Homeric texts. Lincoln, particularly, opposes this practice in general (see Lincoln 1991:24).

raises questions that may make a Hellenist's hair stand on end. In what follows I am going to pursue these comparisons and questions unapologetically, in an attempt to show what Indology has to offer students of Homer and other traditional literature. The short answer is that it is possible to find in Old Indian literature parallels, striking similarities, to elements in Greek literature—parallels that may bespeak a common Indo-European inheritance and that can help illuminate aspects of the Greek elements that are puzzling when examined in isolation...I propose looking backward...to the traditional ritual and ceremonial structures that the Greeks inherited (and adapted) from their Indo-European ancestors, structures also to be discerned in the literature of their linguistic cousins in India.[11]

The major stumbling block to comparative work is the question of whether these parallels have a common ancestor or are merely the product of coincidence. With a few notable exceptions,[12] those philologists who write about Indo-European aspects of Greek or Indic poetry sidestep the issue of how the similar elements they treat arrived in the two traditions. While it seems unlikely that incontrovertible evidence either for or against genetic relationship is going to make an appearance any time soon, it is my belief that there can be a great deal of profit in investigation. Though my bias is in favor of shared inheritance, the case would not be worth making if the comparison did not offer insight into the Homeric poems in their own right. Whether or not their origins are common, both epics repeatedly resort to a shared set of narrative strategies involving female characters assisting and advising male characters. The regularity of the pattern and the predictability of its results provide adequate justification for the comparative undertaking independent of genetic concerns. Nevertheless, before moving to the analysis, I would like to present what is known about the historical background and the

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[11] Jamison 1999:227.

[12] e.g. Hiltebeitel 1990:58–9, Watkins 1995, and an especially thoughtful look at how comparative work can be done most effectively in Sick 1996:5–24.

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development of the Greek and Indian epic traditions, and move from there to a discussion of what constitutes acceptable evidence in favor of genetic relationship.

1.2   Historical Background

The case for shared heritage begins on the simplest and most straightforward level. It is commonly accepted that for an extended period, with 4500 BCE to 2500 BCE as a rough estimated span,[13] the peoples who went on to establish the Greek and Indic civilizations shared a common tongue which became the ancestor of all modern Indo-European languages. In the matter of a proto-Indo-European culture, it is impossible to make realistic claims, but strong evidence does suggest a common mythology, which left diffuse and murky traces in the myths and folk tales of every group of Indo-European speaking peoples.[14]   Though the same currents and patterns can often be traced over wide chronological and geographical areas, rarely does one find a theme or persona with an identical reflex in more than a few branches of the Indo-European tree; rather, "Indo-European mythology is...a dynamic process that produces different results in each Indo-European tradition."[15]

As has been pointed out many times, "Indo-European" is a linguistic entity, and the linguistic evidence for an Indo-European heritage is the most

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[13]Mallory 1973, 1989:127, Lincoln 1981:3–5.

[14]Müller 1881, Dumézil 1968, 1983, 1988, Littleton 1970, Puhvel 1987, Mallory 1989.

[15]Nagy, J.F. 1990:201.

solid evidence available to us. In more than two centuries[16] of comparative work on Indo-European languages, wide agreement has been reached on the relationship between the various branches of the family, as well as on the fundamentals of the reconstruction of proto-Indo-European.[17] Scholars have catalogued substantial evidence of a shared poetic heritage between India and Greece. In particular, the abundance of isoglosses, merisms, and formulae[18] whose reflexes are found in both the Homeric corpus and the Vedas points to an oral literary tradition that existed before either.[19] On these grounds and others, scholars have reached the conclusion that "in both form and content, the heritage of Homeric poetic diction can be traced all the way back to Indo-European prototypes."[20] The same holds true for the *Mahābhārata*. While the most obvious poetic elements shared between Homeric and Indian literature are found in the corpus of Vedic hymns, there is no reason to suspect significant cultural discontinuity between Vedic times (ca. the 14th – 9th centuries) and the period during which the *Mahābhārata* was composed.[21] Basham describes the composition of the *Mahābhārata* as a

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[16]1786, the year of Sir William Jones' famous address to the Asiatic Society, is the traditionally accepted date for the birth of Indo-European linguistics.

[17]Sihler 1995, Watkins, ed. 2000.

[18]e.g. Schmitt 1967, 1968, Benveniste 1969, Nagy 1979:162–3, 1980, Watkins 1995: esp.13–16, Huld 1997.

[19]Watkins 1995:5–6.

[20]Nagy 1999:71.

[21]Van Buitenen places the origins of the *Mahābhārata* in the eight or ninth century B.C., with the earliest extant verbatim segments dating to around 400 B.C., and legitimate additions still being made as late as 400 A.D. (Van Buitenen 1973:I.xxiv). J.D. Smith 1980:48 concurs, as does Jamison 1999:229.

long, slow evolutionary process.[22] The essential continuity of the tradition is widely acknowledged: as Puhvel maintains "Post-Vedic India, particularly in its epic dimension, is just as crucial for comparative mythology as is the chronologically earlier and more archaic Vedic period. Vedic data provide the oldest theology, but the epics supply the narrative."[23] Although the version of the *Mahābhārata* which we possess is far more recent than any piece of Vedic literature, there is reason to believe that the martial songs from which it developed had old roots, of an age comparable to that of the Vedas, and may thus have served as the conduit by which Indo-European themes of wife-snatching, war, and heroic journeyings became the core of the epic. There are many ways in which the *Mahābhārata* is fundamentally different from the Homeric epics. But both traditions arose from the same body of myths and legends, and went on to flourish within comparable cultural settings.

1.3 Standard of Proof

Unfortunately, proving that something could have happened lies far distant from proving that it did, and the above is offered only as background information and hypothesis. Certainly the epics share the genetic tie of descent from the same parent language at some point in their distant pasts,

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[22] "Culturally, the period of the later Vedic literature saw Indian life and thought take the direction which it has followed ever since." Basham 1967:43.

[23] Puhvel 1987:93.

but the question of when literary similarities can be attributed to shared inheritance remains a dense and thorny issue. As was noted in the first section of this chapter, the problem is an old one, and has affected the work of all previous scholars in this area. Straightforward diachronic linguistic studies have a built-in standard of proof; if phonemes in two different languages can be demonstrated to consistently replace one another in comparable word environments, particularly where there is also a commonality of meaning, then coincidence can be safely dismissed as an explanation.[24] But arguments surrounding larger narrative structures require more supporting evidence to ensure that resemblances are not the product of borrowing or accident, as one cannot make the same type of precise comparisons with stories as with words.

There are a number of ways to ensure that comparative analysis is performed with scrupulous attention to avoiding its pitfalls. Comparative Mythological studies, for example, are at their best when bolstered by linguistic arguments; "Because we are more certain of the genetic relationship between Indo-European languages, if related lexical items can be associated with the similar myths in the various languages, the possibility of the previous existence of the parent version of the myth greatly increases."[25] The same methodology can be used in narrative studies; one branch of an argument can be used to reinforce the others. If, for example, two stories from different traditions center around the same motif (e.g. a talking raven or flying carpet), however unusual or striking this may be, it is not in itself a compelling

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[24]See more at Beekes 1995:2.

[25]Sick 1996:6.

reason to assume a hereditary connection. But if a linguistic connection can be established, or if they share identical constellations of motifs—perhaps four or more significant identical elements used in the same way and, ideally, in the same order—then it becomes reasonable to explore the possibility of a genetic relationship. The significance of the individual elements is of particular importance. In the comparisons which follow, the number of points of commonality which I have identified varies from five to nineteen, but the numbers do not tell the whole story. Some combinations of motifs are so distinctive and improbable as to make coincidence unthinkable, while others are merely noteworthy. The comparisons have been written up to be as exhaustive as possible in order to show the full range of supporting evidence, though the weight of each point varies greatly, and many are included only for the sake of thoroughness. Jamison elaborates on her similar methodology in describing her tracings of remnants of ritual threaded throughout Homer and the *Mahābhārata*:

> Genetic linguistic comparison seeks to eliminate from its purview similarities due to (a) universal tendencies and (b) chance. Genetic poetic comparison does the same. In order to eliminate universals, both types of comparison look for salient and peculiar details, often details that do not make sense in the synchronic system in which they are currently found, rather than broad general agreements that might be found between any two languages or literary texts. In order to eliminate chance, we look for structured, systematic sets of similarities, rather than isolated facts.[26]

Finding such constellations is possible in epic because oral poets employ thematic groupings as a way of organizing their material. As Gresseth says (regarding the origins of the Homeric Sirens) "Folklore is not, as a rule, discrete bits of unrelated tradition handed down in random fashion; but rather,

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[26]Jamison 1999:228.

especially in tales, it is a fairly complex association of themes or motifs that have a tendency to attract and cling to each other."[27] The use of grouped thematic elements in a stable order as a frame upon which the narrative segments are built is referred to as "Composition by Theme," and is the predominantly held view of how the epics were created and transmitted.[28] Though we deal with Homer as a text, its oral origin puts narrative sequence directly into the spotlight. As any raconteur or police investigator can attest, sequence is a critical feature of oral narrative, the peg from which all hope of comprehensibility depends. Not only does the order in which events occur (as well as the order in which they are narrated) play a crucial role in the determination of their meaning, it is the most basic level at which the singer engages with the story. Before he can begin a song, he must have a firm grasp of the order of its parts so that he can regulate its pace and be certain that nothing is left out. Though sequence is a cardinal feature of narrative, it is neither a straightforward nor an easily explicated one. Discussion and analysis of sequence in oral literature is fraught with complexity, and even to determine what a narrative's component parts are can be challenging. "One of the nagging questions in Oral Theory and generally in folklore studies has always been 'What is the unit?'—that is, at what level do we seek structure, meaning and function?"[29] Our received texts do not give us clear or consistent demarcations of individual units. For Parry and Lord the basic unit of oral literature is the theme: "a subject unit, a group of ideas, regularly employed by a singer, not merely in any given poem, but in the poetry as a

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[27]Gresseth 1970:205.

[28]Lord 1971, Edwards 1991.

[29]Foley 1988:103.

whole."[30] Like their description of the formula, this definition derives its usefulness largely from its amorphousness. A theme, or motif, can be anything from the multi-part description of a wedding to a few characteristic lines used to introduce an assembly or arm a warrior. The component themes of the episodes treated here vary widely in length. Heubeck describes the inherent difficulty of analyzing themes and motifs:

> In the most favorable circumstances, when a scene is of a very frequent kind, e.g. a council, or when the device of ring-composition marks off a scene, it is possible to discern the poet's units of composition. Closer analysis, however, is apt to lose its objective character. For the poet a given motif has no fixed status: he may elaborate it into a whole scene—or set of scenes—or make it a detail in another; or he may change the character of a scene as he proceeds...Analysis into themes, therefore, may legitimately vary from one critic to another, and should always be understood to be 'for the sake of argument'.[31]

This variation is a hallmark of the analysis of oral narrative. According to Lord, expansion and ornamentation are the most common ways in which a singer changes his delivery of a progression, with omission being the next most common, and re-arrangement of sequence ocurring less often and usually done only in special circumstances.[32] Narrative sequence, then, is one of the more static elements in oral literature. Lord writes on the importance of orderliness:

> In all these instances one sees also that the singer always has the end of the theme in his mind. He knows where he is going. As in the adding of one line to another, so in the adding of one element in a theme to another, the singer can stop and fondly dwell upon any single item without losing a sense of

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[30]Lord 1939:410.

[31]Heubeck *et al.*, 1998 vol.I:250.

[32]Lord 1960:ch. 5, see especially his discussion of change at the boundary between themes at 104.

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> the whole. The style allows comfortably for digression or enrichment...The singer's mind is orderly.[33]

Such a style also ensures the durability of "the stable skeleton of narrative."[34] Foley's findings echoes Lord's: "Events such as a feast, assembly, arming the hero, and the like were shown to be tectonic staples of the singer's repertoire, varying as necessary to suit the particular situation, but in their general outline and verbal content quite stable and recognizable from one instance to the next."[35] Ong, studying orality in a broader context than Lord or Foley, also discusses at length the fundamental primacy of organization in oral narrative: "Oral cultures...use stories of human action to store, organize and communicate much of what they know."[36] Narrative provides "relatively substantial lengthy forms that are reasonably durable—which in an oral culture means forms subject to repetition...Where there is no text, the narrative serves to bond thought more massively and permanently than other genres."[37]

All narratives require a sequence of events and follow similar laws of cause and effect, and it is only to be expected that many will appear to duplicate one another in certain respects. Comparisons of narrative are often complicated by the fact that a tale's success depends simultaneously on its ability to be both like and unlike other narratives with which its hearers are familiar; it must be novel enough to intrigue, but not jarring to the hearer's sensibilities or expectations. This leads to a great deal of uniformity in the

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[33]Lord 1960:92.

[34]Lord 1960:99.

[35]Foley, 1999:15.

[36]Ong 1982:140.

[37]Ong 1982:141.

structure of stories within any particular genre, and to literary observations on the order of the various reductionist systems of plot analysis which reduce all literature to n basic plots.[38] These systems are well-known because they do possess an underlying, if limited, validity. Therefore the search for identifiable shared elements must avoid mistaking essentially universal themes or plot organization for inherited infrastructure. Peradotto describes some particular difficulties involved in making thematic comparison:

> We can never be sure whether what we have is an unconscious, more or less necessary, tradition-enforced story pattern, of the kind hypothesized by Albert Lord (1960:165–69), or deliberate imitation of one storyteller's pattern by another, or, for comparable sequences within a single narrative, the deliberate choice of a narrator to make them similar.[39]

These concerns are valid, as is wariness regarding the possibility of coincidence. But in the case of comparison between two texts which are unlikely to have borrowed from one another and are known to have a distant hereditary connection, at a certain degree of similarity, coincidence ceases to be an acceptable explanation. We can look to these sets of unexpected and heterogeneous similarities to trace the relationships between episodes in the Homeric epics and the *Mahābhārata* by using the stable core of narrative order as the link between superficially dissimilar stories. The presence of four or more identical components appearing in the same order within the thematic progression of a pair of stories, particularly when coupled with linguistic evidence, presents a formidable argument in favor of genetic relationship. Furthermore, similarities of this nature inherently argue against borrowing

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[38] e.g. Foster-Harris 1959 (3 basic plots), Tobias 1993 (20 basic plots), Polti 1917 (36 basic plots).

[39] Peradotto 1990:35.

as an explanation, as borrowing is more likely to result in the adoption of a particular unique idea or situation than in the incorporation of a subtle underlying pattern.

The tracing of narrative and thematic patterning, then, is both a reasonable and available way to conduct comparisons between different pieces of orally composed literature, and has in fact been applied to the Homeric epics in the past. Folklore traditions throughout the world are a vast repository of narrative, and have been mined extensively for comparable material: "Folktales in the *Odyssey* are an old subject in classical scholarship, and there is general agreement on their presence in the *Odyssey*."[40] The relationship between folk-tale and the narrative pairs under discussion will be further noted throughout the dissertation.

The study of Homer's female characters is an active and growing area of scholarly interest. Comparison with Sanskrit epic has already shown itself to be a particularly apt avenue for women's studies because so many of the two epic traditions common features are those connected with female characters and women's issues.[41] The upcoming section treats the history of the field of Women in Homer, in preparation for a discussion of what comparative work can add to the picture.

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[40]Edmunds 1990:239. Or Burgess 2001:95: "Much of the material in the *Odyssey* resembles folktales and can hardly be thought to originate with that poem."

[41]As in Littleton 1970, Page 1973:107–8, Suter 1987, Jamison 1994, 1999, and Doniger 1999.

1.4 Scholarship on Women in Homer

A. Initial Efforts

Scholarship dealing with women in the Homeric epics,[42] though dramatically different in tone and reception and markedly increased in volume in recent years, is unchanged in its fundamental assessment of the portrayal of women in the Homeric texts; namely, that their salient features are passivity and untrustworthiness. The following is the main thrust of Kakridis' 1956 description of "The Rôle of the Woman in the *Iliad*," one of the first papers specifically devoted to a discussion of women in the epics:

> Fighting is confined to men only and to them all the interest of heroic poetry is focussed. Duty for old men and women only consists in accepting the effects of man's deeds in an absolutely passive way...It is characteristic that the non-combatant population offer almost not even some ancillary services; there is not a single scene on [sic] the whole *Iliad* where a woman would look after the wounded in Ilion.[43]

The article is brief (six pages) and essentially dismissive of the idea that the *Iliad*'s female characters play a role worthy of scholarly examination. Regarding the presence of females in the *Odyssey*, Kakridis' assessment is no more positive than it is for the *Iliad*'s women, but at least the actual menace

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[42]There is no comparable body of scholarship on women in the *Mahābhārata*. Bhawalkar 1999 and 2002 are general surveys, Shah 1995 discusses gender relations. A number of other works focus on specific characters, usually Draupadī: Hiltebeitel 1980, 1988, 1999, Biardeau 1984–5 Jani 1989, Polomé 1989, Sutherland 1989, Jamison 1994, 1997, 1999, Doniger 1999.

[43]Kakridis 1956:21–22.

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to life and limb is assigned to the proper quarter, and the women portrayed more as enticements than threats:

> And Odysseus; it is not only savages, terrible beasts, and sea-storms he must conquer; it is also the love that three women, Calypso, Circe, and Nausikaa consciously or unconsciously offer him. But, here, too, as a man he will triumph over the trial and he will come out of it free.[44]

Kakridis' effort is not overtly political (at least not regarding gender conflict). His thesis is drawn from a modern Greek poem by Solomos,[45] and centers around authorial intention. His explanation for male-female interactions in the *Iliad* is that "man is the central hero in his work, and it is him the poet wants to hold up by placing a woman in his way who attempts to stop him...The woman's strong reaction has no other poetic aim than to mark out how virtuous the man is."[46] He further supports this conviction by referring again to the limited role played by non-combatants:

> I should also like to remark that the poet could have referred to many other aspects in the life of the non-combatants, equally taken from actual facts; or to more particulars taken from the life of the besieged city or to anything else. But he has only chosen what served the main purpose of his war epos.[47]

Whether because Kakridis' argument was convincing at the time, or simply for lack of interest, the broad subject of female roles in the corpus was ignored for the next 18 years.[48] In 1974, the next general article on the sub-

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[44]Kakridis 1956:21–22. Kakridis' 1949 *Homeric Researches* is kinder, referring to the trio as "women who hardly deserve [Odysseus'] rejection of them," (1949:40).

[45]Kakridis 1956:22.

[46]Kakridis 1956:24–25.

[47]Kakridis 1956:27.

[48]I refer here only to monographs on the subject; discussions of women's roles occasionally occur in other contexts during this time period. A particularly intriguing one comes

ject, Beye's "investigation of the nature of women in the Homeric poems,"[49] attempted a wider scope, since "the feminine component of the *Odyssey* has never been stressed, talked to or accounted for...The generations of male critics apparently did not know how to accommodate women into the epic tradition."[50] Here he summarizes his findings, which, like Kakridis', stress these characters' passivity and untrustworthiness:

> Whatever the authorship of these two poems, it is worth remarking that two very distinct yet perhaps complementary conceptions of women appear, one in each poem. Probably these should be more specifically called *masculine* conceptions of women. In any case, they are, in the *Iliad*, the notion of woman as an object and possession and, in the *Odyssey*, the notion of woman as a needed and feared figure.[51]

Beye does recognize the deep and underlying importance of many of Homer's female figures, which makes this article a fundamental turning point in the early development of this field. His conception of some Homeric women as powerful but not pernicious is insightful on several points, but seems largely to have been ignored by later critics. Beye says:

from Stanford: "Homer does not hesitate at times to present women as more perceptive and more intelligent than men. Arete is cleverer than Alcinous, Helen than Menelaus, Clytemestra (in a brutal way) than Agamemnon. In fact there have been few periods of European literature when women have been portrayed with such frank appraisal as in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. Homer presents them without adulation or contempt, without romanticism or mysticism, simply as another kind of human being who is in some ways stronger and in some ways weaker than men," (1963:13).

[49]Beye 1974:87.

[50]Beye 1974:93. This article mentions the possibility of comparison with the Sanskrit (as well as other epic traditions); "In the *Mahābhārata* women are relatively prominent; in some episodes the chief character is a woman," (1974:93).

[51]Beye 1974:87.

> The ever-recurring feature of the women of this poem is their dominance in the male-female relationship....The women whom I have mentioned are all good figures. Some of them save Odysseus' life. Their dominance is clearly benign. But the subtlety of the poem saves the story from being simply a fairy-tale success.[52]

Though on the whole Beye's approach and conclusions are quite different from Kakridis', both critics share the perception that female characters in the epics function primarily as psychological burs to the male characters:

> The *Odyssey* superbly captures these two conflicting forces in a man's being, the need for women and the fear of submitting to this need. Certainly, if this is so, then the *Odyssey* was composed by a man because this is a man's dilemma. Yet composed by a man who understood that a man's identity could only be found with his woman. It is a wise child who knows his own father, but a wiser man who finds his own wife.[53]

For more than 15 years these two articles remained the only major works on the subject, but their opinions are echoed elsewhere when the subject of women in Homer arises. For example, Finley's major work on the historical background of the *Odyssey* is dismissive: "There is no mistaking the fact that Homer fully reveals what remained true for the whole of antiquity, that women were naturally inferior and therefore limited in their function to the production of offspring and the performance of household duties."[54] Even as late as 1980, Hainsworth sees nothing in Homer's women which merits deeper scrutiny: "Women's virtues are chastity and faithfulness, but Homer attributes to women little will and drive, so that it is difficult to imagine an active female role."[55]

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[52]Beye 1974:96–7.

[53]Beye 1974:99.

[54]Finley 1956:149.

[55]Hainsworth, J.B. 1980:26.

B. Gender Studies

The essential disregard for women's place in the narrative is no longer even a point at issue, as gender studies has become a popular field and Homer a popular topic. The 1990's produced a number of monographs on women in the Homeric epics. Many of these studies were undertaken in the spirit of "exposing" the misogyny of the ancient world, a fact which the scholars discussed above had taken for granted. While in most cases, this generation's fundamental observations about women's roles in Homer remain strikingly similar to those of the two earlier scholars, the reception is worlds apart. Though the approaches of these critics vary, the underlying assumption was the same passivity and untrustworthiness detailed above. The subordination/marginalization of the female characters which Beye and Kakridis had so cheerfully described had become problematic for the more modern reader. An assessment by Blundell, for example, focusses on the passivity of Homeric women:

> "The function assigned to [women] in both the narrative and the society which it represents is not necessarily downgraded, but they are nevertheless seen as peripheral to the real business of life. Women provide causes and rewards, encouragement or restraint; they reflect the sufferings of warfare, and represent the social ties which form the background to the battle scenes. Always, they exist only in relation to their menfolk. Although they are implicated in life's most serious transactions, they do not take an active part in them."[56]

Gregory expresses the problem in these terms:

> By the time the story comes down to us, the assumption that women have no right to question the workings of romance is deeply ingrained, and only

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[56]Blundell 1995:51.

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recently have we developed the capacity to even notice that feminine self-determination is at issue here. That such a capacity has developed demonstrates, however, the uncompromisability of the poem's relativity of meaning, which reasserts itself in the continued emergence of revisionary readings as the cultures the poems address move on to new configurations.[57]

Holmberg notes that the *Odyssey* "generally empowers or validates the masculine at the expense of the feminine."[58] Murnaghan sees programmatic misogyny: "The [*Odyssey*] self-consciously depicts the formation and authorization of a tradition of misogyny even as it places a counter-example [(Penelope)] at the center of its story."[59]

A few critics have tried to provide more reassuring explications of the state of gender politics in Homer.[60] These include Farron's 1979 article which takes the reverse of Kakridis'[61] position: "Homer had different attitudes from his characters. He knew that women are complete human beings and constantly emphasized how deep and intense their feelings are. By doing this he demonstrated how brutal the conduct of the men in the *Iliad* is."[62] This is a tenable position, particularly with the emphasis in the last sentence. But affirmative feminist re-readings cannot address many fundamental gender-related problems with the epics. For example, Doherty's 1995 book, *Siren Songs; Gender, Audiences and Narrators in the Odyssey*, focuses on the androcentric frame of reference within which Beye and Kakridis so contentedly

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[57]Gregory 1996:19.

[58]Holmberg 1997:1–2.

[59]Murnaghan 1986:107.

[60]e.g. Lefkowitz 1987 "The Heroic Women of Greek Epic," and Marquardt 1985.

[61] "The woman...has no other poetic aim than to mark out how virtuous the man is," Kakridis 1956:25.

[62]Farron 1979:30. Also see Foley, H. 1984 for a better-developed analysis of inter-gender comparisons in the *Odyssey*.

operated:

> I conclude that the *Odyssey* presents itself primarily as a closed [i.e. not open to multiple interpretations] text, and that this has serious consequences for its female readers, whose responses it models in elaborate and seductive ways.[63]

Doherty's is an unabashedly self-conscious reading[64] in which far more is at stake than the interpretation of an ancient text:

> For the sake of clarity, let me sketch in broad outline the androcentric and class-based assumptions that I would resist, and that I see as informing not only the ancient epic—the immediate object of my study—but the social conditions in which much of my life, and that of my colleagues and students, is lived.[65]

While her bare-bones description of the male-female dynamic in the epics is essentially the same as Kakridis' and shares elements with Beye's, it uncovers layers of subtlety in the epic's presentation which were invisible to the earlier generation:

> The *Odyssey* adheres to epic convention in taking a male as its actant-subject; it compounds his privilege by making him the focalizer of most of the action and the narrator of a considerable piece of it. All other characters, including the gods, are cast as either helpers or opponents of Odysseus; but a strikingly high proportion of the female characters (including Penelope, who is also an object) alternate between these two roles, so that they appear treacherous or unstable by comparison with the male characters, who tend to be consistent in their allegiance or opposition.[66]

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[63] Doherty 1995:15.

[64] Doherty 1995:9.

[65] Doherty 1995:5.

[66] Doherty 1995:21. This view is shared by Holmberg, who argues that in the *Odyssey* "Penelope's, and female, narrative desires are consistently overcome or appropriated by the narrative desires of the males, particularly Odysseus, in scenarios that resemble [the] first encounter between Penelope and Telemachos," (1995:104).

Not surprisingly, Doherty also differs from Kakridis and Beye on what to do with this knowledge:

> I believe female readers of the *Odyssey* need to be aware that the epic evokes images of ostensible female power that in fact serve to reinforce a male-dominated gender system. But it is equally important for female readers to locate images that can elude or subvert this kind of co-optation.[67]

Siren Songs is a complex book which identifies two categories of these images. The first is that of powerful women capable of subverting what Doherty perceives as the dominant, anti-female atmosphere of the text. The second type consists of instances in which cracks in the redundancy, or over-determination, of the narrative can be found; that is, gaps or "slips" in the epic which allow for a reading of an event or a character which seems at odds with the overall authorial intention.

Doherty proceeds with her examination by first examining the many incidents of storytelling in the text. "These tales-within-the-tale make for an unusual degree of reflexivity within the poem, which invites us to use the detailed portrayals of internal audiences to reconstruct an implied audience for the epic as a whole."[68] She then moves on to discuss the constituents of this implied audience and what messages the epic holds for them. This is an effective approach to untangling the complicated relationship between epic and listener; epic must appeal to its audience and retain its favor, or it will lose its power over them and, subsequently, its power to influence.

The first three chapters of Doherty's book cover the epic as a whole, but in the fourth chapter, Doherty narrows her focus to the female narrators

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[67]Doherty 1995b:88.

[68]Doherty 1995b:86.

and the power they wield within the epic. She limits the discussion to three pairs of narrations: the tales of Helen and Menelaos in Book 4, Circe's and Odysseus' respective accounts of the dangers of the hero's path in Book 12, and the description of the reunion stories of Odysseus and Penelope. In Doherty's analysis, male narrators always win the contest, but at a price. The inconsistencies in the two accounts, although constructed to de-stabilize the female version, have the inadvertent result of creating the same effect on the narrative as a whole, compromising its authority. This narratological/reader-response approach is a particularly apt method for working on oral literature, for which the evolution of storyline is a complex process. Narratology is also uniquely well-suited for work on the *Odyssey*, in which the flow of information to the audience is tightly controlled and filtered on every level (Is Odysseus still alive? Does Penelope know the Stranger is Odysseus? Will Poseidon find out Odysseus has resumed his travels? Will the Phaiacians survive Poseidon's anger?), and where storytelling is of paramount importance.

Most of the above works share the fundamental position that the construction of Homeric female characters reveals unattractive truths about gender inequality in the ancient world, which manifests as the passivity and untrustworthiness of its female characters. At a basic level this is an unassailable position; the gender inequality of Classical Antiquity is not in contention. But there are limits to the usefulness of scholarship aimed at exposing it. A different approach to the problem of coming to terms with 12th–8th B.C.E. gender politics and the role of women in Homer comes in the form of character studies, which can provide a sharper focus, unblurred by the multiplicity of female roles in Homer. With the character studies discussed below, we

see a shift away from passivity and untrustworthiness as the focus of the discussion on women in Homer.

C. Character Studies

Two recent books concentrate on Penelope and read what others perceive as the passivity of her role as inventive structuring of the story. Felson-Rubin's *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* examines the many different facets of Penelope's character.

> This book explores the relationship between character and poetics in Homer's *Odyssey*. It begins by regarding a specific character, Penelope, both as the nexus of the gazes of other characters, all male, and as a subject acting from her own desire. Like Odysseus on his journeys, she is beset by obstacles, many of them exacerbated by her role as wife and mother. Yet she triumphs, and on her own terms. The Penelope who emerges by the end of the poem is a forceful figure who operates imaginatively within the constraints of her situation and succeeds in keeping her options open until she reaches safety in her husband's embrace.[69]

Where other critics take the incomplete picture we get of Penelope as a lack of coherence in her character or the storyline, Felson-Rubin views her as a tantalizing mystery meant to draw us in but keep us guessing. In contrast to Doherty's reading of the *Odyssey* as a monophonic, closed text, Felson-Rubin reads Homer as creating a "polyphony of contending voices,"[70] and she uses many of the same passages Doherty characterizes as misogynist to argue that through these passages "Homer challenges traditional views of a woman's place expressed within the poem by such characters as the suitors,

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[69]Felson-Rubin 1994:vii.
[70]Felson-Rubin 1994:xi.

Agamemnon, and Telemakhos."[71] Felson-Rubin sees the multi-faceted character of Penelope as the entry point for narrative possibility in the *Odyssey*:

> The perspectives on Penelope as object create multiple images of her for the listener; yet only the image of the faithful wife survives to the end of the poem and enters into the post-Homeric tradition. Other images—the coy tease, the enchantress, the unreliable mother, the adultress, the hard-hearted wife—are ultimately contradicted or fail to fulfill their narrative potential. Nevertheless, the possible plots these images generate...complicate the epic and contribute to its rich texture.[72]

The book's greatest strength is its relaxed (though not disorganized) approach to interpretation, and its main contribution lies not so much in any particular conclusions as in the gradual expansion of our understanding of Penelope as we are led through the perspectives Felson-Rubin lays out before us.

Katz's (1991) tack is not far removed from Felson-Rubin's, though she couches the discussion in terms of Penelope's character as it is constructed to reflect κλέος (whereas Felson-Rubin concentrates on ἀρετή), and rather than Felson-Rubin's contending voices and shadow possibilities, Katz sees indeterminacy as the hallmark of both Penelope's character and the *Odyssey* itself. "I argue...that it is especially in the case of Penelope that there exists a dissonance in the text between the denotative and connotative levels of meaning, or between what is said and what is implied. This indeterminancy is peculiar to the *Odyssey*, and it is incorporated into its narrative structure as its defining quality."[73] Katz describes it further:

> This disruption of the fixity of Penelope's character, then, functions, like Odysseus's disguise, as a strategy of estrangement—we do not know, in a

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[71]Felson-Rubin 1994:vii.

[72]Felson-Rubin 1994:3.

[73]Katz 1991:10–11.

> certain sense, 'who' Penelope is. Her 'character' is thus rendered so as to represent an analogue to her state of sociological indeterminacy, which is defined by her lack of a *kyrios* or authorizing agent.[74]

In the text, this indeterminacy in the construction of Penelope is set against the all-too-well-determined story of Clytemestra and the fate of Agamemnon, and it is this interplay which provides the dramatic tension of the story. Katz goes on to argue that Penelope's indeterminacy is set in opposition to the defining features of other characters' engagement with the narrative: Odysseus' "geographical uncertainty"[75] and Telemachus' "chronological uncertainty."[76]

As does Doherty, Katz views Penelope as an object, and as a particularly opaque one,[77] though she does place her at the dead center of the narrative structure: "It is the figure of Penelope through whom this indeterminacy is encoded into the text."[78] In this respect *Penelope's Renown* differs from the other works discussed here. While most of them read the text in a new way to reinterpret a character, Katz re-interprets a character to read the text in a new way.

One final example concentrates on the *Iliad*'s Thetis, who can not be construed as either passive or untrustworthy. Slatkin's 1991 *The Power of Thetis: Allusion and Interpretation in the Iliad* finds yet another path for character analysis. Since we know that the Homeric texts embody only a

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[74]Katz 1991:193.

[75]Katz 1991:7.

[76]Katz 1991:7.

[77]"Even when Penelope speaks her mind, it is hard to know what is on it," Katz 1991:191.

[78]Katz 1991:18-9.

portion of the mythology from which they spring, Slatkin posits that by applying careful scrutiny both to our text of Homer and to other peripheral sources of the myths, it ought to be possible to discover hidden components of the story. "The epic audience's knowledge of the alternative possibilities allows the poet to build his narrative by deriving meaning not only from what the poem includes, but from what it consciously excludes."[79] The result is a thoughtful examination of the dual nature of Thetis, who is powerful enough to save Zeus himself when he was overthrown by the other gods, but helpless to save her own son.

I have discussed the history of the study of women in Homer at such length because such a large proportion of the scenes which appear to have strong Indo-European ties are those which center around female characters, including five of the six pairs of scenes discussed in the present work. Comparative analysis can offer a great deal in respect to understanding the structuring of these scenes, and thus has great relevance to the discussion of women's roles and construction in the epics. But most of the works discussed above center around the epics' treatment of the major female figures, such as Penelope, Helen, and Clytemestra, whereas the parallels I treat are concerned with less prominent characters. In both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Odyssey*, male heroes, during their obligatory wanderings in the forest or on the high seas, are repeatedly accosted and often rendered great assistance by female strangers, and the *Iliad* contains a wide assortment of goddesses who assist

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[79]Slatkin 1991:4.

their mortal sons or favorites. The beautiful semi-divine woman who appears at just the right moment to save the hero from further discomfort or death is a common plot element. The next section describes the scholarly treatment of these helper figures, both singly and as a class.

1.5   Perceptions of Female Helpers in the Epics

In current scholarship, the *Odyssey*[80] is better known for its female monsters than for its female counselors or helpers; Schein's description of the "nonhuman females who threaten the hero or his return homeward"[81] is characteristic of the way the *Odyssey*'s female strangers have been construed:

> These females, to hear Odysseus tell of them, are often monstrous, and their menace is either literally or symbolically sexual—specific instances of the general danger of being swallowed, engulfed, concealed, or obliterated, against which he constantly struggles.[82]

The view is widespread and consistently expressed by most scholars whose work touches these figures even tangentially:[83] "Many obstacles are placed in the way of [Odysseus'] homecoming, and it is significant that the great majority of these are female,"[84] reads one broad description of female figures in the epics.

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[80]There is almost no comparable work on female helpers in the *Mahābhārata*. Paula Richman's 1999 conference paper, "Seeing the *Mahābhārata* Through the *Rāmāyaṇa* Tradition" (Madison 10-16-99), on a comparison of the Hiḍimbā and Śūrpaṇakhā episodes is the only example I have encountered.

[81]Schein 1995:19.

[82]Schein 1995:19.

[83]Treatments of the subject in general include Taylor 1963 and Schein 1995. The Sirens are covered in Gresseth 1971 and Pucci 1979, and an interesting theory of their origins is offered in Aasved 1996. Calypso is the subject of Güntert 1919, Anderson 1958, and Crane 1988 (who also treats Circe, as does Scully 1987). Segal 1969 deals with Circe's post-Homeric tradition, as do Warner 1999 and Yarnall 1994.

[84]Blundell 1995:51.

Even in the most insightful references, the stressed element is danger, as in Segal's assessment here: "The *Odyssey* is unusually cognizant of the charm and subtle power, the potential helpfulness and dangerousness of woman; and Circe embodies in concentrated form the complex ambiguity of the Odyssean female."[85] Suzuki puts the threat more mildly: "all these women tempt Odysseus to turn aside from the mindfulness of the present to seek oblivion in the past or in timeless immortality."[86] Lincoln discusses the Homeric construction of the unique weapons of femininity:

> Calypso's blandishments immobilize Odysseus and the story alike, but Odysseus is powerless against them. Her *logoi* are playful and winsome, even flirtatious, but unscrupulous and manipulative nonetheless. Effective for the speaker, such words are correspondingly dangerous to the hearer, for with and through them, those who are weaker—women in particular, but others as well—repeatedly overcome those more gifted in physical strength.[87]

Taylor catalogs women among all the various obstacles Odysseus faces (including "death by water") and finds that the common feature of all these threats is a challenge to Odysseus' identity.[88] One charming exception to the rule is Stanford in a piece on personal relationships in Homer. After lamenting that Achilles has no close friends in the Achaean camp he points out that at least "Odysseus' relations with his family in Ithaca, as well as with the Phaiacians, Calypso, and Circe, were...easy and genial...The amorous goddesses had no reason to fear his wiles."[89]

Though feminist critics have not rejected the majority view, they have found certain ways to temper it. Doherty, for example, recognizes the con-

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[85] Segal 1968:419.

[86] Suzuki 1989:70.

[87] Lincoln 1996:9, following Martin 1989 on *logoi* and *muthoi*.

[88] Taylor 1963.

[89] Stanford 1962:12.

tributions of women to Odysseus' *nostos*, but reads the female helpers as not particularly trustworthy allies:

> All other characters are cast as either helpers or opponents of Odysseus; but a strikingly high proportion of the female characters...alternate between these two roles so that they appear treacherous or unstable by comparison with the male characters, who tend to be consistent in their allegiance or opposition.[90]

While it is true that Circe and Calypso are, to varying degrees, antagonists to the hero before becoming his supporters, it is unfair to claim that they "alternate," since no female character ever revokes her allegiance once it has been given to Odysseus. Doherty also sees a "pattern of female betrayal of males,"[91] and many incidents in the *Odyssey* can be called upon to bolster her argument. Nausikaa's advice to Odysseus, for example, is essentially on how to manipulate (though not to betray) her own father: "Stranger, then attend my words, so that you may as soon as possible receive an escort and homecoming from my father." ("ξεῖνε, σὺ δ' ὦκ' ἐμέθεν ξυνίει ἔπος, ὄφρα τάχιστα / πομπῆς καὶ νόστοιο τύχῃς παρὰ πατρὸς ἐμοῖο.") (*Odyssey* VI.289-290), as is Eidothea's to Menelaus (*Odyssey* IV.414–24). This pattern is far from unique to the *Odyssey*. "The daughter who acts against her father is a common *Märchen* motif,"[92] and young women who betray family for a strange man also occur in the *Mahābhārata*. Even more drastically than Eidothea or Nausicaa, Hiḍimbā (discussed in Section 2.3.2) chooses to place her loyalties with the stranger she has just met rather than with her own kin:

दृष्ट्वैव भीमसेनं सा शालस्कन्धमिवोद्गतम् ।
राक्षसी कामयामास रूपेणाप्रतिमं भुवि ॥ १३

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[90]Doherty 1995:21.

[91]Doherty 1995:62.

[92]Heubeck et al. 1998 vol. I:216; Thompson Motif Index G 530.2.

अयं श्यामो महाबाहुः सिंहस्कन्धो महाद्युतिः ।
कम्बुग्रीवः पुष्कराक्षो भर्ता युक्तो भवेन्मम ॥ १४
नाहं भ्रातृवचो जातु कुर्यां क्रूरोपसंहितम् ।
पतिस्नेहोऽतिबलवान्न तथा भ्रातृसौहृदम् ॥ १५
(Mahābhārata 1.139.13–15)

She, having seen Bhīmasena, grown up like a śāla trunk
foremost on earth for his beauty, the demoness loved him. *(13)*
"This dark, big-armed, lion-shouldered, gleaming,
conch-necked, lotus-eyed one will be my wedded husband. *(14)*
I don't have to follow my brother's outrageous orders.
Spousal devotion is stronger than sisterly affection." *(15)*

She recalls her change of loyalties in an impassioned plea for the right to subsequently marry the hero:

मया ह्युत्सृज्य सुहृदः स्वधर्मं स्वजनं तथा ।
वृतोऽयं पुरुषव्याघ्रस्तव पुत्रः पतिः शुभे ॥ ७
(Mahābhārata 1.143.7)

By me, having forsaken friends, my duty, and family
this tigerlike son of yours was chosen as a husband, O Beautiful One. *(7)*

In the *Mahābhārata*, an unbreakable code establishes the natural progression of a woman's life as moving from the protection of her father to that of her husband and his family. In fiction at least, this requires that she establish bonds of trust and friendship with male strangers who might be marriage candidates. The possibility that by following this pattern she may subsequently considered to be untrustworthy is inconceivable within the text. This standard cannot be presumed to hold true across the board within the *Odyssey*—witness Nausicaa's concerns at *Odyssey* VI.255–289—but the majority of female betrayals of family members seem to pass without

comment. Certainly in the case of Eidothea, the most clear-cut example of betrayal of a male relative, the narration only emphasizes her truthfulness and trustworthiness in her dealings with Menelaos: "τοιγὰρ ἐγώ τοι, ξεῖνε, μαλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύσω." "Indeed, Stranger, I will truthfully tell you everything," (*Odyssey* IV.383, 399), and Menelaos himself does not even pause for consideration, but responds by asking her to show him how to proceed (*Odyssey* IV.395). Ultimately, as in Nausicaa's case, Eidothea's role is not that of traitor, but intercessor.

Another assessment of the part played by female strangers which stands out from the rest is Murnaghan's depiction of female involvement in the *Odyssey* as the result of Athena's "enlistment of female characters in the male-centered project of the hero's Return."[93] Murnaghan fully recognizes the positive contributions and impact of Odysseus' interactions with the female strangers, but she perceives them as the puppets of Athena:

> The *Odyssey*, then, goes out of its way to identify the story it tells as Athena's project and, in doing so, signals both its concern with issues of gender and its finally conservative position on those issues. Athena has a distinctive role in the Greek mythological tradition as a figure who resolves conflicts between male and female powers. The resolutions she effects involve both the acknowledgment of female strength and the establishment of hierarchies in which the female is subordinated to the male. Through her own origins and nature and through her interventions in human situations, Athena neutralizes the threats that the female is felt to pose for the male and enlists female figures as willing participants in stable, male-dominated social structures.[94]

I would maintain, however, that while Athena is central as Odysseus' bulwark against disaster, the essential conflicts the goddess seeks to resolve in the *Odyssey* are between males: Odysseus' conflicts with Poseidon and

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[93]Murnaghan 1995:63.

[94]Murnaghan 1995:61–62.

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Zeus/Helios, and his grievance against the suitors. And the fact that a goddess, rather than a god, is entrusted with this important role in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* does nothing to contradict the assertion that in epic, females are better allies than males.

A commonsense approach to the issue reveals little clear basis for the perception of Odysseus as being set in conflict with a procession of females. A simple tally of the *Odyssey*'s victims and aggressors reveals that human or divine women actually cause no loss of life to Odysseus and his crew; there are three encounters with monstrous females, but they are not particularly deadly. Out of a total of twelve boatloads of casualties, six men are seized and devoured by Scylla, a female sea-monster,[95] while Charybdis, a female whirlpool, and the Sirens[96] merely pose some risk (avoided through the advice of Circe) to the hero and his crew. How these creatures should influence our reading of the other female characters in the epics is unclear; Greek monsters are typically feminine (e.g. Hydra, Sphinx, Chimaera, Echidna,), so the female gender of the *Odyssey*'s true monsters may or may not be any more significant than the fact that all rivers are male.[97] In any case, as there

[95]Scully 1987 on doubling in the tale of Odyseseus, offers an interesting reading of parallels between the Cyclops and Scylla episodes, strengthening a case that Scylla is better placed within a "human/monster" binary than within than "a male/female" one (1987:402–6).

[96]As has been noted in Pucci 1979, the Sirens' gender is not actually designated within the text, though there can be little doubt that they were widely conceived of as female.

[97]In other words, the psychological underpinnings of the choice of "female" as the preferred gender for monsters are not clear from the evidence available. The tendency could reflect the idea that females are more dangerous than males, or it could indicate that since females are typically less dangerous than males, a female monster is a greater perversion

are no parallel female monsters in the *Mahābhārata* to treat, the current study can offer no clear path to their interpretation on those grounds. But the presentation of the encounters with the monsters does not resemble the presentation of the encounters with helper figures, and equating them with one another on the basis of their gender alone is not compelling.

In contrast, even a brief overview of the outcomes of encounters with male strangers demonstrates that they are much more likely to result in conflict and death than in assistance to the hero. In both the Homeric epics and the *Mahābhārata*, encounters between males usually begin with a power struggle, whereas among the females this is true only of Circe. Immediately following their departure from Troy, Odysseus and his companions are first routed by the army of the Kikonians, with heavy casualties (six men per ship, *Odyssey* IX.39–61). The Cyclopes, as a race, are monstrous and barbarous (*Odyssey* IX,105–135), with Polyphemos, alone in his cave and wifeless, as the worst and most violent offender among them. Odysseus and a hand-picked band of men escape from the Cyclops only after having lost six of their number to him (*Odyssey* IX.216–460). More civilized male strangers are safe when met as equals, or at least when neither party is at an obvious disadvantage. Aeolus is initially friendly and even offers the valuable gift of the bag of winds when they approach him on an equal footing as a successful war party (*Odyssey* X.13–27). But unlike Eidothea and Leukothea, who easily take pity on help-less strangers accursed by the gods, Aeolus sends the party away abruptly without further help when they return to his island in need (*Odyssey* X.70–76). Their next stop, the island of the Laistrygones, provides a particularly

of the norm and therefore more horrifying and more monstrous.

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instructive example of the substantive difference between confrontations with male and female strangers. The men sent as a reconnaissance expedition encounter three individuals of increasing decrees of hostility. The first is a young girl drawing water:[98]

κούρῃ δὲ ξύμβληντο πρὸ ἄστεος ὑδρευούσῃ,
θυγατέρ' Ἰφθίμῃ Λαιστρυγόνος Ἀντιφάταο.
ἡ μὲν ἄρ' ἐς κρήνην κατεβήσετο καλλιρέεθρον
Ἀρτακίην· ἔνθεν γὰρ ὕδωρ προτὶ ἄστυ φέρεσκον.
οἱ δὲ παριστάμενοι προσεφώνεον, ἔκ τ' ἐρέοντο
ὅς τις τῶνδ' εἴη βασιλεὺς καὶ οἷσιν ἀνάσσοι.
ἡ δὲ μάλ' αὐτίκα πατρὸς ἐπέφραδεν ὑψερεφὲς δῶ.
(*Odyssey X.105–111*)

They came upon a girl drawing water outside of the city,
Iphthime, the daughter of the Laistrygonian Antiphates.
She had gone down to the clear-flowing spring,
Artakie, from which they used to bear water to the city.
They stood around talking, and they asked her
who of them was king and lord over them.
and she readily pointed out the high-roofed house of her father.

She is hardly "the terrifying and gigantic daughter...of the Laistrygonian king Antiphates."[99] Iphthime,[100] Antiphates' daughter, is apparently very

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[98]This is typical in Classical literature. Because drawing water, and the performance of tasks requiring water (washing, cooking) were largely performed by women, encountering a woman at a water source was a standard occurrence, as in the encounter with Nausicaa, and even the disguised Athena is carrying a pitcher at *Odyssey* VII.20. The "conversation at the well" is, in fact, a common motif throughout the literature of the ancient world, from the OT meetings of Moses and Zippora and Jacob and Rebecca, to Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7–42), to other instances in classical literature. Also see the discussion of the woman at the well in Keuls 1985, and Heubeck *et al.* 1989 vol. II:47–48 on the various folk-tale elements present in the Laistrygonian episode.

[99]Murnaghan 1995:65.

[100]Her name does mean "strong" or "mighty", but as this is also the name of Penelope's

much like any other young woman, and nothing about her description or the encounter hints at the monstrosity of her parents. While we are not given a detailed description or assessment of Iphthime's looks or personality, the implication is that she is harmless and helpful enough to converse with at the well, and nothing about her rouses the men's suspicion or fear before reaching her father's house. When they arrive at the palace, however, their first sight of the girl's mother tells them that something is drastically amiss:

οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ εἰσῆλθον κλυτὰ δώματα, τὴν δὲ γυναῖκα
εὗρον ὅσην τ' ὄρεος κορυφήν, κατὰ δ' ἔστυγον αὐτήν.
ἡ δ' αἶψ' ἐξ ἀγορῆς ἐκάλει κλυτὸν Ἀντιφατῆα,
ὃν πόσιν, ὃς δὴ τοῖσιν ἐμήσατο λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον.
αὐτίχ' ἕνα μάρψας ἑτάρων ὁπλίσσατο δεῖπνον·
(*Odyssey X.112–116*)

When they went on there to the magnificent house, a woman
they found there, as great as the peak of a mountain, and they loathed her.
She quickly called magnificent Antiphates from the town,
her husband, and he devised grim destruction for them.
At once snatching one of the companions, he prepared him for dinner.

Thus, while the mother is more terrifying than the daughter, it is her husband who poses the real threat. The male Laistrygones go on to spear and stone Odysseus' men, carrying the bodies off to consume later, and destroying the other 11 ships in the convoy (*Odyssey* X.115–132). As unsettling as their size may be, the women are harmless on their own. This type of gender disparity is not uncommon in epic or folklore, from Hiḍimbā the *rākṣasī* (treated in the next chapter) to the frightening-but-not-violent wife of the Giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk," whose attempts to hide Jack from her husband precipitate the use of the story's defining "fee-fi-fo-fum" utterance.

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sister (*Odyssey* IV.797) this need not be taken too literally.

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It might be possible to read Iphthime's friendliness as a trap or an enticement, but as in the case of the Cyclops (*Odyssey* IX.172–176) or the Lotus Eaters (*Odyssey* IX.88–90), the men were on a deliberate errand to find the denizens of the country and make contact with them.

Even among the otherwise exemplary and hospitable Phaiacians, Odysseus must overcome some initial antipathy from the men,[101] ranging from the hostilities Nausicaa merely imagines will be directed at him if he accompanies her through the city to the palace, to her pointed suggestion to "go on past" (τὸν παραμειψάμενος) her father and approach her mother, to the actual gibes of Euryalus and Laodamas, which he must neutralize through superior athletic performance (*Odyssey* VIII.143–255, esp. 186-198). As Heubeck has it, "we are given to understand that an appeal to the Phaeacians is attended by some hazard. They are ὑπερφίαλοι[102] ["arrogant, insolent"] (vi 274) and Odysseus is to address himself not to their king, but to their queen."[103]

Even Odysseus' own crew is a mixed blessing, though they have an affectionate relationship with him which is expressed many times. Even so, they grumblingly suspect him of hoarding treasure and undo the bag of winds (*Odyssey* X.34–55). By defying Odysseus' express orders, they make an enemy of Helios, the Sun God, by eating the sacred cattle on the island of Thrinachia. After Zeus has punished them for this offense, Odysseus is the only one left alive (*Odyssey* XII.325–425). Finally, back in Ithaca, Odysseus must defeat the horde of suitors who plague his house. Whether through a

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[101]See especially Rose 1969. Benardete 1997:45–61 details some of the contradictions inherent in the presentation of the Phaiacian's attitude to strangers.

[102]Also used of the Cyclops at *Odyssey* IX.106.

[103]Heubeck et al., 1988:I,316.

conscious agenda, or merely in the course of striving for versimilitude, the encounters of lone men with strangers are constructed in such a way as to indicate that the male sex is more dangerous than the female, and that creditable sources of help and advice to the lonely wanderer are more frequently of the feminine gender. Odysseus meets a wide variety of powerful women in the course of his wanderings, most of whom render him positive assistance, but the only males whose help proves useful (Hermes, Eumaios, Telemachus, Philoitios) are not strangers. These examples do not speak well of the treatment one can expect at the hands of a male stranger, particularly those who have an advantage in power, size, or strength, and those whose behavior is not softened by the presence of female household members.

Though there is no scholarly discussion over the behavior of male or female strangers in the *Mahābhārata*, it is worth noting here that the same pattern may be found. The Pāṇḍavas have a number of encounters with strange males during their initial sojourn in the wilderness. Bhīma must slay not only Hiḍimbā's brother, but also the other vicious *rākṣasa* Baka. Later, though the brothers eventually form an alliance with the gandharva Aṅgāraparṇa Citraratha, they do so only after a fierce fight and the gandharva's defeat and humiliation in front of his wife (*Mahābhārata* 1.158–9); yet again, a married, civilized male can be converted to an ally by having the hero emerge victorious but charitable from competition with the stranger. Bhīma must confront a huge assortment of male assailants during their later travels, including the *rākṣasa* Jaṭāsura, who abducts his wife and brothers (*Mahābhārata* 3.154), the Yakṣa Maṇimat (*Mahābhārata* 3.157.50), Baka's brother, Kirmīra (*Mahābhārata* 3.12), and an entire troop of Krodhavaśa

rākṣasas who guard the pleasure garden of Kubera (*Mahābhārata* 3.151–153).

There is also a recurring phenomenon in episodes from both traditions which suggests some "duties" within the epic narratives must be performed by a female character. Jamison 1994 demonstrates that Helen's identification of the Achean heroes from the wall of Troy at *Iliad* III.161–244 is not merely a poetic device, but a critical feature of Indo-European rituals governing illegal abductions and re-abductions. In another example, it is up to Penelope to break the tension over the question of Odysseus' return, and she finally does so by announcing the contest of the bow. The competition Penelope devises is then analogous to Sītā's *svayamvara* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and Draupadī's in the *Mahābhārata*.[104] The competition allows Odysseus, in disguise as a beggar, to seize the opportunity to reclaim his control over the household. In much the same way, the *Mahābhārata*'s Damayantī decides to institute a *svayamvara* in order to find her missing husband Nala (*Mahābhārata* 3.68.20–23), who appears at the court in a god-granted disguise, much as Odysseus does in Ithaca. After the intervention of a kindly serving maid who questions the wanderer (in a scene very much reminiscent of Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus), Nala and Damayantī are finally reunited.

We are nevertheless left with the widespread modern perception that the women are the dangerous elements in the Homeric story. This may be in part due to the comparative length and weight of episodes involving females versus those involving males in Odysseus' tale of woe. While the Cyclops encounter is substantial, the episodes involving the Laistrygones and Thrinachia appear vanishingly small next to the full and careful development of

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[104]See Page 1972:107–108.

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the scenes which take place on Circe and Calypso's islands.[105] This attention leads to yet another explanation for the primacy of women in presentation and perception: there are compelling reasons why having a hero encounter a series of females is more attractive to both poet and audience than having him encounter a series of males. Among these may be the exact opposite of the prevailing viewpoint: it is not that strange women are automatically conceived of as dangerous hindrances, but rather that strange men are. Using benevolent females as vehicles of rescue for the hero at points of crisis allows the narrator to amplify the levels of danger and excitement in the narrative by putting the hero into, and then rescuing him from, increasingly dire straits. Furthermore, female characters provide an opportunity for lush descriptions of beauty, gratifying scenes of personal comfort (hot baths, clean clothes), and the timeless allure of an opportunity for sex and romance. While the episodes involving males follow a standard pattern (conflict) and have a standard outcome (death and violence), encounters with women can vary pleasantly in content and outcome, while operating within a familiar but intriguing template.

The study of women in Homer is a young field, and appears to be still growing. The present work augments the discussion with a comparison of six pairs of scenes which occur in both the Homeric epics and the *Mahābhārata*. Disregarding the encounters with the Sirens and Scylla and Charybdis, Homeric meetings between heroes and strange women can be marshalled into three

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[105]The inconspicuousness of the Thrinachia episode is especially remarkable, since it is the linchpin of the entire epic; see Sick 1996 and Crane 1988:143–156.

types: the island-dwelling δεινὴ θεός, the friendly nymphs, and the young princess. Remarkably, Indic scenes of the same basic type fall into the same three categories, with little overlap and no exceptions. I have also treated a pair of incidents in which a goddess drives a hero's chariot in battle for him, thus extending the comparison to the *Iliad* as well, and for contrast I have discussed the *Cyclopeia* and its close parallel from the *Mahābhārata*. But it is one thing to observe this parallelism as a phenomenon, and another to discuss its implications for epic development. It is my contention that similarities in content and structure exist between scenes involving heroes and female helpers because they are the result of a slow evolution from a common set of ancestral oral narratives, through the process of composition by theme.

This approach, and the conclusions it provides, intersect at an oblique angle with most of the scholarship on women in Homer described in the preceeding sections and can neither validate or disprove the individual findings of other scholars in that area. What it can offer is a way to approach both Homer's misogyny and his lovingly drawn portraits of magnificent female characters through an attempt to trace the evolution of a number of his female roles. By and large, the oral origins of Homeric epic have figured little in the approaches of most of the scholars who work specifically on women. There is nothing unreasonable in simply approaching a text as a text, and the work discussed in the previous section has done much to illuminate the text that is our Homer. But the Oral Theory and its ramifications are critical to our understanding of Homer as well, and approaching Homer's female characters with respect to issues of orality and epic development offers a number of ad-

vantages to interpretation. The female characters we see in Homer were not conceived of and executed by one person with a distinct set of objectives, but shaped over vast stretches of time by many contributors. This is not meant to imply that the characters, or the narratives, lack coherence, but that trying to assemble a literary analysis which does not take their developmental processes into account can produce misleading results. This dissertation will examine what comparison can reveal about the development of the epics and the female characters within them, and why the Greek and Indic epics share a dependence upon this constellation of female roles. What the undertaking can tell us about gender portrayal in the epic is equally important; while it offers support for the view that character's roles are sharply differentiated by gender, it offers much evidence for rejection of the idea that female roles are defined either by passivity or untrustworthiness, or that maleness is necessarily a more privileged quality. I hope to demonstrate that there is an inherited Indo-European core to the epics which consistently places women in roles which are neither passive or untrustworthy but rather helpful to the hero, and in which hostility and danger are the province of male characters. This hypothesis is best illustrated in the context of the narratives under discussion, to an examination of which we will now proceed. In the following sections I will discuss the Homeric scenes and their Sanskrit comparanda from the six sets of incidents described above, in terms of their relationship to one another and the significance of their structure independent of genetic relationship.

2 The Amorous *Deinē Theos*: Calypso, Circe and Hiḍimbā

2.1 Calypso, Circe, and the Composition of the *Odyssey*

Calypso and Circe are the logical starting points for our discussion, as they are the subject of a number of discussions regarding female figures in the *Odyssey*. The episodes resemble one another on multiple levels, from the visits of Hermes to the shared epithet-phrase "ἐϋπλόκαμος δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα" at X.136 and XII.449, to the singing and weaving at V.61-2 and X.221-2. Even Odysseus connects and almost conflates the two at *Odyssey* IX.29–33. But the comparison can be an awkward one as well; in spite of shared characteristics the episodes carry distinct flavors. In his comparison of the two, Taylor points out that in spite of their correspondences, when the scenes are viewed together, "a strong contrast emerges, a contrast as between darkness and light."[106] Boyd discusses the Circe narrative in the context of various elements it shares with Homeric episodes other than Calypso, particularly with the scenes involving Helen and Arete.[107]

But it is the similarities between the Circe and Calypso episodes which

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[106]Stanford 1963:14.

[107]i.e., the bathing of Odysseus (10:357–65 = 4:252–3 = 8:449–55), the mixing of a posset (10:235–6 = 4:220–32 = Il.11:637–42), rubbing and its use in charms (10:391–2 = 4:277), Odysseus' invulnerability to enchantment (10:326–9 = 4:277–89). Boyd 1998:4–6. (Mossé 1981:154 also sees the similarity between Helen and Arete which Boyd describes.)

have attracted the most attention, and the two are frequently treated as a pair. There was much early dispute regarding the two goddesses' origins and relationship to one another, in keeping with the Analyst inclination to try to unravel the origins of the Homeric epics. Most early work relating to Calypso and Circe was carried out not so much on these characters in and of themselves, but with an eye to understanding what they could tell us about the composition and development of the *Odyssey*. Wilamowitz, for example, declared Calypso a poetic invention based upon a pre-existing Circe character: "es ist ganz undenkbar, dafs beide personen nicht identisch sein sollten, die eine der andern nachgebildet...Kalypso ist eine fingirte person; also ist sie die spätere. folglich gab es eine zeit, wo Odysseus zwar bei Kirke war, aber nicht bei Kalypso."[108] In contrast, he felt that Circe, though deeply embedded in the substance of the epic, was an element inherited from folk-tales, and that the Calypso who was specially created for the epic went on to influence the Circe who had already found her way there; "unsere Kirke nach unserer Kalypso gedichtet ist."[109] While it is almost certainly true that the Circe and Calypso episodes each influenced the form the other took, the issue of which one constitutes the "original" figure cannot be so glibly resolved. In fact, given what we now understand about the nature of epic development, it is counterproductive to attempt a resolution.[110]

Lang argued vehemently against Wilamowitz's arguments regarding Circe

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[108](sic) Wilamowitz 1884:116.

[109]Wilamowitz 1884:121.

[110]As Cook: "The question of the priority of Circe or Calypso becomes irrelevent when one considers the goddesses in generic terms, since both are derived from a common mythological archetype, rather than one from the other," (1992:249).

and Calypso's relevance to the composition and dating of the *Odyssey* in a special chapter[111] and clung instead to his Unitarian perspective. Güntert, too, disagreed sharply[112] with Wilamowitz regarding the significance of the commonalities between Circe and Calypso: "aber diese Ähnlichkeit beschränkt sich bei näherem Zusehen lediglich auf das allgemeine Motiv, daß schöne Frauen den Helden auf seiner Heimfahrt aufzuhalten suchen."[113] Though to some the above statement might seem to be a grudging admission that the two are of a type, to Güntert the elements of witchcraft in the Circe story form an obstacle too large to ignore. "Wer kann wirklich den völligen Unterschied in der Charakteristik der beiden schönen Frauen übersehen?"[114] He focusses instead on situating Calypso as a goddess of the dead. Güntert's proposition brought about strong disagreement from Meuli (1921) and Woodhouse (1930) who both chose to follow Wilamowitz. The controversy resurfaces in various other works (e.g. Andersen 1958, who sees Calypso's island as Elysium), and is discussed at length in Crane 1988, which adopts Güntert's view that Calypso has ties to the Underworld, but breaks with him by seeing these ties even more prominently in the Circe episode and in Priam's visit to Achilles. There is a case to be made for the connection to the Underworld, and it links well with other episodes in the *Odyssey* such as the *Nekuia* and the *Phaiakis*, as in Cook's 1992 assertion that the Phaiacians are linked to the ferrymen of the dead and the island of Circe:

> Circe and Calypso belong to a larger class of littoral females which includes

[111]Lang 1892:275–89.

[112] "Für mich ist dies leider nur eine Kette von Trugschlüssen und schiefen Behauptungen, die zu einer unhaltbaren Kombination führen müssen," Güntert 1919:8.

[113]Güntert 1919:8.

[114]Güntert 1919:9.

Eidothea and Siduri, among others. Most important, Circe and Calypso both act as facilitators, sending Odysseus on voyages which take him to Hades and Scheria respectively. Thus, the parallels observed within the Circe and Calypso episodes extend beyond them; and we should note in this context that the organization of the narrative isolates the Calypso-episode from the rest of the *Apologue*, so that it introduces the *Phaiakis*. Circe and Calypso are generic equivalents serving identical narrative functions; Scheria is related to Hades, at least structurally. But what exactly does this association prove? Certainly that Scheria is in some sense analogous to Hades. Yet the analogy holds whether we relate Scheria to Hades or to Elysium, so that it remains unclear on structural grounds whether both nymphs send Odysseus to Hades, or whether Circe sends him to Hades, Calypso to Elysium.[115]

Or, as Crane sees it: "The two figures share precisely those elements which mark Circe and Calypso as part of a larger class of figures [such as Aphrodite, Persephone, Ishtar and Ereshkigal]."[116] Güntert also included a chapter on possible Indic parallels, but he looks only at what he considered to be parallels for goddesses of the dead, not at figures who resemble Calypso, and his conclusions are not convincing. It is my inclination, therefore, to assume that if the connection between the restraining/helpful nymph Calypso and the *Toteninsel* is valid, it represents a conflation of two separate motifs or a Near Eastern import, rather than an enduring IE association.

Another commentator who treated the pair in order to advance ideas about the composition of the epic, Woodhouse, concurs with Wilamowitz; "Homer invented his Kalypso. He made her out of nothing for neither Saga nor folk-tale helped him here."[117] Circe, on the other hand, "is undoubtedly an original element of folk-tale, given to the poet independently of his own narrative...Kirke has the bright irresponsibility of those non-human beings with which popular fancy has peopled the world, living in the moment but

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[115]Cook 1992:249–50.

[116]Crane 1988:31.

[117]Woodhouse 1930:216.

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incapable of any deep or permanent emotion or personal attachment."[118] Page belongs to the folk-tale camp as well, seeing the story of Circe as an adaptation of the tale of "the witch in the woods."[119] In contrast, Heubeck sees the episode as purely epic in its tone and style.[120]

I have included this history of the scholarship on Circe and Calypso largely to highlight the persistence of the early critics' conviction that the resemblances between them had something important to convey about the composition of the epic, a conviction the reader will find echoed here as well. Evidence for the characters' origins can be discerned by placing them alongside an incident which occurs at *Mahābhārata* 1.138–144, the meeting with the *rākṣasī* Hiḍimbā.[121] Episodes of this type—small, self-contained units— are the ideal environment for a high level of narrative fixity to occur and be maintained over time.

The most important feature of my analysis, to which I wish to draw attention at the outset, is the parallel treatment of the progression of each narrative. My intention is to highlight the fact that all three, while telling different stories, proceed in strikingly similar sequence. The major building-blocks of narrative for all three are detailed and discussed below and may also be referred to at Table 1.

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[118]Woodhouse 1930:50.

[119]See Page 1973:57–69.

[120]Heubeck et al. 1989 vol.II:51.

[121]Hiḍimbā is the first female stranger to be encountered by the Pāṇḍavas, the five brothers who are the heroes of the epic. She is a man-eating *rākṣasī* (demoness), whose territory they enter as they flee from a devastating fire devised by their evil cousin to remove them from the succession to the throne.

2.2 Formal Comparison of the Three Episodes

A. Isolation

The first observable element in all three incidents, Indic and Homeric, is the description of the landscape against which the scene takes place.[122] As we learn at the very beginning of *Odyssey* V, Calypso lives on an exceedingly remote[123] but beautiful island. Remoteness is a significant quality in the epics, simultaneously conferring romantic and idealized beauty, while introducing the stark terror of isolation from human society and contact.[124] The remoteness of Ogygia is one of the features that led Güntert to identify it as a νῆσος μακαρῶν, and even Hermes laments that Calypso lives too far away for decent social interaction.[125] Circe lives in similar, though not quite so extreme, isolation on the island of Aiaia, "in the middle of the endless sea," "πέρι πόντος ἀπείριτος" (*Odyssey* X.195). *Mahābhārata* 1.138 sets a similar scene. The opening describes the length and hardship of the Pāṇḍavas' flight from their temporary home in Vāraṇāvata through dangerous country.Hiḍimbā the *rākṣasī* lives in the middle of a desolate wilderness, a " गहनं वनं," (*Mahābhārata* 1.139.21), through which the Pāṇḍavas must pass.

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[122] " 'Topographical' introductions to a new development are rather frequent in Homer," (Hoekstra on xiii 96 vol. II:169).

[123] *Odyssey* V.55: a "νῆσον...τηλόθ᾽ ἐοῦσαν, and V.80, an "ἀπόπροθι δώματα."

[124] Cf. the isolation of other places, e.g. Scheria at *Odyssey* VI.204, or even Ithaca (*Odyssey* IX.25).

[125] "τίς δ᾽ ἂν ἑκὼν τοσσόνδε διαδράμοι ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ ἄσπετον;," *Odyssey* V.100-2.

A similar ambivalence to the wild observable in both texts makes these descriptions especially significant. Terrifying when hostile, and delightful when receptive, the landscape itself reflects the character of its inhabitants in these encounters; if they are friendly, they can provide a welcome respite, but danger is always lurking. There is also an element of risk, in that many of the places Odysseus visits are baited traps; the richness of the island of the Cyclopes, the glorious harbor of the Laistrygones, and the rich flocks of the cattle of the Sun, all lure the men to their destruction. Anticipation of the next encounter with strangers is almost obsessively recounted.[126]

The isolation of the scene also serves as a marker of transition within the epic, and the very presence of a transitional element marks out the fact that all three stories occur within a larger frame narrative. Hansen discusses the way the existence of a frame narrative sets folktales apart from epic,[127] as does Peradotto.[128]

B. Landscape, Flora and Fauna

After identifying the inaccessibility of the location, all three narratives proceed to describe wildlife, particularly birds. Hiḍimbā's forest is populated with carnivorous birds and beasts which are horrific and terrible:

आगमंस्ते वनोद्देशमल्पमूलफलोदकम् ।
क्रूरपक्षिमृगं घोरं सायाह्ने भरतर्षभाः ॥ ६
घोरा समभवत्संध्या दारुणा मृगपक्षिणः ।

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[126] e.g. *Odyssey* IX.87–9, X.100–1, 147. Cf. *Mahābhārata* 1.138.30.
[127] Hansen 1997:444.
[128] Peradotto 1990:36–7.

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(*Mahābhārata 1.138.6–7*)

At evening they came to a wilderness scarce in roots, fruits and water
and terrible with birds and beasts of prey, those Bulls of the Bhāratas. *(6)*
Fearful dusk[129] came on, and the birds and beasts were dreadful.

The prominent reference to "roots" (*mūla*, here euphonically paired with *phala*, "fruit" as it often is) is striking in view of *Odyssey* X.302–306, and Hermes' gift to Odysseus of the plant μῶλυ:

Ὣς ἄρα φωνήσας πόρε φάρμακον Ἀ)ργειφόντης
ἐκ γαίης ἐρύσας καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειχε·
ῥίζῃ μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δὲ εἴκελον ἄνθος·
μῶλυ δέ μιν καλέουσι θεοί· χαλεπὸν δέ τ' ὀρύσσειν
ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι· θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται.
(*Odyssey X.302–306*)

Speaking thus, Argeiphontes gave me the drug,
pulling it from the earth and he showed me its nature;
It has a black root, but a flower like milk.
"Moly" the gods call it, and it is difficult to dig up
for mortal men, but the gods are able to do everything.

The difficulty of mortals in digging up μῶλυ at X.305 may be echoed in the scarcity of the *mūla* at *Mahābhārata* 1.138.6a, and the prominence of moly's root in the description of the plant is also suggestive of a connection. Clay's analysis of this passage demonstrates the profound linkage between the root of μῶλυ and its divine name:

The expected antithesis between divine and human name is replaced by another: it is difficult, indeed, for mortal men to dig up *moly*, but the gods are all-powerful. The new antithesis appears meaningless unless joined to the preceeding description of *moly*. The white flower is visible to all, but

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[129] Other passages in the epic echo the idea that the period around dusk is a particularly liminal and dangerous time, e.g. *Mahābhārata* 3.12.4–5.

the black root can only be seen once the herb has been picked from the ground—an easy task for the gods, as Hermes has just demonstrated. Its physis, however, encompasses both flower and root and hence can be known only to the gods. For this reason, moly, the plant as a whole, is unknown to men and possesses only a divine name with no counterpart in the language of mortals. The T Scholium to χ 305 seems to hint at this: οὐχέτι προσέθηχε παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ὀνομαζέσθαι, ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ ζητεῖν ἡμᾶς τὴν ῥίζαν.[130]

There has been much debate as to whether μῶλυ and *mūla* are linguistically related. The connection was first proposed by Kretschmer,[131] and seconded by many others, although none have produced a satisfying etymological path. Mayrhofer dismisses the connection as "unwahrscheinlich,"[132] and Chantraine concludes that "Le plus prudent est d'admettre un emprunt d'origine inconnue,"[133] but their rejection of the hypothesis is based on unsatisfying evidence, rather than on direct contradictions to the identification. My contention here, that evidence for a relationship between the words can be found in their parallel appearances in similar narrative settings, has been made before. Page also sees the presence of μῶλυ in the Circe-story as an Indo-European survival cognate with *mūla* when he compares the Circe episode to an episode in the Buddhist *Mahāvaṃsa* involving a witch and magical roots:

> Homer has [μῶλυ] here simply because it had always been fixed in this part of the story. It was never forgotten that the antidotal herb in the Indo-European tale had always been called by this and no other name. The Indians preserved the word, the Greeks did not—except in the tale of Odysseus and Circe.[134]

This argument introduces the possibility that μῶλυ has been preserved

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[130]Clay 1972:130–1.

[131]Kretschmer 1892:386.

[132]Mayrhofer 1963:667.

[133]Chantraine 1968:730.

[134]Page 1973:65.

as a substrate word, and was therefore immune to the laws which generally govern the borrowing, preservation and evolution of word forms. Artificially maintained in one special context, it would not necessarily conform to the patterns observable in the rest of the Greek words which descend from Indo-European antecedents. Clay points out that *moly* and the *Planktai* (described to Odysseus by Circe at *Odyssey* XII.59–72) are the only instances in Homer in which we are given divine names unaccompanied by their mortal equivalents,[135] and this supports the idea of a special status for both words, particularly given their narrative proximity to one another.

But roots are not the only element of the scene which receive attention. The island of Ogygia is also described in close detail regarding its trees and birds:

> ὕλη δὲ σπέος ἀμφὶ πεφύκει τηλεθόωσα
> κλήθρη τ' αἴγειρός τε καὶ εὐώδης κυπάρισσος·
> ἔνθα δέ τ' ὄρνιθες τανυσίπτεροι εὐνάζοντο,
> σκῶπές τ' ἴρηκές τε τανύγλωσσοί τε κορῶναι
> εἰνάλιαι, τῇσίν τε θαλάσσια ἔργα μέμηλεν.
> (*Odyssey V.63–67*)

> A wood around the cavern grew, flourishing:
> alder, black poplar, and sweet-smelling cypress.
> There the spread-winged birds nested,
> horned owls and hawks, and thin-tongued crows,
> beach-dwellers, whose labors are concerned with sea-things.

These lines have received much attention. Güntert reads the trees as "*Totenpflanzen*" and compares the island to the asphodel meadows of the underworld and the grove of Persphone, but rejects Finsler's[136] assertion

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[135] Clay 1972.

[136] Finsler 1918:2.292.

that the birds play an active part in generating a funereal theme.[137] Crane
sees none of this; "The trees and birds which in part charm the newly arrived
Hermes have suggested sinister chthonic undertones to some scholars, but this
suspicion seems unfounded. Calypso lives in an idealized natural setting."[138]
I would note, however, that of the bird species listed, two are ferocious birds
of prey just as those in Hiḍimbā's forest are, and the third a predatory
scavenger. In any case, the presence of trees and birds serves as an obvious
and important marker of Calypso's territory. Water is mentioned as well;
four fountains running into lush meadows complete the picture at *Odyssey*
V.70.

Returning to the *Mahābhārata*'s *Hiḍimbavadhaparva*, as the heroes begin
to succumb to exhaustion, verse 1.138.9 relates their arrival at a lovely place
of sanctuary, also complete with trees, birds and water:

ततो भीमो वनं घोरं प्रविश्य विजनं महत् ।
न्यग्रोधं विपुलच्छायं रमणीयमुपाद्रवत् ॥ ९
तत्र निक्षिप्य तान्सर्वानुवाच भरतर्षभः ।
पानीयं मृगयामीह विश्रमध्वमिति प्रभो ॥ १०
एते रुवन्ति मधुरं सारसा जलचारिणः ।
ध्रुवमत्र जलस्थायो महानिति मतिर्मम ॥ ११
(*Mahābhārata 1.138.9–11*)

Then Bhīma, having entered the dreadful forest, desolate and vast,
came upon a banyan with abundant shade, and lovely. *(9)*
There, having set them all down, that Bull of the Bhāratas said,
"I am going to look for water here. Let all your lordships rest. *(10)*
There are water-dwelling cranes calling sweetly.

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[137]Güntert 1919:170.

[138]Crane 1988:16. See Heubeck vol.I 1998:262 for comparable scenes elsewhere in Greek
literature, and Friedrich 1978:11–12, 30, 76–7, for bird motifs connected to Indo-European
Dawn/Water goddesses.

I think there is certainly a great pool of water here." *(11)*

Quite similar to the description of Calypso's island, Hiḍimbā's demesne is forested,[139] "noisy with birds and deer," *mṛgapakṣivighuṣṭa* (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.20), and has repeatedly expressed associations with water.[140]

The description of Circe's island does not conform exactly to that of the other two locales, but Aiaia does share a number of their features. While it is not described in terms of beauty, it is populated by wild beasts[141] comparable to Calypso's birds or Hiḍimbā's terrifying birds and beasts.[142] Though water is not a feature in the early description of the landscape, it does appear later in an unusual way at a critical point in the story. While Odysseus and Circe make love, four maidservants, the daughter of rivers and springs, work about the house;

> Ἀμφίπολοι δ' ἄρα τῆος ἐνὶ μεγάροισι πένοντο
> τέσσαρες, αἵ οἱ δῶμα κάτα δρήστειραι ἔασι.
> γίγνονται δ' ἄρα ταί γ' ἔκ τε κρηνέων ἀπό τ' ἀλσέων
> ἔκ θ' ἱερῶν ποταμῶν, οἵ τ' εἰς ἅλαδε προρέουσι.
> (*Odyssey X.348–51*)

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[139]The *rākṣasas* apparently even live in a tree: " तां विदित्वा चिरगतां हिडिम्बो राक्षसेश्वर: । अवतीर्य द्रुमात्स्मादाजगामाथ पाण्डवान् ॥ १ " "The *rākṣasa*-lord Hiḍimba, having noticed her being gone for a long time, descended from his tree and went to the Pāṇḍavas," *Mahābhārata* 1.140.1.

[140]Particularly at the end of the episode, when Hiḍimbā whisks Bhīma away to make love to him from 1.143.20–26.

[141] "ἀμφὶ δέ μιν λύκοι ἦσαν ὀρέστεροι ἠδὲ λέοντες" (*Odyssey* X.212); "ὡς τοὺς ἀμφὶ λύκοι κρατερώνυχες ἠδὲ λέοντες / σαῖνον," (*Odyssey* X.218-9).

[142]One possible etymology of Circe's name is from κίρκος, "hawk, falcon,"(Bauer 1972). Other possibilities include the name coming from κεράννυμι suggested by X.235, or the κερκίς from X.222 may also be relevant.

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But meanwhile the maidservants worked in the hall,
four of them, who were the workers for Circe's house
They were born from the springs of the glades,
and from the sacred rivers which flow down to the sea.

These seem likely to be structurally related to the four fountains playing outside the cave of Calypso at *Odyssey* V.70.

C. The Scouting Expedition

In keeping with the *Odyssey*'s constant fearful anticipation of the next encounter, Odysseus makes a brief solo expedition to scout out Aiaia. He brings back food (*Odyssey* X.145–172)[143] and sees smoke rising from Circe's hall (*Odyssey* X.149, 197), a sure sign of other occupants of the island.[144]

As does Odysseus on Ogygia, Bhīma goes off alone to scout; just as Odysseus brings food, Bhīma brings back water for the group in his shawl (*Mahābhārata* 1.138.12–13), and just as Odysseus sees the smoke of Circe's dwelling,[145] Bhīma catches sight of a city in the distance,[146] which gives him hope and the resolve to hold on until morning. The party never reaches this city and it is never mentioned again, which suggests that it might be a relic from an earlier version of the episode. If it is vestigial, the fact that it finds

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[143] A stag, and possibly worth special comparison with the mṛgāḥ in *Mahābhārata* 1.138.6–7, though my inclination is to follow van Buitenen and translate those as "predatory beasts," rather than the traditional "deer," but also cf. 1.143.20, quoted above.

[144] This is, or became, a convention; cf. X.99, at the island of the Laistrygones.

[145] This also has a parallel at *Odyssey* IX.167.

[146] " नातिदुरे च नगरं वनादस्माद्धि लक्षये । " "Not far from this wood I perceive a city," *Mahābhārata* 1.138.30.

an analogue in the Circe episode is doubly interesting. This strengthens the contention that the poet of the *Mahābhārata* was adhering to an inherited template, and chose to modify it as circumstances required, rather than to abandon it.

D. Sleeping Companions

Odysseus returns to find his companions lying on the ground with their heads covered, in a deep sleep or death-like state, from which he must rouse them with gentle words:

> ...ἀνέγειρα δ' ἑταίρους
> μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσι παρασταδὸν ἄνδρα ἕκαστον...
> Ὣς ἐφάμην· οἱ δ' ὦκα ἐμοῖς ἐπέεσσι πίθοντο.
> ἐκ δὲ καλυψάμενοι παρὰ θῖν' ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο...
> (*Odyssey X.172–3, 178–80*)

> ...I roused my companions
> with sweet words, standing beside each man...
> So I spoke; they swiftly complied with my words,
> unveiling themselves on the beach of the restless sea...

Bhīma, too, returns to find his mother and brothers sleeping on the ground, unconscious with despair and fatigue. Just as Odysseus speaks to his companions "standing beside each man," Bhīma stands over his mother and brothers in turn and laments their current situation in light of the former glory each enjoyed previously (*Mahābhārata* 1.138.16–23).

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Table 1. The Narrative Framework of the Calypso, Circe and Hidimbā Episodes

	Calypso (V.55-268)	Circe (X.135-574, XII.1-143)	Hidimbā (1.139-144)
A. Isolation, Transition to the episode	V.55; 80, 100-2	X.195	1.139.21
B. Landscape, Flora and Fauna	V.63-7	(no birds, but cf. X.212, 218-9) *moly* at X.302--306	1.138.6-7, 9-11 (also 1.143.20) *mūla* at 1.138.6
C. Scouting Expedition	V.55-74- Description of the island and Calypso's dwelling	X.144-172	1.138.12-15
- Signs of habitation		X.149-Sees smoke from Circe's hall	1.138.30 Sees a city in the distance
- Food/water for company		X.156--172 -Brings back food for the companions	1.138.12-13- Brings back water for the family
D. Sleeping Companions - Hero Speaks beside them	--------	X.172-80	1.138.16-23
E. Weeping	V.81-85	X.201-202	1.138.14
F. The Conference - Instructions Given	V.85-147 Hermes to Calypso	X.277-306 Hermes to Odysseus	1.139.5-11 Hidimba to Hidimbā
- Shape-Changing	--------	X.210—243 Men turned into lions and wolves.	1.139.17 Hidimbā changes form. 1.139.1: Hidimba
- the Evil Brother	--------	X.137: Aietes	
G. Rejection of Friendly Overtures	V.171-7	X.383—5	1.139.27--8
H. The Attack	--------	X.293--5	1.143.2
I. Oath Followed by Sex	Oath: V.178—9 Sex : V.225-7	X.342--7	1.143.10--19
J. Assistance and Departure	V.229--277	X.498-541; X.570-574; XII.16-19; XII.36-141	1.143.33-8
K. Day/Night Division of Time and Swift Travel	V.154—6 --------	-------- X.574	1.143.17-18 1.140.5
K. Meeting with the Seer	--------	XI.100--137	1.144

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E. Weeping

Overwhelmed by the pathos of their situation, Bhīma weeps over the unconscious bodies of his mother and brothers:

स सुप्तां मातरं दृष्ट्वा भ्रातॄंश्च वसुधातले ।
भृशं दुःखपरीतात्मा विललाप वृकोदरः ॥ १४
(*Mahābhārata 1.138.14*)

He, having seen his sleeping mother and brothers on the ground,
his spirit gripped by grief, the Wolf-Belly wept violently. *(14)*

On Aiaia, reconnaisance and assessment of the surroundings are again followed by tears. When Odysseus has roused his sleeping companions and reported the smoke to them, they weep together, fearing what they may encounter next and mourning their dead companions in a formulaic passage:[147]

Ὣς ἐφάμην· τοῖσιν δὲ κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ...
κλαῖον δὲ λιγέως, θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντες·
ἀλλ᾽ οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις ἐγίγνετο μυρομένοισιν.
(*Odyssey X.198, 201–2*)

So I spoke, and their dear hearts were broken...
They wept shrilly, dropping huge tears,
But nothing came of their lamenting.

Weeping occupies the same spot in the narrative progression of all three scenes. While the Ogygia episode lacks a homologous scouting expedition (except perhaps in that the description of the island is expanded slightly more than in the other two), description of the landscape is followed immediately by the note that Odysseus is not enjoying the beauty of the island or the comfort of Calypso's cave, but sits weeping on the seashore:

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[147]X.198 = X.566, XII.277; X.202 = X.568.

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οὐδ' ἄρ' Ὀδυσσῆα μεγαλήτορα ἔνδον ἔτετμεν,
ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἐπ' ἀκτῆς κλαῖε καθήμενος, ἔνθα πάρος περ,
δάκρυσι καὶ στοναχῇ καὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἐρέχθων.
πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρύγετον δερκέσκετο δάκρυα λείβων.
(*Odyssey V.81–84*)

Nor he did not find great-hearted Odysseus inside,
but he wept, sitting by the shore, there as before,
wasting away his spirit with tears and groans and pangs.
He looked continually over the rolling sea, shedding tears.

F. The Conference

Into these three lonely locales occupied by weeping heroes enter new characters who hold brief conversations in which they give instructions to another character. In Book X of the *Odyssey*, Hermes appears on Aiaia to discuss with Odysseus the strategy he must use to disarm Circe (*Odyssey* X.277–306). On Ogygia in Book V, Hermes joins Calypso in her cave and instructs her to release Odysseus (*Odyssey* V.85–147), to which she unwillingly agrees. Her spirited complaint that there is a double standard for gods and goddesses regarding mortal lovers has caught the attention of many critics. Peradotto sees Calypso's speech as a centripetal narrative, one which challenges social norms, and as evidence of the dialogic open nature of the Homeric narratives: "It can be seen as representing revolt against a system whose order is made to depend on the suppression of female sexual desire in a way that is not expected of males."[148]

In the *Mahābhārata* episode, another female receives instructions from a

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[148]Peradotto 1990:55.

male: Hiḍimbā is instructed by her evil brother, Hiḍimba,[149] to capture the Pāṇḍavas and bring them back for him to eat.[150] This exchange occupies the same position in the narrative as Hermes' conference with Calypso, but the later words between the brother and sister at *Mahābhārata* 1.140, in which Hiḍimba angrily attacks his sister for trying to seduce a mortal, bear a greater resemblance to the content of Calypso's retort to Hermes (though spoken from the opposite perspective).

At this point, both the Circe and Hiḍimbā narratives also introduce the motif of shape-changing. At *Odyssey* X.210–243, the advance party Odysseus has sent to Circe's dwelling find themselves transformed into swine. In the *Mahābhārata*, before initially approaching Bhīma, Hiḍimbā changes herself into the shape of a beautiful woman. This ability to transform herself is referred to repeatedly in the text: she is "कामरूपिणी," "(capable of) assuming a shape at will" (*Mahābhārata* 1.139.17), and all *rākṣasas*, the text explains, are "कामरूपधरा:," "bearers of whatever form they wish" (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.32), and "बहुरूपिण:," "many-formed" (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.32).

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[149] Cf. *Odyssey* X.137: In the opening passage of her first scene, Circe, too, is identified as the sister of an evil brother: "αὐτοκασιγνήτη ὀλοόφρονος Αἰήταο," making her the aunt of Medea, according to *Theogony* 956–62 (this iscussed in Stanford 1963:14). but as this may be only a relic from the *Argonautika*, its relevance is therefore uncertain. Calypso also has an unpleasant male relative: at *Odyssey* I.52 we are told she is "Ἄτλαντος θυγάτηρ ὀλοόφρονος," "the daughter of destructive-minded Atlas."

[150] Just as the *Odyssey* has its pair of cannibal encounters (the Cyclops and the Laistrygones), both the journeys of the Pāṇḍavas have episodes involving man-eating *rākṣasas*. The Hiḍimba episode discussed here is paired with the Slaying of Baka in the initial forest sequence, while Kirmīra (Baka's brother) and Jaṭāsura are defeated during the wanderings in the third *parvan*.

Hiḍimbā initially obeys her brother, but changes her mind when she falls in love (*Mahābhārata* 1.139.13). Upon seeing Bhīma, her loyalties shift dramatically, a common feature of encounters with females in the *Odyssey* as well.[151] Reflecting that it would be a terrible shame to see such a handsome man killed, she decides to approach Bhīma with a proposal of marriage instead (*Mahābhārata* 1.139.13–15). Thus her motivations (desire and compassion) are the same as those which typically motivate Odyssean female strangers.[152] When the evil brother Hiḍimba arrives on the scene, Hiḍimbā begs Bhīma to allow her to carry the Pāṇḍavas to safety,[153] but he assures her that he will be able to defeat the male *rākṣasa* while his mother and brothers sleep peacefully.

G. Rejection of Friendly Overtures

All three narratives include friendly overtures by the female character which are initially rejected by the hero. At *Odyssey* V.160–70, Calypso tells Odysseus that he is free to go and that she will give him what assistance

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[151]Eidothea betrays her father to help Menelaos, Nausicaa innocently schemes to get Odysseus accepted in the Phaiacian court, and Leukothea risks the wrath of Poseidon to save Odysseus.

[152]cf. Eidothea IV.364–5; Calypso V.130, 135; Leukothea V.336; Nausicaa VI.205–6, 236–45.

[153]Hiḍimbā's initial interactions with Bhīma center on her attempts to convince him to let her save him from Hiḍimba (*Mahābhārata* 1.139.25, 29; 1.140.4–6). Also cf. *Odyssey* V.129–36, where Calypso recounts having saved Odysseus as the basis of her claim upon him.

she can. Odysseus' reaction (V.171-9) is one of immediate distrust[154] and he demands that she swear an oath not to harm him.

In the early part of their encounter, Bhīma's attitude towards Hiḍimbā is essentially one of friendly dismissal of her romantic entreaties, and braggadocio about what he will do to her brother when he arrives.[155] The demoness's initial entreaty to Bhīma that he make love to her receives a response which bears a remarkable resemblance to Odysseus' words to Circe upon sitting down to eat at her table:

मातरं भ्रातरं ज्येष्ठं कनिष्ठानपरानिमान् ।
परित्यजेत को न्वद्य प्रभवन्निव राक्षसि ॥ २७
को हि सुप्तानिमान्भ्रातॄन्दत्त्वा राक्षसभोजनम् ।
मातरं च नरो गच्छेत्कामार्त इव मद्विधः ॥ २८
(*Mahābhārata 1.139.27–8*)

The mother, the eldest brother, these other younger brothers;
Who would abandon them now **if he was respectable**, *Rākṣasī*? *(27)*
His sleeping brothers having given as food for a *rākṣasa*,
His mother also, **what man** of my sort would go off for passion? *(28)*

ὦ Κίρκη, τίς γάρ κεν ἀνήρ, ὃς ἐναίσιμος εἴη,
πρὶν τλαίη πάσσασθαι ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος,
πρὶν λύσασθ' ἑτάρους καὶ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι·
(*Odyssey X.383–5*)

Oh Circe, for **what man, if he was righteous**,
would endure to taste food and drink
before seeing his companions released with his own eyes?

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[154]cf. Odysseus' initial reaction to Leukothea's advice at *Odyssey* V.354–64.
[155]Stanford 1963:16 discusses Odysseus' comparable "nonchalance" towards Circe and Calypso.

The salient feature of these two passages is the rhetorical question, "What (kind of) man would...", expressed in both cases with the IE formulation "$k^w is\ H_2 ner$-". While the combination of two such basic words may seem unspectacular, particularly given the frequency of rhetorical questions in both epics, rhetorical questions that use this combination are actually quite rare. The formulation does not occur elsewhere in the $\bar{A}di\ parvan$, for example. The Sanskrit depends on the subjunctive and the particle iva to convey the speculation, while the Greek uses the optative; otherwise, the structures used, the verbal content, and the sentiments expressed are remarkably similar.

Page sees Odysseus' protest at X.383–5 as disingenuous, and thinks it is odd that the hero "may share the witch's bed but not her breakfast."[156] He draws the conclusion that "the Homeric version here has deviated from a stricter model, in which the release of the companions preceeded the hero's amour with the sorceress; and so indeed it did in the oldest other version known to us."[157] If Page's conclusion is correct, it would bring the Circean narrative order into closer alignment with that of the Hiḍimbā episode.

In the *Mahābhārata*, the focus of the narrative moves at this point to the arrival of Hiḍimbā's brother and his fight with Bhīma. The fight itself is brief and uninteresting, and is conducted without particular effort on the part of Bhīma, who keeps up a constant stream of color commentary as he wrestles with the ogre and finally snaps his spine. Though the section is entitled "The Slaying of Hiḍimba," the actual slaying is almost superfluous to the narrative.

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[156]Page 1973:56.
[157]Page 1973:56.

H. The Attack

Hiḍimbā is a potentially dangerous female who is easily disarmed by love; more easily, in fact than Circe, who must first be threatened at swordpoint. After half his companions have been changed into swine, and in accordance with Hermes' instructions (*Odyssey* X.287–301), Odysseus goes to Circe's house and sits down to drink the potion she offers him. But when she strikes him with her wand and orders him off to the sty with the others, Odysseus reveals that he is immune to her enchantments:

ὣς φάτ᾽· ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἄορ ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ
Κίρχῃ ἐπαΐξαι ὥς τε κτάμεναι μενεαίνων.
(*Odyssey X.294-5*)[158]

So she spoke; But I, drawing the sharp sword from beside my thigh,
rushed at Circe as if raging to kill her.

By his resistance to her magic, Circe realizes that the man before her is Odysseus, and in an address to him at *Odyssey* X.323–35, she makes peace and invites him to sleep with her, after which their relationship is a peaceful one. In the context of the discussion of the dangers posed by Homeric female figures, it is only fair to point out that the Circe and Calypso stories lack a male antagonist comparable to Hiḍimba, and therefore any conflict which occurs within them must be between Odysseus and the goddess herself. Most other female helper-figures (including Eidothea, Leukothea, Nausicaa, and Hiḍimbā,) whose stories involve conflict have a male character with whom that conflict takes place. As solo agents, the necessity of having dramatic

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[158]Cf. *Odyssey* X.293–5.

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tension in the scene requires that Circe and Calypso must play both the antagonistic and helpful roles.

Even though Hiḍimbā never threatens the Pāṇḍavas, she receives treatment at Bhīma's hands nearly identical to that which Circe receives from Odysseus. After Hiḍimba has been dispatched, Hiḍimbā begins to follow the Pāṇḍavas through the forest. Bhīma sees her, and becomes hostile:

प्रययुः पुरुषव्याघ्रा हिडिम्बा चैव राक्षसी ॥ ३४
भीम उवाच ।
स्मरन्ति वैरं रक्षांसि मायामाश्रित्य मोहिनीम् ।
हिडिम्बे व्रज पन्थानं त्वं वै भ्रातृनिषेवितम् ॥ १
(*Mahābhārata 1.142.34–143.1*)

The tigers-among-men set out; so did Hiḍimbā the *rākṣasī*. *(34)*
Bhīma said:
Rākṣasīs remember quarrels, and rely on bewitching illusion.
Hiḍimbā! Take the path your brother has followed! *(1)*

As Bhīma moves to kill her, he is stopped by an injunction from Yudhiṣṭhira: "Even in anger, Bhīma, Tiger-of-a-Man, don't kill a woman," "क्रुद्धोऽपि पुरुषव्याघ्र भीम मा स्म स्त्रियं वधीः ," (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.2).

I. The Oath Followed by Sex

As Yudhiṣṭhira counsels mercy, and Hiḍimbā reiterates her love for Bhīma, the text comes to the same resolution which incited comment regarding its parallel appearance in the Circe and Calypso scenes; an oath followed by sex.[159] After hearing Hiḍimbā's good intentions, the Pāṇḍavas decide that

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[159]Wilamowitz 1884:119ff., disputed at Heubeck vol.II:60.

her suit has merit. She may marry Bhīma if she will swear to her promises
to bring him back from their tryst, and come to the brothers' aid whenever
called upon (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.10–11):

युधिष्ठिर उवाच ।
एवमेतद्यथात्थ त्वं हिडिम्बे नात्र संशय: ।
स्थातव्यं तु त्वया धर्मे यथा ब्रूयां सुमध्यमे ॥ १६
स्नातं कृताह्निकं भद्रे कृतकौतुकमङ्गलम् ।
भीमसेनं भजेथास्त्वं प्रागस्तगमनाद्रवे: ॥ १७
अहःसु विहरानेन यथाकामं मनोजवा ।
अयं त्वानयितव्यस्ते भीमसेन: सदा निशि ॥ १८
वैशंपायन उवच ।
तथेति तत्प्रतिज्ञाय हिडिम्बा राक्षसी तदा ।
भीमसेनमुपादाय ऊर्ध्वमाचक्रमे तत: ॥ १९
(*Mahābhārata* 1.143.16–19)

Yudhiṣṭhira said:
It is as you say, Hiḍimbā, there is no doubt.
Proper conduct must be upheld by you as I will state it, Slim-waisted one. *(16)*
once he has bathed, and made daily devotions and a dalliance-ceremony, Lady,
You may enjoy Bhīmasena until the setting of the sun. *(17)*
In the days sport with him as you wish, Oh Woman-Swift-as-Thought,
But you must always return Bhīmasena here at night. *(18)*
Vaiśaṃpāyana said:
Having promised, "So be it," Hiḍimbā the *rākṣasī*, then
having taken up Bhīmasena, she rose up from there. *(19)*

Circe's oath-taking is as prompt as Hiḍimbā's. She is at the mercy of
Odysseus, who refuses to relent and come to bed with her until she swears
an oath that she will do him no harm:[160]

"οὐδ' ἂν ἐγώ γ' ἐθέλοιμι τεῆς ἐπιβήμεναι εὐνῆς,
εἰ μή μοι τλαίης γε, θεά, μέγαν ὅρκον ὀμόσσαι

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[160]Cf. also Helen's oath to Odysseus that she will do him no harm at *Odyssey* 4:253,
especially in the context of Boyd 1998:13.

μή τί μοι αὐτῷ πῆμα κακὸν βουλευσέμεν ἄλλο."
Ὣς ἐφάμην· ἡ δ' αὐτίκ' ἀπόμνυεν ὡς ἐκέλευον.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ' ὄμοσέν τε τελεύτησέν τε τὸν ὅρκον,
καὶ τότ' ἐγὼ Κίρκης ἐπέβην περικαλλέος εὐνῆς.
(*Odyssey X.342–7*)

"I would not wish to get into your bed
Unless you will suffer, Goddess, to swear to me a great oath
not to devise any other evil hurt against my person."
Thus I spoke, and she swore at once as I ordered.
But when she had both sworn and finalized the oath,
then I ascended to Circe's lovely bed.

Calypso's oath-taking lacks the attempted violence of the other two, and the narrative reports the oath itself in much more detail. When Calypso has told Odysseus that she will help him build a raft, he reacts with suspicion and demands that she swear that the offer is not a trick.[161] She willingly gives him her oath that her offer is made in good faith, swearing upon earth and heaven and the water of the Styx (*Odyssey* V.185–191). They then sit down to eat (*Odyssey* V.194-200) (maintaining the separation of human and divine food which Güntert read as a parallel to the dangers of eating the food of the Underworld), before retiring to Calypso's bedchamber (*Odyssey* V.225-7). Cook connects the segregated foods on Calypso's island with the potions of Circe: "The threat, common to both episodes, consists of food which would render Odysseus sub- or super- human. In the Circe-episode, Hermes acts directly in Odysseus' stead, so that a scene is introduced in which the goddess is overcome before offering assistance."[162]

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[161] *Odyssey* V.178–9 (= X.343–4 above).
[162] Cook 1992:249.

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J. Departure and Assistance

Finally, each episode comes to an end and the heroes take their leave, with generous assistance from the women. When the necessity of Odysseus's departure is made clear to Calypso, she provides him with all the material assistance he needs, including clothes, tools, timber, sailcloth, provisions, directions, and a kindly wind to speed him on his way (*Odyssey* V.229–277). Circe gladly tells Odysseus how to confer with Teiresias (*Odyssey* X.498–541) and provides him with sacrificial victims (*Odyssey* X.570–574) upon his first departure. When the company departs for good, Circe provisions the ship (*Odyssey* XII.16–19) and gives Odysseus a detailed account of the remaining dangers he and his crew will face (*Odyssey* XII.36–141). Although it is Bhīma who kills her terrifying brother, Hiḍimbā's visit brings the Pāṇḍavas a number of benefits: consolation on their hard journey and the birth of a son, Ghaṭotkaca, conceived and born fully-grown the same day, who proves to be a long-term resource for the family. When Draupadī collapses from exhaustion on a later journey, Ghaṭotkaca is summoned by thought to carry them (*Mahābhārata* 3.144.25) and he fights valiantly for his uncles at Kurukṣetra, until he is killed while trying to destroy their bitter enemy, Karṇa.[163]

Ghaṭotkaca's birth has parallels in the Cyclic poems, where Circe and Calypso are both supposed to have borne children to Odysseus, though these offspring are not included in the *Odyssey*. According to various fragments and summaries, Circe produces a son, Telegonus, to Odysseus in the *Telegony*.[164]

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[163] He is accidentally killed by Karṇa's missile, when it is actually aimed to kill Arjuna.
[164] Procl. *Chrest.* 306; Eust. in *Od* p.1796, 52 (Bernabé 1996:101).

Hesiod has Circe bear Odysseus two other sons, Agrius and Latinus, in addition to Telegonus (Hes. *Th.* 1011–6), and Calypso bears him Nausithoüs and Nausinoüs (Hes. *Th.* 1017–8).

K. Day/Night Division of Time and Swift Travel

Two thematic similarities are also a part of the Circe, Calypso and Hidimbā episodes. Part of Hidimbā's oath (cited above) is an explicit day/night division of Bhīma's time; Hidimbā may have him during the day, but at night he belongs to his mother and brothers. This split is reminiscent of *Odyssey* V.154–6 and the division of Odysseus' time upon Calypso's island, though in reverse:

ἀλλ' ἦ τοι νύκτας μὲν ἰαύσκεν καὶ ἀνάγκη
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ·
ἤματα δ' ἂμ πέτρῃσι καὶ ἠϊόνεσσι καθίζων
(*Odyssey V.154–6*)

But by nights, indeed he would lie beside her, of necessity,
in the polished cave, him unwilling, beside her who wished it;
by days sitting upon the rocks on the shore.

Another similarity is the stress laid upon the supernatural abilities of the female characters in question. Like the "dread goddess" (*Odyssey* X.136) Circe, Hidimbā's main attribute is her enormous power; besides her transformative abilities, she is "रक्षोबलसमन्विता", "endowed with the powers of a *rākṣasa*" (*Mahābhārata* 1.140.5). Throughout the episode we are bombarded with references to Hidimbā's supernatural abilities, particularly those related to travel. She is "अन्तरिक्षचरा", "able to fly through the sky" (*Mahābhārata*

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1.139.26), and "कामगमा", "able to travel at will" (*Mahābhārata* 1.140.5), and she later travels with Bhīma "तत्र तत्र मनोजवा " "everywhere swift as thought" (*Mahābhārata* 1.143.27). Circe, too, is proficient at swift and unseen travel. As the companions take their leave of her and go to their ship for the voyage to the underworld, they find that she has arrived ahead of them to tether their sacrificial animals; "swiftly overtaking us; for who with their eyes can see a god going hither and thither (ἤ ἔνθ' ἤ ἔνθα κιόντα, *Odyssey* X.574) if the god doesn't wish it?"

L. The Meeting With the Seer

In a final noteworthy parallel, the Hiḍimbā episode is immediately followed by a brief encounter with the prophetic Vyāsa, grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas and author of the epic, just as the encounter with Teiresias in the *Nekuia* directly follows Odysseus' first stay on Aiaia. Teiresias informs Odysseus that although peril and uncertainty still lie ahead and bad men await him at home, if he can follow Teiresias' advice he will eventually live to old age surrounded by friends (*Odyssey* XI.100–137). At *Mahābhārata* 1.144, Vyāsa reveals to Kuntī and her sons that the Dhārtarāṣṭras are in the wrong, and that the Pāṇḍavas will eventually triumph and reign supreme. Both the Circe and Hiḍimbā narratives thus become part of the pathway which gives the heroes access to the seer and the important information he offers.

2.3 Conclusions

This comparison offers a significant expansion of the various parallels Homerists have noted between the Circe and Calypso episodes. When the episodes are measured only against one another, and in the context of Homeric language and structure, it is difficult to determine how meaningful their shared characteristics are. But seen in comparison with their distant cousin Hiḍimbā, a remarkable set of common narrative elements emerges. The three episodes share too many salient features, and the shared traits involved are too heterogeneous, to support claims that they are the product of coincidence or parallel manifestations of universal archetypes. It is my contention that the identical cores of these three episodes are an Indo-European survival from the epics' earliest roots. Though the stories are not carbon copies of one another in their current incarnations, they are built upon the same foundation.

If we accept the contention that Circe, Calypso, and Hiḍimbā all spring from a common source, then at last we can move to the part of the discussion which is most valuable to Classicists, namely; what can the comparison reveal about the Circe and Calypso narratives? In terms of Circe and Calypso's place in the evidence regarding the composition of the epic, their similarities to the Hiḍimbā story indicate that while they may share characteristics with folktales of witches, they are native to the epic tradition. Folktales and epic have surely counter-influenced one another over time, but Circe was not taken over wholesale from folktale and refitted for the epics; we can now see that the structure of her story marks her as part of the epic tradition. In

terms of the evolution of the *Odyssey*, the distribution pattern of the shared features, with a preponderance common to Circe and Hiḍimbā, and only a few distinct to Calypso and Hiḍimbā, suggests that the Circean material is closer to a putative original than most of the Calypso story, and that the split which created the two Homeric versions occurred after the Greek and Sanskrit epics had gone down their separate paths.

When the comparison is addressed in terms of interpretation, what sets Circe and Calypso apart from both Hiḍimbā and their Odyssean sisters[165] is the absence of a male counterpart in their episodes. Every other encounter with a female stranger also involves a male: Iphthime sends the men to her father, Eidothea helps Menelaus trick her father, Leukothea protects Odysseus from Poseidon, Nausicaa and Arete bring Odysseus into Phaiacian society. The absence of male antagonists in the Circe and Calypso episodes requires the women to fulfill both the antagonist and helper functions, and results in the "alternation" of roles which Doherty[166] finds so unsettling. Hypothesizing a lost male figure (equivalent to Hiḍimba) in the two scenes would remove the necessity of role-switching and bring them into line with the other helper encounters. At *Odyssey* X.137, Circe's evil brother Aietes is mentioned, a figure with an extra-Homeric presence in the *Argonautika* and a mention in Hesiod (*Th.* 956–62); it is possible that he once played a role analogous to that of Hiḍimba. The loss of a male character from the scene could also have prompted the inclusion of Hermes in the conferences at V.85–147 and X.277–306, where his appearance supplants that of Hiḍimba in the Calypso

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[165] Once again excluding the monsters: Scylla, Charybdis, and the Sirens.

[166] Doherty 1995:21, discussed in Section 1.4.

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episode, and the two conversations cover related topics. Although Hermes' role as a messenger/helper is frequently noted in the texts, we witness him performing it in these two instances in the *Odyssey*, and events common to these two episodes but unique to the rest of Homeric literature are suggestive.

Postulating that the female character was moved into the position of the hero's opponent raises another interesting set of questions of interpretation. It is not clear whether such a transition would signify a positive or negative shift in the perception of female characters: on the one hand it is a more prominent role, signifying an interest in female characters, and Circe and Calypso remain ultimately helpful and benevolent. But on the other hand, it would indicate a growing vision of females as the source of conflict.

The following section examines another set of of shared narrative elements extracted from the Odyssean *Phaiakis* and an encounter between the *Mahābhārata*'s Arjuna and the princess Citrāngadā.

3 The Young Princess: The Encounters with Nausicaa and Citrāṅgadā

A second type of encounter between heroes and female strangers is exemplified by that with Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, and in the *Mahābhārata* with Citrāṅgadā, the daughter of the king of Maṇipūra: the meeting with the young and marriageable princess. Odysseus' stay with the Phaiacians is a pivotal episode whose importance extends far beyond the meeting with Nausicaa and is the setting in which Odysseus narrates for the first time all of his adventures leading up to his stay on Calypso's island.[167] The *Mahābhārata*'s presentation of Arjuna's liaison with Citrāṅgadā is in no respect as fully developed, and in fact occupies only 11 *ślokas*, but virtually every element in those 22 lines finds a ready analogue in the *Phaiakis*. As was discussed in the previous chapter, aggregations of similar motifs can persist in epic long after the stories themselves have altered, and can point to common genetic inheritance. If these two scenes do share a common ancestor, there can be no certainty about its length or import, but the similarities appear to be far beyond mere coincidence. The shared elements are briefly detailed below, ordered as they appear in the *Mahābhārata*'s version.

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[167]Relevant commentaries on the episode include Woodhouse 1930:54–65, Vallillee 1955, Rose 1969, Gutglueck 1988, Cairns 1990, Jamison 1997, Glenn 1998, Gutglueck 1988, Olson 1991. Shapiro 1995 treats artistic representations of the scene.

3.1 Common Motifs in the Stories of Nausicaa and Citrāṅgadā

1. The Meeting at the River-Mouth

As with the Circe, Calypso, and Hiḍimbā scenes, the commonalities begin with the landscape. Both encounters initiate at a river-mouth, specifically one that has been adapted for human use. Odysseus arrives on the coast of Scheria at a river-mouth used as a washing place, after swimming along the coast searching for a place to come to land (*Odyssey* V.438–43). The meeting place is described as Nausicaa and her attendants arrive there:

> Αἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ ποταμοῖο ῥόον περικαλλέ' ἵκοντο—
> ἔνθ' ἦ τοι πλυνοὶ ἦσαν ἐπηετανοί, πολὺ δ' ὕδωρ
> καλὸν ὑπεκπροέει μάλα περ ῥυπόωντα καθῆραι
> (*Odyssey VI.85–7*)

> When they reached the lovely run of the river—
> Where there were permanent washing-basins, and much good water
> flows forth to clean even very soiled things.

Though the sea figures little in the *Mahābhārata* as a whole (the forest is the usual *locus* of activity outside of civilization), it is prominent during Arjuna's solo journeyings. The structure of Arjuna's period of exile resembles that of the *Odyssey* in a number of ways: its most prominent feature is the separation from his wife, it comprises a series of encounters with women, and it emphasizes piety and appeasement of the gods. This preoccupation with

water and the sea, which is mentioned only in the *Arjunavanvāsa*, adds a final surprising commonality. Early on in his travels, Arjuna leaves behind his retinue (*Mahābhārata* 1.207.10-11) and resolves to travel along the coast, eventually arriving at Maṇalūra, famed for its sacred river bathing sites:

समुद्रतीरेण शनैर्मणलूरं जगाम ह ॥ १३
तत्र सर्वाणि तीर्थानि पुण्यान्यायतनानि च ।
(*Mahābhārata 1.207.13-14*)

By way of the ocean coastline, he eventually arrived at Maṇalūra.
There he went to all the sacred fords and holy sanctuaries.

Although the passage does not stress it, it is understood that such places are the acme of cleanliness and purification, corresponding, on a more spiritual plane, to Nausicaa's well-engineered washing place. Though the seacoast and the river are stressed as the general location of the *Mahābhārata* episode, Arjuna also visits the town in order to pay his respects to the king of Maṇalūra, just as Odysseus' final destination is the city of the Phaiacians. In the same way that wilderness and isolation are the hallmark of the stories involving Circe, Calypso and Hiḍimbā, Nausicaa and Citrāṅgadā's tales are concerned with civilization, politics, and social rank.

2. Walking About the City

The actual meeting of Arjuna and the princess takes place in the next *śloka,* when they meet as Citrāṅgadā is "walking about in the city," "पुरे तस्मिन्विचरन्तीं " at *Mahābhārata* 1.207.15. While Odysseus and Nausicaa's meeting does not take place in the city, the question of whether they should

walk through it together on their way to the palace is handled in detail at VI.255-89, where Nausicaa vividly imagines the scandal which might result from their being seen together in public. At *Odyssey* VII.72 it is also mentioned that Arete, Nausicaa's mother, enjoys a great deal of popularity among her subjects "when she walks about in the city," "ὅτε στείχησ' ἀνὰ ἄστυ." Though this might appear to be a minor element, its use in reference to all three women assumes some importance. The mores described in the epics are a composite of centuries of cultural practices and poetic invention, and we have no indication that either society practiced extreme *purdah*-style isolation of women. Nevertheless, to describe women of the royal family as walking freely about the city is a likely indication of a special situation. This accords well with the exceptional position these women hold in their respective families, described in the next section. When viewed as a determining detail in a portrait of a women endowed with a high social standing, it is possible to see these three seemingly off-hand mentions as critical pieces of characterization, striking and unusual to their ancient hearers and therefore excellent candidates for retention in the narrative.

3. Trouble With the Royal Succession

Though it figures into the two episodes differently, difficulties over the royal succession play a role in both stories. *Odyssey* VII details the genealogy of the Phaiaician royal house, ostensibly with a view to explaining the high status of Arete, who "wields far more power than is normal for a Homeric

queen,"[168] though it is clear that Alcinous' kingship is not dependent on his marriage to her:[169]

Ναυσίθοον μὲν πρῶτα Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
γείνατο καὶ Περίβοια, γυναικῶν εἶδος ἀρίστη...
Ναυσίθοον μεγάθυμον, ὃς ἐν Φαίηξιν ἄνασσε.
Ναυσίθοος δ' ἔτεκεν Ῥηξήνορά τ' Ἀλκίνοόν τε.
τὸν μὲν ἄκουρον ἐόντα βάλ' ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
νυμφίον ἐν μεγάρῳ, μίαν παῖδα λιπόντα
Ἀρήτην· τὴν δ' Ἀλκίνοος ποιήσατ' ἄκοιτιν,
καί μιν ἔτισ' ὡς οὔ τις ἐπὶ χθονὶ τίεται ἄλλη,
ὅσσαι νῦν γε γυναῖκες ὑπ' ἀνδράσιν οἶκον ἔχουσιν.
(*Odyssey VII.56–7, 62–8*)

First, Nausithous was born of the Earthshaker, Poseidon,
and Periboia, fairest in form of all women...
Nausithoos the Great-Hearted, who was lord among the Phaiacians.
Nausithous sired Rhexenor and Alcinous.
But the first, still sonless, silver-bowed Apollo struck down,
newly married in the megaron, leaving only one child
Arete. Her Alcinous made his wife,
and her he honored as no other woman upon the earth is honored,
however so many wives keep house for husbands.

Similarly, *Mahābhārata* 1.207.20 explains Citrāngadā's unusual rank through a problem with the royal succession. An ancestor had petitioned the god Śiva to ensure the survival of the dynasty, but no current male heir has been produced. The crisis results in Citrāngadā's enjoyment of a special designation:

राजा प्रभंकरो नाम कुले अस्मिन्बभूव ह ।
अपुत्रः प्रसवेनार्थी तपस्तेपे स उत्तमम् ॥ १७
उग्रेण तपसा तेन प्रणिपातेन शंकरः ।
ईश्वरस्तोषितस्तेन महादेव उमापतिः ॥ १८
स तस्मै भगवान्प्रादादेकं प्रसवं कुले ।

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[168]Olson 1991:1. See also Whittaker 1999 for a discussion of Artete's unusually high status.

[169]Butterworth 1966:125 thinks the passage is an attempt to obfuscate a history of matrilineality.

एकैक: प्रसवस्तस्माद् भवत्यस्मिन्कुले सदा ॥ १९
तेषां कुमारा: सर्वेषां पूर्वेषां मम जज्ञिरे ।
कन्या तु मम जातेयं कुलस्योत्पादनी ध्रुवम् ॥ २०
पुत्रो ममेयमिति मे भावना पुरुषोत्तम ।
पुत्रिका हेतुविधिना संज्ञिता भरतर्षभ ॥ २१
(*Mahābhārata 1.207.17–20*)

There was a king by the name of Prabhaṃkara in our royal house.
He, sonless and desirous of offspring, performed the highest austerities.
With his fierce penance and meditation, Lord Śaṃkara
was pleased, the great god, the Husband of Umā.
The god bestowed on him that there would always be one child in the royal line.
Since then there has always been one child in the royal line.
Sons were born to all of my predecessors,
But to me this girl was born, who will certainly be the carrier-on of the line.
"She is my son," I pretend, Best of Men,
On account of the law I have designated her my *"Puppet,"*[170] Bull of the Bhāratas.

The frequency with which traits observed in Citrāṅgadā's story appear in regard to Arete's character, rather than to Nausicaa, need not be an impediment to viewing them as shared inherited traits. Storytelling is an essentially conservative art, and audiences are not pleased to see remembered details dropped from a narrative. Reassignment of a characteristic or a detail which has become awkward for the narrator is a common alternative to the more radical step of complete removal, because it preserves the familiar character of a story, while allowing room for greater artistic freedom.

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[170]Technically defined in Indian Law as "daughters whose sons are considered the immediate sons of the daughters' father." van Buitenen 1978:448, n. to 1.60.10.

Table 2. Shared Elements in the Nausicaa and Citrāngadā Narratives

	Nausicaa	Citrāngadā
A. The Meeting at the River-Mouth	VI.85-7 Odysseus meets Nausicaa after he has floated along the coast looking for a place to come ashore. The meeting takes place at the washing-basins at a river-mouth.	1.207.13-14 The episode takes place as Arjuna travels along the coastline visiting sacred bathing spots where the rivers meet the sea.
B. Walking About the City	VI.255-89 Nausicaa talks about whether it would be appropriate for Odysseus to walk to the city with her. VII.72 Arete is described as often walking about the city.	1.207.15 Citrāngadā is walking about the city when Arjuna meets her.
C. Trouble With the Royal Succession	VII.56-7, 62-8 When King Rhexenor dies sonless, his brother marries the surviving princess, who enjoys an extremely high status.	1.207.17-20 Though the royal house has been promised there will always be a successor, no son has been born, so Citrāngadā enjoys special status.
D. A Shared Epithet ("Husband of ___")	VIII.465 Zeus referred to as the "Husband-of-Hera"	1.207.18 Shiva referred to as the "Husband-of-Uma"
E. The Hasty Offer of Marriage	VII.311—15 Alcinous offers his daughter to Odysseus with astonishing quickness.	1.207.21 Citrāngadā's father offers her in marriage to Arjuna as soon as he meets him.

4. A Shared Epithet

At 1.207.18 (quoted directly above), the formulation "उमापतिः," (*Umāpatiḥ*) "Husband-of-Umā" recalls Odysseus' words to Nausicaa at *Odyssey* VIII.465, which refer to Zeus as the "πόσις Ἥρης." Though the evidence is not strong enough to make an unequivocal assertion of genetic relationship, neither does it exclude the possibility. Both epithets are relatively uncommon, with only seven Homeric occurrences and nineteen in the *Mahābhārata*. Excepting two instances (at *Mahābhārata* 2.10.20 and 4.8.27), all occurrences in both epics are line-final. Greek πόσις and Sanskrit *patiḥ* are both reflexes of IE *potis, though there is no obvious direct connection between the goddess Umā and Hera other than their status as the spouses of ruling gods. The Greek version is a strongly fixed formula, preceeded in every case by ἐρίγδουπος, while the *Mahābhārata* varies its accompaniments, favoring *bahurūpa* (4 times), *viśvarūpa* (3 times), *virūpākśa* (3 times) and *devadeva* (3 times). While there can be no linguistic connection there, the phonic resemblance between ἐρίγδουπος and the *rūpa*-based compounds is noteworthy.

Epithet use is often context-based, and this tendency is observable here to a considerable degree. While the four Iliadic appearances are apparently random in their subject matter (*Iliad* VII.411 and X.329 are used at oath-takings; XIII.154 Hector asserts Zeus is aiding him; XVI.88 Achilles tells Patroclus not to get carried away with success), the other Odyssean examples occur in a female-oriented context, a passage which highlights Helen's role, and mentions Telemachus' marriage prospects. XV.111 comes in Menelaus' parting words to Telemachus as Helen prepares to present Telemachus with a

robe for his future wife, and XV.180 introduces Telemachus' farewell to Helen. In the *Mahābhārata*, the vast majority of uses occur within exhaustive epithet-lists in praise-passages directed at the god.[171] But when not simply used within an epithet string, it appears in episodes specifically concerned with women and feminine issues, including a supplication for progeny by a king and his two wives at 3.104.11, and twice in Amba's prayer to Śiva that she be reborn as a man at 5.188.7 and 5.188.9. Thus, if the two scenes are related, the preservation of the same epithet in each is due to its appropriateness to the situation.

5. Hasty Offer of Marriage

Nausicaa's father, Alcinous, suggests with surprising haste that Odysseus might marry Nausicaa:

αἲ γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον,
τοῖος ἐὼν οἷός ἐσσι, τά τε φρονέων ἅ τ' ἐγώ περ,
παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν ἐχέμεν καὶ ἐμὸς γαμβρὸς καλέεσθαι
αὖθι μένων! οἶκον δέ κ' ἐγὼ καὶ κτήματα δοίην,
εἴ κ' ἐθέλων γε μένοις·
(*Odyssey VII.311–15*)

If only, by Father Zeus and Athena and Apollo,
since you are the sort of man that you are, and I am thinking these thoughts,
you would take my daughter and be called my son-in-law,
and settle here! I would give you a house and possessions,
If you would stay here willingly.

A number of critics have argued that Nausicaa is an element from folktale, and that the original version would actually have contained a marriage

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[171]These include *Mahābhārata* 2.10.20; 3.41.19; 3.81.149; 3.83.24; 3.256.25; 5.49.24; 8.24.40; 10.6.33; 10.12.26; 10.70.3; 13.17.40; 13.145.33; 14.8.1,6,27; 14.8.29.

between the princess and the hero. Woodhouse points out that the games-scene among the Phaiacians very much follows the pattern of a *svayamvara* or marriage-contest.[172] Vallillee feels that as it stands, the marriage-less episode is a "tragic artistic blunder,"[173] and Butterworth sees it as displaying Odysseus' rejection of matrilineality.[174] Some ancient versions apparently found a way to tie things up nicely: according to Eustathius, "Τηλέμαχόν φασι Ναυσικάαν γῆμαι τὴν Ἀλκινόου," "They say Telemachus married Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous."[175] Some commentators have defended the lack of a wedding; Taylor feels strongly that Nausicaa's role in the epic is to show that Odysseus will not give up his *nostos* and marry her.[176] Gross sees the impulse toward marriage, but says the episode is coherent as it stands, and showcases Odysseus' political savvy through his "discreet resolution of a difficult problem."[177]

A marriage does, in fact, occur in the Indic episode reviewed here. The princess Citrāṅgadā's father, Citravāhana, wants a marriage between Arjuna and his daughter to take place in order to produce a son for the royal succession:

एतच्छुल्कं भवत्वस्याः कुलकृज्जायतामिह ।
एतेन समयेनेमां प्रतिगृह्णीष्व पाण्डव ॥ २२
(*Mahābhārata 1.207.22*)

Let this be her bride-price: let a family-successor be born here.
By this agreement marry her, Pāṇḍava. *(22)*

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[172]Woodhouse 1930:54–65.

[173]Vallillee 1955:179.

[174]Butterworth 1966:31.

[175]Eust. in Od. p.1796, 35. Bernabé 1996:104.

[176]Taylor 1963.

[177]Gross 1976:317.

Though Arjuna fathers a son upon Citrāṅgadā, he does not remain in Maṇalūra, but continues upon his journaey. Odysseus, of course, sidesteps Alkinoos' offer entirely and instead requests that the Phaiacians give him passage home to Ithaca.

3.2 A Relevant Parallel Passage

The Nausicaa episode contains one element which finds a more apt parallel with Hiḍimbā's scene from the *Mahābhārata*, rather than with the material involving Citrāṅgadā. Below is Odysseus' famous address to Nausicaa at *Odyssey* VI.148:

αὐτίκα μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον·
"Γουνοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις ἦ βροτός ἐσσι·
εἰ μέν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
Ἀρτέμιδί σε ἐγώγε, Διὸς κούρῃ μεγάλοιο,
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυήν τ' ἄγχιστα ἐΐσκω."
(*Odyssey VI.148-152*)

At once he spoke gentle and winning words,
"I beseech you, Lady; Are you some goddess or are you mortal?
If you are one of the gods who rule broad heaven
I hold that you to Artemis, the child of Great Zeus,
are nearest in countenance, stature, and form."

Odysseus' words strongly resemble the introductory speech Kuntī makes to Hiḍimbā, from the episode discussed in the previous chapter:

ततः कुन्ती समीक्ष्यैनां विस्मिता रूपसंपदा ।
उवाच मधुरं वाक्यं सान्त्वपूर्वमिदं क्षनैः ।२
कस्य त्वं सुरगर्भाभे का चासि वरवर्णिनि ।
केन कार्येण सुश्रोनी कुतश्चागमनं तव ॥ ३
यदि वास्य वनस्यासि देवता यदि वाप्सराः ।

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आचक्ष्व मम तत्सर्वं किमर्थं चेह तिष्ठसि ॥ ४

(*Mahābhārata 1.142.2-4*)

Amazed by the perfection of her loveliness, Kuntī stared at her,
then said softly and very kindly, in a gentle voice, "Beautiful Woman, *(2)*
Whose are you who resemble a child of the gods, and who are you?
What task has taken you here, Lovely one, and from where? *(3)*
If you are the goddess of this wood, or a celestial nymph,
tell me all, and also why you are standing here." *(4)*

The base formulation in both cases is the standard set of questions which appears over and over again in both epics, although the Nausicaan version is more politely indirect than most such inquiries. But the additional set of shared components is striking, including the initial emphasis on the gentleness of the questioning, the assertion of the beauty of the stranger, the claim that the speaker cannot tell if the addressee is mortal or divine, and the explicit comparison of the young woman to a child of the gods/Zeus.

The significance of a passage shared between the Hiḍimbā and Nausicaa episodes is unclear. One of the strengths of the argument for shared inheritance, is the exceedingly small number of commonalities which cross the boundaries of the subsets designated here. To combat the idea that these patterns could be merely coincidental, it is necessary to offer at least some assurance that other random commonalities, divorced from a larger pattern, do not occur elsewhere in the texts. In this particular case, however, there is a likely reason for the unexpected positioning of the two similar passages. Speech and Address formulae are among the most standardized in epic literature, rivalled only by name epithets. Meetings between strangers in the epics always contain at least a perfunctory form of these questions, which would

facilitate the transmission of a passage from one episode to another, as it is easy to transplant a passage to a story if the narrative is already structured to accomodate it. For this reason, the duplication and drift of introduction formulae is much more likely to occur than that of less common narrative elements. Because they have a broad applicability, a bard can work them in wherever he wishes.

3.3 Conclusions

The most interesting facets of this comparison are the two respects in which the episodes differ: the disparity in their sizes, and the fact that one contains a marriage while the other does not. It is my belief that these two features are a direct result of one another.

Both scenes come from portions of their epic in which the heroes move from woman to woman: Odysseus parted company with Circe only to end up in the embraces of Calypso, and now Nausicaa (and her father) would like him to be her husband. Arjuna has just made a common-law marriage to Ulūpī, and after his marriage to Citrāngadā, he decides to marry his best friend's sister through a legal abduction in *Mahābhārata* 1.211–13. Both heroes have wives waiting for them at home as well. In these floods of romantic adventures, individual incidents can easily get lost. The brief detail of Arjuna and Citrāngadā's marriage gives every impresssion of being retained only to avoid a lengthy explanation in Book 14 when the real point of the story takes place

(discussed in the upcoming chapter). Wandering heroes marry princesses all the time in folktales; they do so elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, in scenes even more brief and understated that the one under discussion here. By comparison, the *Phaiakis* is a poignant and memorable tale of youthful hopes and a traveller's fidelity in the face of temptation. The commentators cited above who felt that a marriage was noticeably absent from the episode are probably correct, but I must agree with Taylor and Gross's claims that its absence is what gives the episode its power.

The upcoming chapter considers the final type of female stranger: the helpful, water-dwelling, shape-changing sprite. Though the underlying narrative structures are the least similar in this final instance, the fact that this group comprises two sets of paired stories makes for an interesting comparison.

4 The Water-Dwelling Demi-Goddess: Ino, Eidothea, Ulūpī and Vargā

While the episodes discussed in the previous chapters can be closely correlated through their narrative sequence, four other episodes involving female assistance (namely, the encounters with Leukothea, Eidothea, Ulūpī the Snake-Girl, and Vargā the enchanted nymph) are better analyzed according to their structural characteristics. Like the characters they feature, these episodes are fluid and versatile, and demonstrate how a flexible element may persist where a more rigid one must be abandoned. As a result, their shared material occurs at the level of motif-cluster rather than parallel narrative organization. Most of these scenes are not prominent or fully-developed, and they are therefore especially subject to alteration as the poet casts and recasts them in accordance with his view of their importance to the epic. The end result of such a process may be perceived as a lack of coherence in the narrative. In the case of Leukothea, Wilamowitz pointed out a series of inconsistencies in the storyline:

> Leukothea hilft den Odysseus, trotzdem Poseidon noch die scene beobachtet: sie kann es; warum tut es Athena nicht? hatte Leukothea, die meeresgöttin, mindene rücksicht auf Poseidon zu nehmen? weiter, was hilft eigentlich Leukotheas schleier dem Odysseus? wir hören nirgend davon als in den versen 459–62, d.h. da wo er den schleier zurückgibt. dieser kann nichts anderes bewirken als dafs Odysseus das schwimmen so übermenschlich lange aushält. [178]

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[178]Wilamowitz 1884:135-6.

Wilamowitz ultimately declares Leukothea an Ionian adoption. Heubeck also sees the intervention of Ino/Leukothea and Eidothea as insufficiently accounted for. He claims that "Particularly noteworthy is the absence of any apparent motive for the assistance which the two goddesses provide,"[179] choosing to disregard the assertion that it was pity that inspired both of them to help the heroes (*Odyssey* IV.364, V.336). Others damn the episode's usefulness with faint praise: Benardete feels that Ino's veil and the removal of Odysseus' clothes are introduced into the story only to make sure that Odysseus is naked and vulnerable when he reaches Phaiacia.[180] Friedrich sees Ino as merely another Aphrodite-variant (but does not mention Eidothea),[181] and Peradotto has included an implicit comparison of the encounters with Eidothea and Circe in the the context of comparing the Proteus and Teiresias epsiodes.[182]

As with the stories of Circe and Calypso, it is probable that Ino/Leukothea and Eidothea arose from a common source at some point; the Eidothea and Leukothea incidents occur in adjacent books and are linked by a number of narrative similarities. The question is whether or not that common source was in place during the "Greek" and "Homeric" period of the epic's development, or from its earlier Indo-European sources. Their putative counterparts in the *Mahābhārata*, Ulūpī the Snake Girl and Vargā the Crocodile Nymph, are even more closely linked by textual proximity; less than 25 *ślokas* separate the two adventures. Both feature unusual aquatic females who attempt

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[179]Heubeck et al. 1998 vol. I:216.

[180]Benardete 1997:45.

[181]Friedrich 1978:47, 81.

[182]Peradotto 1990:35–41.

to drag Arjuna below the water, but end up being friendly to him. Their similar features, coupled with their propinquity, make it clear that the two episodes are connected to one another.

Though there are shared motifs linking all four, the incidents pair off naturally according to the differing focal points of each narrative, namely a wrestling match and a life-saving magical token. This chapter discusses their similarities to one another, as well as similarities in the presentation of the two pairs in each epic. For easier comparison, these points of commonality have also been listed at Table 3.

4.1   Structural Comparison of the Four Demi-Goddesses

A. Water-Dwellers

While associations with water have appeared in every set of helpers under discussion, the four figures in this section are all actually aquatic. In the epics, this is not a particularly unique characteristic; water was prominent in the descriptions of the landscapes in the Circe, Calypso, and Hiḍimbā narratives, and a number of other divine female figures (including Thetis and Aphrodite) have ties to water. Friedrich has commented on this tendency of epic female characters to have links to water or the sea, and has assigned an association with water as "Dimension Six" in his discussion of the structural characteristics of benevolent goddesses who are both maternal and erotic in their characterization, and which he identifies as being Aphrodite

multiforms.[183]

The sea nymph Eidothea appears to Menelaos when he is stranded on Pharos, and helps him to resume his homeward voyage. She is the daughter of Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, and she moves freely between land and water, diving in to fetch fresh seal-skins and ambrosia for the ambush at IV.435–446.

Though she is of mortal heritage, Leukothea is a creature of the open sea:

Τὸν δὲ ἴδεν Κάδμου θυγάτηρ, καλλίσφυρος Ἰνώ,
Λευκοθέη, ἣ πρὶν μὲν ἔην βροτὸς αὐδήεσσα,
νῦν δ' ἁλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι θεῶν ἒξ ἔμμορε τιμῆς.
(*Odyssey V.333-5*)

The daughter of Cadmus saw him then, lovely-ankled Ino,
Leukothea, who before was a mortal, speaking with a human voice,
But now in the open sea she shares in the honor of the gods.

The *Mahābhārata*'s first example of this type is Ulūpī the Snake-girl.[184] Though this particular story makes it clear that Ulūpī is aquatic, addressing her as जलचारिणि ("Denizen of the Waters," *Mahābhārata* 1.206.22) and situating the episode in the underwater palace of Ulūpī's father, elsewhere the Snakes live in underground caves, an inconsistency which raises the suspicion of an awkward conflation of two different pieces of inherited material.

The encounter with Vargā, the second in the *Mahābhārata*'s pair of benevolent aquatic female helpers, finds Arjuna again seized while bathing, but this

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[183]Friedrich 1978:80-1.

[184]The Snakes, or Nāgas, are a distinct class of mythical beings who figure prominently in the *Mahābhārata*. By setting the original telling of the story of the *Mahābhārata* at the 12-year Snake Sacrifice of the Kurus' ancestor King Janamejaya, and by numerous implicit comparisons between the holocaust of the Snakes and the apocalyptic war at Kurukṣetra, the epic links the destinies of the Snakes and the Kurus on many levels.

time by an enchanted celestial nymph in the form of a crocodile. She and her transformed sisters have been living in the sacred fords and dragging off the ascetics who come to bathe there.

B. Rises out of Sea/Earth Unsummoned in Time of Need

Leukothea emerges through the water to aid Odysseus as his raft is being capsized by Poseidon off the coast of Phaiacia. She comes without being called, drawn by an awareness of the hero's suffering and the desire to help:

> αἰθυίῃ δ' εἰκυῖα ποτῇ ἀνεδύσετο λίμνης,
> ἷζε δ' ἐπὶ σχεδίης καί μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε·
> "Κάμμορε, τίπτε τοι ὧδε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
> ὠδύσατ' ἐκπάγλως, ὅτι τοι κακὰ πολλὰ φυτεύει;
> οὐ μὲν δή σε καταφθίσει, μάλα περ μενεαίνων.
> (*Odyssey V.337–41*)

> In the shape of a flying sea bird, she arose from the water
> sat upon the raft, and to him spoke these words:
> "Poor thing, why does Poseidon Earth-Shaker so
> dreadfully hate you, that he devises so many evils for you?
> But he will not destroy you, however much he wishes to.

Though Eidothea's entrance occurs on dry land and is not described when she first appears to Menelaos as he walks about the island (*Odyssey* IV.365–70), her return to the sea at *Odyssey* IV.425, "she sank under the billowing sea" ("ὑπὸ πόντον ἐδύσετο κυμαίνοντα") recalls that of Leukothea at V.351–2, who "sank back into the billowing sea," ("ἂψ ἐς πόντον ἐδύσετο κυμαίνοντα"). Her motivation for appearing to Menelaos, pity at his desperate situation, is the same as Leukothea's for appearing to Odysseus:

> καί νύ κεν ἤϊα πάντα κατέφθιτο καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν,
> εἰ μή τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο καί μ' ἐλέησε,

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Πρωτέος ἰφθίμου θυγάτηρ ἁλίοιο γέροντος,
Εἰδοθέη· τῇ γάρ ῥα μάλιστά γε θυμὸν ὄρινα.
ἥ μ' οἴῳ ἔρροντι συνήντετο νόσφιν ἑταίρων.
(*Odyssey IV.363–367*)

And by that time all the food would have gone, and the strength of the men,
if one of the gods had not taken pity and saved me,
the daughter of mighty Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea,
Eidothea; for it was her spirit that was so stirred.
She met me, wandering about apart from my companions.

Ulūpī originally appears to Arjuna by pulling him under the water, rather than rising above it, but when she re-appears in the narrative many books later, it is by rising up through the ground as if it were liquid. Ulūpī's major assistance is not described until the 14th book of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Āśvamedhika parvan*. Arjuna has returned to Maṇalūra as part of a Horse Sacrifice conducted by his brother Yudhiṣṭhira. Arjuna's son by Citrāṅgadā (one of the helpful young princesses discussed in the previous chapter), Vabruvāhana, is now ruler of the region. He comes out of the city to greet his father with due ceremony. Since Arjuna is following the horse, and therefore must be considered a hostile adversary, he feels his son's friendly welcome constitutes a serious breach of warrior-class behavior, and berates him for it. The situation is repaired by the sudden appearance of Ulūpī, who arises out of the earth:

तमेवमुक्तं भर्त्रा तु विदित्वा पन्नगात्मजा ।
अमृष्यमाणा भित्त्वोर्वीमुलूपी तमुपागमत् ॥ ८
(*Mahābhārata 14.78.8*)

The daughter of the Snake, having perceived the things said by her husband
and unable to stand it, Ulūpī came to him by splitting through the earth. *(8)*

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Appearances of this type also recall that of Thetis to her son Achilles at *Iliad* I.357–9 and XVIII.65–7.

C. Shape-Changing

As quoted above, Ino appears to Odysseus in the form of a sea-bird:

ἥ ῥ' Ὀδυσῆ' ἐλέησεν ἀλώμενον, ἄλγε' ἔχοντα·
αἴθυίη δ' εἰκυῖα ποτῇ ἀνεδύσετο λίμνης,
ἷζε δ' ἐπὶ σχεδίης καί μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε·
(*Odyssey V.336–8*)

She then pitied sea-tossed Odysseus, who was suffering hardships;
in the shape of a flying sea bird, she arose from the water
sat upon the raft, and to him spoke these words;

Heubeck takes the εἰκυῖα as descriptive of manner, rather than appearance,[185] but seen alongside Athena's bird-form delivery of nectar and ambrosia to the fasting Achilles at *Iliad* XIX.350, Heubeck's reading is unconvincing:

ἣ δ' ἅρπῃ εἰκυῖα τανυπτέρυγι λιγυφώνῳ
οὐρανοῦ ἐκ κατεπᾶλτο δι' αἰθέρος.
(*Iliad XIX.350–1*)

And she, in the form of a broad -winged, shrill voiced hawk
dove out of the heavens through the aether.

One could read Leukothea's assumption of the bird form as a disguise intended to prevent Poseidon from observing her giving help to Odysseus, or as a simple precaution against the force of the storm Poseidon has raised. As with the association with water, Friedrich sees associations with birds

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[185]Heubeck vol. I:283.

and the assumption of ornithomorphs as 'Dimension Three' of the Aphrodite multiforms.[186]

In the *Mahābhārata*'s Vargā episode, the altered form has occurred against the will of the demi-goddess, who has been turned into a crocodile. When she has been restored to her true self, Arjuna's introductory question, "Who are you and why are you a crocodile?"[187] is answered with the explanation that the *apsaras*[188] Vargā and her four friends angered a brahmin ascetic who condemned them to life as crocodiles in the fords. The passage is reminiscent of *Odyssey* V.334-5, and Ino's past life as a mortal, though Vargā's story is about disgrace rather than elevation in status.

Shape-changing also plays an important role in Eidothea's story. In accordance with Eidothea's instructions, Menelaos and his men ambush the old man and hold him tightly. Proteus assumes multiple forms in his attempts to break free, but is finally subdued:

ἡμεῖς δὲ ἰάχοντες ἐπεσσύμεθ', ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας
βάλλομεν· οὐδ' ὁ γέρων δολίης ἐπελήθετο τέχνης,
ἀλλ' ἦ τοι πρώτιστα λέων γένετ' ἠϋγένειος,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα δράκων καὶ πάρδαλις ἠδὲ μέγας σῦς·
γίγνετο δ' ὑγρὸν ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον.
ἡμεῖς δ' ἀστεμφέως ἔχομεν τετληότι θυμῷ.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δή ῥ' ἀνίαζ' ὁ γέρων ὀλοφώϊα εἰδώς,
καὶ τότε δή με ἔπεσσιν ἀνειρόμενος προσέειπε·
(*Odyssey IV.454-61*)

We, leaping up, rushed at him, throwing our arms
around him. Nor did the old man forget his treacherous arts.
But first became a strong-bearded lion,
and then a serpent, and a panther, and a great hog;
He became both liquid water and a high-branching tree.

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[186]Friedrich 1978:80-1.
[187]"का वै त्वमसि कल्याणि कुतो वासि जलेचरी ।" *Mahābhārata* 1.208.13.
[188]A celestial nymph.

We, unyielding, held him with enduring spirit.
But when the old man, the possessor of devious wiles, wearied,
He finally spoke to me with words, asking questions.

While Ulūpī does not herself change form, the shape-changing abilities of Snakes are well-attested throughout the *Ādi parvan* and an integral part of their nature.

E. The Wrestling Match

Scenes from both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Odyssey* center around a wrestling match. Like the Circe episode, Arjuna's encounter with Vargā is one of the few helper-encounters which begins with initial hostilities and in which the woman has a history of previous victims. After being told that the religious community at the sacred fords has been plagued by the five crocodiles, Arjuna laughs off the risk and begins to bathe. The enchanted Vargā then attacks him:

ततः सौभद्रमासाद्य महर्षेस्तीर्थमुत्तमम् ।
विगाह्य तरसा शूरः स्नानं चक्रे परंतपः ॥ ८
अथ तं पुरुषव्याघ्रमन्तर्जलचरो महान् ।
निजग्राह जले ग्राहः कुन्तीपुत्रं धनंजयम् ॥ ९
स तमादाय कौन्तेयो विस्फुरन्तं जलेचरम् ।
उदतिष्ठन्महाबाहुर्बलेन बलिनां वरः ॥ १०
उत्कृष्ट एव तु ग्राहः सोऽर्जुनेन यशस्विना ।
बभूव नारी कल्याणी सर्वभरणभूषिता ।
दीप्यमाना श्रिया राजन्दिव्यरूपा मनोरमा ॥ ११
(Mahābhārata 1.208.8-11)

Then, having reached the best ford of the great Sage Subhadra,
the heroic Burner-of-his-Foes, having dived in, took a bath. *(8)*

Then, by a great snapping crocodile, that tiger-of-a-man
was grabbed in the water, Dhanaṃjaya, the son of Kuntī. *(9)*
The Kaunteya, having seized the writhing crocodile,
That strong-armed Best of the Strong stood up powerfully,*(10)*
But when that snapper had been dragged out by the glorious Arjuna,
She became a beautiful young woman, adorned with all ornaments,
blazing with beauty, King, of divine form and charming. *(11)*

After Arjuna subdues the crocodile in his strong grip, Vargā is restored to her natural nymph-form, and and Arjuna performs the same feat with the other four crocodiles. Vargā also tells Arjuna that she had been specifically awaiting him, as his coming had been predicted to her by the itinerant sage Nārada (*Mahābhārata* 1.209.15–20) as well as by the ascetic who transformed her:

यदा च वो ग्राह्भूता गृह्न्तीः पुरुषाञ्जले ।
उत्कर्षति जलात्कश्चित्स्थलं पुरुषसत्तमः ॥ ९
तदा यूयं पुनः सर्वाः स्वरूपं प्रतिपत्स्यथ ।
(*Mahābhārata 1.209.9*)

When you, in the form of crocodiles are grabbing people in the water,
a certain superior man will drag you from the water to the land. *(9)*
Then all of you will return again to your own forms.

The passage is reminiscent of those in which Circe (*Odyssey* X.330–2) and the Cyclops (*Odyssey* IX.506–12) claim to have been told to expect the arrival of Odysseus. Under her direction, Arjuna frees her companions and ends his wanderings by celebrating his triumphs with the god Kṛṣṇa (1.210.6–10). Though the Crocodile Girl does not give Arjuna any assistance in return, the episode wins Arjuna that most crucial of rewards in epic terms, fame as the remover of the crocodile menace from the sacred fords.

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A wrestling match is also the central feature of Eidothea's story. After she has explained to Menelaos how to hide his men among the Old Man's flocks of seals and given them sealskins to drape over themselves, in a thoughtful gesture she even provides dabs of ambrosia under their noses to keep them from being nauseated by the stench of the seals. She tells them what to expect when they seize the Old Man of the Sea:

"τὸν μὲν ἐπὴν δὴ πρῶτα κατευνηθέντα ἴδησθε,
καὶ τότ' ἔπειθ' ὑμῖν μελέτω κάρτος τε βίη τε
αὖθι δ' ἔχειν μεμαῶτα καὶ ἐσσύμενόν περ ἀλύξαι.
πάντα δὲ γιγνόμενος πειρήσεται, ὅσσ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν
ἑρπετὰ γίγνονται καὶ θεσπιδαὲς πῦρ·
ὑμεῖς δ' ἀστεμφέως ἐχέμεν μᾶλλόν τε πιέζειν.
ἀλλ' ὅτε κεν δή σ' αὐτὸς ἀνείρηται ἐπέεσσι,
καὶ τότε δὴ σχέσθαι τε βίης λῦσαί τε γέροντα,
ἥρως, εἴρεσθαι δὲ θεῶν ὅς τίς σε χαλέπτει,
νόστον θ', ὡς ἐπὶ πόντον ἐλεύσεαι ἰχθυόεντα."
ὡς εἰποῦσ' ὑπὸ πόντον ἐδύσετο κυμαίνοντα.
(*Odyssey IV.414–24*)

"When first you see that he has fallen asleep
then see to it with all you strength and might
that you hold him there, though he be eager and pushing to escape
and he will try to turn into everything on earth,
which moves and lives, and even blazing fire,
but you all hold him tightly and squeeze him all the more.
And then when he, himself, asks you a question with words,
and then let go of your might and release the Old Man,
Hero, and ask which one of the gods persecutes you
and your homecoming, so that you may sail on the fishy sea."
Speaking thusly, she sank into the rolling sea.

The encounter (*Odyssey* IV.454–63) proceeds much as Eidothea predicts it will at *Odyssey* V.342–53 (quoted below in Section D).

Both the Eidothea and Vargā episodes, then, present a situation in which the hero must grip his adversary firmly in order to restore him/her to his/her

natural form, after which he is able to converse with the shape-changer who no longer poses a threat. Once Proteus has been subdued, he tells Menelaos what he needs to know and gives him news of the other Achaean leaders.

The Ulūpī episode does not have an exact parallel to the wrestling in the two incidents described above, but does open with a similar situation. Arjuna meets Ulūpī, when she grabs him and pulls him below the waters of the Ganges as he bathes in preparation for a religious ritual:[189]

तत्राभिषेकं कृत्वा स तर्पयित्वा पितामहान् ।
उत्तितीर्षुर्जलाद्राजन्नग्निकार्यचिकीर्षया ॥ १२
अपकृष्टो महाबाहुर्नागराजस्य कन्यया ।
अन्तर्जले महाराज उलूप्या कामयानया ॥ १३
(*Mahābhārata 1.206.12–3*)

There, having made ablutions and offered to his ancestors,
as he was emerging from the water, intending to perform the fire rituals, *(12)*
the strong-armed man was dragged by the daughter of the king of the Snakes,
under the water, O King, by the lustful Ulūpī. *(13)*

Unfazed by his capture, Arjuna first performs an underwater version of the *agnihotra* he had been about to perform on land, before turning to Ulūpī to find out who she is and why she has brought him there.[190] As Hiḍimbā was for Bhīma, Ulūpī has been driven out of her mind by love for Arjuna, and that is her only motive in seizing him. When he protests that he has been temporarily condemned to a hermit's life, Ulūpī demonstrates complete fore-knowledge of his situation (*Mahābhārata* 1.206.24), and describes the chain

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[189]Cf. the seizing of Hylas by a water nymph in the *Argonautika*.

[190]"कस्मायं सुभगो देश: का च त्वं कस्य चात्मजा ॥ १७ ," "What is this lovely land? And who are you? And whose child?" (*Mahābhārata 1.206.17*).

of events which brought him there. At his request she explicates the tricky *dharma* inherent in his period of forced celibacy (*Mahābhārata* 1.206.23), and that being favorably resolved, makes love to him. But this first encounter is only Ulūpī's introduction in the epic. Arjuna departs and continues on his journey, eventually arriving at Maṇalūra, and carrying out his marriage to Citrāngadā, and fathering the son whom he re-encounters in the context of the horse sacrifice.

D. Magic Token

Returning to the *Mahābhārata*'s Book 14, when Ulūpī arises through the earth to find Arjuna in conflict with his son over the necessity of fighting one another, she sets a plan into action. Ulūpī instructs Vabruvāhana to engage in battle with his father because it is the only acceptable behavior for a warrior. Vabruvāhana is convinced, and he and Arjuna begin a single combat. After an extended battle, Vabruvāhana sends off a volley of arrows, which though explicitly shot without intent to kill, pierce Arjuna's chest and mortally injure him. Seeing what he has done, the young man falls into a deathlike swoon. His mother, Citrāngadā, rushes to the field and laments at great length, pleading with Ulūpī to explain why she has caused the deaths of father and son (*Mahābhārata* 14.79). Vabruvāhana regains consciousness, and makes a resolution to starve himself to death out of remorse (*Mahābhārata* 14.80). In response to their lamentations, Ulūpī summons a magic gem which she knows will revive Arjuna:

उलूपी चिन्तयामास तदा संजीवनं मणिम् ।

स चोपातिष्ठत तदा पन्नगानां परायणं ॥ २
(*Mahābhārata 14.81.2*)

Then Ulūpī thought of the re-vivifying gem
and it then appeared, that salvation of the Snakes.

Ulūpī directs Vabruvāhana to place the gem upon Arjuna's chest (*Mahābhārata*
14.81.10–2) and its power restores the dead hero to life. Ulūpī then reveals
that the entire series of events was necessary for the expiation of a curse upon
Arjuna.

In the *Odyssey*, Leukothea also provides a magical token to assist Odysseus:

"ἀλλὰ μάλ' ὧδ' ἔρξαι- δοκέεις δέ μοι οὐκ ἀπινύσσειν-
εἴματα ταῦτ' ἀποδὺς σχεδίην ἀνέμοισι φέρεσθαι
κάλλιπ', ἀτὰρ χείρεσσι νέων ἐπιμαίεο νόστου
γαίης Φαιήκων, ὅθι τοι μοῖρ' ἐστὶν ἀλύξαι.
τῆ δέ, τόδε κρήδεμνον ὑπὸ στέρνοιο τάνυσσαι
ἄμβροτον· οὐδέ τί τοι παθέειν δέος οὐδ' ἀπολέσθαι.
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν χείρεσσιν ἐφάψεαι ἠπείροιο,
ἂψ ἀπολυσάμενος βαλέειν εἰς οἴνοπα πόντον
πολλὸν ἀπ' ἠπείρου, αὐτὸς δ' ἀπονόσφι τραπέσθαι."
Ὣς ἄρα φωνήσασα θεὰ κρήδεμνον ἔδωκεν,
αὐτὴ δ' ἂψ ἐς πόντον ἐδύσετο κυμαίνοντα
αἰθυίη εἴκυῖα· μέλαν δέ ἑ κῦμα κάλυψεν.
(*Odyssey V.342–353*)

"But indeed, do thusly— for you seem to me not to lack understanding—
throwing off these clothes, leave the raft to be borne by the winds,
and swimming with your hands, seek after a landing
in the country of Phaicia, whither it is your fate to escape.
And here, wrap this divine veil about your chest,
nor is it necessary for you to suffer anything, or to be destroyed.
But when with your hands you have touched the land
unfasten it and throw it out into the wine-dark sea
far off from the land, and turn yourself away.."
Having spoken thusly, the goddess gave him the veil,
and she slipped away into the swelling sea
in the shape of a sea bird, and a black wave hid her.

After some hesitation, Odysseus uses Leukothea's veil to save himself from drowning (*Odyssey* V.354–372). Gutglueck attributes Odysseus' reluctance to follow Ino's orders to residual fears about nudity and emasculation from his initial conflict with Circe.[191]

F. The Goddess' Powerful Father

In both the Ulūpī and Eidothea episodes, it is information provided by the nymph's powerful father which drives the episode and saves the hero. Eidothea describes Proteus' knowledge:

> τόν γ᾽ εἴ πως σὺ δύναιο λοχησάμενος λελαβέσθαι,
> ὅς κέν τοι εἴπῃσιν ὁδὸν καὶ μέτρα κελεύθου
> νόστον θ᾽, ὡς ἐπὶ πόντον ἐλεύσεαι ἰχθυόεντα.
> καὶ δέ κέ τοι εἴπῃσι, διοτρεφές, αἴ κ᾽ ἐθέλῃσθα,
> ὅττι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακόν τ᾽ ἀγαθόν τε τέτυκται,
> οἰχομένοιο σέθεν δολιχὴν ὁδὸν ἀργαλέην τε.
> (*Odyssey IV.388-393*)

> If, somehow, lying in ambush you might be able to entrap him,
> he could tell you the road and the length of your path
> and about your homecoming, as you travel upon the fishy sea.
> And he could tell you, Beloved of Zeus, if you wish it,
> whatever wicked or wonderful things have been done in your palace
> while you have traveled on your long and difficult journey.

Proteus proves to be as helpful as his daughter promised. In regard to the folktale connections of the scene, Hansen reports that "the notion that marine deities are prophetic is found in other traditions as well,"[192] and connects the *Odyssey*'s Proteus-encounter to various Scandinavian legends in which "(1) a man captures a marine spirit, (2) as a result of which he is

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[191]Gutglueck 1988.

[192]Hansen 1997:453.

entitled to ask him/her questions. (3) He does so, and (4) receives truthful answers."[193]

Ulūpī also makes use of her father's powerful position as the king of the Snakes in order to assist Arjuna. She overhears Gaṅgā, the mother of Bhīṣma, authorizing her relatives to place a curse upon Arjuna (*Mahābhārata* 14.82.7–23),[194] and immediately tells her father about the threat to her husband:

तदहं पितुरावेद्य भृषं प्रव्यथितेन्द्रया ।
अभवं स च तच्छ्रुत्वा बिषादमगमत्परम् ॥ १६
पिता तु मे वसून्गत्वा त्वदर्थं समयाचत ।
पुनः पुनः प्रसादैनांस्त एनमिदमब्रुवन् ॥ १७
(*Mahābhārata 14.82.16–17*)

I became distressed and quickly reported this to my father,
and he, having heard this went into a state of deep dejection. *(16)*
Having gone to the Vasūs, my father pleaded on your behalf,
again and again propitiated them. They said this to him: *(17)*

By supplicating Bhīṣma's kin, Ulūpī's father is able to secure a bargain that Arjuna can be freed from the curse by being killed in combat with his son.

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[193]Hansen 1997:454.

[194]The next chapter describes another intervention Gaṅgā makes on behalf of Bhīṣma in an earlier battle.

Table 3. Commonalities in the Leukothea, Eidothea, Ulūpī and Vargā Episodes.

	Ino/Leukothea	Eidothea	Ulūpī	Vargā
A. Aquatic	V.334-5 Used to live as a mortal, but now lives in the open sea.	Daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.	1.206.22 A "Denizen of the Waters" 1.208.13 A "Water-Liver"	A former celestial nymph who lives in a sacred pool in crocodile form.
B. Rises out of Sea or Earth	V.336-8 Rises out of the sea to help Odysseus.	Initial appearance not described, but returns to the sea at IV.425	14.78.8 Emerges straight out of the earth	_____
C. Shape-Changing	V.336-8 Appears to Odysseus in the form of a sea-bird	IV.414—24 Proteus must be held tightly until he stops shape-shifting.	Snakes are all endowed with shape-changing powers, though Ulūpī is never shown using them.	Turned into Crocodile by sage. 1.208.10-11 When held firmly out of water, reverts to proper form.
D. Magic Token	V.345-351 Gives Odysseus a magic veil which saves him from drowning	_____	14.81.2 Provides a magic gem which restores Arjuna to life.	_____
E. A Wrestling match	_____	IV.414—24 Proteus must be held tightly to be subdued.	1.206.13 Drags Arjuna beneath the water out of love for him.	1.208.10-11 The crocodile-formed nymph must be held firmly out of the water to break the curse.
F. Powerful Father	_____	Eidothea is the daughter of Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, who gives them the information they need.	14.82.7-23 Ulūpī's father gives her the information to save Arjuna from a curse.	_____

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4.2   A Comparison From Cycle Material

This tale of father-son combat resulting in the father's death in the Ulūpī story also finds a possible comparison in material from the cycle poems. In the *Chrestomathia*, Proclus summarizes the *Telegony*, the adventures of Telegonus, son of Odysseus and Circe:

> ἔπειτα εἰς Ἰθάκην καταπλεύσας τὰς ὑπὸ Τειρεσίου ῥηθείσας τελεῖ θυσίας. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα εἰς Θεσπρωτοὺς ἀφικνεῖται καὶ γαμεῖ Καλλιδίκην βασιλίδα τῶν Θεσπρωτῶν...μετὰ δὲ τὴν Καλλιδίκης τελευτὴν τὴν μὲν βασιλείαν διαδέχεται Πολυποίτης Ὀδυσσέως υἱός, αὐτὸς δ᾽ εἰς Ἰθάκην ἀφικνεῖται· κἀν τούτωι Τηλέγονος ἐπὶ ζήτησιν τοῦ πατρὸς πλέων, ἀποβὰς εἰς τὴν Ἰθάκην τέμνει τὴν νῆσον· ἐκβοηθήσας δ᾽ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ παιδὸς ἀναιρεῖται κατ᾽ ἄγνοιαν. Τηλέγονος δ᾽ ἐπιγνοὺς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τό τε τοῦ πατρὸς σῶμα καὶ τὸν Τηλέμαχον καὶ τὴν Πηνελόπην πρὸς τὴν μητέρα μεθίστησιν· ἡ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀθανάτους ποιεῖ, καὶ συνοικεῖ τῆι μὲν Πηνελόπηι Τηλέγονος, Κίρκηι δὲ Τηλέμαχος.

(Proclus, *Chrestomathia* 306[195])

[Odysseus] then, having sailed back to Ithaca, carries out the sacrifices ordered by Teiresias, and then reaches Thesprotis and marries Callidice, queen of the Thesprotians...After the death of Callidice, the succession goes to Polypoetes, Odysseus' son, while Odysseus himself returns to Ithaca. Meanwhile, Telegonus, sailing in search of his father, goes Ithaca and razes the island: Having marched out in defence, Odysseus is slain by his son in ignorance. Telegonus, realizing his error, takes the body of his father, and Telemachus and Penelope to his mother [Circe], where she makes them immortal, and Telegonus marries Penelope, and Telemachus marries Circe.

It is impossible to establish compelling connections through a summary, rather than through comparison of the actual texts, but it is worth noting that the two stories contain the same set of significant elements: the important sacrifice (those ordered by Teiresias, and the Horse-Sacrifice), the heir to the kingdom sired on a princess by the journeying hero, the paired human and divine mothers, the father-son combat resulting in the father's

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[195]Bernabé 1996:101–3.

death and the son's remorse, and the magical, life-conferring intervention of a recurrent powerful helper-figure.

4.3   Conclusions

Each epic gives us two obviously paired episodes about water-dwelling semi-human women, one of which involves a life-saving token, and the other a wrestling match to subdue a shape-changing opponent. While the internal evidence for a genetic tie between these two pairs of episodes is not overwhelming, it is enough to validate the claim that the complete set of female helpers in the *Mahābhārata* is in exact correspondence with those in the *Odyssey*. When coupled with the high degree of symmetry within the Circe, Calypso and Hiḍimbā episodes, and the strong commonalities of the Nausicaa and Citrāngadā stories, the two pairs presented in this section round out a compelling totality. In the tales of Ino, Eidothea, Ulūpī and Vargā, we see a base character, the helpful young beautiful water-dweller, who becomes a template, like the model for a string of paper dolls which unfolds and grows to add complexity and beauty to the storyline.

Since the *Odyssey* and the *Mahābhārata* each possess the same two types of stories about encounters with female water-sprites, it is reasonable to assume that this reflects the distribution of their ancient hypothetical predecessor(s). But while the *Odyssey* contains two encounters of roughly equal size and import, the *Mahābhārata* has a much more irregular split, with

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Ulūpī's role being greatly extended, while Vargā's role is peripheral. Furthermore, the total distribution of shared traits is not the same for both epics; between Ulūpī and Eidothea there is the cross-linkage of the powerful, near-omniscient father who plays an important role in gathering information for the hero. There is also the fact that shape-changing is connected to all four episodes. It is equally possible then, in light of the extreme interconnectedness of all four of the characters discussed in this chapter, that proto-epic material contained only one encounter with a water-dwelling shape-shifter, and that encounter comprised both a wrestling match and the gift of a magic token. Though there can be no definitive resolution to the question, seeing these pairs of encounters as the two halves of one original explains their close relationship to one another and the preservation of so many obvious similarities in their construction.

5 The Goddess as Charioteer: Athena and Gaṅgā

The penultimate pair of scenes to be presented for consideration reveals another way in which divine females serve as helpers for male heroes. The *Iliad* and the *Mahābhārata* each contain a scene in which a goddess drives a hero's chariot in battle for him: Athena drives the chariot of Diomedes during his *aristeia* in Book V of the *Iliad*, and the goddess Gaṅgā drives her son Bhīṣma's chariot during his single combat with Rāma Jāmadagnya, narrated in the fifth book of the *Mahābhārata*. Given the frequency with which gods enter the war at Troy, the mere existence of two such scenes does not automatically suggest that they descend from a common ancestor. Though a goddess driving a chariot is a striking and remarkable image, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the idea could have occurred independently to the poets of both traditions. But examination of the surrounding events in the narratives reveals that the goddesses' chariot-driving is in each case framed by an identical set of incidents whose profiles, though less picturesque, are equally exceptional.

Both scenes occur relatively early in their respective epics. As Kirk notes, Diomedes' is the first extended *aristeia* of the *Iliad*.[196] Bhīṣma's duel with Rāma is the *Mahābhārata*'s first display of true military combat (as opposed

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[196]Kirk 1990:53.

to spontaneous fights with *rākṣasas* and Asuras, or ceremonial contests at *svayamvaras*), and takes place at Kurukṣetra, the war's battlefield, although it does not occur during the great war itself. The story of the duel is narrated to Dhṛtarāṣtra by Bhīṣma himself, during a council about strategy held on the eve of the great battle, and explains Bhīṣma's unwillingness to fight against the warrior who provoked the combat.

Warfare, unfortunately, knows few cultural boundaries and there is a great deal of uniformity in its practice, so some of the commonalities between the two scenes are natural and unavoidable. Like all Iliadic battle scenes, Diomedes' *aristeia* contains many typical elements, and this complicates the comparative attempt. Comparison is also affected by presentational differences between the two scenes. One of these is that the *Mahābhārata* version describes one 24-day-long battle between two combatants, whereas Book V of the *Iliad* describes a variety of encounters between multiple fighters, and the action repeatedly cuts away from, and returns to, Diomedes' display of military valor. Another important factor is that in the *Mahābhārata*'s version, the helpful goddess is also the hero's mother, whereas Athena is a virgin goddess.[197] But Athena does have a number of mortal favorites to whom she gives assistance, and is twice compared to a mother as she does so.[198] As

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[197] Athena describes her role as that of Diomedes' ἐπιτάρροθος (*Iliad* V.186), as she says she was for his father (*Iliad* V.808).

[198] As at *Iliad* IV.127–33, when she brushes a missile away from Menelaos "ὡς ὅτε μήτηρ / παιδὸς ἐέργῃ μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἡδέι λέξεται ὕπνῳ," "as when a mother / keeps a fly off of her child, when he lies in sweet sleep," or after the footrace at *Iliad* XXIII.783, when Ajax complains that he was tripped by Athena, "ἥ τὸ πάρος περ / μήτηρ ὡς Ὀδυσῆϊ παρίσταται ἡδ' ἐπαρήγει," "she who used to / stand beside Odysseus like a mother and help him." See also discussion of *Iliad* XXIII.783 in Jackson 1999.

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Nagy puts it, "The function of the diòs thugátēr as a motherly goddess who preserves the hero from mortal harm is typical on the level of epic narrative."[199] The theme of maternal concern for a warrior is also highlighted in *Iliad* V through the interventions of another immortal mother, Aphrodite, who rescues her human son Aeneas from his combat with Diomedes.

Though it contains many typical features, Book V of the *Iliad* also contains many singularities,[200] and a significant proportion of these find analogues in the combat of Bhīṣma and Rāma Jāmadagnya. There are also several occurrences which are duplicated elsewhere in Homer or in the cycle poems in specific contexts linked to the current scene. These are discussed individually below, following the order of events in the Homeric narrative.

5.1   Thematic Parallels

A. Contact With the Helpful Goddess Precedes the Combat

The helpful goddesses both confer with the heroes before the battles begin. Though these conferences are different in tone, their placement at the onset of the scene emphasizes the thoroughgoing importance of the goddess' intervention; the driving of the chariot is not an isolated incident, but a part of the helper's programmatic involvement in the episodes. As Book V of the *Iliad* opens, Athena magically confers military prowess on the hero

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[199]Nagy 1979:205.
[200]Fenik 1969:28, 39, 77.

Diomedes:

’Ένθ’ αὖ Τυδεΐδῃ Διομήδεϊ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
δῶκε μένος καὶ θάρσος, ἵν’ ἔκδηλος μετὰ πᾶσιν
Ἀργείοισι γένοιτο ἰδὲ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἄροιτο.
δαῖέ οἱ ἐκ κόρυθός τε καὶ ἀσπίδος ἀκάματον πῦρ,
ἀστέρ’ ὀπωρινῷ ἐναλίγκιον, ὅς τε μάλιστα
λαμπρὸν παμφαίνῃσι λελουμένος Ὠκεανοῖο·
τοῖόν οἱ πῦρ δαῖεν ἀπὸ κρατός τε καὶ ὤμων,
ὦρσε δέ μιν κατὰ μέσσον, ὅθι πλεῖστοι κλονέοντο.
(*Iliad V.1–8*)

And now to the son of Tydeus, Diomedes, Pallas Athena
gave might and courage, so that he would stand out among all
the Argives and achieve noble glory.
She struck an untiring flame from his helmet and shield,
like the late-summer star, which especially
glitters brightly when it has bathed in Ocean.
This kind of flame she sparked from his head and shoulders,
and she urged him into the middle, where the masses churned.

The *Mahābhārata*'s version of the combat also opens with an exchange between the hero and the goddess who will assist him, but the encounter proceeds quite differently. Instead of encouraging Bhīṣma, Gangā pleads with her son not to fight:

ततो मामब्रवीद्देवी सर्वभूतहितैषिणी ।
माता स्वरूपिणी राजन् किमिदं ते चिकीर्षितम् ॥ २२
(*Mahābhārata 5.179.22*)

Then to me spoke the goddess who cares for the welfare of all beings,
my mother, in her own form, [saying] "What is this you wish to do?" *(22)*

Bhīṣma explains the situation to her, and she tries to remedy it by approaching Rāma. When she later returns to her son, he bluntly turns her away:

ततो गङ्गा सुतस्नेहाद्भीष्मं पुनरुपागमत् ।
न चास्याः सोऽकरोद्वाक्यं क्रोधपर्याकुलेक्षणः ॥ ३०

(*Mahābhārata* 5.179.30)

Then Ganga, out of love for her son, returned again to Bhīṣma,
and he did not obey her word, rolling his eyes in anger. *(30)*

B. The War-crazed, Deathless Opponent

Both episodes involve the goddess' protégé battling an opponent who is a
war-crazed immortal, and renowned for his bloodlust and gratuitous cruelty.
Zeus describes Ares at the end of Book V:

ἔχθιστος δέ μοί ἐσσι θεῶν οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσιν·
αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε.
(*Iliad V.890-1*)

To me you are the most hateful of all the gods who hold Olympus.
For always strife and war and fighting is dear to you.

Ares' appearance in the battle is so unnerving that "τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ῥίγησε βοὴν
ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης·" "seeing him, Diomedes of the noble war-cry shuddered,"
(*Iliad* V.596). At V.842–8 Athena and Diomedes come upon Ares stripping
a mortal fighter he has killed, "something that no other god does elsewhere"
on the battlefield.[201] As an immortal, Ares can not be killed, though he is
wounded at the end of Book V, and must retreat to Olympus to be healed.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma's opponent is Rāma Jāmadagnya, a leg-
endary brahmin whose catalogue of shocking acts includes decapitating his
own mother with an axe (*Mahābhārata* 3.116) and the slaughter of all the

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[201]Fenik 1969:77.

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male members of the warrior caste during the juncture between the second and third ages of the earth (*Mahābhārata* 1.2.1–9, 1.58, 3.117).[202] He is a mythical figure even within the main narrative thread of the *Mahābhārata*, and the most skilled warrior of all time. His immortality was granted as a boon by his father (*Mahābhārata* 1.116.18), and the fact that "न च रामेण मर्तव्यं कदाच्छिदपि," "Rāma can never ever die," (*Mahābhārata* 5.184.17) plays an important role in the combat between Bhīṣma and Rāma, just as Diomedes' temerity in attempting to fight with gods and goddesses is a central part of Book V of the *Iliad*.

C. The Goddess Attempts to Dissuade the Opponent

In both scenes the goddess allied with the hero makes an early attempt to prevent the conflict. Athena approaches Ares and leads him away from the battle:

...ἀτὰρ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
χειρὸς ἑλοῦσ' ἐπέεσσι προσηύδα θοῦρον Ἄρηα·
"Ἄρες Ἄρες βροτολοιγέ, μιαιφόνε, τειχεσιπλῆτα,
οὐκ ἂν δὴ Τρῶας μὲν ἐάσαιμεν καὶ Ἀχαιοὺς
μάρνασθ', ὁπποτέροισι πατὴρ Ζεὺς κῦδος ὀρέξῃ,
νῶϊ δὲ χαζώμεσθα, Διὸς δ' ἀλεώμεθα μῆνιν;"
Ὣς εἰποῦσα μάχης ἐξήγαγε θοῦρον Ἄρηα.
τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπ' ἠϊόεντι Σκαμάνδρῳ,
Τρῶας δ' ἔκλιναν Δαναοί·
(*Iliad V.29–37*)

...But bright-eyed Athena
taking him the hand, addressed these words to raging Ares:

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[202] The effect of the massacre was that all the surviving warrior-caste females had to have their children fathered by brahmins, ensuring the dominance of the priestly caste over that of the warriors.

"Ares, Ares, mortal-destroyer, murder-polluted stormer of walls,
Shouldn't we allow the Trojans and the Achaians
to fight, so that father Zeus may offer glory to whichever side?
But let us withdraw and avoid the wrath of Zeus."
So speaking, she led raging Ares out of the battle.
She sat him down upon the bank of the Scamander,
and the Danaans turned the Trojans.

According to Kirk, the gesture of taking Ares by the hand indicates firmness, but Athena's syntax is soothing and obsequious.[203] Fenik compares Athena's removal of Ares from the battle here with her blocking him from joining the war at *Iliad* XV.121–42, and with Apollo's suggestion of a truce to Athena at *Iliad* VII.22–43.[204] Though the scenes do have similarities, both are very different in tone and motivation. Of particular importance in the comparison is the element of deception in the Book V scene; the threat of Zeus' wrath is not imminent, and Athena's wish to see Ares out of the fighting is clearly connected to the fact that at V.1–8 she has instilled so much might in Diomedes that fire has blazed from his shield and helmet, and she does not want Ares to disrupt his chance at glory.[205] However much it may be structured to resemble other battlefield negotiations between gods, this encounter between Ares and Athena is motivated by Athena's wish to protect Diomedes from Ares. It also foreshadows the dramatic peak of the episode, in which Athena and Diomedes attack Ares together.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Gangā makes a similar attempt to protect Bhīṣma by interceding with his opponent. After learning of her son's intention to

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[203] Kirk 1990:56–7.

[204] Fenik 1968:14.

[205] Fenik too acknowledges the Athena's disingenuousness; in discussing V.29–37, he says. "In 0, of course, she is genuinely worried," 1968:14.

fight, Gaṅgā goes to Jāmadagnya and begs him to call off the duel:

ततः सा राममभ्येत्य जननी मे महानदी ।
मदर्थं तमृषिं देवी क्षमयामास भार्गवम् ।
भीष्मेण सह मा योत्सीः शिष्येणेति वचोऽब्रवीत् ॥ २८
स च तामाह याचन्तीं भीष्ममेव निवर्तय ।
न हि मे कुरुते काममित्यहं तमुपागमम् ॥ २९

(*Mahābhārata 5.179.28–9*)

Then my mother, the great river, went to Rāma,
For my sake the goddess asked for pardon from the Bhārgava sage,
"Don't fight with Bhīṣma your student," she said.
And he said to her as she was pleading "Try stopping Bhīṣma.
He does not do what I desire, so I attack him."

Gaṅgā's attempt is unsuccessful, as Athena's also ultimately proves to be.

D. The Hero is Struck in the Shoulder

Both heroes sustain wounds to the shoulder which intensify their determination and fury on the battlefield. Diomedes is hit by the arrow of Pandaros early in Book V, before Pandaros has found a chariot to ride into the battle:

Τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησε Λυκάονος ἀγλαὸς υἱὸς
θύνοντ' ἂμ πεδίον πρὸ ἕθεν κλονέοντα φάλαγγας,
αἶψ' ἐπὶ Τυδεΐδῃ ἐτιταίνετο καμπύλα τόξα,
καὶ βάλ' ἐπαΐσσοντα τυχὼν κατὰ δεξιὸν ὦμον,
θώρηκος γύαλον· διὰ δ' ἔπτατο πικρὸς ὀϊστός,
ἀντικρὺ δὲ διέσχε, παλάσσετο δ' αἵματι θώρηξ.
(*Iliad* V.95–100)

But when the glorious son of Lykaon noticed him
charging along the plain, putting the ranks to flight before him.,
instantly he bent his curved bow against the son of Tydeus,
and attacking, he shot, striking the right shoulder,
the hollow of the corselet; the sharp arrow flew through it,

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straight through it went, and the corselet was spattered with blood.

Both Kirk[206] and Fenik have noticed resemblances between the above and Diomedes' wounding at the hands of Paris at XI.369–400. Fenik points out that the two incidents are structured in the same way:

A. Diomedes fights successfully.
B. Pandaros/Paris sees him and wounds him with an arrow.
C. Pandaros/Paris rejoices. In Λ Diomedes replies, in E he does not.
D. Diomedes withdraws, Sthenelos/Odysseus pulls out the arrow.[207]

Step C, termed "Premature Boasting," by Fenik,[208] also occurs twice in the scene from the *Mahābhārata* under consideration here, at 5.181.15 (discussed below) and 5.183.9–10 (following, as in the above pattern, an arrow-wound to the collarbone), when Bhīṣma has been badly wounded and Rāma and his supporters mistakenly begin to rejoice, believing him to be dead. Fenik also notes that V.286 ff. follows steps A through C, but ends with the killing of Pandaros, and he asserts that at three close repetitions this sequence can be labeled "typical." But typical or not, the scene in *Iliad* V is carefully tailored to the situation at hand. Unlike the foot-wound in *Iliad* XI, which Diomedes claims to notice "about as much as if a woman had struck me or a witless child" ("ὡς εἴ με γυνὴ βάλοι ἢ πάϊς ἄφρων," *Iliad* XI.389), this is a serious, though not life-threatening wound. The injured Diomedes prays to Athena

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[206]Kirk 1990:65.

[207]Fenik 1968:234. He also notes that the wound in the foot creates the likelihood of a commonality with the scene from the Aithiopis in which Paris kills Achilles with a wound to the foot, though he feels the two Iliadic versions are more closely related to one another.

[208]Fenik 1968:21.

for help in recovering and in killing Pandaros, and the strength and courage
with which she inspires him propels him into the true heart of the *aristeia*:

καὶ πρίν περ θυμῷ μεμαὼς Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι·
δὴ τότε μιν τρὶς τόσσον ἕλεν μένος,
(*Iliad V.135–6*)

And though before his heart had been eager to fight the Trojans;
now three times as much his fury seized him,

Bhīṣma also receives a significant and galvanizing wound in the shoul-
der, though it occurs on what will be the final day of his conflict. Rāma
Jāmadagnya hurls a javelin at him, and the pain of the wound whips Bhīṣma
into greater fury:

ततो भरतशार्दूल धिष्ण्यमाकाशगं यथा ।
सा मामभ्यहनत्तूर्णमंसदेशे च भारत ॥ ६
अथासृङ्क्षोऽस्रवद्घोरं गिरेर्गैरिकधातुवत् ।
रामेण सुमहाबाहो क्षतस्य क्षतजेक्षण ॥ ७
ततोऽहं जामदग्न्याय भृशं क्रोधसमन्वितः ।
प्रेषयं मृत्युसंकाशं बाणं सर्पविषोपमम् ॥ ८
(*Mahābhārata 5.185.6–8*)

Then, Tiger of the Bhāratas, like a fire-altar flying through the air,
it hit me swiftly in the shoulder region, Bharata. *(6)*
Then my blood flowed horribly like minerals on a mountain
from the wound struck by strong-armed Rāma, whose eyes are like wounds. *(7)*
Then I was powerfully filled with violent fury, and at Jāmadagnya
I shot an arrow like death itself, like the venom of a snake. *(8)*

Though Bhīṣma has already sustained a number of injuries (such as the
arrow-strike to the collarbone at 5.183.9–10 mentioned above), the shoulder
wound (coupled with instructions he received in a dream the night before)
spurs on his will to finish the conflict. This particular wound is, if anything,
remarkable for its mildness; other injuries sustained in the battle include

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being hit with 960 crane-fletched fiery arrows (5.180.20), 900 straight-shafted spotted arrows (5.180.28), and a rain of arrows so thick that they blot out the sun and the friction of their contact with one another in the sky starts a fire in the heavens (1.181.30–34). Amidst these hyperbolic descriptions, a simple shoulder wound stands out dramatically, particularly in its prominent position as Bhīṣma prepares to emerge victorius.[209]

It is also worth noting that Rāma also begins to shoot his arrows at Bhīṣma at *Mahābhārata* 5.180.5 before Rāma has mounted his chariot (though causing no mentioned damage), just as Pandaros shoots at Diomedes from the ground. In this detail the scene thus conforms to Kirk's general observation on V.15 that the probable loser of a contest usually makes the first throw.[210]

E. The Charioteer Removes Arrows from the Hero

Before the beloved charioteer is supplanted by the goddess, both stories focus on his role as attendant as he performs the service of pulling arrows out of the hero. Sthenelos is introduced as a companion to Diomedes in the catalogue of the ships (*Iliad* II.563–4, and at IV.367), but does not appear again until Diomedes returns to his chariot after being struck by Pandaros' arrow:

...τὸν δ' οὐ βέλος ὠκὺ δάμασσεν,
ἀλλ' ἀναχωρήσας πρόσθ' ἵπποιιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν

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[209]In an interesting contrast, Fenik 1969:61–2 discusses the extraordinary number of phantasmata, "those incidents in the battle scenes that are so extraordinary that they contradict both probability and possibility," which may be found in *Iliad* V.

[210]Kirk 1990:55.

ἔστη, καὶ Σθένελον προσέφη, Καπανήϊον υἱόν·
"ὄρσο, πέπον Καπανηϊάδη, καταβήσεο δίφρου,
ὄφρα μοι ἐξ ὤμοιο ἐρύσσῃς πικρὸν ὀϊστόν."
Ὣς ἄρ᾽ ἔφη, Σθένελος δὲ καθ᾽ ἵππων ἆλτο χαμᾶζε,
πὰρ δὲ στὰς βέλος ὠκὺ διαμπερὲς ἐξέρυσ᾽ ὤμου·
αἷμα δ᾽ ἀνηκόντιζε διὰ στρεπτοῖο χιτῶνος.
(*Iliad   V.106–10*)

And him the swift dart did not tame,
but returning to his team and chariot
he stood, and said to Sthenelos, the son of Kapaneus;
"Get up, dear son of Kapaneus, and come down from the chariot,
to pull this piercing arrow out of my shoulder."
So he spoke, and Sthenelos jumped from the team to the ground,
and standing beside him he drew the swift dart straight through the shoulder;
and blood shot through his woven tunic.

Bhīṣma's charioteer remains nameless throughout the episode, but is introduced as they set out together. In describing his equipment, Bhīṣma notes that his horses were "युक्तं सूतेन शिष्टेन बहुशो दृष्टकर्मणा," ("yoked by an experienced driver who had seen many of my deeds," *Mahābhārata* 5.179.12). This charioteer pulls arrows from the injured hero at the end of the first day of the duel:

आत्मनस्तु ततः सूतो हयानां च विशां पते ।
मम चापनयामास शल्यान्कुशलसंमतः ॥ १
(*Mahābhārata 5.181.1*)

Then my charioteer, from himself and the horses, Lord of the Earth,
and from me, removed arrows, being widely celebrated as clever. *(1)*

Table 4: Comparison of the of Bhīṣma and Diomedes Battle Scenes

	Diomedes	Bhīṣma
A. Contact with helpful goddess preceeds the Combat	V.1-8 Athena makes fire blaze from Diomedes' head, shoulders, and shield, and confers might upon him	5.179.22-30 Gangā tries to convince Bhīṣma not to fight
B. The War-crazed, Deathless Opponent	Ares, the God of War	Rāma Jāmadagnya, a Brahmin who previously slaughtered all the warriors on earth.
C. The Goddess Tries to Dissuade the Opponent	V.29-37 Athena persuades Ares to leave the battle, but he later returns.	5.179.28-9 Gangā attempts to persuade Rāma to make peace, but he refuses.
D. The Hero Struck in the Shoulder	V.95 Hit by Lykaon's arrow	5.185.6
- The Opponent Boasts Prematurely	V.101-106	5.181.15, 5.183.9-10
- Wound ignites the Hero's Valor	V.133-43	5.185.6-8
E. Charioteer Removes Arrow(s) From the Hero	V.110	5.181
F. An Opponent Who Lacks a Chariot	V.192-205 Lykaion lacks a chariot. V.217-40 He agrees to share Aeneas'	5.180.1 Rāma Jāmadagnya has no chariot. 5.180.6-7 conjures one by thought.
G. An Opponent Faints, but Recovers	V.695 Sarpedon faints when a spear is removed from his thigh.	5.181.24 Rāma faints from an arrow wound
H. The Combat Prompted by a Female Character	Diomedes' attack on Aphrodite incurs the outrage of Apollo, who intercedes with Ares, and convinces him to fight Diomedes.	Ambā's grievance against Bhīṣma gains the sympathy of Hotravāhana, who intercedes with Rāma, who goes into battle with Bhīṣma.
I. The Goddess Drives the Hero's Chariot	V.835-41 Athena drives the chariot of Diomedes	5.183.16 Gangā drives for her son Bhīṣma
J. Fight Involves a Serious Taboo which Alters During the Combat	V.123-33 allowed to fight Aphrodite, no others V.440-2 a warning not to attack gods V.815--834 Athena tells him to attack Ares	5.184.10-19 Bhīṣma told to use the Sleepmaker 5.186.1-5 Stopped from using it by the gods
K. The Opponent is Chastised by his Father	V.888-98 Zeus expresses disgust at Ares	5.186.9-21 Rāma's father and ancestors intervene and tell him to desist

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F. An Opponent Who Lacks a Chariot

Both scenes contain an early incident in which an opponent has no chariot and must acquire one, though the situations are resolved differently. The significance of the missing chariot itself also varies in each epic, since the Greek practice was to fight on the ground and use the chariot mainly for transportation onto and around the battlefield, whereas the Indic warriors fought from the chariot. As Bhīṣma and Jāmadagnya prepare to engage with one another, Bhīṣma notices that his opponent is unmounted and insists he must have a car in order to fight:

तमहं स्मयन्निव रणे प्रत्यभाषं व्यवस्थितम् ।
भूमिष्ठं नोत्सहे योद्धुं भवन्तं रथमास्थितः ॥ १
आरोह स्यन्दनं वीर कवचं च महाभुज ।
बधान समरे राम यदि योद्धुं मयेच्छसि ॥ २
(*Mahābhārata* 5.180.1–2)

Almost laughing with battle-joy, I adressed him who stood ready for battle;
Standing on a chariot I am not able to do battle with you on the ground. *(1)*
Ascend a chariot, Hero, and bind on armor, O Great-Armed One,
if you wish to fight with me in battle, Rāma. *(2)*

In response, Rāma Jāmadagnya declares that the earth will serve as his chariot with the Vedas as his horses, and conjures a chariot by thought (*Mahābhārata* 5.180.6-7), after which the two warriors begin the combat.

In the *Iliad*, as Diomedes' divinely inspired prowess begins to cause serious losses on the Trojan side, Aeneas seeks out Pandaros to ask why he has not used more of his arrows against Diomedes. Pandaros explains that he lacks

a chariot because he cared too much for his horses to subject them to the rigors of life at Troy (*Iliad* V.192–205). According to Fenik there is no parallel to this situation in the *Iliad*,[211] and I am unable to locate one in the *Mahābhārata*. Though the two situations have different resolutions, the singularity of the initial condition increases its relevance.

Aeneas invites Pandaros to share his chariot, and they have a brief discussion over who will drive which retreats back into formulaic territory.[212] Together, they attack Diomedes, who chooses to fend them off from the ground though his chariot and driver are standing at the ready (*Iliad* V.251–8). Fenik notes that Diomedes' decision to fight also marks a return to normal practice; "The fight itself proceeds in standard fashion, one man on foot facing two in a chariot. This is a common sight—cf. E 159, E 239, E 608, Λ 101, Λ 126."[213] Aeneas is badly wounded, and when his mother, Aphrodite, comes to his rescue she too is wounded by Diomedes. Lycaon is killed outright, and Diomedes moves on to other opponents.

G. An Opponent Faints, but Recovers

Both episodes describe one of the enemy combatants fainting from a wound and then recovering, as well as the concern the fallen man's comrades have for him. Rāma Jāmadagnya faints from an arrow wound:

तेन त्वभिहतो गढं बाणच्छेदवशं गत: ।
मुमोह सहसा रामो भूमौ च निपपात ह ॥ २३

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[211] Fenik 1968:28.
[212] Fenik 1968:29.
[213] Fenik 1968:11.

ततो हाहाकृतं सर्वं रामे भूतलमाश्रिते ।
जगद्द्वारत संविग्नं यथार्कपतनेऽभवत् ॥ २४

(*Mahābhārata* 5.181.23–5)

Struck deeply and overwhelmed by the arrow cut,
Unconscious, Rāma fell heavily to the earth. *(23)*
Then they all cried "Haa! Haa!" over Rāma lying on the ground,
All the people were agitated as if the sun had fallen, O Bhārata, *(24)*

Rāma's attendants refresh him with cool water, and he is soon able to resume
the battle. In the *Iliad*, after Sarpedon is hit by a spear, his companions lay
him under a tree and give him medical attention:

οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα δῖοι ἑταῖροι
εἶσαν ὑπ' αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς περικαλλέι φηγῷ·
ἐκ δ' ἄρα οἱ μηροῦ δόρυ μείλινον ὦσε θύραζε
ἴφθιμος Πελάγων, ὅς οἱ φίλος ἦεν ἑταῖρος.
τὸν δὲ λίπε ψυχή, κατὰ δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀχλύς.
αὖτις δ' ἀμπνύνθη, περὶ δὲ πνοιὴ Βορέαο
ζώγρει ἐπιπνείουσα κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν.
(*Iliad* V.692-8)

But then Sarpedon, like one of the gods, his noble companions
took beneath a beautiful oak of aegis-bearing Zeus;
Straight out of Sarpedon's thigh then, he thrust the ash spear
Stalwart Pelagon, who was his dear companion.
And the spirit left him, and mist poured down upon his eyes
But again he was given breath, as the gust of Boreas
blowing, revived him who had horribly gaped out his soul.

In the *Mahābhārata*'s episode, Bhīṣma also faints from an arrow wound,
at 5.181.15–16. The fact that he does so immediately before Rāma faints
suggests that it is the result of internal doubling, done to make the scene
more balanced.

H. The Encounter Prompted by a Wrong Done to a Female Character

Bhīṣma's duel with Rāma Jāmadagnya comes at the instigation of a woman named Ambā, who seeks revenge upon Bhīṣma for having inadvertently ruined her plans for marriage. In despair, she meets a male relative and begs him for help. He agrees to enlist the aid of his friend Rāma Jāmadagnya, a former weapons instructor to Bhīṣma, believing that Jāmadagnya can use his influence over Bhīma to bring about a peaceable resolution to the conflict. Instead, Jāmadagnya is won over to Ambā's cause, and when Bhīṣma refuses to make amends to her, a fight to the death is proposed.

The *Iliad* employs a similar triangle of characters, though it is set up as the combat proceeds, rather than as a prelude to the fight. At V.334–40, Diomedes stabs Aphrodite on the hand as she tries to rescue her wounded son Aeneas. In pain, she drops Aeneas, who is taken up by Apollo instead. Aphrodite approaches Ares and asks him to lend her his horses and chariot so that she can return to Olympus. When Diomedes then continues to attack Aeneas as Apollo attempts to carry him to safety, the god loses his temper. He reprimands Diomedes, and after safely disposing of Aeneas, he too asks Ares for assistance in dealing with the wrong done to Aphrodite and the outrage against his own person:

> δὴ τότε θοῦρον Ἄρηα προσηύδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων·
> " Ἄρες Ἄρες βροτολοιγέ, μιαιφόνε, τειχεσιπλῆτα,
> οὐκ ἂν δὴ τόνδ' ἄνδρα μάχης ἐρύσαιο μετελθών,
> Τυδείδην, ὃς νῦν γε καὶ ἂν Διὶ πατρὶ μάχοιτο;
> Κύπριδα μὲν πρῶτα σχεδὸν οὔτασε χεῖρ' ἐπὶ καρπῷ,
> αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐτῷ μοι ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἶσος."
> Ὣς εἰπὼν αὐτὸς μὲν ἐφέζετο Περγάμῳ ἄκρῃ,

Τρῳὰς δὲ στίχας οὖλος Ἄρης ὄτρυνε μετελθών.
(*Iliad V.454–61*)

Then to furious Ares spoke Phoebus Apollo
"Ares, Ares, mortal-destroying, blood-stained, stormer of walls,
Why don't you join the battle and drag off this man,
the son of Tydeus, who now would even fight with father Zeus?
First he struck Cypris on the hand near the wrist,
Then he rushed at me myself as if he were a god."
So speaking he seated himself upon the height of Pergamus
and baneful Ares entered the Trojan ranks and urged them on.

Both combats are thus triggered by a wrong committed by the hero
against a female character who turns to a pair of sympathetic male char-
acters for assistance.

I. The Goddess Drives the Hero's Chariot

Book V of the *Iliad* has other divine female chariot drivers, though most
have divine female passengers as well: Iris drives Ares' car for Aphrodite
(V.363–9) and Hera drives for Athena (V.767–76). When Ares returns to
the battle (V.461 ff.) at the request of Apollo (V.454–9), Athena and Hera
become uneasy as the tide begins to turn. Athena instructs Diomedes that
she will help him drive off Ares, and takes over as his charioteer:

Ὣς φαμένη Σθένελον μὲν ἀφ' ἵππων ὦσε χαμᾶζε,
χειρὶ πάλιν ἐρύσσασ', ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἐμμαπέως ἀπόρουσεν·
ἡ δ' ἐς δίφρον ἔβαινε παραὶ Διομήδεα δῖον
ἐμμεμαυῖα θεά· μέγα δ' ἔβραχε φήγινος ἄξων
βριθοσύνῃ· δεινὴν γὰρ ἄγεν θεὸν ἄνδρα τ' ἄριστον.
λάζετο δὲ μάστιγα καὶ ἡνία Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη·
αὐτίκ' ἐπ' Ἄρηϊ πρώτῳ ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους.
(*Iliad V.835–41*)

So speaking she pushed Sthenelos down from the team to the ground,
drawing him back with her hand, and he readily jumped away;

and she went into the chariot beside godly Diomedes
the avid goddess; greatly the oak rattled bearing
her weight, for it bore the dread goddess and the greatest man.
Pallas Athena took up the whip and reins;
and straightaway she first drove the single-footed horses against Ares.

The *Mahābhārata*'s version plays out rather differently. After the death of
Bhīṣma's charioteer, Gaṅgā takes over and drives the chariot while Bhīṣma
is temporarily incapacitated by yet another arrow wound. As he regains
consciousness he sees his mother standing in his chariot:

मातरं सरितां श्रेष्ठामपश्यं रथमास्थिताम् ॥ १५
हयाश्च मे संगृहीतास्तया वै महानद्या संयति कौरवेन्द्र ।
पादौ जनन्याः प्रतिपूज्य चाहं तथार्ष्टिषेणं रथमभ्यरोहम् ॥ १६
ररक्ष सा मम रथं हयांश्योपस्कराणि च ।
तामहं प्राञ्जलीभूत्वा पुनरेव व्यसर्जयम् ॥ १७
(*Mahābhārata 5.183.15-17*)

I saw my mother, the best of rivers, standing on my chariot; *(15)*
My horses were driven by the great river in the battle, Kaurava King.
I worshipped my mother's feet and Arṣṭiṣeṇa, and mounted my chariot. *(16)*
She had protected my chariot and horses and gear.
Having saluted her again, I sent her away. *(17)*

Unlike Diomedes, who actively solicits Athena's support, Bhīṣma is reluc-
tant to accept help from the goddess, and after discovering that his mother
has aided him, he dismisses her.

J. Taboo

Each episode's combat scene is connected to an unusual taboo, the rules
of which are debated back and forth, and its boundaries tested. In the *Iliad*,

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the taboo is that of doing battle with a god and the consequences of doing so; what Kirk calls "this Book's special theme of the wounding of gods."[214] The instructions begin at *Iliad* V.123–132, when Athena gives Diomedes the power to see gods on the battlefield by removing the "mist" from his eyes. Along with this ability she gives him strict instructions not to risk attacking the gods (but makes an exception in the case of Aphrodite). Thus, at V.330–2, Diomedes does not hesitate to attack Aeneas' mother when she comes to protect her son, knowing that she has no proficiency in battle, and even taunts her as she flees. Aeneas passes to the protection of Apollo, but Diomedes continues the attack, even though he recognizes that Apollo is a god (*Iliad* V.433–4). Apollo quickly loses patience with Diomedes, and warns him not to fight with gods (*Iliad* V.430–42). Diomedes' relents slightly; "he retreated a little," ("ἀνεχάζετο τυτθὸν ὀπίσσω," *Iliad* V.443), but when Athena returns to him later in the epic after Ares has rejoined the fray, he confesses his uncertainty at the situation and insists he has been following her orders (V.814–24). At *Iliad* V.825–34 Athena reassures Diomedes, and declares that she will personally escort him into battle against Ares. They succeed in wounding the god, and Ares retreats to Olympus to catalogue his grievances against them to the unsympathetic Zeus (*Iliad* V.868–87).

In the *Mahābhārata* the taboo regards a spectacular magical weapon referred to as the "Sleep-Causer"[215] (*prasvāpa*), which Bhīṣma had used in a past life. At *Mahābhārata* 5.184.10–19, Bhīṣma is informed in a dream by celestial brahmins that he must conjure and use the Sleep-Causer in order

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[214]Kirk 1990:51.

[215]Its power seems to lie in its ability to put immortals into a state of deep sleep which renders them equivalent to the dead, but this is never clearly spelled out in the text.

to defeat Rāma. During the crescendo in the next day's fighting following his shoulder-wound, he summons the weapon and prepares to use it, but at *Mahābhārata* 5.186.1–5 he is suddenly stopped by a coalition of the gods, who intervene on Rāma's behalf. The celestial brahmins then second the divine command not to use the weapon, and Bhīṣma withdraws it from the battle, and tries to resume the fight with other magical weapons. But as Rāma realizes that he was about to be defeated he becomes infuriated, and must be calmed by his father and ancestors.

K. The Opponent Chastised by His Father

Both episodes end with the bested opponents being lectured by their fathers and reproached for both their past deeds and their current situation. In the *Iliad* Zeus expresses disgust at Ares' behavior when the wounded god returns to Olympus:

> Τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς·
> "μή τί μοι, ἀλλοπρόσαλλε, παρεζόμενος μινύριζε.
> ἔχθιστος δέ μοί ἐσσι θεῶν οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσιν
> αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε.
> μητρός τοι μένος ἐστὶν ἀάσχετον, οὐκ ἐπιεικτόν
> Ἥρης· τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ σπουδῇ δάμνημ' ἐπέεσσι·
> τῶ σ' ὄϊω κείνης τάδε πάσχειν ἐννεσίῃσιν.
> ἀλλ' οὐ μάν σ' ἔτι δηρὸν ἀνέξομαι ἄλγε' ἔχοντα·
> ἐκ γὰρ ἐμεῦ γένος ἐσσί, ἐμοὶ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ·
> εἰ δέ τευ ἐξ ἄλλου γε θεῶν γένευ ὧδ' ἀΐδηλος,
> καί κεν δὴ ἦσθα ἐνέρτερος Οὐρανιώνων."
> (*Iliad   V.888–98*)

Looking at him fiercely, the Cloud-Gatherer Zeus spoke;
Don't sit beside me complaining, Good-for-nothing.
To me you are the most hateful of all the gods who hold Olympus.
For always strife and war and fighting is dear to you.
You have the uncheckable, unendurable wrath of your mother,

Hera. I can scarcely control her with words.
I think it is by her suggestions that you suffer this.
But not so long yet will I tolerate your bearing pain;
For you are of my line, and to me your mother bore you;
If you were born so destructive from another of the gods,
Then long since you would have been lower than the offspring of Uranus.

Fenik discusses this scene on Olympus in comparison with similar ones that take place after the woundings of Artemis (XXI.405 ff.) and Aphrodite (V.318 ff.), and notes that the major difference between V.888–98 and the others is that with the wounded Ares, "Zeus turns on him as fiercely as he had kindly consoled Aphrodite and Artemis."[216]

In the *Mahābhārata* Rāma Jāmadagnya's ancestors intervene in the combat and tell him to desist. Their words and tone are not as angry as Zeus', but they do contain a reprimand for his past actions:

ततोऽपश्यत्पितरं जामदग्न्यः पितुस्तथा पितरं तस्य चान्यम् ।
त एवैनं सम्परिवार्य तस्थुरूचुश्चैनं सान्त्वपूर्वं तदानीम् ॥ ९
मा स्मैवं साहसं वत्स पुनः कार्षिः कथंचन ।
भीष्मेण संयुगं गन्तुं क्षत्रियेण विशेषतः ॥ १०
क्षत्रियस्य तु धर्मोऽयं यद्युद्धं भृगुनन्दन ।
स्वाध्यायो व्रतचर्या च ब्राह्मणानां परं धनम् ॥ ११
इदं निमित्ते कस्मिंश्चिदस्माभिरुपमन्त्रितम् ।
शस्त्रधारणमत्युग्रं तच्च् कार्यं कृतं त्वया ॥ १२
वत्स पर्याप्तमेतावद्भीष्मेण सह संयुगे ।
विमर्दस्ते महाबाहो व्यपयाहि रणादितः ॥ १३
(*Mahābhārata 5.186.9-13*)

Then Jāmadagnya saw his father, his father's father, and the father of that one.
Having stood surrounding him, they said to him coaxingly then *(9)*
"O Calf, don't ever again do something so reckless as
to go into battle with a Warrior such as Bhīṣma. *(10)*
Fighting is the whole duty of a Warrior, Descendant of Bhṛgu,

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[216]Fenik 1969:41.

But Veda-recitation and vow-observance is the highest wealth of Brahmins. *(11)*
On the last occasion of us persuading you to take up arms,
an extremely horrible deed was done by you. *(12)*
O Calf, Let this battle with Bhīṣma be finished to this extent.
This is your destruction, O Strong-Armed One, withdraw from the fray." *(13)*

The motif of chastisement by the father has also occurred earlier in the *Iliad*'s Book V, when the doomed Pandaros recollects that his father ordered him to take horses and a chariot to Troy:

ἦ μέν μάλα πολλὰ γέρων αἰχματὰ Λυκάων
ἐρχομένῳ ἐπέτελλε δόμοις ἔνι ποιητοῖσιν·
ἵπποισίν με κέλευε καὶ ἅρμασιν ἐμβεβαῶτα
ἀρχεύειν Τρώεσσι κατὰ κρατερὰς ὑσμίνας·
(*Iliad V.197–200*)

But very often the old man, the spear-bearer, Lykaon
as I was going from the well-constructed house, ordered
me to hasten off with horses and chariots
to have pre-eminence among the Trojans in the strong encounters.

Pandaros regrets that he left the horses behind out of concern for their well-being, and did not realize how useful they would be to him. This brief scene, which has no parallels in Homer, may be a duplication of a motif used to give the scene balance;[217] since Diomedes' major opponent in the scene (Ares) is reprimanded by his father, we see an implicit rebuke by the father of the lesser opponent (Pandaros) as well. To be chastised by one's father in either epic was unquestionably a mark of great shame. Finlay gives an accurate and powerful description of the importance of the father-son relationship in the Homeric world:

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[217]See Fenik 1969:43 for discussion of this compositional technique.

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In Homeric society, the relationship between father and son was fundamen-
tal. The patriarchal household was the basic unit of society, and communal
institutions were shaped in the image of the household...The force of pater-
nal affection anchored individual loyalty to communal responsibility, while
fatherhood and fame established modes of continuity against mutability and
mortality.[218]

Miller notes that tension such as that which we see between Zeus and Ares
is common in epic literature: "we expect tension and antagonism, possibly
fatal antagonism, between father or genitor and heroic son."[219]

5.2 Conclusions

The motif of the opponent's chastisement by his father at the end of both
episodes is particularly interesting when viewed in contrast to the repeated
references to mothers and motherhood (such as Aphrodite's solicitous con-
cern for Aeneas described at *Iliad* V.311–18, 378, Aphrodite's recourse to
her own mother for comfort at *Iliad* V.370 ff., and the lion simile utiliz-
ing a mother lion at *Iliad* V.554) throughout the scene. Aphrodite's role in
Book V may represent the type of intra-scene doubling we saw in connection
with Nausicaa and Arete; a trope or characteristic is retained in the episode
for continuity, but transferred to another character in order to accomodate
changing circumstances. In view of these overtones, the close parallels be-
tween this scene in which Athena helps Diomedes, and the corresponding

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[218]Finlay 1980:268.
[219]Miller 2000:88.

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scene from the *Mahābhārata* in which a hero is similarly aided by his mother suggest that Athena's assistance to Diomedes and other heroes needs to be examined more closely.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Athena is twice compared to a mother elsewhere in the *Iliad* (IV.127–33, XXIII.783) when she aids mortal favorites. The major difference between the roles of the female helpers in these two scenes is that while Diomedes is eager to receive the help of Athena (who urges him on to battle and promises him success there), Bhīṣma rejects the help of his mother Gaṅgā (who attempts to dissuade him from fighting and foretells an eventual dire outcome to his feud with Ambā). It is impossible to say with certainty which might constitute the "original" version of the chariot-driving goddess' role, but the mother-motifs catalogued above suggest that the Iliadic episode may have descended from one structured so as to have a mother in the role of the goddess-charioteer. An explanation as to why the role might be altered also presents itself; epic mothers are generally presented as unwilling to encourage their sons to go into battle. Thetis does everything in her power to prevent (*Iliad* I.421–2) or postpone (*Iliad* XVIII.127–37) Achilles' re-entry into the battle, as does Hecuba (*Iliad* VI.251–662, XXII.84–89) for Hector. Aphrodite never actively discourages her son or protégé from fighting, but she is quick to rescue them by bodily removing them from combat (*Iliad* 3.373–82). In the *Mahābhārata* the same pattern prevails; we see every prominent mother, including Gāndhārī (*Mahābhārata* 5.127), Kuntī (*Mahābhārata* 5.143-44), and Citrāṅgadā (*Mahābhārata* 14.77–81), begging their sons not to fight. But a mother's benediction is of paramount importance to a warrior in battle

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and frequently sought (*e.g. Mahābhārata* 11.13.8–11, 17.5–8). The addition of another female character to perform this function allows the hero's real mother to remain grief-stricken and opposed to the combat, without threatening the outcome of the son's undertaking. The mother-substitutes can give the required benediction and encouragement to the hero without being hampered by maternal fears of seeing her son killed in battle. Characters of this type include Ulūpī (*Mahābhārata* 14.78–81), and in the current episode under discussion, Satyavatī, Bhīṣma's stepmother. Before the duel, Bhīṣma goes to his stepmother to tell her what he is about to do and to receive her blessing:

एवमुक्त्वा ययौ रामः कुरुक्षेत्रं युयुत्सया ।
प्रविश्य नगरं चाहं सत्यवत्यै न्यवेदयम् ॥
ततः कृतस्वस्त्ययनो मात्रा प्रत्यभिनन्दितः ।
(*Mahābhārata 5.179.8–9*)

Having said these things, Rāma went to the field of the Kurus, eager for battle.
I, having entered the city, explained matters to Satyavatī.
Then, having the benedictions for safe travel and blessings by my mother, [I left].

He can thus engage in the conflict without the cloud of ill-omen which lack of a mother's blessing would have engendered.

There are also other reasons why the Greek epic might evolve so as to remove a mother and replace her with a more neutral female helper. Slater noted the shift away from maternal figures throughout the history of Greek literature, though he does not perceive anti-mother sentiment in Homer.[220] But by the Fifth Century the mythological figure of the powerful and protective mother had been subsumed into that of the dangerous and destructive

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[220] "Fear of the mature woman is lacking in the epics," Slater 1968:71.

mother, while the role of the young female helper persists. As Slater describes it, "It was mature, maternal women who were most feared, and regarded as most dangerous. In the tragedies it is young women and virginal goddesses who are helpful and benign, while the mature ones tend to be jealous, vindictive, and destructive."[221] Friedrich notes that "The erotic, sensuous figures figures in Greek myth tend to be segregated from the 'mature,' maternal, or motherly,"[222] with Aphrodite remaining the only female character from Greek Mythology who is simultaneously motherly and erotic. The Homeric epics display many caring mothers (Thetis, Hecuba, Anticleia), but it may be that Athena's role as a motherly (but virgin) goddess began as a replacement for mothers whose roles were perceived as needing alteration.

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[221]Slater 1968:12.

[222]Friedrich 1978:182.

6 The Anti-Helper: The *Cyclopeia* and the *Bakavadha*

6.1 Folktales and the Epic

Of all the *Odyssey*'s embedded narratives, the Homeric *Cyclopeia* has been subjected to the most exhaustive comparative efforts. It is well-known that the tale of the Cyclops Polyphemus resembles the tale of the "Encounter with the Ogre in a Cave," and numerous folkloric parallels of the episode have been collected from all over the world. Grimm collected and discussed 10 versions,[223] and Hackmann 221,[224] while Radermacher found a number of parallels in various pieces of world literature.[225] Germain examined Berber versions,[226] Knox pursued Near Eastern possibilities in depictions of one-eyed giants on seals,[227] Frame has compared the episode to Vedic myths,[228] and comparable tales have been collected from France, Finland, Arabia, Turkey,

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[223]Grimm 1857.

[224]Hackman 1904. This number includes 124 versions of "The Ogre in the Cave," 50 versions of "The Trick with the False Name," and 47 additional tales which contained motifs similar to both elements in the other two groups but were regarded by Hackman as late conflations, rather than possible sources for Homer.

[225]Radermacher 1915.

[226]Germain 1954:55–129.

[227]Knox 1979

[228]Frame 1978:44–6.

Ireland, Korea, and Africa.[229]

From the beginning, the consensus opinion was that the folktales were a pre-existing nexus from which Homer borrowed.[230] Page used the Cyclops story as a paradigm for his approach to the Analyst-Unitarian controversy, namely that "many of the well-known inconsistencies in the narrative of the poem are, in my opinion, more easily explained in terms of one author and several stories than in terms of several authors and one story."[231] Page's analysis centers around seven points in which the Odyssean version differs from the folktales: 1) the Name-Trick, 2) the Inebriated Cyclops, 3) the Magic Ring, 4) the Weapon of Blinding, 5) Lot-casting, 6) the Single Eye, and 7) the Escape Method. Schein, in a complementary article, later revisits five of Page's points, demonstrating that these variations do not occur randomly, but "can best be understood in terms of the *Odyssey* as a whole, since each is clearly connected with a main theme or motif of the poem."[232] In a comprehensive summary article, Glenn later re-examined the folktales collected by Grimm, Hackmann, and Page, and analyzed them according to 25 characteristics he perceived as fundamental to the tale. One drawback of this method is that neither Glenn nor his sources cite data about the frequency or popularity of the variants, and therefore the representation of Glenn's characteristics in the collection gives us no true measure of each characteristic's true relevance. If variant A is told ninety percent of the time, and

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[229]See discussion in Glenn 1971:134.

[230]A small number of critics have argued that the folktales were derived from Homer, including Bender 1878:29–30, Meuli 1921:65–70, and O'Sullivan 1987.

[231]Page 1955:17.

[232]Schein 1970:74.

ten others are each told one percent of the time, the significance of variant A's unique features will be lost in the data. The current argument, however, is concerned mainly with demonstrating that certain key elements shared by Homer and the *Mahābhārata* do not occur in the folktales at all, and Glenn's results are thus adequate for this purpose. As Glenn's extensive summary of folktale evidence and scholarship on the matter concludes:

> Undoubtedly the idea of man-eating ogres (with one or more eyes) has occurred independently to storytellers all over the world. But when we find a consistent sequence of motifs—men trapped by an ogre, the cannibalism, the blinding (usually with a red-hot spit or stake, sometimes with boiling liquid), and the escape with the help of sheep—then we immediately see that Homer and the much later folktales and sagas are sharing a common story. Now if the modern versions of these tales are independent of Homer (as has seemed most probable), yet at the same time they share a common plot, it follows that Homer shared this tale, borrowed and adapted it, rather than invented it. This conclusion, which is almost unanimously accepted, is confirmed by (1) apparent slips in Homer's own version which suggests he knew alternatives which survived in later versions, (2) the many other widespread motifs common to the *Odyssey* and to folktales, and (3) the universally recognized fact that Homer's poems are deeply rooted in oral tradition.[233]

Glenn asserts that these tales pre-date Homer and were drawn upon for epic material, but feels that the Homeric versions surpass their models: Polyphemus is "a convincing literary character, as opposed to the monotonous pasteboard ogre who constantly recurs in the folktales."[234] Ceramic evidence can also be used to support the model of folkloric priority. According to Burgess, while representations on pottery of the blinding of a one-eyed giant come to us from the Archaic Age, "no other scene from the *Odyssey* is

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[233]Glenn 1971:14–5.

[234]Glenn 1971. This opinion is voiced by many, as Scott, J.A. 1916:125 "the finished product as it left the hand of Homer is as little like the original material as a watch-spring is like the primitive ore."

plausibly the subject of art until the sixth century,"[235] leading to the hypothesis that the narrative sources for the works were folktales which preceded the epic's composition. Burgess also finds that many details depicted in the scenes are inconsistent with the presentation of the Homeric narrative, which further supports this conclusion.

Though few contradictions to it can be raised on the basis of folkloric or Homeric evidence,[236] nevertheless, the theory is an unsatisfying one. The Cyclops episode is in many ways the very heart of the epic, particularly in terms of Odysseus' character development. While seeing it as a borrowed addition can not actually compromise the integrity of the text or devalue scholarly analyses of the episode, it nonetheless colors our perceptions of the whole. Kirk, for example, sees the Odysseus of the Polyphemus episode as inconsonant with the Odysseus of the rest of the epic:

> The faithful husband who rejects a life of divinity with Circe and Calypso is estimable enough; he makes a nice symbol of the conservative and social demands of man and the power of his affections, even at the cost of survival. Yet he does not accord with the dangerously conceited victor over the Cyclops. In fact, the Odysseus of the sea adventures makes too strange an impression for the good of the whole poem.[237]

The unity of the apparently folk-lore-originating sea-tales with the rest of the epic is an important consideration in light of the number of scholars who

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[235]Burgess 2001:111.

[236]O'Sullivan 1987:11 analyzes Frazer's example no. 17 and makes a compelling case that it is a clear instance of a folktale which has been copied from a version of the *Odyssey*, but omits the trick of the name. He concludes that "It is clearly possible that a folktale of this kind, a tale without the *Nobody* trick, developed from the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops in antiquity and was the ancestor of the extant [folk] versions."

[237]Kirk 1965:121.

have explored the episode in very productive ways, finding that in epic, as in life, a desperate crisis is the most revealing of human situations. Newton, for example, discusses parallels between the *Cyclopeia* and Odysseus' treatment of Melanthius and suggests that "Odysseus' encounter with Melanthius evokes memories of his earlier encounter with Polyphemus,"[238] but Newton claims that Odysseus shows a restraint in dealing with Melanthius which demonstrates his evolution as a character. Stewart analyzes the episode for what it can tell us about the importance of name-exchanges in the Homeric world.[239] Peradotto points out just how thoroughly entrenched in the epic the *Cyclopeia* is, by showing that at the end of the epic, the only unresolved issue, the "ultimate *telos*" of the story, is Odysseus' offering to Poseidon in expiation for the blinding of his son Polyphemus,[240] as predicted by Teiresias at XI.90–137. If the *Cyclopeia* was adopted and installed wholesale into Homer's presentation of Odysseus' return from Troy, then these and other works on the subject all demand that the encounter exhibit a high degree of absorption into the rest of the epic, that all its threads be fully intertwined for their conclusions to be valid. This puts them at odds with Page's position that many Homeric inconsistencies are the "unmistakable proof of the unskillful insertion of alien matter into the framework of the poem,"[241] which his book describes.

Comparison with an episode from the *Mahābhārata* casts the relationship between the *Cyclopeia* and the folktales in a different light. In the *Baka-* and

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[238]Newton 1997:11.

[239]Stewart 1976.

[240]Peradotto 1990:59–93.

[241]Page 1970:18.

Kirmīravadhaparvans, we once again find a Sanskrit episode whose narrative structure parallels that of a tale from Homer. The Sanskrit version has been split into two distinct sections: the initial killing of an ogre and a later attempt at revenge by the ogre's kin. This is in fact not so different from the structure of the Homeric tale, in that the Polyphemus episode leads to the revenge of Poseidon for the blinding of his son (discussed at *Odyssey* I.68–9, attempted at V.282–381, and finally taken against the Phaiaicians at XIII.125–187), but in the *Mahābhārata*'s version the sought-after revenge necessitates another fight between the hero and an ogre. Similarities in the frames of the narratives also extend to the fact that both stories are loosely paired with other encounters with man-eaters, both of which open with interactions with less hostile female ogres (i.e. Odysseus' encounter with the Laistrygones at *Odyssey* X.80–132, and the Pāṇḍavas' encounter with Hiḍimba and Hiḍimbā at *Mahābhārata* 1.139-143). As with the Ino/Eidothea–Ulūpī/Vargā pairs, the similarities between the episodes are heightened by the fact that the parallels extend outside of the individual scenes.[242]

The comparison is conducted below as it has been in previous chapters, and the results are also listed in Table 6. Table 5 reproduces Glenn's analysis of the characteristics of the folklore versions alongside data about their occurence in the *Cyclopeia* and the slayings of Baka and Kirmīra.

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[242]See discussion in Peradotto 1990:36–7 about the importance of the existence of the surrounding frame narratives in a comparison.

Table 5: Glenn's Folktale Analysis.

Glenn (* indicates Page's categories)	Folktale Examples (out of 125 sampled)	Cyclopeia	Baka / Kirmīra
1. Maritime Setting	23	yes	no
2. Giant One of Group	18 some w/ houses, servants	yes	yes
3. Rest of Group Left Near-by	No exact parallels	yes	yes
4. Companions Eaten	61	yes	no
5. Hero does not <u>know</u> who he will meet	116	Yes (has premonition)	no
6. Cave Setting	41	yes	no
7. Wait for Ogre's Return	16	yes	yes
8. Giant Has One Eye*	74, 18 w/ eye-related issues	unclear	no , but cf. use of name "Ekachakrā"
9. Description of Giant	10	yes	yes
10. Giant traps Men w/Rock	4	yes	n/a
11. Giant's Impiety	no	yes	yes
12. Hero deceives giant to protect others	0	yes	n/a
13. Hero tempted to kill, but blinds instead	1	yes	no
14. Casting of lots*	3- to determine who will be eaten	yes	yes
15. Drunkenness*	2	yes	no
16. "Nobody" trick*	0, but found in other tales	yes	Faint echoes
17. Hero to be eaten last as guest-gift	0	yes	n/a
18. Wooden Stake as* Weapon	8 – wooden stake 51 – An iron spit 2 - firebrand	yes	yes, and Kirmīra uses firebrand
19. Giant cries for help	7	yes	yes
20. Escape method using sheep*	24 66 – sheepskin(s)	yes	n/a
21. Giant addresses his pet ram	9	yes	n/a
22. Hero steals flock	8	yes	n/a
23. Hero provokes giant, who throws rocks	30 – hero mocks 6 – giant throws stones	yes	yes
24. Giant curses hero	0	yes	Kin seek retribution
25. Giant throws deadly magic object*	38	rocks or curse may be substitute	no

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6.2 A Comparison of the *Cyclopeia* and the *Bakavad-haparvan*

A. The Encounter Occurs During a Period of Dangerous Travel

All three encounters occur during risk-filled periods during which the heroes are reluctant travellers. Odysseus, of course, is attempting to return home after the war at Troy. During the encounter with Baka, the Pāṇḍavas are fleeing after their cousin Duryodhana has attempted to assassinate them by means of a house-fire. Much later in the epic, the killing of Kirmīra takes place after Duryodhana has tricked the Pāṇḍavas out of their kingdom and sent them into exile.

B. The Ogre Described as a Ruler of his Kind, but Later Revealed as an Outcast and a Brute

The *Cyclopeia* presents us with two mildly contradictory elements. When we are introduced to the Cyclops at I.70-1, he is described as "ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον, ὅου κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον πᾶσιν Κυκλώπεσσι," "Godlike Polyphemus, whose power is the greatest among all the Cyclopes." The description of him as ἀντίθεος is at odds with later accounts of his savagery and irreverence. The reference to his κράτος may refer only to physical prowess, as Glenn and others have insisted,[243] but most other examples in the *Odyssey* of *kratos*

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[243] As Bona 1966:72–77, Glenn 1971:148 and O'Sullivan 1987:23n.17.

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with the dative indicate ruling power over others,[244] and no usages directly
contradict the reading.[245] In contrast with this depiction of a leader, we are
told that οὐδὲ μετ' ἄλλους / πωλεῖτ', ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθεν ἐὸν ἀθεμίστια ᾔδη,"
"nor with the others / did he consort, but stayed away, thinking lawlessly,"
(*Odyssey* IX.188). This is one of the points treated by Glenn: "Essentially,
Polyphemus is one of a group of Cyclopes (9.106ff., 117, 125 ff., etc.); yet
Homer nevertheless chooses to depict him assomething of a 'loner' (9.187–
92), as we find in the vast majority of folktales."[246] Mülder also sees this
as evidence of a re-worked and conflated folk-tale.[247] Page takes the same
position, and points out that it must have been so done because neighbors
are required for the "Nobody" trick to work: "there is a whole community
of them, and Polyphemus is their lord and master; when he cries out in
the night it is very natural that his loyal and sympathetic subjects should
emerge in their nightgowns to ask if he is in pain."[248] As Glenn concedes:
"Bona's and my reservations qualify but do not contradict Page's basically
sound view that Homer's version conflates a 'loner' with a mighty figure in
some sort of group."[249]

Baka, too, is initally described a king, not merely among the *rākṣasas*, but
among Asuras,[250] an "असुररात् ... बली," "a strong Asura-king," (*Mahābhārata*

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[244] *Odyssey* I.359, XXI.353 (power in household), XI.353, (power in *dēmos*), XI.485
(power among the dead), V.4, XVI.264 (of Zeus over the other gods).

[245] *Odyssey* XII.274, XXIV.429, XV.273.

[246] Glenn 1971:147.

[247] Mülder 1903.

[248] Page 1955:5.

[249] Glenn 1971:148.

[250] The general term for the broad category of demonic gods and demi-gods.

1.148.4), who is "इशो जनपदस्यास्य पुरस्य च महाबल:" "extremely powerful, lording it over both town and countryside," (*Mahābhārata* 1.148.3). After the battle we learn that he possess both a house and servants (*Mahābhārata* 1.152.1), but in the encounter itself he is nothing but a fearsome and uncivilized brute who lives in the jungle ("वनं," *Mahābhārata* 1.151.1–2). While it can be argued that no discrepancy exists in the *Odyssey*'s version, a contradiction regarding Baka's nature is integrated into the *Mahābhārata*'s storyline. It is quite clear that although he is a king in every sense of the word, he is also an inarticulate, wood-ranging loner who demands human flesh as tribute and attacks without adequate provocation.

C. An Eater of Human Flesh

The horror of the murder and consumption of humans is central to the dramatic impact of both tales, and both reinforce this with multiple references to "man-eaters" and to the "human-meat" on which they feed. At *Odyssey* X.200, the Cyclops is remembered as an "ἀνδροφάγος," "man-eater," and at IX.297 he lies down to sleep "ἀνδρόμεα κρέ᾽ ἔδων," "having fed on human flesh." At IX.347 Odysseus uses the same words to refer to the human flesh Polyphemus has eaten while offering him the wine. Finally, at IX.374, he vomits up "ψωμοί τ᾽ ἀνδρόμεοι," "chunks of human [meat]." Baka is repeatedly called a "man-eater" ("पुरुषादक:", at 1.148.4, 1.150.26, 1.151.1, 1.152.6,) and his preferred food is human flesh (मानुशमांस). Both stories subsequently revolve around the threat of the consumption of the hero by the ogre, as does the later encounter with Kirmīra, who also is identified as

"man-eating" ("पुरुषादानं") at *Mahābhārata* 3.12.4, and claims to eat human flesh at 3.12.23. He announces his intention to eat the party as part of the initial name exchange:

के यूयमिह संप्राप्ता भक्ष्यभूता ममान्तिकम् ।
युधी निर्जित्य वः सर्वान्भक्षयिष्ये गतज्वरः ॥ २४
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.24*)

Who are you who have come here as beings fit to be eaten?
Having defeated you in battle I shall feast on you care-free.

He makes another explicit threat to eat Bhīma in 3.12:

यदि तेन पुरा मुक्तो भीमसेनो बकेन वै ।
अदैनं भक्षयिषामि पश्यतस्ते युधिष्ठिर ॥ ३६
एनं हि विपुलप्राणमद्य हत्वा वृकोदरम् ।
संभक्ष्य जरयिष्यामि यथागस्त्यो महासुरम् ॥ ३७
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.36-7*)

As Bhīmasena was previously left alive by Baka,
Today I will eat him as you watch, Yudhiṣṭhira,
having killed the great-spirited Wolf-Belly!
Having eaten him I will digest him as Agastya did the Great Asura.

In the *Mahābhārata*, no humans are directly depicted being eaten by Baka or Kirmīra, whereas the *Odyssey* gives grim descriptions of the deaths of the six men Polyphemus eats at IX.287–97, 310–11, 344.

D. The Ogre Lives Wthout Worries

The famous passage at *Odyssey* IX.106–11 describes the lawless, but Edenic, lifestyle enjoyed by the Cyclopes:

Κυκλώπων δ' ἐς γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίστων
ἱκόμεθ', οἵ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν
οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν,
ἀλλὰ τά γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται,
πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἠδ' ἄμπελοι, αἵ τε φέρουσιν
οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον, καί σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει.
(*Odyssey IX.106–11*)

To the land of the arrogant, lawless Cyclopes,
we came. For they, depending upon the immortal gods
neither grow plants with their hands or plow,
but everything grows without sowing or plowing,
wheat and barley and grapevines, which bear
wines abundantly, and the rain of Zeus nourishes them.

Kirk is bothered by 107, "οἵ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν" which he
sees as a contradiction to the overall lawlessness of the Cyclops, particularly
as expressed at IX. 275–6. Mondi expresses the same dissatisfaction with
the passage: "Why was the poet willing to tolerate the embarassing paradox
of Zeus smiling favorably upon such self-proclaimed impiety?"[251] I do not
see the passage as necessarily implying worship of the gods, but simply as-
suming without question that natural forces will provide their sustenance. A
semantic comparison might be *Matthew* 6:26, "ἐμβλέψατε εἰς τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ
οὐρανοῦ ὅτι οὐ σπείρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν οὐδὲ συνάγουσιν εἰς ἀποθήκας,
καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τρέφει αὐτά·" "Look at the birds of the sky that
neither plant nor harvest nor gather into barns, and your father in heaven
feeds them." Both passages describe a similar unreflective absorption in the
cycle of natural life under the general stewardship of the divine.

Baka's livelihood depends largely on his parasitism of the townsfolk, ac-

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[251]Mondi 1983:19. His eventual conclusion is that IX.107–15 pre-dates the assimilation
of the folktale into the epic (p.23).

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cording to the introduction to the episode at *Mahābhārata* 1.148.1–10, but there is no explicit statement comparable to the description of the Cyclopes. In the tale of Kirmīra, however, the ogre brags about the ease of his life, specifically about his lack of worries:

वनेऽस्मिन्काम्यके शून्ये निवसामि गतज्वरः ।
युधि निर्जित्य पुरुषानाहारं नित्यमाचरन् ॥ २३
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.23*)

In this deserted Kāmyaka forest I live care-free.
I live here always eating humans, having defeated them in combat.

The term "care-free," *gatajvara*, is repeated again in the next verse (*Mahābhārata* 3.12.24), (cited above in B).

E. The Ogre's Eye

The question of the Cyclops' eye has caused philologists some irritation. "Cyclops" is a compound of PIE $*k^{w}ek^{w}lo$ which became Greek κύκλος, 'circle' and $*H_3 \bar{e}k^{w}s$ (the Greek compound-final form -ωψ). $*H_3 \bar{e}k^{w}s$ is a lengthened form of $*H_3 ek^{w}$, "see," from which come Homeric ὄσσε and Vedic *ákṣi*, "eyes." Thus, most scholars echo Chantraine in the assessment that it must originally have meant "having a large, round eye," rather than "single-eyed." As Chantraine describes it:

Depuis Hés. *Th.* 144 le mot est interprété "ceux qui ont un œil rond,"...cette analyse peut ne pas paraître satisfaisante d'un point de vue logique, le terme ne significant pas "qui n'a qu'un œil," mais "qui a un gros œil rond."[252]

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[252]Chantraine 1968–80.

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This seems to be an accurate assessment.[253] Hesiod's careful explanation of the word in the *Theogony* suggests that the term's inexactness may have been noted in the ancient world as well:

οἵ δὴ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα θεοῖς ἐναλίγκιοι ἦσαν,
μοῦνος δ' ὀφθαλμὸς μέσσῳ ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ.
Κύκλωπες δ' ὄνομ' ἦσαν ἐπώνυμον, οὕνεκ' ἄρα σφέων
κυκλοτερὴς ὀφθαλμὸς ἕεις ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ·
Theogony 142–5

Indeed, in other respects they were like the gods,
but a single eye was set in the middle of their foreheads.
And the name "Cyclopes" was put on them because of their
one circular eye set in their forehead.

Hesiod is referring specifically to Brontes, Steropes and Arges who are in many respects distinct from Polyphemus' island-dwelling race. As West puts it, "apart from having only one eye, Hesiod's thunderbolt manufacturers have little in common with the pastoral Cyclopes described in Book IX of the *Odyssey*."[254] But it is the question of the single eye which concerns us here. While the *Odyssey* never explicitly states that Polyphemus is monophthalmic, no references in the text contradict the assumption (e.g. *Odyssey* I.69, IX.333, 383, 394, 397, 453, 515–6), nor do the extant pictorial representations from antiquity.[255] Page declares that the single eye's purpose is to make the blinding a more feasible operation, and the monster more memorable and appalling.[256] Glenn attributes the lack of direct statement to

[253]Thieme 1951, followed by Sihler 1995:117, offers the idea that the word reflects *πκυ-χλωπ- 'cattle-thief,' but this seems unnecessarily complicated and has not been widely embraced.

[254]West 1988:64 n. to ln. 139.

[255]Burgess 2001:108–112.

[256]Page 1955:14.

intentional reticence on Homer's part:

> Homer's failure to state explicitly that the giant had only one eye is no
> random oversight of mere confidence that tradition will clarify the details.
> Rather, it may well be interpreted as part of a trend that often characterizes
> Homer's version, viz., the suppression or deemphasis of magical or supernat-
> ural elements, while striving for a convincing and gripping realism.[257]

Whatever the reason for Homer's lack of a definitive statement regarding the Cyclop's eye(s), it is an unusual absence. Not only is the monster's eye of direct relevance to the plot, but the poet sacrifices the opportunity for a grim and horrifying description of the deformity.

Once again, the contribution of comparison is a similar set of ambiguities which become mutually illuminating when put together. The "Slaying of Baka" takes place at a small town called Ekacakrā. Contrary to standard practice in Indian Epic, this is not the name of any known town on the subcontinent, and there is no accepted interpretation of its meaning.[258]

Like 'Cyclops', 'Ekacakrā' is a compound formed around PIE $*k^w ek^w lo$, with "eka", the Sanskrit reflex of PIE $*oy$-, "one" as the initial member. PIE $*k^w ek^w lo$ is formed from the reduplication of the root $*k^w el$, "to turn, move round," so its primary meaning is "wheel," and this agrees with the majority of its descendant forms (including Toch. A $kuk\ddot{a}l$, Toch. B $kokale$, and OE $hw\bar{e}l$). But "circle" is an equally apt and widespread secondary meaning. As Beekes says of the wheels to which $*k^w ek^w lo$ probably referred "there is no question but that we have to do here with massive (as opposed to spoked) wheels, that is to say, wheels which were made out of one whole

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[257] Glenn 1971:155.

[258] It is not identified in Schwartzberg 1978, the definitive treatment of South Asian ge-
ography, and is unknown outside of the *Mahābhārata* passages in reference to this episode.

piece of wood, such as that found at De Eese in Drenthe in the northeast of the Netherlands (from about 2400 B.C.), or with wheels made of planks of wood."[259] While the base meaning of Sanskrit *cakra* is also "wheel," it has a wide range of sub-meanings which refer to a variety of circular objects such as Indra's discus, astronomical circles, circular military arrays, and the six circular *cakras* (power points) of the body, as well as to a number of cyclical phenomena. Though the meaning "circle" predominates for Greek κύκλος, it too is used for "wheel" at *Iliad* V.722, XVIII.375, XXIII.340, so the same basic range is covered by both the Greek and Sanskrit reflexes.

Sanskrit "Ekacakrā" can thus be translated literally as either "one-circle' or 'one-wheel," but the exact sense of the compound remains uncertain. Van Buitenen hazards "The City of the Wheel of One Dominion,"[260] which reflects the connection of the *cakra* with kingship. Gonda explicates the two threads of this connection in his discussion of the term *cakravartin-* (used of ancient Indian kings), that the wheel is "the 'symbol' or rather representation of conquering efficacy." He says:

> On the one hand, the wheel constitutes the moving power of a carriage, and chariot races are, as we already know, a very important means of establishing *vāja-* and obtaining or establishing dominion. On the other hand, the sun which is itself a wheel,[261] ever invincible and ever indefatigable, turns its circle in the sky and the universe."[262]

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[259]Beekes 1995:37.

[260]Van Buitenen 1973, n. to *Mahābhārata* 1.144.10. He also refers to Weber, who cites the name Ekacakrā as evidence that in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 13.5.4.7 *Paricakrā* is the proper *Ms* reading rather than *Parivakrā* (Weber I,1850:192–3). Vendidad 1.16 indicates that the Indo-Iranians used *cakra/caxra* in geographic names (Bartholomae 1904:576).

[261]Sanskrit *sūryasya cakrás*. In Greek we find the cognate phrase ἡλίου κύκλος at A. *Pv.* 91, *Pers.* 504, S.*Ant* 416, and elsewhere.

[262]Gonda 1966:125.

It is also possible that the cognate Avestan epithet *aēwa-caxra*, "one-wheeled" (of the god Mithra's chariot at Yt.10.136) may be relevant.

The major drawback of all of the translation possibilities described above is that they offer no connection between the compound's meaning and its obvious and deep relationship to the story at hand. The repeated emphasis given to the made-up name of this imaginary town, beginning at *Mahābhārata* 1.144.11, when the traveling heroes are first instructed to go there, suggests it has a deeper connection to the story than mere location. It is appealing to link Ekacakrā with "Cyclops," because it conveniently supplies both a link to the term ($*k^w ek^w lo$), and the element missing from Hesiod's definition of "Cyclops," the "one." As with the question of Polyphemus' kingship (above), comparison with the *Mahābhārata*'s story presents us not with answers but with a remarkably similar set of questions. There is no clear path to the interpretation of Ekacakrā, any more than there is a good explanation for why the salient feature of a Cyclops is the roundness, rather than the singularity, of his eye. It is my belief that the two terms are different expressions of a Proto-Indo-European motif connected with the episode which moved onto two divergent paths. It is reasonably certain that the forms of IE $*k^w ek^w lo$ are rich with allusion in both instances; in the Greek because it does not properly fit the definition required, and in the Sanskrit because it makes no sense independently. The Greek, Sanskrit, and Avestan evidence cited above does suggest a few possible ways to envision a relationship between the two words. The existence of other city-names formed on *-cakra* might account for why a term somehow associated with the episode was reassigned as the place name rather than the monster's name in the Sanskrit version. The

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connection between IE $*k^w ek^w lo$ and kingship might be tied up with the uncertain kingship of the two ogres. The tales as we have them provide little evidence for these possibilities, but there are several unexplored avenues in the *Mahābhārata*'s version which may be connected to the Cyclops' single eye.

As it reads, the *Mahābhārata*'s episode does not suggest that the *rākṣasa* Baka has any more or less than the usual number of eyes.[263] But an underlying pre-occupation with eyes can be traced in the Baka and Kirmīra episodes, which abound with references to eyes: *Mahābhārata* 1.151.5 finds Baka "rolling his eyes." Kirmīra is "blazing eyed" (*dīptākṣa* 3.12.6), and "copper-eyed" (*tāmrākṣam* 3.12.8). At 3.12.20 we hear that he has "eyes wide with fury", and at 3.12.65 Kirmīra's eyes become filmed when he dies. And at 3.12.66 Bhīma tells Kirmīra's corpse "you will no more rinse your eyes with tears for Baka." These references tend to favor the word "*akṣi*" (derived from PIE $*H_3 ek^w$ as are ὄσσε and -ωψ) for "eye" rather than more common synonyms such as *netra* or *nayana*.

One final detail may be called upon to offer a possible explanation. The name 'Baka' means "crane." The shape of a crane's head is such that only one eye can be seen at a time, and that eye is uniquely round and quite centrally located, as seen in Figure 1. My suggestion is that the stories of Baka and Polyphemus may be descendants of an Indo-European tale involving a crane-demon, or perhaps a one-eyed ogre whose face was characterized as resembling the profile of a crane.

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[263] *Mahābhārata* 2.47.15 does demonstrate that the Indic tradition was familiar with the idea of one- and three-eyed beings, and lists them alongside cannibals.

6. The Siberian Crane, *Grus leucogeranus*

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Greek familiarity with the distinctive profile of the crane is demonstrated by the existence of the term γερανόφθαλμος, "crane-eyed" in the Scholia to Oppian's *Halieutica*.[264] A crane's profile does embody to a remarkable degree the Homeric ambivalence regarding Polyphemus' eye; the dominant image they create in the mind is of only one eye, yet one would never call them one-eyed. The appearance and behavior of cranes is also suggestive of the epic monster's behavior: cranes are ferocious predators, and extremely tall birds, whose size can be intimidating. Not only are cranes often seen ruthlessly snapping up fish or frogs, they display a great deal of aggression among one another. Like the Homeric Cyclopes, they live in large groups with each pair nesting individually. Polyphemus' own name, "Many-Songs," is irrelevant to an ogre, but may be reasonably applied to a bird, and perhaps with satirical humor upon a bird whose call is a hoarse croak.

F. The Ogre Resembles a Mountain

All three ogres are explicitly compared to mountain peaks. Polyphemus' size, like most of his other qualities, is both amazing and terrifying:

> καὶ γὰρ θαῦμ' ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον, οὐδὲ ἐῴκει
> ἀνδρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι
> ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων, ὅ τε φαίνεται οἶον ἀπ' ἄλλων.
> (*Odyssey   IX.190-2*)

> For he was a savage marvel, not resembling
> bread-eating man, but a wooded peak
> of the lofty mountains, when seen apart from the others.

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[264]Sch.Opp.*H* 1.386 *Poetae Bucolici et Didactici.*

The wife of Antiphates is similarly described at X.113, as "like the peak of a mountain," "ὅσην τ' ὄρεος κορυφήν." The immense, lifeless body of Baka is also a source of both wonder and horror to the liberated townspeople:

ततो नरा विनिष्क्रान्ता नगरात्काल्यमेव तु ।
दद्दशुर्निहतं भूमौ राक्षसं रुधिरोक्षितम् ॥ ८
तमद्रिकूटसद्दशं विनिकीर्णं भयावहम् ।
एकचक्रां ततो गत्वा प्रवृत्तिं प्रददुः पुरे ॥ ९
(*Mahābhārata 1.152.8–9*)

When the people emerged from the town at the usual time
They saw the dead *rākṣasa* on the ground, moist with blood
like a broken mountain peak, fear-inspiring.
Having gone to Ekacakrā, they brought the news in the city.

Kirmīra's appearance to the Pāṇḍavas is described in the introduction to the scene as standing in their path "like an unmoving mountain," ("गिरिरिवाचल:," *Mahābhārata* 3.11.23) and, in a more specific later passage, as being "like Mount Maināka" ("मैनाक इव पर्वत:," *Mahābhārata* 3.12.15).

G. The Hero Helps a Priest

Both episodes begin with an encounter with a priest which proves to have critical importance to the story's outcome, but the two encounters vary greatly in length. The meeting with Polyphemus is preceeded by a brief aside which describes the origin of the wine which will figure so prominently in the episode. The powerful wine was a gift from Maron, a priest of Apollo, in a carry-over from the preceeding encounter with the Kikonians:

...ἀτὰρ αἴγεον ἀσκὸν ἔχον μέλανος οἴνοιο,
ἡδέος, ὅν μοι δῶκε Μάρων Εὐάνθεος υἱός,

ἱρεὺς Ἀπόλλωνος, ὃς Ἴσμαρον ἀμφιβεβήκει,
οὕνεκα' μιν σὺν παιδὶ περισχόμεθ' ἠδὲ γυναικὶ ἀζόμενοι·
(*Odyssey IX.196–200*)

But I had a goatskin flask of black wine,
sweet, which Maron, son of Euanthes had given me,
the priest of Apollo, who protects Ismarus,
he gave it because, showing reverence, we protected him and his wife and son;

This is all the mention we have of Odysseus' assistance to Maron and his family, and the characters may well exist only to explain the origin of the wine. But the aside has the character of other Homeric references which we recognize as brief nods to stories with which the audience is already familiar. Van Buitenen has also pointed out the propensity of epic literature to downplay certain of its elements as its narratives evolves: "Successive generations would add, embellish, digress; but also understate what might have been emphasized before."[265] Although the description of Odysseus' assistance to Maron is succinct to the point of inconsequentiality, there are other indications that religious obligation is an integral part of the episode. One of Glenn's primary pieces of evidence against comparison with the folktales is the absence of what he perceives as a motif of religious piety running through the *Cyclopeia*.[266] Not only does Glenn see the piety of the hero as important, but "In Homer's story...contempt for the gods has become quite central to the giant."[267] This distribution of emphasis (relative unimportance of priest/ great importance of hero's piety) makes sense in the context of the evolution of Greek religion in general, where the priesthood was inconsequential, and

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[265] Van Buitenen 1973:I.xxiii.

[266] As at IX.107-8, 196-215, 231, 275-8, 412.

[267] Glenn 1971:158.

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personal and societal duty to the gods was heavily stressed.[268] The opposite was true of Indic society.

If the *Cyclopeia* is the story of a thrilling and dangerous encounter with traces of a lesson in piety running through it, the *Bakavadhaparva* is a lesson in religious piety which contains a thrilling and dangerous encounter. In the *Mahābhārata*, the story begins at the house of a brahmin, a member of the priestly caste, with whom the heroes have been lodging incognito. The brahmin's turn has come up by lot to make a sacrifice (composed of one wagonload of rice, the buffalo that pull the wagon, and one member of his family) to Baka. The book opens with 100 verses demonstrating the piety of the brahmin and his family, and then the heroes' mother delivers another 40 on the necessity of showing reverence to brahmins. As an act of religious duty and in obedience to his mother's wishes, Bhīma, the mightiest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, volunteers to be the victim, since he makes a specialty of killing *rākṣasas*. While the *Odyssey* briefly mentions Maron's wife and son, the *Mahābhārata* contains 36 verses of the wife nobly offering to sacrifice herself to the monster (*Mahābhārata* 1.146.1–36), and a vignette of the lisping baby son telling his parents not to cry and promising to kill the ogre with a straw (*Mahābhārata* 1.147.20–22).

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[268] As Burkert 1985:95 "Greek religion might almost be called a religion without priests: there is no priestly caste as a closed group with fixed tradition, education, initiation, and hierarchy, and even in the permanently established cults there is no *disciplina*, but only usage, *nomos*. The god in principle admits anyone, as long as he respects the *nomos*, that is, as long as he is willing to fit into the local community."

Table 7: Narrative Structure in the Cyclops, Baka, and Kirmīra Tales

	Cyclops	Baka	Kirmīra
A. Encounter occurs during period of dangerous travel	Odysseus is trying to get home after the Trojan War	The Pāṇḍavas are fleeing after an assassination attempt by their cousin	The Pāṇḍavas are in exile after their cousin has tricked them out of their kingdom
B. The ogre is described as a ruler of his kind…	I.70-1 – "Godlike Polyphemus, whose power is the greatest among all the Cyclopes."	1.148.4-5 – A king 1.152.1- has a house and servants	————
…but later revealed as an outcast and a brute.	IX.188-9 – a loner IX.106, 187	1.151.2 – lives in a desolate wilderness, attacks without friends or retinue	————
C. An eater of human flesh	IX.297, 374 X.200	1.148.4; 1.150.26 1.151.1; 1.152.6	3.12.23-4
D. The ogre's eye	All textual references to Polyphemus' eye presume there is only one: I.69, IX.333, 383, 394, 397, 453, 515—6 Hesiod's definition of a Cyclops claims that "a single eye was set in the middle of their foreheads" *Theogony* 142	The incident takes place at an otherwise unknown town called Ekachakrā. The ogre's name, Baka, means "crane," and the distinctive element in a crane's features is the appearance of having one large round eye.	Unusual frequency of references to Kirmīra's eyes: 3.12.6, 3.12.8, 3.12.20, 3.12.65, 3.12.66
E. The ogre's carefree life emphasized	IX.105-115	————	3.12.23-4
F. The ogre resembles a mountain	IX.191-2 - like "a wooded peak of the lofty mountains"	1.152.9 - "like a broken mountain peak"	3.11.23 - "like an unmoving mountain," 3.12.15 - "like Mount Maināka"

G. The hero helps a priest	IX.196-215 - "Maron, son of Euanthes ...showing reverence, we protected him and his wife and son"	1.145-150 The Pāṇḍavas help the Brahmin who has given them lodging.	————
H. Priest's food/wine taken to the ogre	IX.212- takes wine with him IX.345 – gets Cyclops drunk	1.151.1-2 takes cartload of rice and two buffaloes to the ogre	————
I. The Hero eats the ogre's food	IX.232	1.151.5-11	————
J. Victim/attacker drawn by turn or lot	IX.334-5 – 4 men plus Odysseus draw lots to kill Ogre. gift of being eaten last.	1.148.7-8 – towns-people must sacrifice themselves in turn	————
K. A tree or wood, especially burning wood, as the weapon	Cyclops carries a load of wood IX.319-20- red-hot olive tree	1.151.12- Baka pulls up trees 1.151.16- a "tree battle," ogre killed with tree	3.12.40 – Bhīma uproots a tree 10 armspans tall and strips it of its leaves. 3.12.45 - Kirmīra attacks with firebrand, uprooted trees.
L. Prominence of the hero's name	IX.364-71 –"NoMan" given as name	1.149.17, 1.150.27, 1.151.6 - insistance on anonymity 1.151.17 – Baka shouts Bhīma's name as he dies.	3.12.25-30 - Recognition of Bhīma's name prompts the attack, in retribution for the death of Baka.
M. Other ogres respond to the commotion...	IX.401-2 IX.408	1.152.1	————
. ...but cause no trouble	IX.410-413	1.152.2-5	————
N. Attacks with rock(s)	IX.481-6, 536-40 - Cyclops hurls rocks at the departing ship	————	3.12.51 – Kirmīra hurls rocks
O. Encounter was expected/anticipated	IX.506-12 – encounter foretold	————	3.12.29-31 – Kirmīra has been searching for Bhīma
P. Accusation of cheating	IX.510-16	————	3.12.31
Q. Sacrifice	IX.550-553 – Odysseus sacrifices the ram used in the escape.	————	3.11.24 – Kirmīra killed "like a sacrificial animal" 3.30.64 – death like that of a sacrificial animal.

H. Priest's Food/Wine Taken to the Ogre

Odysseus carries Maron's wine to his meeting with Polyphemus because of a suspicion that he might need it:

τοῦ φέρον ἐμπλήσας ἀσκὸν μέγαν, ἐν δὲ καὶ ἦα
χωρύκῳ· αὐτίκα γάρ μοι ὀΐσατο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
ἄνδρ' ἐπελεύσεσθαι μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκήν,
ἄγριον, οὔτε δίκας εὖ εἰδότα οὔτε θέμιστας.
(*Odyssey IX.212–15*)

I took some of this, having filled a great flask, and took provisions
in a bag, for from the start my proud heart imagined
I would encounter a man endowed with great strength,
fierce, knowing neither law nor custom.

Bhīma drives the wagon full of food to the forest in accordance with the ogre's demands, and summons the monster:

ततो रात्र्यां व्यतीतायामन्नमादाय पाण्डवः ।
भीमसेनो ययौ तत्र यत्रासौ पुरुषादकः ॥ १
आसाद्य तु वनं तस्य रक्षसः पाण्डवो बली ।
आजुहाव ततो नाम्ना तदन्नमुपयोजयन् ॥ २
(*Mahābhārata 1.151.1–2*)

Then, when the night had passed, the Pāṇḍava took the rice,
Bhīmasena went there where the man-eater was. *(1)*
Having approached the *rākṣasa*'s jungle, the strong Pāṇḍava
then called him by name as he brought that food. *(2)*

I. The Hero Eats the Ogre's Food

After calling out to Baka, Bhīma sits down and eats the food he has brought until he is discovered by the ogre:

ततः स राक्षसः श्रुत्वा भीमसेनस्य तद्वचः ।
आजगाम सुसंक्रुद्धो यत्र भीमो व्यवस्थितः ॥ ३
महाकायो महावेगो दारयन्निव मेदिनीम् ।
त्रिशिखां भृकुटिं कृत्वा संदश्य दशनच्छदम् ॥ ४
भुञ्जानमन्नं तं दृष्ट्वा भीमसेनं स राक्षसः ।
विवृत्य नयने क्रुद्ध इदं वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ ५
कोऽयमन्नमिदं भुङ्क्ते मदर्थमुपकल्पितम् ।
पश्यतो मम दुर्बुद्धिर्ययासुर्यमसादनम् ॥ ६

(*Mahābhārata 1.151.3–5*)

Then the *rākṣasa*, having heard the words of Bhīmasena
he came, enraged, to where Bhīma was waiting. *(3)*
Large-bodied, fast-moving as if tearing the earth,
He knit his brow in three lines, biting the wall of his teeth. *(4)*
Having seen Bhīmasena eating the food, the *rākṣasa*
rolling his eyes, angrily said these words: *(5)*
"Who is this eating my rice? For my sake it is prepared!
Desirous of going to Yama's abode[269] you eat this in my sight! *(6)*

The *Odyssey's* version lacks a deliberate attempt to inflame the monster here, postponing it until Odysseus' ill-advised decision to shout out his name to Polyphemus at IX.473–480 and 491–505, but Odysseus confesses to a certain stubborness which prevents him from taking his companions' advice to plunder the cave and leave (*Odyssey* IX.224–230). Though Polyphemus does not actually spot the men until he has lit his fire at IX.251, Odysseus and his companions are surprised by Polyphemus in the act of eating Polyphemus' carefully laid-up cheeses:

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[269]i.e. "Wanting to die." Yama is the god of the dead.

’Ένθα δὲ πῦρ κήαντες ἐθύσαμεν ἠδὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
τυρῶν αἰνύμενοι φάγομεν, μένομέν τέ μιν ἔνδον
ἥμενοι, ἧος ἐπῆλθε νέμων·
(*Odyssey IX.231–3*)

Then, lighting a fire, we sacrificed and we ate,
taking for ourselves from the cheeses, and we waited for him inside,
sitting, until he came back from herding;

Burgess sees the consumption of the ogre's cheese as a metaphorically loaded and dangerous act: "The stealing or partaking of a giant's food could conceivably serve to deepen a sense of the victims' entanglement in the world of the giant. Persephone's pomegranate seeds are analogous (and the Homeric Polyphemus episode has been described as an Underworld multiform)."[270] This is also comparable to the wariness surrounding the scenes of dining discussed in the Circe and Calypso episodes. Glenn notes that the most common folktale variant actually has the ogre entice the hero into his lair, and only 11 versions depict a hero who waits for the ogre.[271] In both the episodes under consideration here, the wait for the ogre is a significant part of the storyline demonstrating Odysseus' recklessness and daring in one, and Bhīma's bravado in the other.

J. Victims/Attackers Drawn by Turn or Lot

Both stories share the motif of turn-taking among the ogre's human victims. In the *Mahābhārata*, the brahmin describes the system whereby the villagers pay tribute to Baka:

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[270]Burgess 2001:228, n.184.
[271]Glenn 1971:153.

वेतनं तस्य विहितं शालिवाहस्य भोजनम् ।
महिषौ पुरुषश्चैको यस्तदादाय गच्छति ॥ ६
एकैकश्चैव पुरुषस्तत्प्रयच्छति भोजनम् ।
स वारो बहुभिर्वर्षैर्भवत्यसुतरो नरैः ॥ ७
तद्विमोक्षाय ये चापि यतन्ते पुरुषाः क्वचित् ।
सपुत्रदारांस्तान्हत्वा तद्रक्षो भक्षयत्युत ॥ ८

(*Mahābhārata 1.148.6–8*)

His price is fixed at a wagonload of food
a pair of oxen, and one human who goes there taking them. *(6)*
One by one each person sends the food
and a man's turn is not easily passed after many years. *(7)*
If any people anywhere try to escape,
the *rākṣasa* kills them with son and wife and eats them. *(8)*

The idea of humans being consumed in turn comes up in the *Odyssey* when Polyphemus has drunk the wine and asked Odysseus his name, claiming to want to offer him a guest gift. But the "gift" is merely the promise that Odysseus' turn to be eaten will come last:

Οὖτιν ἐγὼ πύματον ἔδομαι μετὰ οἷς ἑτάροισι,
τοὺς δ' ἄλλους πρόσθεν· τὸ δέ τοι ξεινήϊον ἔσται.
(*Odyssey IX.369–70*)

No-one I will eat last, after his companions,
and the others first; that will be my guest gift to you.

The drawing of lots to determine who will wield the olive tree is in the same vein as the turn-taking described above; a cold-blooded determination of who must face down the ogre:

αὐτὰρ τοὺς ἄλλους κλήρῳ πεπαλάσθαι ἄνωγον,
ὅς τις τολμήσειεν ἐμοὶ σὺν μοχλὸν ἀείρας
τρῖψαι ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ, ὅτε τὸν γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἱκάνοι.
(*Odyssey IX.331–3*)

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Then I ordered the others to cast lots,
for who would dare with me to take up the beam
to grind it in the eye, when sweet sleep had come to him.

This is another area in which Page found difficulties with the Homeric text as it stands, calling the lots at IX.331–3 "an odd and ineffective affair,"[272] and suggesting "that in some earlier version of this story the casting of lots decided not who should help Odysseus, but who should be eaten next,"[273] which agrees well with the Sanskrit evidence. Only three folktale versions contain lot-casting, and all three use it to determine the order in which people will be eaten, in the same way that the Sanskrit version uses turn-taking among the villagers.

K. The Tree as Weapon

All three allomorphs carry repeated references to trees as weapons, particularly in the form of the combination of wood and fire. This parallel in weaponry carries more weight when considered alongside the fact that both Odysseus and Bhīma are associated with particular weapons (the bow and the club), both of which could perform the services required in each context. But instead raw wood is a repeated element in both narratives. In a foreshadowing of his eventual doom, Polyphemus enters the cave and throws down a load of wood, scaring the men with its tremendous crash:

...φέρε δ' ὄβριμον ἄχθος
ὕλης ἀζαλέης, ἵνα οἱ ποτιδόρπιον εἴη.

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[272]Page 1955:12.

[273]Page 1955:12.

ἔντοσθεν δ' ἄντροιο βαλὼν ὀρυμαγδὸν ἔθηκεν·
ἡμεῖς δὲ δείσαντες ἀπεσσύμεθ' ἐς μυχὸν ἄντρου.
(*Odyssey IX. IX.233-5*)

...He bore a mighty load
of dry wood, so that he might make dinner.
Throwing it into the cave he made a crash;
Terrified, we were driven into the inner nooks of the cave.

But this wood is not the stake which will be used in the blinding. The weapon

Odysseus will use on Polyphemus is not introduced until IX.320:

Κύκλωπος γὰρ ἔκειτο μέγα ῥόπαλον παρὰ σηκῷ
χλωρὸν ἐλαΐνεον· τὸ μὲν ἔκταμεν, ὄφρα φοροίη
αὐανθέν. τὸ μὲν ἄμμες ἐΐσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
ὅσσον θ' ἱστὸν νηὸς ἐεικοσόροιο μελαίνης,
φορτίδος εὐρείης, ἥ τ' ἐκπεράᾳ μέγα λαῖτμα·
τόσσον ἔην μῆκος, τόσσον πάχος εἰσοράασθαι.
(*Odyssey IX.319-24*)

For a great bludgeon belonging to the Cyclops lay beside the sheepfold
of green olive wood; he had cut it so he could carry it about
when it has dried. And looking at it, we made it out to be
as big as the mast of a twenty-oared black ship,
a broad merchantman which traverses the depths;
so great was the length, so great the thickness as it seemed.

In the Baka narrative, the conflict's signature weapon is introduced as

Bhīma continues to eat the food offering, ignoring the *rākṣasa*'s yells and

threats. Enraged, Baka uproots a tree to use as a weapon:

ततः स भूयः संक्रुद्धो वृक्षमादाय राक्षसः ।
ताडयिष्यंस्तदा भीमं पुनरभ्यद्रवद्बली ॥ १२
(*Mahābhārata 1.151.12*)

Yet more enraged, the *rākṣasa* took a tree,
then, he mightily charged at Bhīma, intending to thrash him.

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Bhīma responds in kind, and a "tree battle," ("वृक्षयुद्धम्," *Mahābhārata* 1.151.16) ensues, though Baka is finally killed when Bhīma breaks him in two.

Kirmīra's story begins with the ogre attacking the travelling party with a firebrand,[274] in a verse which subtly equates the weapon with the monster's blazing eyes:

तेषां प्रविशतां तत्र मार्गमावृत्य भारत ।
दीप्ताक्षं भीषणं रक्षः सोल्मुकं प्रत्यदृश्यत ॥ ६
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.6*)

When they entered (the forest), blocking their path, O Bhārata,
a blazing-eyed, horrifying *rākṣasa* appeared with a firebrand.

From that point on, the encounter with Kirmīra continues in the same vein as that with Baka, as Bhīma uproots a tree to use as his weapon:

ततो भीमो महाबाहुरारुज्य तरसा द्रुमम् ।
दशव्याममिवोद्विद्धं निष्पत्रमकरोत्तदा ॥ ३९
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.39*)

Then strong-armed Bhīma quickly pulled up a tree
ten armspans tall and stripped it leafless.

This detail of the stripping of the leaves may be a pared-down analogue to Odysseus' preparation of the olive tree, and both the Polyphemus and Kirmīra episodes contain descriptions of piles of uprooted trees. *Mahābhārata* 3.12.49's description of trees scattered about like withered reeds recalls the αὐλή of Polyphemus, built of stones and "μακρῇσίν τε πίτουσιν ἰδὲ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν" (*Odyssey* XI.186).

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[274]Glenn (1971:165) notes that a firebrand is twice employed in the folktales, as does Burgess 2001:103.

As may be seen in Table 5, the weapon of choice in the folktales is the iron spit, and this detail has captivated the attention of commentators. Page found the *Odyssey*'s wooden stake to be particularly unbelievable in light of the assertion that it glowed when heated in the fire. He fumes, "the fresh-cut log of green olive-wood will turn black and smoke and smoulder; in the end it may burst into flames, but there is one thing you may wait in vain for it to do—*to glow all through* like a white-hot poker."[275] This objection is countered by Cook, who claims to have personally witnessed a heated olive-branch display the behavior described in the *Odyssey*.[276] Cook's explanation for the absence of the spit is based upon his assumption that "excepting his weakness for human flesh, Polyphemos is apparently a vegetarian. Homer thus eliminates the spit."[277] Cook also sees important cultural and mythological associations in the use of olive wood.[278] Burgess has a different objection: "The red-hot spit is a dangerous weapon; not so a heated wooden stake...That a wooden stake is less common in the analogues than a spit is not especially significant, since an ancient Greek version of this tale type need not have matched the tendencies of the modern analogues. But the Odyssey's use of the wooden stake in unusual ways does imply knowledge of a variant with a spit. Why would the Homeric narrative go out of its way to favor a wooden stake over a spit?"[279] His answer, following Schein,[280] is that the lack of an iron spit must be intended to stress Polyphemus' primitive, low-tech lifestyle.

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[275] Page 1966:10–11.
[276] Cook 1995:104–5.
[277] Cook 1995:102.
[278] Cook 1995:106–9.
[279] Burgess 2001:102–3.
[280] Schein 1970:76–7.

Burgess and Schein also agree that the absence of the spit must also be intended to call attention to Polyphemus' primitive act of consuming of raw food.[281] But O'Sullivan[282] takes "ὁπλίσσατο," "he prepared," at V.291 and 344 as implying cooking, and I would argue as well that *Odyssey* IX.233-5 (above) indicates that Polyphemus intended to cook his food. The use of a tree as the weapon demonstrates the conservatism of the epic tradition, which shies away from innovation. But the folktale tradition, with its focus on telling a brief tale well rather than preserving a much larger narrative, can afford to be more accepting of innovation, though it too avoids radical change.

L. Prominence of the Hero's name

The trick of the name is the hallmark of the *Odyssey*'s story. At IX.355-6, the inebriated Cyclops asks for Odysseus' name, claiming he wants to give him a guest-gift. Odysseus recognizes that the overture is a trap, and gives his famous response:

> Οὖτις ἐμοί γ' ὄνομα· Οὖτιν δέ με κικλήσκουσι
> μήτηρ ἠδὲ πατὴρ ἠδ' ἄλλοι πάντες ἑταῖροι.
> (*Odyssey IX.366-7*)

> "No one" is my name; "No one" is what they call me,
> my mother and my father and all my other friends.

The stage is thus set for Polyphemus' later cry to the other Cyclopes, "O Friends, No one is killing me by treachery or force!" ("ὦ φίλοι, Οὖτίς με

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[281]Schein 1970:74-5.
[282]O'Sullivan 1987:18.

κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν,") which convinces them they should not come to his aid. The folktales of the blinding of the ogre do not contain the name trick,[283] although it may be found in a different set of tales based on the injuring of a fairy or devil, in which the hero avoids retribution by giving a false name.[284] Hackmann preserves 50 verisons of this story, only three of which use "Nobody" and the rest "Me" or "My Self."[285] Glenn concludes (along with Page) that Homer chose to incorporate both tales:

> The fact that the trick with the false name persists today as an independent folktale motif undoubtedly points to the [conclusion that] Homer (or his immediate source) conflated two tales. This alternative is universally accepted, and for an obvious reason: it is much easier to conceive of a storyteller's adding a theme from a separate tale than to suppose that an original and presumably well-established tale should now appear dissected in modern versions and should thrive virtually without a trace of the former connection.[286]

Or as Page puts it, the Polyphemus episode is "not an element but a compound."[287]

Though the Baka episode does not utilize a trick of the name, it contains evidence that it did at one point in its development. The first of these is the insistance on Bhīma's anonymity while killing the ogre, expressed first by Kuntī to their brahmin host at 1.149.17. The reason given makes little sense, as they are already living incognito with the brahmin (and posing as brahmins themselves) to avoid being murdered by their cousins:

न त्विदं केषुचिद् ब्रह्मन्व्याहर्तव्यं कथंचन ।

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[283]Except in two versions which Hackmann (1904:36), Page (1955:18), and Glenn (Glenn 1971:160 see note 21) all agree were likely to have been influenced by literary sources.

[284]Glenn 1971:143.

[285]Hackmann 1904.

[286]Glenn 1971:144.

[287]Page 1955:3.

विद्यार्थिनो हि मे पुत्रान्विप्रकुर्युः कुतूहलात् ॥ १७

(*Mahābhārata 1.149.17*)

But Brahmin, not one bit of this should be told to anyone.
For they would pester my sons constantly for information.

This is reiterated by Bhīma's brother Yudhiṣṭhira at 1.150.27:

उपपन्नमिदं मातस्त्वया यद्बुद्धिपूर्वकम् ।
आर्तस्य ब्राह्मणस्यैवमनुक्रोशादिदं कृतम् ।
ध्रुवमेष्यति भीमोऽयं निहत्य पुरुषादकम् ॥ २६
यथा त्विदं न विन्देयुर्नरा नगरवासिनः ।
तथायं ब्राह्मणो वाच्यः परिग्राह्यश्च यत्नतः ॥ २७

(*Mahābhārata 1.150.26–7*)

Mother it is perfectly right what you have put your mind to do,
and have done out of pity for that poor brahmin.
Surely Bhīma will return having killed the man-eater. *(26)*
But so that the people living in the town should not find this out.
The brahmin should be told and carefully restrained. *(27)*

Bhīma himself completely ignores Baka's demand to tell him his name
at 1.151.6, and does not speak at all during the killing, though he laughs at
1.151.7 and 1.151.14. But the most compelling argument for a lost name-trick
in the story lies in a peculiar little detail.

As he makes a final desperate rush for Bhīma, Baka "trumpets out his
name" ("नाम विश्राव्य," *Mahābhārata* 1.151.17).[288] There is no explanation
given for the utterance, it is not a battle convention in the epic, and Bhīma

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[288]This formulation does not actually specify which name (Baka or Bhīma) is trumpeted.
I have worked under the assumption that the name is Bhīma's because it seems very
unlikely (though not impossible) that Baka would utter his own name. I would also not
rule out the possibility that by the time the tale reached the recorded form, the narrator
was uncertain as to whose name was being called out.

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has taken great care to be anonymous. Bhīma then leaves the scene secretly at *Mahābhārata* 1.152.6. When the townspeople discover Baka's body, they go to the Brahmin's house to find out what happened. Faithful to his promise,[289] he tells them only that an itinerant mendicant volunteered to take his turn, and that he must have killed Baka.

Though the name of Baka's killer is thus shrouded in utmost secrecy, it somehow makes its way to the ear of the ogre's brother, Kirmīra. When the Pāṇḍavas encounter Kirmīra by chance much later in the epic and tell him their names, he announces that he is Baka's brother, and thanks the gods for fulfilling his desire for revenge (*Mahābhārata* 3.12.25–30). The question is never answered (or even addressed) as to how he found out that Baka's killer was Bhīma. Combining that inconsistency with Baka's shouting of Bhīma's name at death suggests very strongly that a piece of the story is missing.

M. Other Ogres Arrive, but Cause No Trouble

The wounded Polyphemus calls out to the other Cyclopes:

αὐτὰρ ὁ Κύκλωπας μεγάλ' ἤπυεν, οἵ ῥά μιν ἀμφὶς
ᾤκεον ἐν σπήεσσι δι' ἄκριας ἠνεμοέσσας.
οἱ δὲ βοῆς ἀΐοντες ἐφοίτων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος·
ἱστάμενοι δ' εἴροντο περὶ σπέος ὅττι ἑ κήδοι.
(*Odyssey IX.399–402*)

But the Cyclops called out mightily, to those around him
living in the caves on the windy mountain-top.
Perceiving his cries, they arived from here and there;
and standing around his cave they asked about his distress.

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[289]Literally "and protecting the Pāṇḍavas," ("रक्षमाणश्च पाण्डवान्") *Mahābhārata* 1.152.13.

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Just as the Cyclop's yells draw the other Cyclopes, Baka's dying scream brings the other *rākṣasas*:

तेन शब्देन वित्रस्तो जनस्तस्याथ रक्षसः ।
निष्पपात गृहाद्राजन्सहैव परिचारिभिः ॥ १
(*Mahābhārata 1.152.1*)

Frightened by the sound, the *rākṣasa*'s subjects then
emerged from the house with the servants, King.

In the *Odyssey*, the other Cyclopes are taken in by the trick of the name, and, failing to understand the urgency of Polyphemus' situation, they abandon him:

Οἱ δ' ἀπαμειβόμενοι ἔπεα πτερόεντ' ἀγόρευον·
"εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τίς σε βιάζεται οἶον ἐόντα—
νοῦσόν γ' οὔ πως ἔστι Διὸς μεγάλου ἀλέασθαι·
ἀλλὰ σύ γ' εὔχεο πατρὶ Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι."
Ὣς ἄρ' ἔφαν ἀπιόντες·
(*Odyssey IX.410-413*)

They, answering, addressed winged words;
"If no one is abusing you, you're all alone—
there is no avoiding the ills of great Zeus;
But you should pray to your father, Lord Poseidon."
So they spoke, going away;

In the *Mahābhārata*, Baka's household members are easily cowed, and pose no threat to Bhīma or the town:

तान्भीतान्विगतज्ञानान्भीमः प्रहरतां वरः ।
सान्त्वयामास बलवान्समये च न्यवेशयत् ॥ २
न हिंस्या मानुषा भूयो युष्माभिरिह कर्हिचित् ।
हिंसतां हि वधः शीघ्रमेवमेव भवेदिति ॥ ३
तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा तानि रक्षांसि भारत ।
एवमस्त्विति तं प्राहुर्जगृहुः समयं च तम् ॥ ४

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ततः प्रभृति रक्षांसि तत्र सौम्यानि भारत ।
नगरे प्रत्यदृश्यन्त नरैर्नगरवासिभिः ॥ ५
(*Mahābhārata 1.152.2-5*)

Bhīma, the best of fighters, calmed the frightened, witless [*rākṣasas*],
And the mighty one caused them to accept a treaty;
"No longer are humans to be harmed by you here in any way.
Indeed, it should be that a killer be himself killed immediately."
Those *rākṣasas*, Bhārata, having heard this speech,
said "Let it be so," and accepted the treaty.
From then on the *rākṣasas* there were good-natured, Bhārata.
When they were seen in the city by the people who were city-dwellers.

N. The Ogre Throws Rock(s)

The incident at Ekacakrā ends with the death of Baka, but the Cyclops remains alive and Odysseus cannot resist taunting him as the companions sail away. In retaliation, Polyphemus hurls rocks at the departing ship (*Odyssey* IX.481–6, 537–42). The Laistrygones also hurl rocks with which they crush the rest of Odyseeus' fleet (*Odyssey* X.118–124).

Rock-throwing has a place in the tale of Kirmīra as well:

ततः शिलां समुत्क्षिप्य भीमस्य युधि तिष्ठतः ।
प्राहिणोद्राक्षसः क्रुद्धो भीमसेनश्चचाल ह ॥ ५२
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.51*)

Then having lifted a rock meant for Bhīma who stood his ground in battle,
The *rākṣasa* threw it in a fury, and Bhīmasena staggered.

Though Bhīma defeats Kirmīra easily, the depiction of the hero staggering is rare; Bhīma's characterization centers around his invulnerability to attack.

O. Encounter was Expected/Anticipated

When Polyphemus learns Odysseus' name he laments that he should have been on guard against him since everything had been foretold to him by the prophet Telemos (*Odyssey* IX.506–16). At 3.12.31 Kirmīra reveals that he has been searching for Bhīma so that he might take revenge for the killing of Baka, though this contradicts his earlier assertion that he merely lives a carefree predatory existence in the forest.

P. The Accusation of Cheating

Polyphemus also laments that Odysseus was not at all the type of man Telemos' prophecy led him to expect, and that the fight was not fair:

> ὅς μοι ἔφη τάδε πάντα τελευτήσεσθαι ὀπίσσω,
> χειρῶν ἐξ Ὀδυσῆος ἁμαρτήσεσθαι ὀπωπῆς.
> ἀλλ' ἀεί τινα φῶτα μέγαν καὶ καλὸν ἐδέγμην
> ἐνθάδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι, μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκήν·
> νῦν δέ μ' ἐὼν ὀλίγος τε καὶ οὐτιδανὸς καὶ ἄκικυς
> ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν, ἐπεί μ' ἐδαμάσσατο οἴνῳ.
> (*Odyssey IX.511–16*)

> He told me all these would be brought to pass,
> that I would be deprived of my sight at the hands of Odysseus.
> But I was always expecting some man both big and fine
> to come here endowed with great might;
> But now someone tiny and worthless and feeble
> has destroyed my eye, after he knocked me out with wine.

Polyphemus' complaint is echoed in Kirmīra's words upon learning Bhīma's identity:

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सोऽयमासादितो दिष्ट्या भ्रातृहा काङ्क्षितश्चिरम् ।
अनेन हि मम भ्राता बको विनिहतः प्रियः ॥ ३०
वेत्रकीयगृहे राजन्ब्राह्मणच्छद्मरूपिणा ।
विद्याबलमुपाश्रित्य न ह्यस्त्यस्यौरसं बलम् ॥ ३१

(*Mahābhārata 3.12.30–1*)

This one is reached, thank heaven, the brother-killer sought after for so long.
By this one was my dear brother Baka struck down *(30)*
At Vetrakīyagṛha, King, in disgiuse as a brahmin
having resorted to magic, for indeed there is no strength in this one's chest. *(31)*

These words appear terribly out of place when applied to Bhīma; the *Odyssey*'s phrase works because it emphasizes the fact that it is Odysseus' *mētis*, rather than his strength, which bested Polyphemus. But Bhīma is legendary for his might, and while flyting is frequently a part of Sanskrit battle scenes, it is usually less patently false.

Q. Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a significant part of the *Cyclopeia's* motif of piety. Odysseus and his men sacrifice at *Odyssey* IX.231 when settling down to their meal of Polyphemus' cheese. At *Odyssey* IX.550-553 Odysseus sacrifices the ram he clung to while making his escape from the cave. The parallel to this in the *Mahābhārata* is not as clear-cut as many of the other points, but rests on the characterization of the death of Kirmīra as being like a sacrifice. In the narration which introduces the episode, we are told that the manner of Kirmīra's death resembles that of a sacrificial animal:

तं भीमः समरश्लाघी बलेन बलिनां वरः ।
जघान पशुमारेण व्याघ्रः क्षुद्रमृगं यथा ॥ २४

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(*Mahābhārata 3.11.24*)

Bhīma, boastful in battle, and by his strength the best of the strong,
killed him like a sacrificial animal, as a tiger kills the lowly deer. *(24)*

The description recurs when Kirmīra's death is described:

तं विषीदन्तमाज्ञाय राक्षसं पाण्डुनन्दनः ।
प्रगृह्य तरसा दोर्भ्यां पशुमारममारयत् ॥ ६३
(*Mahābhārata 3.12.63*)

Realizing that the *rākṣasa* was bested, the son of Pāṇḍu
quickly pulled him up with his arms and killed him like a sacrificial animal. *(63)*

Though the comparison is explicitly made with the manner of Kirmīra's death, it can be presumed that to some degree the choice of manner reflects its purpose, or at least an overtone that the death is intended to convey.

6.3 Conclusions

Research such as that of Page and Glenn has done a superb job of gathering the relevant evidence from folk-tales regarding their relationship to the Homeric *Cyclopeia*. There can be no doubt that the tale of Polyphemus was influenced by folkloric versions of the episode, and went on to influence them in return. But the deep-rooted and programmatic narrative similarities of the *Mahābhārata*'s incident at Ekacakrā, coupled with the linguistic tie between

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Ekacakrā/Cyclops and the suggestions that the Indic tradition was once familiar with the trick of the name, suggest that the Cyclops episode must have been present in Indo-European epic material. Table 7 illustrates the transmission model suggested by the data from comparison with both folklore versions and the *Mahābhārata*. A putative Proto-Indo-European version, which developed in co-existence with a folktale tradition, directly generated both the Homeric and Indic versions. As per the evidence of Page, Glenn and others, the folktales probably continued to exert an influence on the Homeric version over generations, resulting in commonalities such as the entrapment in the cave and the subsequent escape beneath sheep, motifs of which we see no trace in the Indic version.
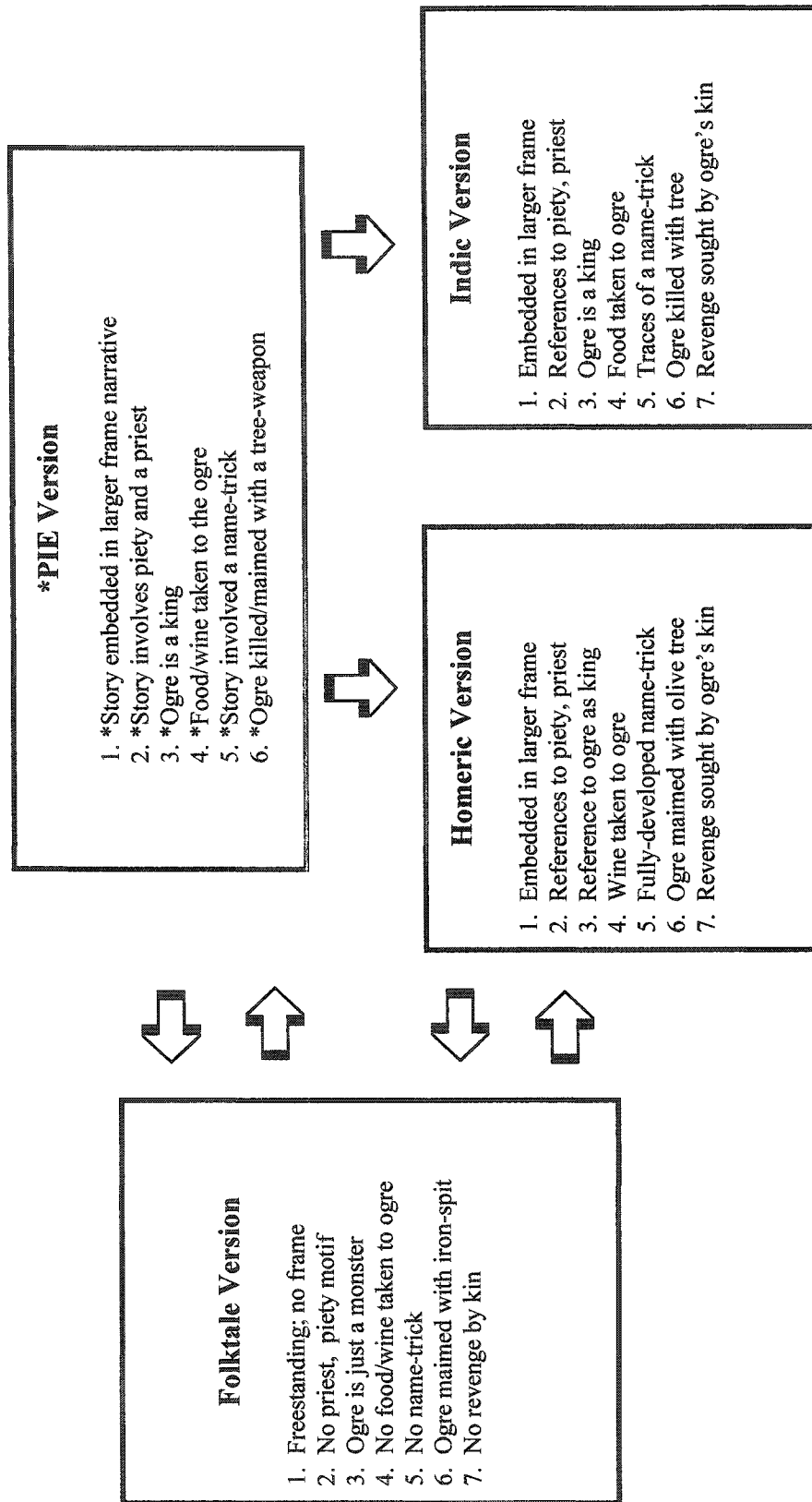
*PIE Version

1. *Story embedded in larger frame narrative
2. *Story involves piety and a priest
3. *Ogre is a king
4. *Food/wine taken to the ogre
5. *Story involved a name-trick
6. *Ogre killed/maimed with a tree-weapon

Indic Version

1. Embedded in larger frame
2. References to piety, priest
3. Ogre is a king
4. Food taken to ogre
5. Traces of a name-trick
6. Ogre killed with tree
7. Revenge sought by ogre's kin

Homeric Version

1. Embedded in larger frame
2. References to piety, priest
3. Reference to ogre as king
4. Wine taken to ogre
5. Fully-developed name-trick
6. Ogre maimed with olive tree
7. Revenge sought by ogre's kin

Folktale Version

1. Freestanding; no frame
2. No priest, piety motif
3. Ogre is just a monster
4. No food/wine taken to ogre
5. No name-trick
6. Ogre maimed with iron-spit
7. No revenge by kin

TABLE 7: Transmission of the Narrative Between the Various Traditions

It may be that the answer to these questions is given in the long run by temperament rather than by learning, or what passes as such.

Woodhouse 1930:18

My view can no more be proved than theirs, but at least let me record it.

van Buitenen 1978:163

7 Conclusion

The preceeding chapters have presented an analysis of six scene-types from the *Odyssey*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Iliad*, which demonstrate the presence of certain underlying narrative patterns upon which each set of scenes is constructed. As the work of Lord,[290] later supported by that of Ong,[291] suggested, story-forms are both durable and portable. Though the episodes have all undergone significant evolutionary change, the narrative armatures which underly them have preserved enough of their unique themes to leave intact groups of elements which we can point to as parallels. In several instances, most strikingly with the Circe/Hiḍimbā pair, the Greek and Indic versions also share the same thematic ordering, which further strengthens the case for genetic inheritance. It is the clustering of these elements upon which I place the most emphasis; many of the points in the Circe and

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[290]Lord 1971.

[291]Ong 1982.

Hiḍimbā stories, for example, appear trivial when viewed alone. But the whole sequence: a scouting expedition / sleeping companions / weeping / conference / friendly overtures by the goddess / attack / oath followed by sex, is more than the sum of its parts. Under very different exteriors, the episodes' skeletons are made up of the same components. Even a relatively unique element, such as the goddess-as-charioteer, carries much more weight when seen as part of two parallel patterns involving combat with a seemingly undefeatable hero, the violation of a taboo, and the castigation of the opponent by his father.

Several of the narrative pairs also present us with philological evidence to support the theory of a genetic relationship between them. The parallel occurrences of μῶλυ/$m\bar{u}la$, and the pair of rhetorical questions using the Indo-European formulation "$k^w is\ H_2 ner$-" in the Circe and Hiḍimbā episodes, the "Husband of Hera/Umā" epithet in the Nausicaa and Citrāṅgadā stories, and the possible connection between "Cyclops" and "Ekacakrā" all carry the evidence to a new level. The themes and motifs which make up a narrative are far more "portable" than verbal elements; in transmission a story is far more likely to retain its sequence of major events than its exact words. Thus the presence of parallel verbal elements suggests that there was some degree of textual fixity to the proto-epic material which subsequently evolved into the separate traditions.

Just as constellations of similar elements within each set of episodes mark them out as descending from the same parent version, so too, on the larger scale, the equivalent constellations of paired episodes indicate that the epics as a whole may well have come from a common source, and one that was

more structured than a diffuse mass of individual folk-tales from which each tradition picked and chose. The episodes involving the goddess-charioteers are particularly telling in this respect, as this is the only scene-type which does not come from the *Odyssey*'s Deep-Sea Stories. Scenes of battle are generally not at home in folk-tale, but belong instead to traditions of epic and saga. A pair of battle-oriented episodes which displays the same type of correspondences as the more folkloric "Encounters of the Wandering Hero" stories makes a compelling argument that the sources of Greek epic were perhaps more unified than the early Analysts believed them to be, if not quite as monolithic as the Unitarians wished.

This is, at least, what I believe the evidence reveals. Though the similarities which I have outlined unquestionably do exist, and the data presented in the preceeding charts and outlines presents a well-rounded whole, the argument that these commonalities exist through coincidence or convergent evolution might never be countered with absolute proof of genetic relationship. But at a certain level of similarity, the argument that the parallels could be accidental or that two societies with similar story traditions could independently produce narratives in such close correspondence to one another requires a leap of faith more miraculous than that required to entertain the concept of shared inheritance.

Why do these patterns involving women (and a monster) persist, when nothing comparable has been found involving male characters? The phenomenon may reveal a fundamental conservatism regarding male-female relations in both societies; while the politics of male-male interactions altered and evolved along with society (and thus necessitated the alteration of story-

patterns), male-female relationships remained on a different plane, best represented by archetypal scenes which changed comparatively little over time. I prefer to think that the Cyclops episode is similarly paradigmatic, and it is this commonality which has put it in the same category with the female helpers, rather than having danger be the common thread. This dissertation cannot speak for all of Homer's female characters, human, divine and monstrous, but it does present a comprehensive argument for seeing this particular group (Calypso, Circe, Ino, Eidothea, and Nausicaa, as well as Athena in some of her roles) as representing a distinct subset of Homeric women who originate from a set of benevolent and helpful Indo-European female figures.

The scenes involving the helpers also share with the Cyclops-scene the feature of occurring in small, encapsulated episodes, clearly defined within narrative boundaries. They resemble folk-tales in structure as well as content, and, like folk-tales, are perfectly sized to be easily remembered and transmitted. Interactions between male figures are more likely to extend over long stretches of text and space: Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel within the first 300 lines of the *Iliad*, and only eighteen books later do they finally reconcile. Poseidon's wrath at Odysseus is engendered before the epic's text opens, and we never learn whether the planting of the oar (foretold by Teiresias at *Odyssey* XI.119–136) is effectively carried out to end the matter.

Though other closely comparable groups of episodes may exist elsewhere (as in battle or council scenes[292]), finding them in such a close constellation of

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[292]Though these areas may have some potential, it is my feeling that such scenes will already have such a high degree of circumstantial similarity that detecting signs of inherited underlying patterns will not be possible.

material regarding women suggests that the gender issues which have risen to such prominence in the scholarship of the 80's and 90's are not anachronistic. The repeated selection of female figures as the hero's helpers demonstrates a fascinating consciousness of gender issues in the epics, even though it may never be possible for us to entirely understand what that consciousness was. Though the central figures of the epics are their heroes, these heroes do not stand alone as they undergo the ordeals they must endure. Epic is at all times thoroughly conscious of the necessity of society and a social framework, and cognizant of the pain which can result from separation from society and its support network. In the wilderness outside of society, and even, at times, in battle, heroes trust an assortment of female figures to rescue them from dangerous situations. The epic's female figures are not a random collection of characters, but a coherent assembly, a spectrum of possible vehicles for benevolent oversight and intervention in the heroes' adventures. The identification of these scenes made in this dissertation is only a starting point for further investigation. It is to be hoped that scholarship can begin to discuss Homer's female helpers in the same way it has previously spoken of Homer's female monsters or Homer's female obstacles.

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