

THE VOICE OF THE DEAD IN HOMER'S *ODYSSEY* AND IN EGYPTIAN FUNERARY TEXTS

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Aber das Wehende höre,
die ununterbrochene Nachricht,
die aus Stille sich bildet.
Es rauscht jetzt von jenen jungen
Toten zu dir.

Rainer Maria Rilke

1. Introduction

Language marks the boundaries of communities: the barbarian says “bar bar” (Strab. 14.2.8), the gods have their own language (Hes. *Theog.* 831, *Il.* 1.403-4, etc., *Od.* 10.305, etc., Pl. *Phdr.* 252C), and animals speak in their various twitterings and brayings without λόγος (Isoc. *Paneg.* 48), which are – except in very special cases (*Il.* 19.404-17, Numbers 22.28-31) – unintelligible to mortals other than seers like Melampus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.11-12) or visionaries like Palamedes (Hyg. *Fab.* 277.1). From a linguistic perspective, the dead are characterized as bereft of the gift of speech¹. “The communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living”, as T. S. Eliot puts it. This is not just the willful snubbing of an Ajax or a Dido (*Od.* 11.541-64, Verg. *Aen.* 6.450-76), or the special status of certain individuals, such as Narcissus the Eretrian, called Σιγηλός according to Strabo (9.2.10), because those who passed by his tomb remained silent, but more likely because he himself was (naturally) unresponsive in death. Rather, this is the general condition of the *mutum sepulchrum* that becomes a stock subject of elegy (Antip. Sid. *Anth. Pal.* 7.467.7 [= 532-9 Gow-Page, *HE*], Catull. 96.1, 101.4, Tib. 2.6.34, Prop. 2.1.77); remember that the

¹ On this concept, see F. Solmsen, “The ‘Gift’ of Speech in Homer and Hesiod”, *TAPA* 85 (1954) 1-15.

resurrected Alcestis requires three days to be undedicated to the nether gods before she can speak (Eur. *Alc.* 1144-6)². The corpse who speaks to Theognis (1229-30) is said by Athenaeus (547A) – for such a thing would be ludicrous if taken literally (cf. Ar. *Ran.* 167-80) – to be a riddling reference to a conch-shell³. Although the living can speak to the dead with some confidence that they will be heard (e.g. Pind. *Ol.* 14.20-4), they are not encouraged to wait for an answer⁴.

Nevertheless, in Homer's *Nekuia*, which is supposed to present the most canonical Greek view of the underworld unadulterated by Eleusinian or Orphic mysticism⁵, we find the idea that the dead can speak to the living. Indeed, it is the quest for just such speech that motivates Odysseus' journey. In the *Nekuia*, the souls of the dead cannot converse with Odysseus until they have drunk the blood of a black sheep that he has sacrificed. Teiresias admonishes (*Od.* 11.95-6):

ἀλλ' ἀποχάζεο βόθρου, ἀπισχε δὲ φάσγανον ὀξύ,
αἵματος ὄφρα πίω καὶ τοι νημερτέα εἶπω.

What is the origin of this idea – so alien to the Greek notion of the *mutum sepulchrum* – that, if we give them blood, the dead may speak the truth to us? It is the contention of this paper that this idea finds its context in the most elaborately developed, if strikingly un-Hellenic, ideas concerning the afterlife formulated in the ancient world: those presented in the funerary texts of pharaonic Egypt.

2. History of the Hypothesis

At first sight, this suggestion may seem unpromising. The notion that there may have been some relation between Greek culture and Egyptian has been repeatedly mooted, but until recently always on the fringes of Classical scholarship. The dissemination of Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphic writing of ancient Egypt by his *Précis du système hiéroglyphique* (Paris) of 1824 cast into brilliant relief the formerly obscure nature of the oldest Mediterranean culture. Inspired by this wealth of information, Franz Joseph Lauth published his *Homer und Aegypten*

² G. G. Betts, "The Silence of Alcestis", *Mnemosyne* 18 (1965) 181-2 compares the Roman custom of ostracizing those pronounced dead in error.

³ J. M. Wickersham, "The Corpse who calls Theognis", *TAPA* 116 (1986) 65-70.

⁴ Ch. Segal, "Messages to the Underworld: An Aspect of Poetic Immortalization in Pindar", *AJP* 106 (1985) 199-212.

⁵ Cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche*, trans. W. B. Hillis (London, 1925) 56 and M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* 2nd ed. (Lund, 1950) 621.

(Munich) in 1867, in which he argued for the existence of Egyptian loan-words in Homeric Greek. This was not a matter of Egyptian words for recognisably Egyptian things such as pyramids and ibises⁶, but of words that had passed into the mainstream Greek lexicon. With this work Lauth entered what was virtually a scholarly *terra incognita*⁷. Lauth's pamphlet appears not to have been widely circulated, but he sent a copy of it to the British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, who devoted his spare time following the defeat of his first government in 1874 to writing pamphlets attacking the doctrine of the infallibility of the papacy and articles advocating Lauth's theories of Egyptian influence on Homer. The latter he collected as *Homeric Synchronism* (London) in 1876 (esp. 265-72). In that same year Heinrich Schliemann excavated at Mycenae and discovered there *inter alia* numerous Egyptian artifacts, initiating the ever-increasing flood of archaeological evidence for Egyptian trade with Bronze-Age Greece⁸, evidence that was brought forcefully to the attention of philologists of my generation by Emily Vermeule's discussion of them in her account of death in early Greek art and poetry⁹.

On the negative side, Max Müller (1832-1900) demonstrated the close connection between Greek and Sanskrit, which implied the existence of a common Indoeuropean tongue and guaranteed that there was a high degree of recognisably "Greek" content in the Greek language and culture before the proto-Hellenes ever entered the Mediterranean basin. Moreover, scholars' ignorance of what language was spoken by the Mycenaeans, which persisted until Michael Ventris deciphered the Linear B tablets in 1953 and conclusively proved that they spoke Greek¹⁰, problematized efforts to

⁶ On which, see A. Erman, "Ägyptische Lehnworte im Griechischen?" (*Bezenbergers Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen* 7 (1883) 336-8, A. Wiedemann, *Sammlung altägyptischer Wörter, welche von klassischen Autoren umschrieben oder übersetzt worden sind* (Leipzig, 1883), W. Spiegelberg, "Ägyptische Lehnwörter in der älteren griechischen Sprache", *ZVS* 41 (1907) 127-32, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, "On Egyptian Fish Names used by Greek Writers", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 14 (1928) 13-33, and J.-L. Fournet, "Les emprunts du grec à l'égyptien", *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 84 (1989) 55-80.

⁷ But see J.-J. Barthélemy, "Réflexions générales sur les rapports des langues égyptienne phénicienne et grecque", *Recueils des mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions* 32 (1763) 212-33.

⁸ See C. Lambrou-Phillipson, *Hellenorientalia* (Göteborg, 1990) 39-41, and E. H. Cline, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean* = *Tempus Reparatum* 591 (Oxford, 1994).

⁹ E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1979) 42-82.

¹⁰ J. Chadwick, *The Decipherment of Linear B* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1967).

envisage a mechanism for the spread of influence from the orient to Greece by necessitating the cumbersome and, as it turns out, needless hypothesis of a third linguistic group allegedly inhabiting Greece during the Bronze Age before the arrival of the Greek tribes. This problem beset Martin P. Nilsson's magisterial work, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (op. cit.), which appeared in 1928 (second edition 1950) and which, among many other things, recognized that the Homeric concept of Elysium came to Greece via Minoan Crete perhaps ultimately from an Egyptian source (p. 619-33). As a consequence, little work was done on the Egypt-Greek connection in the years between Gladstone and Ventris.

Meanwhile, toward the end of his life, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was goaded by the Marr-affair¹¹ into publishing five letters in *Pravda* (June 20, 29, July 11, 22, 28 of 1950) on the relationship of language to class hegemony, and inspired by these reflections, subsequently collected as *Marxism and Linguistics*¹², linguist P. V. Ernstedst made a fresh attempt, in the same year that Ventris demonstrated that the Mycenaeans spoke Greek, to argue for Egyptian influence on Homeric and post-Homeric Greek in his *Египетские заимствования в греческом языке* ["Egyptian Loan-words in the Greek Language"] (Moscow and Leningrad, 1953). This work has never been translated and was not reviewed in the major classical journals, and its influence, like that of Lauth's work, has been severely limited.

In the years following Ernstedst's book, the possibility of Egyptian influence on Greek has been the subject of a mere handful of scattered articles, such as those by Constantin Daniel ("Des emprunts égyptiens dans le grec ancien", *Studia et Acta Orientalia* 4 [1962] 13-23), Bertrand Hemmerdinger ("Noms communs grecs d'origine égyptienne", *Glotta* 46 [1968] 238-47), A. G. McGready ("Egyptian Words in the Greek Vocabulary", *Glotta* 46 [1968] 247-54), and Richard Holton Pierce ("Egyptian Loan-Words in Ancient Greek?", *SO* 46 [1971] 96-107), the latter of whom is openly hostile to the idea. These articles stand clearly outside of the mainstream of

¹¹ N. Ja. Marr (1865-1934) rose to great prominence in the Soviet intelligentsia by inventing a Marxist linguistics, but his work was so absurd (he claimed to have discovered the five original words whence all human languages were descended and, importantly for us, believed linguistic borrowing impossible, all languages being from their inceptions mixtures) that it brought both the discipline and the ideology into disrepute. By 1950 a movement was afoot to displace his epigones from their seats in the country's leading academies. See J. V. Murra, R. M. Hankin and F. Holling, *The Soviet Linguistic Controversy* (New York, 1951) and L. L. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957).

¹² B. Franklin ed., *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905-1952* (Garden City, NY, 1972) 407-44.

Greek etymology, to say nothing of Homeric philology, preoccupied as it has been throughout much of our century by the oral-formulaic hypothesis.

Since the mid-eighties the situation has undergone a sea-change, and the issue of Egyptian contact is suddenly no longer the marginal interest that it has so long been. For one thing, there has been an increase in our understanding of the orientalizing period, ca. 750-650 B.C., and the near eastern influence that (as the term implies) reached Greece at that time, when the master poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were putting the *ultima manus* on their work. This interest is reflected in Walter Burkert's *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1992, German ed. 1984) and M. L. West's "The Rise of the Greek Epic", *JHS* 108 (1988) 151-72. The work of these scholars does not bear directly on the question of near eastern influence during the Mycenaean period, but recognition of contact in the fifth and sixth centuries encourages one to look for it at an earlier date also¹³. For another thing, Martin Bernal's work-in-progress, *Black Athena* (London), whose first volume appeared in 1987 and second in 1991 – a further volume is planned –, has been singularly successful in raising the consciousness not only of professional classicists but of interested laypersons in this and other kindred issues, and has provoked widespread response¹⁴. (Bernal, however, is a historian and not a philologist and the etymological aspect of his argument, which principally concerns us here, has met with varying reactions¹⁵).

Any individual hypothesis of a specific case of borrowing must stand or fall on its own merits, but the *a priori* objections once raised against such hypotheses are now no longer in play. Proof of the borrowing of a word from one language as a different word in another language would require six elements. The first of these – that there be proof of contact between speakers of the two languages, and hence of the possibility of transmission – I consider in all cases under consideration to have been established by the archaeological evidence. The remaining five, which will have to be assessed separately in each individual case, are as follows. Both words would have to be identical in sound within the phonetic possibilities of the recipient language. They would also have to be identical in sense. The word in the

¹³ Cf. e.g. W. Burkert, "Von Amenophis II. zur Bogenprobe des Odysseus", *Grazer Beiträge* 1 (1973) 69-78.

¹⁴ See most recently M. R. Lefkowitz and G. MacLean Rogers (edd.), *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill and London, 1996).

¹⁵ Highly favourable: G. A. Rendsburg, "Black Athena: An Etymological Response", *Arethusa* Special Issue (1989) 67-82; highly critical: J. H. Jasanoff and A. Nussbaum, "Word Games: the Linguistic Evidence in *Black Athena*", 177-205 in Lefkowitz and Rogers, *op. cit.*

source language would have to be attested chronologically prior to the received word. There would have to be no credible *tertium quid* that could be a common source for both words. And there could be no synonym for the word in the recipient language, indicating a void in the vocabulary that had to be filled, by lexical borrowing if necessary. Two further features tend to characterize borrowings (although counter-examples are not wanting): in languages with unequal levels of material culture, borrowing tends to proceed from that of greater culture to that of lesser, and tends to involve words for technological items, cultural artifacts, and religious concepts; English, for example, has borrowed words for cappuccino and sushi on the one hand and eucharist and resurrection on the other (but not words for nose or father). Even if all these criteria be met, one might still suspect coincidence rather than borrowing as an explanation, but this possibility would be reduced virtually to nil in the case where there exists a cluster of words from the same semantic field, all giving evidence of borrowing from a common source.

I propose in what follows to compare the Egyptian and Homeric depictions of the afterlife in general and specifically in their respective views of the voice of the dead.

3. *The Egyptian View of the Afterlife*

Nowhere in extant Egyptian literature is there a discursive account of the afterlife, and the rich and variant traditions concerning the postmortal fate of the *kʿ* (which answers more or less to the Homeric ψυχή) must be inferred from the myriad surviving funerary texts, most significant of which is the *Book of the Dead*, whose earliest surviving version dates from the mid fifteenth century B.C. From these one may deduce that the Egyptians believed the *kʿ* of the deceased to stand in judgement before various underworld-gods, chief of whom is Osiris, the god who had suffered death, been resurrected, and now ruled the kingdom of the dead (Plut. *Mor.* 382E). To be judged by the god, the deceased must be endowed with voice – for there can be no justice without speech – and the Ritual of the Opening of the Mouth (*wpi-r*) was performed on hrs behalf (*Book of the Dead* chapters 21-2). Once hrs mouth had been opened, s/he could pronounce the formulaic declaration of innocence that scholars have named the Negative Confession, a catalogue of forty-two misdeeds that s/he denied having committed in life (“I have done no wrong, I have not despoiled, I have not robbed, etc.”, *Book of the Dead* chapter 125). Since everyone recites the same Negative Confession, the task of judgement is to determine whether or not the

confession has been truly recited, in other words, whether there is any lack of correspondence between the words of the mouth and the thoughts of the heart, what Cicero calls *discidium linguae atque cordis* (*De orat.* 3.61). Only in such a correspondence does goodness and beauty consist (the ideogram for *nfr*, “good, beautiful”, is a heart with windpipe attached [Horapollon *Hieroglyphica* 2.4], showing the heart and mouth connected)¹⁶. To determine the truth of the deceased’s words, his heart is weighed in scales against the ostrich-feather of Maat, or Truth (*Book of the Dead* chapter 30B)¹⁷. If the heart is free of falsehood in the matter of the Negative Confession, then it will not be weighed down and will balance the feather. If, however, any part of the Negative Confession has been uttered falsely, the heart will be burdened by falsehood and will not balance the feather (*Book of the Dead* chapter 30b). Lest the female triformed monster, “Eater of the dead” (*‘m-m(w)tt*), part crocodile, part lion, and part hippopotamus, who haunts the scales of justice in Amenta, devour the person whose heart is oppressed by falsehood, Osiris must redeem the heart by removing the sin, so it will balance the feather and make the deceased *mꜣ’-ḥrw*, “true of voice”.

Not only must Osiris redeem the soul of the departed, but he must feed it in the afterlife. These two functions are connected, for the words whereby the dead is judged issue from the mouth that eats the food. To encourage Osiris to feed the dead, the mourner gives him prayers and offerings, begging him in turn to feed the deceased. We see this in a typical funerary inscription (the *ḥtp di nsw* formula):

*Htp di nsw Wsir nb Ddw, ntr ‘ꜣ, nb ḥbꜣw,
dꜣ.f prt-ḥrw (m) t ḥnkt, kꜣw ḥpdw, šs mnḥt,
ḥt nbt nfrt wꜣbt ‘nḥt ntr im,
n kꜣ n imḥy S-n-Wsrt, mꜣ’-ḥrw.*

“A boon which the king gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, the great god, lord of Abydos, that he may give *invocation-offerings* consisting of bread

¹⁶ In Greek thought also the tongue should draw its words from the heart (Pind. *Nem.* 4.8) and the tongue should grow in the chest (Sappho fr. 120 Lobel-Page, Voigt). See R. Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1954) 66ff, 469-70, and L. E. Woodbury, “The Poetry of Tongue and of Phren in the *Frogs*”, *Language and the Tragic Hero* = *Festschrift Kirkwood* (Atlanta, Ga., 1988) 175-85 at 178 = *Collected Writings* (Atlanta, Ga., 1991) 475. Only in the case of the unprincipled does the tongue speak without the consent of the φρήν (Eur. *Hipp.* 612, cf. Ar. *Ran.* 101-2, 1471, *Thesm.* 275, Arist. *Rh.* 1416a29). See H. C. Avery, “My Tongue Swore, but my Mind is Unsworn”, *TAPA* 99 (1968) 19-35.

¹⁷ For a bibliography of discussions of Maat, see M. Lichtheim, *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies* (Göttingen, 1992) 205-7.

and beer, oxen and fowl, alabaster and clothing, all things good and pure on which a god lives, to the spirit of the revered Senwosret, *justified*"¹⁸.

This sustenance afforded by Osiris to the *kꜣ* of the dead person is (here and elsewhere) called *pꜣt-ḥrw*, "invocation-offerings" (literally, "a going forth of the voice"). This enigmatic term was perhaps always polyvalent and is not ambiguous merely because we are ignorant of Egyptian beliefs. It is possible that the food is produced by the voice of Osiris (as it were, "and Osiris said, 'Let there be food,' and there was food"), or perhaps it is even equivalent to the voice of Osiris, as the Bible says that people do not live by bread alone but by every word that issues from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8.3). Again, perhaps it is the newly restored and justified voice of the dead that calls forth the food, magically activating the foodstuffs painted on the tomb-walls¹⁹. I would suggest that the reverse may be true and that, as *mꜣ'-ḥrw*, the dead person is so closely identified after judgement with his voice, and is sustained by the food to such an extent that the food allows for, and in that sense is, the 'going forth of the voice' of the deceased.

4. Greek Borrowings from the Egyptian Afterlife (in General)

This view of the afterlife had an extensive impact on the Greek, probably as a result of successive borrowings made over many generations, as the following considerations show.

4.1 Climate

The climate of the Greek underworld is forbidding. For one thing, there are all those rivers: Styx, Acheron, Cocytus and Pyriphlegethon; there is water too in the λίμνη (Eur. *Alc.* 442-4) or *palus* (Verg. *Aen.* 6.107 etc.) across which Charon ferries the dead. For another, there is the flora, the galingale and the reed of Aristophanes *Frogs* (243-4, cf. Leontion fr. 7 Lib., 1-6 Powell, *Anth. Pal.* 7.365). So prominent is this feature in the underworld scenes of one Lekythos-painter that scholars have dubbed him the "Reed Painter"²⁰. Then there is the fauna, which consists mainly of frogs (Ar. *Ran.* passim, Juv. 2.150). All this muck (πηλός, βόρβορος) makes sense for a place of eternal torment (e.g. *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 480-2, Pind. fr. 137 Maehler, Soph.

¹⁸ A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* 3rd ed. (London, 1957) 170 (bold type added).

¹⁹ See Gardiner, op. cit. 170-3, and E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* 1895 (New York, 1967) LXXIV n. 14.

²⁰ D. C. Kurtz, *Athenian White Lekythoi: Patterns and Painters* (Oxford, 1975) 63.

fr. 837 *TrGF*), as with the mud of Orphic eschatology (*Ar. Ran.* 145-51, *Pl. Phd.* 69C, *Resp.* 363D, 533D) known to the *genti fangose* of Dante's *Inferno* (7.110). But paradise is pictured in a similar vein: remember the flowers that water feeds (ὕδωρ δ' ἄλλα [ἄνθεμα] φέρβει = water-lilies?) in Pindar's isles of the blessed (*Ol.* 2.74). Again, the word λειμών describing the meadow of asphodel across which Achilles strides (*Od.* 11.539) comes from the same root, suggestive of water, as λιμήν and λίμνη²¹. The idea of paradise being a frog-infested swamp might be natural to Egyptians, to whom the only known alternative was desert, and indeed we learn from the *Book of the Dead* that the Dear Departed dwell in the field of reeds (*šꜥt iꜣrw*), but the notion would not be so obvious to the inhabitants of thirsty Argos (*Il.* 4.171, *Thebais* fr. 1 Davies, etc.) unless it were a cultural borrowing.

4.2 Charon/ἡ-ḥꜣ.f

Implicit in the wet climate is the divine ferryman, most familiar from Vergil's portrait (*Aen.* 6.325-8), who makes his first appearance in Greek literature in the *Minyas* fr. 1 Davies (= *Paus.* 10.28.2), and next recurs (anonymously) in *Aesch. Sept.* 852-60 and again in *Eur. Alc.* 252-57. The name appears to be an ordinary human one²². The inscription preserved as Peter Allan Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca* (Berlin and New York, 1983) number 127 (Χαῖρε Χάρων·| οὐδὶς τυ κακῶς| λέγει οὐδὲ θα|νόντα, / πολὸς| ἄνθρωπον λυ|σάμενο<ν>| καμάτο) may refer to a physician, unless we are to read θανόντες for θανόντα. Aristotle (*Rh.* 3.17 = 1418b23) says that Archilochus fr. 19 West was spoken by Charon the carpenter. The name Charon was also borne by the historian from Lampsacus (262 *FGrHist*), a boar-hunter and a warrior (*LIMC* svv. Charon II and III).

The celestial ferry-man of Egyptian myth is Mahaf (*mꜣ-ḥꜣ.f*)²³. This name originally meant, "the sickle (i.e. the sickle-shaped tiller of the sacred boat) is behind him", or in other words "helmsman", but the name was soon misunderstood as the homonymous term "he who sees behind him", a term evocative of the uncanniness of looking backward in Hades (*Verg. G.* 4.453-527). Because of this misunderstanding, Mahaf is portrayed in the vignettes of the *Book of the Dead* facing backwards. The Greek Charon is likewise portrayed on at least one occasion looking back over his shoulder²⁴.

²¹ J. Puhvel, "'Meadow of the Otherworld' in Indo-European Tradition", *ZVS* 83 (1969) 64-9 at 64.

²² It also has no etymology. In view of the subject of the present paper, I am tempted to propose Egyptian *ḥꜣrw*, "voice", "to cry". At any rate, when we meet Charon in *Eur. Alc.* he is calling Alcestis to him, "impetuously urging" her to make haste (255-6).

²³ R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* revised ed. (London, 1985) 90.

²⁴ Vermeule, *op. cit.* 71 fig. 28.

4.3 *Cerberus/inpw and 'm-m(w)tt*

The hound of Hell, Cerberus, is known already to Homer (*Il.* 8.365-9) and is named first in Hesiod (*Theog.* 311); he is thereafter a fixture of the Greek underworld, particularly as the object of Heracles' ultimate labour (e.g. Pind. *Dithyramb* 2 = fr. 70b Maehler, *Ar. Ran.* 109, 467-8, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11-2). He is usually credited with a plurality of heads, sometimes all canine, sometimes those of a snake-dragon-dog hybrid (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12, Tzetz. *Chil.* 2.389-92).

The Egyptian god Anubis (*inpw*) is depicted in judgement-scenes guarding the balance, watching the pointer with great diligence²⁵. He is depicted with the head either of a jackal or of a dog – the point is disputed²⁶.

The Greek and Egyptian names are clearly unrelated, and the ancients explained the Greek name as a derivation by means of syncope, metathesis and an assimilation of /o/ to /e/ from κρεοβόρος (Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 6.395, 8.297)²⁷, making it a synonym for σαρκοφάγος. The name so interpreted bears a striking resemblance to the Egyptian “eater of the dead” (*'m-m(w)tt*), who, like Cerberus in some of his manifestations, was a chimerical hybrid.

4.4. *Rhadamanthys/nb-Ḳmntt*

The brief reference to Rhadamanthys in *Od.* 4.564 (ὄθι ξανθὸς Ῥαδάμανθος) shows that he is already in Homer's time intimately connected with Elysium²⁸. The element *vθ-* shows that his name is non-Greek, whether of Peloponnesian (cf. hyacinth, Corinth, etc.) or of Cretan provenance (cf. labyrinth, etc.). In Egyptian eschatology, the dead are judged by the underworld-god Osiris (*Wsir*), who is referred to as “Lord of the West” (*nb-Ḳmntt*). The term “West” (*Ḳmntt*) refers to the traditional location of cemeteries on the west bank of the Nile, in the direction where the sun sets, and comes by a natural association to refer to the abode of the dead in the other world²⁹, as Sophocles speaks of departed souls flying toward the headland of the western god (ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ *OT* 177). The term is transliterated as Ἀμένθης by Plutarch (*Mor.* 362B)³⁰. It is a striking

²⁵ Budge, op. cit. CXVII.

²⁶ Gardiner op. cit. 459, quoting Th. B. Hopfner, *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter* (Vienna, 1913) 47.

²⁷ See A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (Leipzig, 1893) 50.

²⁸ L. Malten, “Elysion und Rhadamanthys”, *Jahrbuch des kaiserlich Deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 28 (1913) 35-51 at 35, and Nilsson, op. cit. 623.

²⁹ Budge, op. cit. CXXXIII.

³⁰ See J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (U. of Wales Press, 1970) 406-7.

confirmation that Rhadamanthys has his ultimate origin in Neb-amenthes of Egypt (where theriomorphic gods were common) that oaths sworn by animals – geese, dogs, rams, etc. – rather than by the anthropomorphic gods of Greece (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 83, Av. 521, Pl. *Ap.* 22A1, *Grg.* 482B5, etc.) were ascribed by Sosicrates to Rhadamanthys, because of his δικαιοτής (461 F 3 *FGrHist*). Indeed, in Plato's *Gorgias* (loc. cit.) Socrates swears μὰ τὸν κύνα τὸν Αἰγυπτίων θεόν.

4.5 *Psychostasia*/wd' mdww

Homer describes the agonistic weighing of the fates of men in the scales of Zeus (*Il.* 8.69-74, 22.209-13, cf. Aesch. fr. 279-80 *TrGF*); in the parody in Aristophanes *Frogs* (1364-1413) it is *words* rather than fates that are weighed. The *Book of the Dead* chapter 30B describes the weighing of the heart on the scales of *Mt*. Even though it is the heart that is placed on the balance, the process is called “the judging of words” (wd' mdww)³¹.

4.6 *Elysium*/št ἰrw

The story of Menelaus' future in Elysium is told to him by Proteus during their encounter in Egypt (*Od.* 4.351-570). The derivation of the name Elysium from the Egyptian št ἰrw, which might conceivably have been pronounced “*ialu* field”, was first advanced by Lauth³² and has been reiterated as recently as 1979 by Vermeule³³, but Burkert's explanation of the word as arising from ἐνὶ ἡλύσιος, “struck by lightning and therefore sacred to Zeus”³⁴ through false division as ἐν Ἡλυσίῳ³⁵ is now generally accepted³⁶. The ideas, however, even if not the words, are clearly related. The possibility of a further connection between either the Egyptian or the Greek paradise and the name of Eleusis, home of the cult that promised a blessed posthumous existence to its initiates, is tempting, although impossible to prove³⁷. Certainly the Eleusinian legend about Demeter's failed attempt to

³¹ Budge, op. cit. 12.

³² Lauth, op. cit. 5.

³³ Vermeule, op. cit. 69-82.

³⁴ On this concept, see E. R. Dodds, *Euripides: Bacchae* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1960) on Eur. *Bacch.* 6-12, and Rohde, op. cit. 581-2.

³⁵ W. Burkert, “Elysion”, *Glotta* 39 (1961) 208-13.

³⁶ As e.g. by P. Chantraine *DELG* s.v. Ἡλύσιον, S. West in A. Heubeck et al., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford, 1988) 1.227 ad *Od.* 4.563ff, and M. Schmidt in *LfrE* s.v. Ἡλύσιον.

³⁷ J. Gwyn Griffiths, “In Search of the Isles of the Blest”, *G&R* 16 (1947) 122-6. G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, 1961) 18-9 expresses scepticism about a possible Cretan connection.

burn off the mortal part of Demophon (*Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 231-55) bears a curious resemblance to the Egyptian story of Isis' attempt to burn off the mortal part of Malcander's son (Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 15-6), and the wide diffusion in Egypt of a magic formula for warding off scorpion-bites, which alludes to this myth, "make[s] it quite unlikely that an origin in Greek literature should be assumed.... If there is any connection, the influence must have come from Egypt to Greece"³⁸.

5. *Greek Borrowings from the Egyptian Afterlife (The Voice of the Dead)*

Most significant, perhaps, of all the similarities between Egyptian and Greek views of the afterlife are those that concern the voice of the dead.

5.1 *μάκαρ/ἡρῳ*

Elysium is also referred to in Greek as the "land of the blessed" (μακάρων αἶα Eur. *Bacch.* 1339), or more often the "island(s) of the blessed" (Hes. *Op.* 171, etc.) to which specially favoured mortals are translated at the end of their earthly life. (The deceased can also be μάκαρ even while in Hades rather than in the isles of the blessed [Hes. *Op.* 141, Aesch. *Pers.* 634, Eur. *Alc.* 1003]). The μάκαρες are the gods, both Olympian (Eur. *Her.* 758) and chthonian (Aesch. *Cho.* 476) or those exceptional mortals elected to spend eternity with them. The term is similar in meaning to εὐδαιμών and ὀλβιος, but not identical with them. "[M]άκαρ describes [the happiness that a god gives] from the point of view of an observer; εὐδαιμών... gives it from the experient's point of view, and suggests the reason for it ('having a good δαίμων')"³⁹, while ὀλβιος contains a further nuance, meaning "both prosperous in the worldly sense... and happy"⁴⁰. This "land of the makares" corresponds in form and meaning to the Egyptian *t n mṯ'-ḥrw*, the "land of the mṯ'-ḥrw", which is a suburb of the *šḥt ṯrw* (*Book of the Dead* chapter 15).

The term *mṯ'-ḥrw* is an interesting one. Meaning "true of voice", it is "an epithet added to the names of dead persons and hence often practically equivalent to our 'deceased'. Originally applied to Osiris with reference to the occasion when his regal rights, being disputed by Seth, were vindicated before the divine tribunal in Heliopolis. The same epithet is also used in

³⁸ W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1987) 20.

³⁹ Dodds, op. cit. 75 ad Eur. *Bacch.* 72-5.

⁴⁰ N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974) 310-11 ad *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 480-2.

connexion with Horus as the 'triumphant' avenger of the wrongs done to Osiris"⁴¹. It has often been thought that this term is the source of Greek μάκαρ⁴². This suggestion is dismissed without argument by Chantraine (*DELG* s.v.) but merits serious consideration, especially since there is no other plausible etymology⁴³. The proper name *Hr-ʾ-hrw* is transliterated as Ἀρμάχοπος, but far from "expos[ing] the fundamental arbitrariness" of the proposed etymology, as Pierce writes⁴⁴, the similarity of μάκαρ to -μάχοπος seems rather to confirm the hypothesis. The difference is threefold. First, there is the naturalizing second-declension ending, which seems appropriate to borrowings of a later date⁴⁵. Then there is the difference in the second vowel. This likewise is not troubling, especially when one recalls that ancient Egyptian, like classical Arabic, appears to have lacked the /o/ vowel⁴⁶ and that in the Bohairic dialect of Coptic (spoken in the delta and hence closest to Greece) the ancient *hrw* was vocalized as *hara*⁴⁷. Finally, the only morphological mystery is why Greek would represent the /h/ as /k/ rather than /ch/, the normal Greek reflex of an Hamito-semitic aspirate, as is shown by Hebrew *hrš* "gold" and its Greek cognate, χρυσός⁴⁸.

5.2 ἐπεα πτερόεντα/*mʾ-hrw*

The presence of the spells inscribed upon the coffin, which the soul of the dead would have to read to aid *hrm* in the tribulations of the afterlife, and of the *Book of the Dead*, frequently buried together with the mummy for

⁴¹ Gardiner, op. cit. § 55 pp. 50-1. See also T. Devéria, "L'expression Mâa-xerou", *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 1 (1870) 10-8, and A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin, 1971) 1.15-8.

⁴² A. H. Krappe, "ΜΑΚΑΡ", *Revue de Philologie* 14 (1940) 245-6, Daniel, op. cit. 18-9, Vermeule, op. cit. 73, Bernal, op. cit. 1.61. An alternative (and much less compelling) Egyptian etymon for the same Greek word, viz. *mʾr*, "happy, blessed", is proposed by Hemmerdinger, op. cit. 240; a semitic etymology is proposed by Rendsburg, op. cit. 80.

⁴³ G. Curtius, *Principles of Greek Etymology*, trans. A. S. Wilkins and E. B. England (London, 1875) 1.198 = 161 German ed. proposes μακρός, but there is scant similarity of sense between the two words.

⁴⁴ Pierce, op. cit. 105.

⁴⁵ I argued in *Glotta* 72 (1994) 20-3 that Egyptian *ntry* was borrowed into Greek during the Bronze Age as νέκταρ and later, in the archaic period, as νίτρον, with the Greek ending added.

⁴⁶ Gardiner, op. cit. 433.

⁴⁷ Daniel, op. cit. 19.

⁴⁸ Oddly, the consonant changes again in the subsequent history of the word in the Italian derivative, *magari*. See F. Palazzi, *Novissimo dizionario della lingua italiana* 2nd ed. (Milan, 1939) 662 ad loc.

the same purpose, indicates that, unlike in Assyria for example where literacy was the concern only of the priestly caste, in ancient Egypt everyone of any means was obliged to be literate – the very fate of his soul depended on it. Like other Egyptian words, the phrase *mꜥ-hrw* could be written in hieroglyphs (or in the related hieratic) in three ways, alphabetically, phonetically, and ideographically; being the briefest, the ideographic form is the most common. The ideographic writing represents the element *mꜥ* by a feather, symbolic of truth. “True of voice” is thus, in the hieroglyphic writing known to all middle- and upper-class Egyptians, “feathered of voice”. This fact is very suggestive. A Homeric formula links speech and feathers, namely ἔπεα πτερόεντα, which literally means “feathered words”. The Greek bards, unversed in the lore of the Osirian judgement of the dead, at first took this formula to refer to words feathered like arrows and so linked to the ballistic properties of speech such as missing (ἄμαρτοεπής) or not missing (cf. ν-ημέρτης) the target of relevance and truth⁴⁹. Later, however, they understood the phrase not as “feathered” but as “winged words” and saw in it a reference to words winged like birds that escape the cage of the teeth by that noisily pivoting door, the tongue⁵⁰. Just as the formulaic expression θοή νηϋς, ‘swift ship’ awakens in the student of Homer “a single idea, that of a hero’s ship which possesses the speed characteristic of the finest ships; but in the world of epic poetry he knows only the finest ships – there are no others”⁵¹, so the formula “feathered words” awakens in the listener the idea of a hero’s words. And since a hero is “a deceased person who exerts from his grave a power for good or evil and who demands appropriate honour”⁵² – who is, in other words, one of the μάκαρες θνητοί (Hes. *Theog.* 141) –, the phrase ἔπεα πτερόεντα, like the Egyptian *mꜥ-hrw*, is said of one who at the time of narration is μάκαρ.

Double borrowing of a foreign phrase, once as a loan word and once as a calque, is not without parallel. One might think (suggestively, also in a religious context) of Latin *omnipotens*, which yields in English both the loanword “omnipotent” and the calque “almighty”. So too in Homeric Greek just as the borrowing of semitic *tršš*, “sea” into Greek as θάλασσα did not prevent the word’s original meaning of “wine-red” from inspiring the phrase

⁴⁹ J. A. K. Thompson, “Winged Words”, *CQ* 30 (1936) 1-3, M. Durante, “*Epea pteroenta*: la parola come ‘cammino’ in immagini greche e vediche”, *Rendiconti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 13 (1958) 3-14, reprinted (in German) in *Indogermanische Dichtersprache Wege der Forschung* 165 (Darmstadt, 1968) ed. R. Schmitt, 242-60, Chantraine, *DELG* 3.947.

⁵⁰ See my remarks in *AJP* 116 (1995) 1-5.

⁵¹ M. Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (New York and Oxford, 1971) 128.

⁵² W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, Mass., 1985) 203.

ἐπὶ οἶνοπα πόντον, according to a theory advanced by Cyrus H. Gordon⁵³, so the borrowing of *m'-hrw* as μάκαρ need not have prevented its ideographic representation from inspiring the phrase ἔπεα πτερόεντα.

5.3 *Blood for the ghosts/prt-hrw*

Moreover, just as the *hṭp dī nsw* formula associates the deceased's state as "true of voice" (*m'-hrw*) with his receipt of funeral offerings that are called "going forth of the voice" (*prt-hrw*), so, we have seen, does Homer associate the chthonian sacrifice of the blood of a black sheep with the ghost's ability to speak the truth (*Od.* 11.96). For, like the Egyptians, the Mycenaeans felt the need to feed their dead. A reference to "the thirsty ones" on the Pylos tablets has been interpreted as a kenning for "the dead"⁵⁴, and geometric funeral art shows attempts to feed the corpse: a row of dead ducks tied to the bier, or a child holding a fish to his father's lips⁵⁵. Eventually this impulse got out of hand and Solon became the first to introduce sumptuary legislation limiting funeral expenses (*Cic. de leg.* 2.26.64, cf. Solon fr. 4.12-3 West). It is improbable that all this tending of the dead was wholly unself-interested. Rather, like Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 or Clytaemnestra and Electra in Aeschylus *Choephoroi*, those who fed the dead wanted something in return, such as the help in necromancy that came from restoring voice to the dead.

6. *Mechanism of Contact*

How could fragments of Egyptian eschatology have made their way into Greece? We can answer this in some detail. Ancient sea-faring was a frightening enterprise (*Hes. Theog.* 440, *Op.* 618⁵⁶) and sailors naturally

⁵³ See the Appendix below.

⁵⁴ *di-pi-si-jo-i* (PY Fr 1204) may refer to the 'Festival of the Thirsty (Dead)', as is suggested by W. K. C. Guthrie, "Early Greek Religion in Light of the Decipherment of Linear B", *BICS* 6 (1959) 35-46 at 45 and L. R. Palmer, *The Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts* (Oxford, 1963) 252-3. Although the kenning 'thirsty ones' = 'dead' conforms to later Greek usage (cf. W. Deonna, "Croyances funéraires. La soif des morts. Le mort musicien", *RHR* 109 [1939] 53-81, M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* [Cambridge, 1974] 202-5), Guthrie's and Palmer's interpretation has been variously challenged by S. Marinatos, "Πολυδίσιον Ἄργος", 265-74 in L. R. Palmer and J. Chadwick edd., *Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies* (Cambridge, 1966), F. Rodríguez Adrados, "Di-pi-si-jo-i y el mes Dipsio de Farsalo", *Minos* 9 (1968) 187-91, and M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1973) 479.

⁵⁵ Vermeule, *op. cit.* 18.

⁵⁶ The semitic imagination, no less awed by the sea, conjured up the spectres of Tiamat and Leviathan.

followed the coast, crossing the open sea by island-hopping, as one walks over a pond on stepping stones, and from this habit of circumnavigating the mediterranean, “[u]nder the XVIIIth Dynasty the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean, the north-western world of the Egyptians, going *viâ* Syria to Asia Minor and Crete and so back by Libya, was known as the ‘Great Ring’ [*šn-wr*]”⁵⁷. This meant that the first point of contact between Egyptians and Mycenaean Greeks ought to have been the island of Rhodes, where Mycenaean colonists had established themselves in the period LH II/IIIA, and this suspicion is confirmed by the archaeological record, as for example the shattered ostrich egg discovered in New Tomb 31 at Ialysos and the five bronze mirrors from New Tombs 61, 67, 69, 73 and 84, which are also suggestive of Egyptian provenance⁵⁸. Greek mythology reflects this route of contact by stating that Danaus was a king of Egypt who came, via Rhodes (Hdt. 2.182, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, *Marm. Par.* 239 A 9 *FGrHist*), to Argos.

Rhodes is virtually the only place in the Greek world where the sun received an important cult⁵⁹. One is tempted to attribute this cult to Egyptian influence, for sun-worship was prominent in Egyptian religion at all periods, especially during the reign of the heretical Amenhotep IV Akenaten, who established, with considerable proselytic zeal⁶⁰, the monotheistic cult of the sun-disk (*itn*). This temptation is stronger if one accepts the argument that Homer’s phrase “rosy-fingered Dawn” was inspired by the rayed sun-disk of Akenaten⁶¹. As regards beliefs about the afterlife, Vermeule has mooted a possible connection between the name of Ialysus⁶², with its numerous tombs on the outlying hills of Moschou Vounara and Makria Vounara⁶³, and the “field of reeds” (*šwt irw*) of the Egyptian afterlife, which – as we have said – was arguably pronounced “*Ialu* field”⁶⁴. The second surviving reference to the isles of the blest in Greek literature is in Pindar’s *Second Olympian Ode*, composed for Theron of

⁵⁷ H. R. Hall, “Keftiu and the Peoples of the Sea”, *BSA* 8 (1901-2) 157-89 at 160; Gardiner, *op. cit.* 595, however, defines the term as “the Ocean supposed to surround the earth”.

⁵⁸ C. Mee, *Rhodes in the Bronze Age* (Warminster, 1982) 22 and 45.

⁵⁹ See F. H. de Gaertringen, *Inscriptiones Graecae* 12.1 (Berlin, 1895) 233-4 index VI s.v. “Ἄλιος, and D. Morelli, “I Culti in Rodi”, *Studi Classici e Orientali* 8 (1959) 1-184 at 15-7. Cf. P. M. Fraser and G. E. Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands* (Oxford, 1954) 130-2, and Burkert, *Greek Religion* 175.

⁶⁰ Emissaries of Akhenaten effaced all depictions of the disenfranchised god, Amun. See D. B. Redford, *Akhenaten: the Heretic King* (Princeton, 1984) 175-6.

⁶¹ See my remarks in *Sileno* 19 (1993) 91-100.

⁶² Vermeule, *op. cit.* 77.

⁶³ R. Hope Simpson, *Mycenaean Greece* (Park Ridge, NJ, 1981) 195.

⁶⁴ Vermeule, *op. cit.* 77.

Acragas in 476 (lines 70-1). There is a strong Rhodian connection with this poem. Acragas was a Rhodian colony (Polyb. 9.27), and one of Theron's ancestors, Telemachus, was among the original colonists from Rhodes (schol. Pind. *Ol.* 2.82d [= 1.82 Drachmann])⁶⁵. Moreover, Nancy Demand has pointed out that Pindar's ode "peoples the ruling hierarchy of the afterlife with a family which... [has] peculiar relevance to the Akragantine/Rhodian cult of Zeus Atabyrios"⁶⁶. Equally suggestively, the other Greek term for the isles of the blest, "Elysium", finds its second occurrence in extant literature in Apollonius *Argonautica* (4.811; the first occurrence is in *Od.* 4.563). While we cannot say for certain whether Apollonius' association with Rhodes precedes or follows the composition of his poem, after a review of the conflicting ancient testimony, Mary Lefkowitz offers the compelling hypothesis that Apollonius was called 'the Rhodian' because, "he came from Rhodes to begin with, as an *émigré* to Alexandria, like Callimachus of Cyrene"⁶⁷. If so, his poem, like Pindar's *Second Olympian* may have borne a distinctive Rhodian stamp.

The next stepping-stone after Rhodes in the passage from Egypt to Greece was Crete. There is also a clear Cretan background to the Greek doctrine of the afterlife, revealed for example in the role of Rhadamanthys in the Greek Elysium (*Od.* 4.564), for Europa gave birth to Rhadamanthys, along with Minos and Sarpedon, on Crete (Hes. fr. 140 Merkelbach-West = Bacch. fr. 10 Snell). The Egyptians called Crete *Kftyw*, just as the Assyrians called it *Kaptara* (cf. Hebrew *Kptr*, Deuteronomy 2.23 etc.). The connection of Crete with Egypt is shown by the role of *Kftyw* among the "islands in the heart of the great green (i.e. the Mediterranean)" that sent tribute to the vizier Rekhmere' during the reign of Tuthmosis III⁶⁸. The role of Keftiu in transferring Egyptian goods to Greece has been much discussed⁶⁹.

Along this island-hopping route travelled merchants carrying olive oil and wine down from the north and bringing back Egyptian goods in return. These goods were not merely trinkets such as ostrich eggs or mirrors, but more utilitarian products. The apparent borrowing of the Egyptian word *ntry* as Greek *véκταρ*⁷⁰ suggests that sodium carbonate from the dry lakes of

⁶⁵ T. J. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks* (Oxford, 1948) 310.

⁶⁶ N. Demand, "Pindar's *Olympian* 2, Theron's Faith, and Empedocles' *Katharmoi*", *GRBS* 16 (1975) 347-57 at 349-50.

⁶⁷ M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London, 1981) 130-1.

⁶⁸ Gardiner, op. cit. 233.

⁶⁹ See Efi and Yannis Sakellarakis, "The Keftiu and the Minoan Thalassocracy", 197-202 in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos, *The Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and Reality* (Stockholm, 1984), who cite bibliography.

⁷⁰ See my remarks at *Glotta* 72 (1994) 20-3 (cf. Hemmerdinger, op. cit. 240-1).

Egypt was brought north, along with knowledge of the mummification-technology for which the Egyptians used it⁷¹. In handing on this information about how to treat the dead, the Egyptian traders naturally passed on some of their rich lore about the afterlife.

7. Homeric Silences

The poet of the *Odyssey* knows of Egyptian Thebes as a city from which visitors could bring back rich presents (4.126-7) and of the river Aegyptus, the prototypical διπετής ποταμός⁷², which men visited for trade or piracy (14.257-65, 17.423-34). Nevertheless, these references to Egypt are few and far between, and one might be justified in asking: if the influence of Egypt on Homeric Greek is as great as has been claimed above, why is it so inobvious that scholars can deny it outright or even ignore it altogether? We must remember that there are certain things that Homer prefers not to discuss. He offers, for example, scant mention of Dionysus (*Il.* 6.130-40, *Od.* 11.321-5, 24.74-5), so that, were the name of that god not attested on the Linear B tablets (PY Xa 102)⁷³ we might be tempted to think him a recent addition to the pantheon. W. K. C. Guthrie compellingly suggests that Homer has an aristocrat's aversion to this plebeian god⁷⁴. Similarly, Homer seems oblivious to the concept of μῦσμα that so exercised the tragedians, but the leading authority on the matter, Robert Parker, finds "the symbolism of pollution... already linked to death in Homer"⁷⁵. Perhaps again it is not ignorance of, but aversion to a concept that explains Homer's silence.

⁷¹ Aphrodite anoints Hector's body with rose-scented olive oil so that Achilles cannot mutilate it (*Il.* 23.186-7). Although Homer ascribes this and other instances of embalming (*Il.* 16.669-83, 19.38-9) to divine agency, they are apparently reminiscences of actual, although atypical, Mycenaean practice. Additional textual evidence for Mycenaean embalming is the lengthy prothesis (*Il.* 24.664, *Od.* 24.63) and the use of ταρχύω to mean 'to bury' (*Il.* 7.85, etc.), if this is an early form of ταριχεύω, 'to pickle'. Archaeological evidence is offered by the existence of MH intramural burials and by body 3 from shaft-grave V of grave-circle A at Mycenae, alleged by H. Schliemann, *Mycenae* (New York, 1878) 296 to have been well preserved after three millenia. That the Mycenaean learned embalming from Egypt, as did the Israelites (Genesis 50.1-3), is suggested by the fact that it is into Patroclus' nostrils that Thetis drips nectar and ambrosia (*Il.* 19.39), since in Egyptian mummification excerebration was performed via the nasal cavity (Hdt. 2.86.3).

⁷² I argue in *AJP* 118 (1997) 353-62 that the Homeric phrase διπετέος ποταμοῖο (*Il.* 16.174 etc.) was inspired by the Egyptian notion of a celestial Nile (*h'py m pt*) that nurtures all foreign peoples, not like the earthly Nile does with its annual inundation, but by falling as rain.

⁷³ Ventris and Chadwick, op. cit. 127.

⁷⁴ W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (Boston, 1950) 160.

⁷⁵ R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 69.

Likewise, it is noteworthy that in describing an intercontinental war Homer is most sparing in his references to non-Greek-speaking peoples (rare exceptions: *Il.* 2.804, 867, 4.437-8), especially if Trojan is not (as the discovery of grey Minyan ware both at Troy and at Mycenae rather suggests that it is) a form of Greek (but cf. *Hymn. Hom. Aph.* 113, Verg. *Aen.* 2.423) and Homer even betrays possible signs of antisemitism, applying to the Phoenicians the adjective τρώκτης (*Od.* 15.415-6), which "may suggest thieving vermin, mice, &c."⁷⁶ This jingoism is not surprising under the circumstances. The Aeolic and Ionic bards, driven into ignominious exile in Asia Minor by the marauding Dorian hordes, dreamed of the lost gold of Mycenae and consoled themselves by recounting their last victory, that over the city of Priam. Their lacerated τιμή needed all the praise it could get to shower over their ancestors; they had little to spare for the achievements of outlanders and preferred to people the non-Greek world with prurient witches, cannibalistic freaks, and sulking, lonely gods than with highly cultured foreigners. Moreover, if the fusion of several dialects in the epic *Dichtersprache*⁷⁷ produced a panhellenic sense of inclusion, perhaps a certain xenophobic exclusivity was the dark counterpart to this.

Underneath the version of events given the imprimatur of orthodoxy by inclusion in the Homeric epics, other traditions lurked ready to spring into the light of history in their own good time. Homer's poetry is traditional, of course: the simplicity and extension of the formulaic system is proof of that⁷⁸. But from Antoine Meillet's conjecture that the metres of Greek lyric and of the (lyric) hymns of the *Rigveda* are cognate⁷⁹ it follows that the dactylic hexametre of Greek epic arose out of the metres of lyric poetry, specifically the Pherecratean, rather than *vice versa*. From this in turn it follows that, although no Greek lyric earlier than Archilochus is extant, the tradition of lyric poetry is substantially older than that of epic. It is also at several points

⁷⁶ Homer also betrays a distaste for the Phoenician invention of writing (*Il.* 6.168-9). See D. B. Monro, *Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford, 1901) 2.33 ad *Od.* 14.289. For more recent discussions of Homer's Phoenicians, see J. D. Muhly, "Homer and the Phoenicians", *Berytus* 19 (1970) 19-64, J. N. Coldstream, "Greeks and Phoenicians in the Aegean", *Madrid Beiträge* 8 (1982) 261ff, and P. Wathélet, "Les Phéniciens dans la composition formulaire de l'épopée grecque", *RBPh* 52 (1974) 5-14.

⁷⁷ To an Ionic substrate were added Aeolic forms (ἐγών, πίσυρες, ἄμμες and ὕμμες) and Doric ones (τεῖν, τὴν, etc.). See D. B. Monro, "Traces of different Dialects in the Language of Homer", *Journal of Philology* 9 (1881) 252. Dialectal variants account for many of the Homeric doublets; see R. Stromberg, "ΕΙΒΩ und ΛΕΙΒΩ bei Homer", *C&M* 21 (1960) 15-7, and M. Haslam, "Homeric Words and Homeric Metre: Two Doublets Examined (λείβω - εἶβω, γαῖα - αἶα)", *Glotta* 54 (1976) 201-11.

⁷⁸ Parry, *op. cit.* 7.

⁷⁹ A. Meillet, *Les origines indoeuropéennes des mètres grecs* (Paris, 1923).

incompatible with it. We see this in the frequent "misuse" of Homeric formulae by the lyric poets (such as Sappho's talk of the "rosy-fingered moon" [fr. 96.8 Lobel-Page, Voigt] or Solon's application of the epithet "black" to the *personified* Earth [fr. 36.5 West])⁸⁰ and in disagreements over the details of various myths (such as Homer's claim that Tantalus is punished in Hades [*Od.* 11.582], versus the lyric poets' view that he was punished on Olympus [Alcm. fr. 100 Calame = 79 *PMG*, Pind. *Ol.* 1] or Homer's placing of Achilles in Hades [*Od.* 11.467] versus the lyric poets' location of him in the isles of the blessed [Pind. *Ol.* 2.79, Ibycus 291 *PMG*, Simonides 558 *PMG* = schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.814-5 = p. 293 Wendel]⁸¹). Moreover, Pindar, for one, explicitly rejects the authority of Homer (*Nem.* 7.20-4)⁸² and Plato (*Phdr.* 243A) says that Stesichorus, in writing his palinode (192 *PMG*), realised, as Homer had failed to do, his mistake in blaming the Trojan War on Helen. Being older and less homogeneous than the epic, the lyric tradition is less likely to have had a *parti pris* on any issue, and thus on a point of controversy between the two traditions is the more worthy to be believed.

So it is that the reports of Egyptian influence on Greece that we meet with in the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus, in the second book of Herodotus, at various places in Plato, and elsewhere may bear greater weight of authority than an *argumentum ex silentio* based on Homer's text.

8. Conclusion

We can now see how it is that Teiresias can be thought able to speak the truth to Odysseus once he has drunk the offered blood. Egyptian traders bringing sodium carbonate to Greece via Rhodes and Crete had introduced the mummification-technology for which they used it, as well as some pieces of their extensive lore about the postmortal fate of the soul. These pieces included the information that the dead were "just of voice" (*m'ḥrw*, μάκαρ) in that they spoke "words feathered" (*ἔπεα πεπρόεντα*) with truth (*m't*). This voice would naturally fly unerringly (*νημερτές*) to the target of truth, but only if it were given the offerings that were the "going forth of the voice" (*pṛt-ḥrw*).

⁸⁰ A. E. Harvey, "Homeric Epithets in Greek Lyric Poetry", *CQ* n.s. 7 (1957) 206-23.

⁸¹ F. Solmsen, "Achilles on the Islands of the Blest: Pindar vs. Homer and Hesiod", *AJP* 103 (1982) 19-24, and A. Edwards, "Achilles in the Underworld: *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aethiopis*", *GRBS* 26 (1985) 215-27.

⁸² U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Pindaros* (Berlin, 1922) 173.

APPENDIX: THE WINE-DARK SEA

The Greek word θάλασσα is not derived from the Indoeuropean word for “sea” represented by Latin *mare*, Irish *muir*, Gallic *mor*, and Gothic *marei*, and an etymology from outside the Indoeuropean family, originating as it did far from the Mediterranean, is *a priori* likely (the native Indoeuropean word seems to have meant “marsh”). Hebrew *taršiš* means “sea” according to Jerome (ad Isaiah 2.16; the word normal in Biblical Hebrew is *yam*). Gordon has advanced *taršiš* as a possible etymon for θάλασσα⁸³. On Jerome’s testimony, the meanings are identical and the considerable formal differences between the two words diminish if one supposes that the borrowing occurred when the old semitic case-endings were still in use. From the form **taršišu* (nominative), or more probably **taršiša* (accusative⁸⁴), the word θάλασσα might have arisen by the following four stages. First, Hebrew /š/ was naturally represented by its closest Greek equivalent, /s/. Second, the aspiration lost from /š/ was restored by the change from /t/ to /th/, a substitution regularly shown by the Septuagint rendering of proper names. Such transfer of aspirates is attested in the declension of θρίξ, τριχός and the conjugations of θάπτω, τρέφω and τρέχω. Third, there was an interchange of /l/ and /r/, which is well-attested within Greek (e.g. ἔρχομαι/ἤλθον, αἶρω/εἶλον) to such an extent that the Linear B script failed to distinguish between the two phonemes, and may have been provoked here by the phonetic similarity to one of the Greek metaphors for sea, ἄλς, “the salty thing”. Finally, metathesis of /i/ (which then changed to /a/) and /s/, with concomitant regression of the accent, completed the word’s transformation into its Greek form.

Meanwhile, *taršiš* itself has a suggestive etymology. Ugaritic *trt* (= Hebrew *tīrōš*, Genesis 27.28 etc. and Hieroglyphic Hittite *tuwarsa*) means “must, new wine”, and in view of the fact that there was a shared pan-Aegean vocabulary for the vintage, as in the words for wine (Hebrew *yayin*, Greek οἶνος) and mixing (Hebrew *masak*, Greek μίγνυμι, with its by-form μίσγω)⁸⁵, Gordon has suggested that *taršiš*, like the Homeric epithet for the

⁸³ C. H. Gordon, “The Wine-Dark Sea”, *JNES* 37 (1978) 51-2, and “The Mediterranean Synthesis”, 188-96 in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C.*, W. A. Ward and M. S. Joukowski edd. (Dubuque, Iowa, 1992).

⁸⁴ The accusative persists even into Biblical Hebrew with the locative sense that one finds also in Latin (e.g. *domum ire*), e.g. *yama* (“seaward”, “westward”, Exodus 26.22 etc.).

⁸⁵ J. P. Brown, “The Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine”, *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969) 146-70, cf. *Israel and Hellas* = Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 231 (Berlin/New York, 1995) 134-58.

sea, οἶνοψ meant “wine-dark” or “red” (cf. Coptic *trošreš*, “red”). Certainly wine and the sea have much in common: wine is shipped by sea, wine makes one sea-sick (Timaeus 566 F 149 *FGrHist*)⁸⁶, the game of kottabos in some versions involves the sinking of toy boats, and the Rhodians, among others, added seawater to their wine (Athen. 1.32d), a custom that struck other Greeks as odd enough to merit the insult, ἀλμοπότεις, “brine-drinkers”.

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⁸⁶ W. J. Slater, “Symposium at Sea”, *HSCP* 80 (1976) 161-70; cf. M. I. Davies, “Sailing, Rowing and Sporting in One’s Cups on the Wine-Dark Sea”, 72-5 in *Athens Comes of Age: Papers of a Symposium* (Princeton, 1978).