

THE ODYSSEY, THE SYMPLEGADES, AND THE NAME OF HOMER

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Throughout the whole of early Greek history and literature there is surely a notable tendency to belittle the artistic contributions of the Western Greeks of Sicily. Of this the work I have engaged in on the *Odyssey* during the past fifteen years has made me much more conscious.

It is now clear beyond any reasonable doubt, I think, that the whole *Odyssey* is a Sicilian tale of the Western Mediterranean, apart from Telemachus's visit to Greek Pylos and Sparta in Books iv and xv, where the poet's topography, it is to be noted, is no longer accurate, as it is in the remainder of the poem. From this it is clear that the ascription of the poem's authorship to "Homer" was, and is, erroneous to the point of absurdity.

It is then the purpose of the present paper to consider this characteristic "plagiarizing" tendency of the Grecian mind, apparent also in their eastern tale of the Symplegades, and to follow the steps by which these particular instances came to pass.

I

In all my published work on the *Odyssey* during the past twelve years¹, I have been indebted, for the stimulus, to Samuel Butler's re-discovery of Scheria-Trapani in the 1890's and to his wholly original and all-important observation that Trapanese scenery had also been used for "Ithaca". In this I am absolutely sure he was right — if only for the fact that he failed to work it out and missed amongst other things the final and conclusive

¹ For a convenient summary of it, up to 1964, see my *Odyssean Retrospect* in *The Proceedings of the African Classical Associations* (= *PACA*) Vol. 7. Three other papers have been published since then, and there are more to come.

evidence of Formica-“ Asteris ”², and all the surprising results that have followed from it³.

I have said Butler’s “ re-discovery ” of Scheria-Trapani, because as I pointed out in my *SOO*, 14-16, there is clear evidence in Apollonius (*Argonautica* iv. 986 f.) that this identification was current in antiquity but had been overlaid by the spurious claim of Corcyra to be entitled to the honour⁴, a claim which, being recorded by Thucydides, has largely made a mess of Odyssean scholarship for 2½ thousand years.

I have long been quite certain of all my Odyssean identifications⁵, with the exception of the Lotus-eaters, for which there is no exact evidence⁶.

² See my *Sicilian Origin of the Odyssey* (= *SOO*, 1957, obtainable now from Blackwell’s), p. 37, with illustration: again in *Reality and Allegory in the Odyssey* (= *RAO*, 1959), p. 15: and with further illustration and “ propaganda ” in *The Importance of Od. ix. 25-26*, in *PACA*, 9, 1966-7. [In this last mentioned paper I have also been able to show to my own satisfaction why the poet used Marettimo for “ Ithaca ” in Bk. ix, and the mainland of Trapani for it in the other 23 books]. Formica-Asteris is (with other things) of outstanding and conclusive evidential importance. It has therefore never been mentioned in any notice of my work, like much other unwelcome evidence, during the past ten years.

³ E.g. (1) The identification (by the simple “ scientific ” method of clue, hypothesis, prediction and verification - or otherwise) of all the fictitiously-named but real places in the poem. (2) The explanation of the true nature of the River of Ocean (and the *πελοπα γαίης* = the Pillars of Hercules) in Homer, Hesiod, and the *Odyssey*. (See now in my *Odyssean Essays* (= *OE*), Blackwell, 1965, Chs. i, v, vii). (3) The fact that the *Od.* is later than Hesiod, *ib.* Ch. v. (4) The fact that “ Styx ” was never the name of a river — a scholastical blunder, for the nature of which many a schoolboy has in the past been caned — and which will also entail corrections in all the world’s dictionaries (*ib.* Ch. x). (5) The discovery that the “ abode of Styx ” was the Cave of St. Michael in the Rock of Gibraltar, *ib.* (6) That the imagined House of Hades, approached or left only by way of her falling water, lay under the caverns below, *ib.* Ch. v and cf. *Iliad* viii 369. (7) That the City of the Cimmerians was ancient Ceuta - and other things as well, involving (in course of time) the correction of many errors at present in LSJ. (All this, I am told by the “ reviewer ” of *OE* in the *Classical Review* of June 1966, was hardly worth putting into a book!). Orthodoxy on the defensive runs very true to form, with its traditional weapons of silence, sneer, and mis-statement, as others, more important than I, of course have found, from Bruno and Galileo, Boucher de Perthes, De Sautuola, Mendel, and others too. Darwin, on whom the mantle of the prophet (rightly or largely wrongly) happened to fall, was just lucky.

⁴ For one thing only, how could the Cyclopes and Laestrygonians (admitted by all, including Thucydides, to be Sicilians) have been the close neighbours and kinsmen of *Corcyrean* Phaeacians, as described in *Od.* vii. 55 f. and 201 f.? - even if they had lived on the slopes of Etna, 300 miles from Corfu? (They lived of course in western Sicily, another 130 miles distant). See also below, in due course.

⁵ I call them mine, but they are not mine at all. They are the poet’s, as any schoolboy or scholar can see, who cares to look and to start from Scheria-Trapani. Otherwise you are sunk-*spurlos*.

⁶ But for which I accept the traditional Isle of Djerba or Meninx. It was certainly somewhere on the N. African coast. For the Sirens’ Island see below. I have been much

Of none am I more certain than the following, which are of particular importance in my present argument.

1) That Mt. Eryx was the great mountain that Poseidon threatened to throw upon Scheria - and on which Eumaeus's pig-farm was situated.

2) That Ustica was the Isle of Circe in the *Odyssey*⁷. It fits the description of it in the poem perfectly in every respect, and there is positively no other island in the Western Mediterranean — or indeed anywhere else — that does, with a nice little sandy harbour to land at (*Od.* x. 141 f.); essentially low-lying itself (*ib.* 196); but with a 'hill of outlook' in it (148), (see *RAO* p. 48 and illustration on 49); small and fairly circular (Odysseus sees all round it from his hill of outlook 194 f.); and with no land whatever in sight of it (*ib.*). (It is 40 miles from Palermo, and some 65 from Alicudi, the nearest island)⁸.

3) That the plural Planctae were the three scoria-cones of Vulcanello, once separate but now all welded together, now extinct but then erupting upwards.

4) That Charybdis's "lower peak" (xii. 101), "within bow-shot" of Scylla's, was the "ruined tuff-cone" (as Judd described it in his "*Volcanoes, what they are and what they teach*", of 1881), with a crater at foot, erupting from under the water. It is now high and dry, close to the foot of Mt. Vulcano, and now known as the Faraglione, but still has its two peaks (xii. 241), on which the spray fell, as the poet had doubtless seen for himself or experienced. (See illustration I herewith).

too timid in my earlier works in saying that my identification of Telemachus's last land-fall but one before reaching Trapani-Ithaca, on his return to Trapani-Ithaca from Grecian Pylos (viz. "Fair-flowing Chalcis and the Springs" of xv. 295), as Chalcidian Himera (with its three rivers and its still functioning Termini Imerese), could "hardly be proved". But it is proved — by its name and topographical exactitude — and its dates — by what led me to it, and to what it then led me. In a moment of time I could see (on the N.G.M. map I was using), where Scylla and Charybdis must be. There lay Circe's solitary isle of Ustica before my eyes; and after a day or two the Gateway of the Sun was looking at me from the Pillars of Hercules - my first realization that the *Odyssey* was what it proved to be, a skilfully made topographical jig-saw puzzle, in which every single piece fits into place, and in that place only. For remarks on the text of the passage at xv. 295 see *The Importance of Od. ix. 25-26* in *PACA* 9 of 1966-7, Section X. I would add (with reference to the *C.R.* for June 1966) that this is not "unreasonable confidence". It rests on the first-hand evidence of its contexts — and reasoned argument on them. The curse of orthodox Odyssean scholarship is hearsay evidence — and the party line.

⁷ Hesiod had her in one of the islands of the Tyrrhenian coast (*Th.* 1015). None of these, as the large scale maps reveal, is in the least suited to the Odyssean description. (See *OE*, 39 and note (26) on 52). For its special evidential importance see my *Importance of Od. ix. 25-26*, (Section IV) - and below.

⁸ My co-reviewer, Mr Bradford, puts her at Cape Circeo. But, apart from the foregoing, the poet gives a curiously wide berth to the Italian coast.

5) That Scylla's "cavern" was the small exterior crater high up on the flank of Vulcano ("out of bow-shot" from the sea beneath) — now known as the Fossa Antica — erupting outwards and downwards (and "biting" the spectators below).

Vulcano's "sharp peak" (xii. 73) has long since been blown away — like that of Vesuvius. (The volcano erupted violently in 1775 and is still middly active).

I am glad to reproduce Plate VII from *RAO*, if only for the fact that in eight years or more no "critic" has ever mentioned it. It is taken from a sketch in Judd's *Volcanoes*, and it shows how exact and unmistakable the poet's topography was, (and is), in this as in all other cases, (however briefly sketched), once you have grasped his method ⁹.

I am also more than glad to have obtained permission from the editors of the *National Geographic Magazine* (given against their custom) to use these four of their remarkable sequence of six photos of what happened at Fayal Island in the Azores in 1957. These appeared just in time (June 1958) to be described, as a postscript, in *RAO* p. 46, of which description, however, no notice so far as I know has ever been taken. (It would almost seem that the shade of Drepanodorus, as I call him rather than "Homer", had enlisted the aid of the Earth-Shaker to provide at the requisite moment this really astonishing analogy of the scenes described in the *Odyssey*).

In the first of these photos (Sept. 27, 1957) the analogue of the "Wandering Rocks, ("The Wanderers" let us call them), heralds their first appearance — erupting from under the surface — with the analogue of Charybdis's "low peak" between them and that of Scylla's lofty one.

In the second (Oct. 5) they have shown themselves to be also equivalent to the "Symplegades" of later Greek legend (and plagiary) by "clashing" (like the *Συνδρομάδες*) into "Charybdis" — though they are not said to do so in the *Odyssey*. (They did do so there for the last time in A.D. 1444) ¹⁰.

In the third (Oct. 30) they have disappeared again, leaving "Charybdis" still *in situ*.

In the fourth (Nov. 18) they have re-appeared - and done it again!

And in all four, there is the analogue of Scylla's exterior crater, looking at us from the high peak of Fayal! Drepanodorus and Poseidon must have acted with despatch. (Vulcanello was not joined by land to the Faraglione

⁹ As my *C.R.* reviewer, like others, has not - nor ever attempted to do, I imagine. Neither this, nor any other of my not less conclusive illustrations in *RAO* (e.g. of the Straits of Gibraltar scenes, those at "Scheria" and "Ithaca", the "Floating Isle" of Stromboli, the "White Calm" at Cala Bianca or Calypso's Isle of Perejil), has received a single mention, so far as I know, in any notice of my works from 1957 to the present day - such are the traditional weapons of Orthodoxy on the Defensive.

¹⁰ Mercalli (*Geologia d'Italia*, 1883). See *RAO*, 43 at foot.

and Vulcano till the eruption of A.D. 1444 - well over 2000 years instead of a few short weeks.) [In the two remaining pictures in the *N.G.M.* the Ilha Nova and the analogue of Charybdis's peak have piled up very much higher and become an integral portion of Fayal - having completed their show].

Please don't say (*more scholastico*), "Oh, but this could have happened anywhere, as you have now shown".

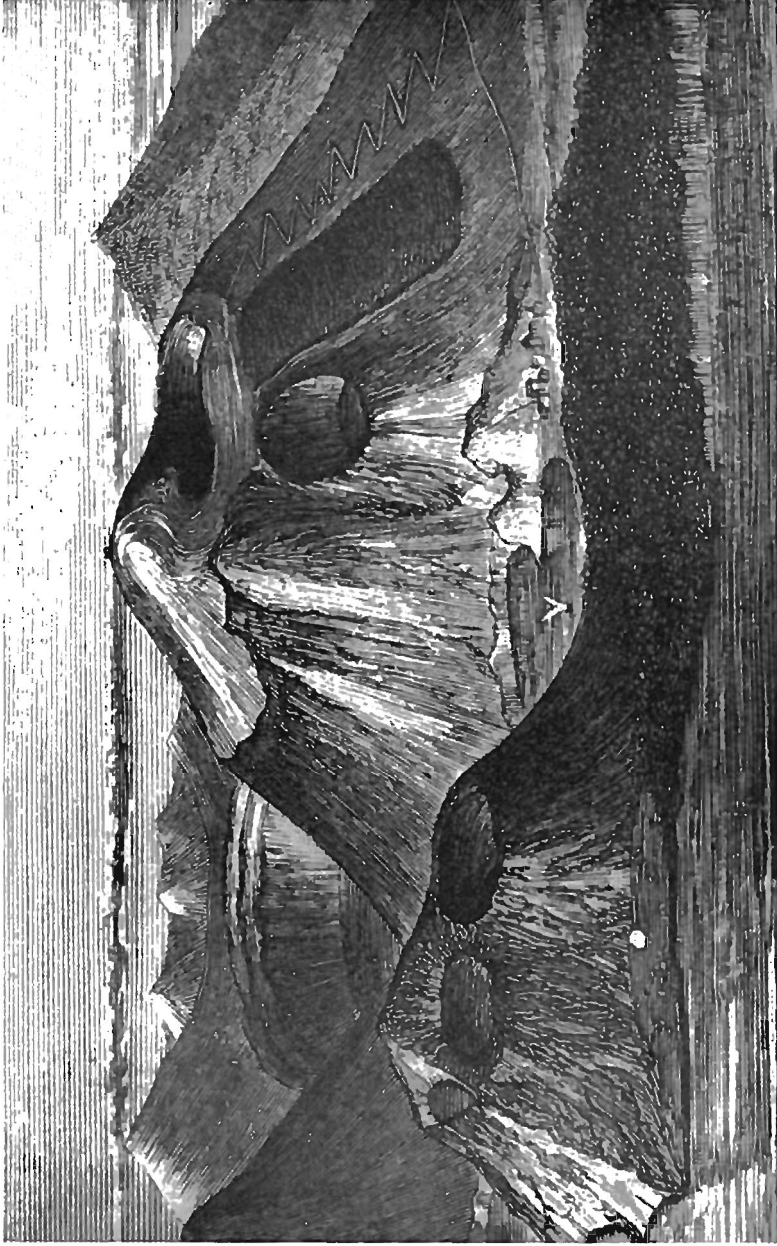
It certainly never happened in the mouth of the Bosphorus. (See Herodotus iv. 485 and consult the geologists).

[As it has long been recognized, from the pages of the *Odyssey* and those of Apollonius (*Argonautica* iv. 917-928), that the Planctae, Scylla, and Charybdis must have been somewhere in the Lipari Islands (cf. LSJ sv. *πλάγκτος*; Merry and Riddell on *Od.* xii. 61), it is curious that very few scholars, if any, before me, have sought to identify them with exactitude. Merry talked of Stromboli, and babbled *more suo* of icebergs - in both of which he has been followed of course by others¹¹. Liddell and Scott spoiled an otherwise good Section II by writing: "Homer did not conceive the Planctae as moving, so that prob. he gave it an active sense, the deceivers, beguilers". This last is now quite out of the question. It is true that they are not said to move in the poem. But they will have appeared, like the Ilha Nova, (and perhaps vanished and reappeared), if not in the poet's time, within the memory or record of his contemporaries. I think this finally settles the meaning of the word. For other islets that have appeared, and vanished again, in these very waters, see *RAO*, 37.

As for "Scylla" on the Italian coast and "Charybdis" in the Straits of Messina, they really should not any longer be shown by classical scholars to Athens-bound pilgrims as an instance of the poet's "Fairy-land" method. And I must withdraw my now shocking remarks in *RAO* (35 at foot and 36) that the poet was imitating the Greek Argonautic story. It was the other way round — see below].

6) The sixth certain identification of my present list is that the Sirens'

¹¹ E.g. Stanford on xii. 50 f.: "Probably Homer has combined two vague accounts . . . of the fires and tidal waves connected with volcanic islands and icebergs". And now Mr Bradford (in his "*Ulysses Found*"), working unfortunately on the fatal basis of Corcyra-Scheria, has also accepted Stromboli (instead of Vulcano). So too Crates' absurd twaddle about the Laestrygonians in x. 80 f. and "the short nights and days of high northern latitudes" has been swallowed holus bolus by our orthodoxists. And so we have the White Calm of x. 94 (which is still to be seen and photographed (*RAO* Pl. x) at Cala Bianca, near Castellammare (once the harbour town of Elymian Egesta), transferred to the frozen fjords of Norway with their "yodelling" natives. Hence too we get the frozen seas and "northern" cannibals in the *Companion to Homer*. (See their pages 284 and 308-9, and my *Odyssean Retrospect* in *PACA* 7). "Hear-say evidence"? Anything that anyone has ever said sufficiently long ago is "evidence" to some.



The "Planctae"; "Charybdis" and "Scylla" in the Straits of Vulcano (from RAO)

1. September 27, 1957



2. October 5, 1957



3. October 30, 1957



4. November 18, 1957



5. December 18, 1957



6. March 18, 1958



Ilha Nova at Fayal

Island must lie, as the *Odyssey* tells us, between Aeaea-Ustica and the Planctae-Vulcanello. It must therefore be one of the three intervening islands, Alicudi, Filicudi, or the notably twin-peaked Salina-Didyme. No one can quarrel with that. Now I have found that for every single one of all his fictitiously named places, (including "Ithaca"), the poet invariably gives definite clues for the treasure-hunt, however brief they may sometimes be. Here the only final clue is given, I feel sure, in the inflexion of a single word - Σειρήνων in xii. 167 - "the Sirens *twain*"¹². (See my *OE* 9, 10, and ftn. 10 on p. 11). Hesiod had three Sirens (fr. 47 in the Loeb Ed.).

With the knowledge, however, of Aeaea-Ustica and Vulcanello-Planctae, it matters very little in point of fact which of the three islands it was - except for the pleasure of knowing. But one point of interest remains in connexion with it.

Apollonius in his iv. 912-917 tells us that this island of the Sirens was not very far from the Temple of Aphrodite on Mt. Eryx - of which temple there is no mention in the *Odyssey*. It seems then that Apollonius had some knowledge of this vicinity apart from the tale in the *Odyssey*. He was not a very thrilling poet, but he was a good scholar, as scholars go, and an honest sort at that. For those reasons, and for the nature of his work, he will be our key witness for what is to follow. He will now bring us back to Corcyra and its claim to have been "Scheria".

I shall first, however, summarize definite points against that claim - apart from the fact that I know it, positively, to have been quite wrong¹³.

1) The Corcyreans were not close neighbours and kinsmen of the Cyclopes, and could not have been so described even if the latter had lived on the slopes of Etna: (see my footnote 4).

2) They were not "the last of men", ἔσχατοι (Od. vi. 205-206). The heel of Italy was only 60 miles due west of them, and its instep and toe stretched for 70 miles to the south — not to mention the island of Sicily, where Greeks had also lived since long before the date of the *Odyssey*. (Due west of Trapani there is nothing to speak of till you get to Cartagena).

¹² My C.R. friend sneers at me for identifying the isle as Salina, "just because it has two peaks" — without any mention of the supporting evidence or argument — of course. "Worse", says he "Nausicaa's name is . . . an allusion . . . to the burning of the ships . . ." If 'Scheria' was Drepanum, as of course it was, why on earth should that not have been the meaning of her name? I have gone into the business; my reviewer has not, and just sneers, *more scholastico*. He then has the impertinence to say "Inaccuracy, however, is never far way". That is a flat untruth - and the only evidence he offers (about the number of times Meges is mentioned in the *Iliad*) is too childish for words.

¹³ C.R. says I "ignore the fact that there are positive arguments" for it. That is not true. Let him see my page 14 in *SOO* which I do not suppose for a moment he has read. *OE* was concerned, as stated in its preface, with matters arising *from* my previous identifications - not with establishing them all over again.

3) They did not all reside in a town approached by a λεπτή εισίθμη.

4) Nor did they live on "a large island" or on an island at all, save for the fact that they lived in Sicily. [LSJ and the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* are utterly wrong in saying that they did, on the strength of vi. 204, (οἰκέομεν δ' ἀπάνευθε πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ), a phrase which suits Sicilian "Drepane" as well as any place in the world. The λεπτή εισίθμη (which LSJ and the O.C.D. neglect) was once so narrow and low that the seas some times washed right over it - though the work of man in modern times has now made it very different].

5) And finally the fact — not the "claim" — of Trapani having been Scheria, is now the most obvious thing in the whole wide world of literature. [This is not "unreasonable confidence" as my Classical Quarterly reviewer says. I happen to know what I am talking about, and have worked at it for fifteen years on very firsthand evidence].

There may indeed be excuses for this "plagiarism" on the part of the Corcyraeans. Like the rest of the Greeks perhaps (and the new *Companion to Homer*)¹⁴ they thought that in the world of the epic "once we are out of sight of western Greece the Mediterranean stretches for uncharted distances to west and north" and indeed may not have heard of Trapani. There is no excuse for the modern orthodoxist, who clings to the claim of Corcyra, as though to the last leaky lifebelt on a sinking ship. It certainly will not float, save as a danger, for a while, to honest navigation.

The Corcyreans then quite possibly did not intend actually to plagiarize Scheria from Trapani, but plagiarize it they did. I discussed the grounds of their claim ten years ago on p. 14 of my *SOO*. In what follows I quote from its p. 15, with my italics, and with my comments in square brackets. We now return to Apollonius and to the Argonautic legend (*Arg.* iv. 982 f.). Like a good scholar he plumps for Scheria-Corcyra, but, like an honest one, he records also the claim of Trapani, as current in the 3rd century B.C.

"Fronting the Ionian Gulf there lies a *large* island" [There was a slip here in the Loeb translation, which in *SOO* I carelessly followed.] . . . "beneath which lies the sickle . . . wherewith Cronos mutilated his father; but others call it the Reaping Hook of Demeter . . . For Demeter once dwelt in that island", [meaning Sicily; and the sickle *was* the peninsula of Trapani, (not underneath it), with the εισίθμη as its handle - not underneath any island] . . . "and taught the Titans" [cf. the one-eyed Cyclopes of *Theogony*, 139-143] "to reap the ears of corn . . . ; whence it is called Drepane, the sacred nurse of the Phaeacians . . . (Tr. Seaton, Loeb)".

"This material came down to Apollonius from the seventh century. Alcaeus, we are told by the Scholiast, agreed with Acusilaus in saying that the Phaeacians sprang from the drops of blood which fell from the mutilated

¹⁴ See its p. 284 and my *Odyssean Retrospect*, (*PACA* 7), p. 33.

Uranus. Whereas Apollonius has to bury the sickle underneath Corcyra, Trapani was reputed itself to be the actual sickle used and thrown down by Cronos. (So Servius on *Aen.* iii. 707; see P. W. s.v. Drepanum 1698.9; see also Mair, Callimachus and Lyc., Loeb. s.v. Drepanum) ”.

The island then in this passage, where Demeter taught the ‘Titans’ to reap the ears of corn will be Sicily, and the Titans, who were also ‘Giants’, the Cyclopes. Demeter and Persephone were of course particularly connected with Sicily, where it was claimed they first appeared and where wheat first grew (Diod. v. 2. 4). Her great temple still stands at Egesta in the same district as Eryx and Trapani. (It was from this neighbourhood, it will be remembered, that Cicero as a young man was able to send large quantities of corn to Rome at a time of scarcity - *pro Plancio*, 4) ”.

II

The Symplegades

1) Apollonius now leads us back by way of the Planctae, Charybdis and Scylla, in the Straits of Vulcano, to his tale of the Symplegades in the Bosphorus — or the “Plegades” as he prefers to call them — I suppose for metrical reasons? (*Arg.* ii. 317-356 and 549-610). In this tale I think he was not too happy — it seems to me pretty unconvincingly told — for he must have suspected in his own mind that it was but a crib from the Odyssean tale — from the House of Hades (cf. *Od.* xi: *Arg.* ii. 353, 609)¹⁵: the doves of *Od.* xii. 62 — “improved” to one dove, only, who lost her tail between the Plegades (*Arg.* ii. 328 f., 555 f.): and ‘Αργῶ πᾶσι μέλουσα παρ’ Αιήταο πλέουσα¹⁶ (*Od.* 70).

From this I do not of course mean to suggest that there were not other ancient tales of the Argo - dashing about all over the place. It is obvious from the *Odyssey* that there were. And they will also have been Greek, I expect, in every sense of the word. I think there was perhaps a wry smile in our poet’s accurate seaman’s mind, when he wrote ‘Αργῶ πᾶσι μέλουσα. But the details cited above surely come from the *Odyssey*.

2) Εἴθ’ ὄφελ’ Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος
Κόλγων ἐς αἶαν κυανέας Συμπληγάδας

says Medea’s nurse at the opening of the famous play.

¹⁵ The House of Hades without a shadow of doubt was in the Straits of Gibraltar in Homer, Hesiod and the *Odyssey*. See e.g. *Iliad* i. 423 and xxiii. 205: cf. *Od.* i. 22-25 - and all over the place in the *Theogony*. See also Chs. v and vii in my *OE* and my paper *On Iliad xxiii 71-76*, in *PACA* 8 of 1965. It is just childish to think otherwise. (All this is on first-hand evidence — not on what someone else may have said — or thought).

¹⁶ For the western connexions of Aetes and Medea (apart from the eastern) see *OE* Ch. v, § 4.

Well, I am pretty sure that Argo never did any such thing. On this passage says A. W. Verrall in his school-edition of the play :

“Rocks at the entrance of the Euxine which according to the legend were moveable and clashed together before the passage of the Argonauts, after which they became fixed. The reason of their being called *blue* is uncertain, perhaps from the mist of distance. Homer (Od. 12. 75) says of them νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφιβέβηκεν κυανέη”.

Verrall was a little bit careless - and so was someone else (in the course of the sixth century B.C.) in pinching them from the *Odyssey*. There it is not the Planctae, nor Chaybdis's peak, but Scylla's lofty summit that is described, correctly (*more poetae*), as having a blue-black *volcanic* cloud above it even in summer and autumn (*Od.* xii. 73-5).

How one small error may corrupt the world, though Herodotus, as an historian, drily mocks at it in his pleasing iv. 85. The whole of this tale of the Plegades, or Symplegades, in the Bosphorus must have been concocted during the sixth century: - for the *Odyssey* (as we have it) was surely not composed much before the end of the seventh¹⁷; and yet by the fifth century Greeks the tale of these eastern Symplegades, which never existed, was fully accepted.

We find the “Κυανέαι” and the “Symplegades” as names in their own right by then - e.g. in Euripides (*Medea* 1 and 2 and 1263, *I.T.* 422); in Sophocles (*Antigone* 966), and Herodotus quoted above — all contemporary with one another — and later on in Theocritus (*συνδρομάδες Κυανέαι*, 13.22) — and Strabo - and ever since. Weeds grow better than choicer plants.

The Greeks indeed were great folk at adopting anything that came handy, to our benefit certainly in many cases. It is not a crime of course to adopt and adapt - but credit be where credit is due, and it is well to trace the sources.

Thus Immanuel Velikovsky has shown, I think, in his very remarkable *Oedipus and Akhnaton*, that the Greeks also adopted from the city of Thebes in Egypt the whole tale of “Oedipus”, his physical deformity, the tale of the female Sphinx, the father-murder and mother-marriage, and the subsequent catastrophes, in the most astonishing detail — and transferred it all to the town of Thebes in Boeotia, reducing, however, the hundred gates of Akhnaton's city in Egypt to the modest number of seven.

¹⁷ I am not alone of course in thinking so. But I consider — on good evidence — that “Fair-flowing Chalcis and the Springs” is decisive evidence, the traditional date of the founding of Himera being 648 B.C. There is also the fact that Drepanodorus appears to have known of Naucratis (*RAO* Ch. xiii, A. and p. 159). The first vase paintings of Odyssean topics — (Polyphemus) — are dated “c. 650 B.C.”, and I think they were later than that.

III

The "Homeric" *Odyssey* and the Name of Homer

The first great fault, and to us the most astonishing "plagiarist" and problem of them all, was the ascription of the authorship of the *Odyssey* to the much earlier Aegean author and compiler of the *Iliad*. How could it have come to pass?

In this inquiry I must, with apologies, be personal and make a good deal of use of the first person pronoun.

In it the respective dates of the two epics must first be considered, (and with them the date of Hesiod). In *OE* Ch. v I have made it clear that Hesiod was a good deal earlier than "Drepanodorus". And I think the tradition that made Hesiod contemporary with "Homer" of the *Iliad* was probably not far out, though he might have been of course of a somewhat younger generation.

In the summary of modern thought on the subject in the Oxford Classical Dictionary it is written: "We may then perhaps place Homer before 700 B.C. . . . But Theopompus may not have been far from the truth in making Homer a contemporary of Archilochus" (whose dates, however, seem very far from certain). For the present purpose then, let us put Homer late in the 8th or early in the 7th century. As for the *Odyssey* I feel quite sure that it was not completed much before the very end of the 7th. On pages 158-159 of *RAO* I argued that the poet was probably aware of Naucratis as a trading depot in the Nile - established about the mid-seventh. And apart from minor indications I now feel completely positive that "Fair-flowing Chalcis and the Springs" of *Od.* xv. 295 (which I think should follow the present line 298¹⁸) was the colony of Himera - with its *three* rivers, and celebrated Springs (now known as the Termini Imerese), founded as a Greek colony by men of Chalcis c. 648 B.C. (For this please see my note (6) above). A further proof of the poet's later date is that he parodies both the *Iliad* and the *Theogony*, in affection no doubt, but in a manner far from respectful¹⁹.

Add to the foregoing the fact that the *Odyssey*, (once we use the master-key of Trapani as both "Scheria" and "Ithaca", and study it for the very first time, like any modern scientist or ancient detective, by the simple "scientific method" of clue, hypothesis, search or prediction, and fulfilment or otherwise), turns out to be — beyond the remotest possibility of evidential

¹⁸ See my *Importance of Od. ix. 25-26*, section X.

¹⁹ For some discussion of this, see my paper *Odyssean Reflections* Sections I and II [Not published as yet. Its Section I (Hesiod) is to appear in the *Classical Quarterly*: but *not* Section II (Homer)].

rebuttal — a poem of western waters, by a son of Western Sicily. And add to that the fact that in a very few years the whole Greek world had accepted the *Odyssey* as the work of the author of the *Iliad* — as is the orthodox view even today — and it is the most surprising thing in the history of literature.

How could it have happened? Who could have started it? Only the rhapsodists surely, the guild of the Homeridae, I would imagine, with their headquarters in Chios - who, it has been suggested, were a very highly organized, close-knit, and secretive guild, with a rule and tradition of anonymity. These for generations will have been giving recitations of the *Iliad*, the great tale of the great Trojan War; and the name of "Ὀμηρος" according to my theory will have started with them, at a very early stage, as a surname or title, I should say. I do not think for a moment it was the poet of the *Iliad*'s real name. In the very late seventh or early sixth century, I shall suppose, they acquired in one way or another the *Odyssey* — whether as a written text, as I prefer to think, or brought to them by word of mouth. "Drepanodorus" himself for all we know to the contrary might have joined the guild and have followed their rules and conventions - or he may have died and some one else may have been responsible.

In my *Importance of ix. 25-26* I have argued that our Bk. ix was his earlier work, composed and recited by him for the entertainment and amusement of the folk of Trapani — (using purely for fun in the first place their own island scene for "Ithaca") — that it was an *immediate success overseas*, as sixth century vase-paintings bear out, and that Polyphemus in fact was the "acorn from which the oak of the *Odyssey* was to grow".

I would now suggest that thereafter he ceased perhaps to be a sailor and local bard, and became a professional one. (I suggested for other reasons that he might have done so, and repaired to Chios, in the last chapter of *OE*. If he did not, his poem most certainly some day did). But there, indeed, he might have completed his poem — [up to xxiii. 296, let us say, leaving only rough notes for the rest of it]²⁰. And there he may have accepted the rules of the guild — and surrendered his real name, perhaps, as monks and nuns did in later times for a different sort of communion — giving up the personal claim of authorship, as a member loyal to the guild's tradition, and for the pleasure and excitement of the theatrical art of the singer of tales — especially of his own. But he still knew that in days to come the honour would still be that of his native land, (and his very own as a son of it), and of the waters he had sailed in his youth. For using Trapani now and

²⁰ Something goes out of it after that. I guess that he did not live to revise the rest of it. He certainly never completed his earlier intention, of sending Odysseus on his travels again, and bringing him back in the end to die in peace, looking out over the sea at "Ithaca", with the folk all happy around him (see *OE* Ch. xii).

its mainland scenes for "Ithaca", and the Gibraltar Straits near Ceuta for the Cimmerians and the visit to Hades, and for Calypso's Island, he made of his poem, in addition to everything else, a wondrous geographical treatise²¹ and treasure-hunt, with characteristic clues at every point for the western seas and landfalls: a *roman à clef* indeed, but a great deal more than that.

He surely intended it all to be deciphered in course of time, just as Mr Pepys surely intended his shorthand some day to be deciphered.

The problem now remains, how did "Homer" of the *Iliad* acquire his name? I do not for a moment suppose it was his real one, or twenty different Greek cities would hardly have claimed him so vigorously as their son. It will more likely have been a surname or title bestowed upon him, by an earlier generation of rhapsodists, I should imagine. (If the following has been suggested before, there is no harm, I hope, in my dealing with it again, and from my own point of view).

I think the root *δμ-*, perhaps, is at the root of the problem. In *Od.* xvi. 468 the verb *δμηρέω* occurs in the simple sense of "meeting" - "coming together with". It must have been an oldish word, for it recurs only twice (in *Theogony* 39 and Arist. Fr. 66 - according to LSJ) and then in slightly different senses, "agreeing together" in the first, and in the sense of the giving of hostages in the second, as in the verb *δμηρεύω*.

There is also the substantive *δμηρεία* or *δμηρία*, with that second signification. But there is no reason whatever why it might not once have been in vogue in the former sense - a "meeting together" or congress, or festival. And as the best of all festivals (until the *Odyssey* came along) were those at which the *Iliad*, the great tale of the Trojan War, was recited to the twang of the harp by the Rhapsodists, the Greeks in ancient days might well have spoken of going "*εἰς τὴν Ὀμηρίαν*", just as folk in England say "to Edinburgh for the Festival".

From that it would be but a step (especially with the rhapsodists' "tradition of anonymity"), for the folk who went to listen to dub the author of the *Iliad* "*Ὀμηρος*. And what is more the rhapsodists might have welcomed the convenient appellation.

And that will be how Homer got his name — and why he was claimed as their son by some twenty chatterbox Greek cities. (And also how he came to be "blind" (see LSJ sv.) — and a "hostage" also).

And when the second great Epic of Trojan War times came along, and was recited together with the *Iliad*, that will be how the author of the *Odyssey* also came to be "Homer", the two epics becoming τὰ Ὀμηρικά.

²¹ In which respect he still stands alone in poetry. He is our first geographer - in prose or poetry. It was no doubt from the misunderstanding of the *Od.* that the absurd Roman convention arose, that it was almost a poet's duty to avoid geographical accuracy. (E.g. Philippi and Pharsalus both at the same place in Lucan).

“ And what a clever man he must have been ” (some ancient Greek may have said to some superior rhapsodist in the course of getting the ancient equivalent of his signature.) “ to have composed two such different poems ”. “ Yes, yes ” the answer may have been “ he composed his *Odyssey* later on to amuse the young folk and the women ”.

And sooner or later the rhapsodists themselves will have deified “Ὀμηρος, and bestowed the *Odyssey* on him also.

One can imagine someone from one of those twenty different cities saying: “ Oh yes, no doubt about it. My great-great-grandfather’s maiden aunt had one of his sandals. It’s very old of course but we have it still - it’s a family heirloom ”. “ You’re a liar ” says some one else, “ his statue still stands where it has always stood in our market-place . . . ” and so on and so forth. And hence the perplexities and touching faith of 2000 years and more of Odyssean scholarship - all the result of “ orthodoxy ” and working on second-hand hear-say evidence. I sometimes say to myself, “ Man does not live by bread alone, but by every bit of nonsense that drips from the lips of his pastors and masters and next-door neighbours ”. Pull me to pieces, as regards the *Odyssey*, by all means, if you can do so - honestly. No one has tried as yet.

It is human to err but I have placed my trust in the guidance and first-hand evidence of Drepanodorus, as no one has done before me. I am confident that he at any rate has not led me astray.

Christchurch, New Zealand, 1967.

Postscript Note

This paper, like others that have preceded it, though mainly concerned with West Mediterranean waters, is also of interest, I hope, in the field of Mycenaean study. For I see little room to doubt that the poet of the *Odyssey* was himself descended of those Mycenaean mariners who left their archaeological traces in Sicily, and such greek place-names as Drepanon and Panormus - men who had known the unforgettable πόρον Ὠκεανοῖο (*Theog.* 292) and had seen for themselves in the modern Hall of St. Michael “ the glorious house of Styx, roofed over with long rocks, propped up to heaven all round on silver pillars ” (*Theog.* 777-779). [See Ch. V in my *Odyssean Essays* and *On Iliad xxiii* 71-76 in *PACA* Vol. 8, 1965].