

HERACLES IN NARROW STRAITS *

Facilis descensus Averno says Vergil's Sybil, emphasising a notion familiar to antiquity ⁽¹⁾, that the descent to Hades is easy in the sense of "inescapable sooner or later". Antiquity also displays traces of the contrary notion, that the entry to the Underworld is difficult ⁽²⁾ because narrow, especially for those seeking illicit entry. Hes. *Th.* 726ff. (on the structure of the Underworld) has been interpreted in a way that is relevant to this larger idea:

τὸν πέρι χάλκεον ἔρκος ἐλήλαται· ἀμφὶ δέ μιν νύξ
τριστοιχὶ κέχυται περὶ δειρήν· αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε
γῆς ρίζαι πεφύασι καὶ ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης.

M. L. West's note ⁽³⁾ on δειρήν in v. 727 runs: "presumably the 'neck' formed by the top of the enclosing wall. The word implies a relatively narrow entrance, as of a jar". He says nothing of the earlier treatment of this passage by H. Wagenvoort ⁽⁴⁾ which likewise concludes that we are to en-

(*) Professor Sir John Boardman kindly read and discussed with me an earlier draft of this article.

⁽¹⁾ *Aen.* 6.126. Numerous parallels for the idea are assembled in Page's note on *AP* 10.3 (*Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge 1981) p. 392f. Note also Christ's words in *Matthew* 7.13: "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction", and also cf. Hes. *Op.* 287ff.

⁽²⁾ This might be the meaning intended by the author of 'Anacreon' 395 (not genuine: see in *primis* M. H. Rocha Pereira, *Sobra a Autenticidade do fragmento 44 Diehl de Anacreonte*, (Coimbra 1961) 9ff.: Αἶδεω γάρ ἐστι δεινὸς / μυχός, ἀργαλὴ δ' ἐς αὐτὸν / κάτοδος (the meaning "descent" for this word is late: Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 69 (*Moral.* 378E), Lucian *Dial. mort.* 27.1 etc.) or the epithet may be explained by the words that follow: καὶ γὰρ ἐτοῖμον / καταβάντι μὴ ἀναβῆναι. The phrasing is too incoherent for us to be sure.

⁽³⁾ In his commentary *ad loc.* (Oxford 1966), p. 360.

⁽⁴⁾ *Orcus*, "Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni" 14, 1938, 33ff. = *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden 1956) 102ff. Hes. *Th.* 726ff. is dealt with on p. 128f. of the reprinted version. Though overlooked by West (sup. cit. [n. 3]) Wagenvoort's interpretation is quoted with approval by P. Walcot, *Hesiod and the Near East* (Cardiff 1966) p. 61, who further wishes to connect the Hesiodic lines with *Il.* 5.385ff. where Otus and Ephialtes shut Ares up in a bronze κέραμος for thirteen months. In fact (although Walcot does not mention this) the Homeric episode in its turn has been associated with a passage in Oriental literature which locates a certain type of vessel in the Underworld. Thus M. Riemschneider, "Acta Acad. Scient. Hung." 8, 1960, 7ff. (cf. J. C. Balty, "Latomus" 20, 1961, 910f.) cites the case of the Hittite weather-god Telipinu whose anger is finally assuaged by being transferred into a number of bronze vessels or

visage a vast vessel whose entrance is like a neck. Wagenvoort deals with these lines of the *Theogony* in the context of a lengthy discussion of the Greek and Latin concept of the Underworld as a gigantic vessel with a narrow neck. He thinks that the Latin word *Orcus* derives from *orca* meaning "jar", "pitcher" and explains *Orci fauces* in this light. Not surprisingly he also cites the well-known Attic tomb lekythos ⁽⁵⁾ now in Jena which shows Hermes Psychopompus holding his wand in the vicinity of winged souls which are flying into or emerging out of a jar set in the ground. Though the exact interpretation of this artefact must remain uncertain ⁽⁶⁾, its relevance to the general idea under discussion is obvious. A number of Etruscan urns showing Death variously depicted as wolf-headed or entirely wolf-shaped and emerging in fettered state from a sort of jar set in the earth were cited as pertaining to the same nexus of ideas by Karl Meuli ⁽⁷⁾ in his posthumously published and unfinished study of "gefesselte Götter".

The idea that the entrance to the Underworld is narrow must not be confined to its conception as a large vessel with a slender neck, though that might be the ultimate origin of the notion. But the Underworld or Otherworld is often conceived as possessed of doors, and these too can be pictured as narrow. To quote Jan de Vries: "Der Eingang zur Unterwelt ist... ein enger Durchgang, den man nur in grösster Eile durchschreiten kann" ⁽⁸⁾. Among the examples cited in support of this generalisation he

cauldrons that stand within the Underworld: what goes into these never comes out again (for a translation of the relevant Hittite text see A. Goetze ap. J. B. Pritchard, *ANET*³, Princeton 1969) pp. 126ff. and (with useful introduction and commentary) C. Kühne ap. W. Beyerlin, *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen 1975) = *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* 159ff.). See further (with caution) W. Berg, "Fabula" 17, 1976, 15ff. and J. Harmatta, "Acta Ant. Acad. Scient. Hung." 16, 1968, 57ff.

⁽⁵⁾ Jena 338: ARV² 760.41. For some bibliography see Wagenvoort (sup. cit. [n. 4]) p. 125 n. 6. For an illustration see e.g. Nilsson, *GGR* 1³ plate 33.3.

⁽⁶⁾ Cf. D. Kurtz, *Athenian White Lekythoi* (Oxford 1975) p. 83 n. 4.

⁽⁷⁾ *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Basel / Stuttgart 1975) p. 1079f. with plate 57.

⁽⁸⁾ *Betrachtungen zum Märchen* (Helsinki 1954) p. 96. See further A. B. Cook, *Zeus* 3.2 976ff., and A. K. Coomaraswamy in *Studies and Essays... offered to G. Sarton...* (New York 1944) 465ff. (On the more general concept of the gates of the Underworld see Usener, "Sitzb. der kais. Akad. der Wiss. in Wien" phil.-hist. Kl. 137, 1897, 30ff. = *Kl. Schr.* 4.226ff.; O. Weinreich, *Gebet und Wunder* (Tübingen 1929) 270ff., K. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle* ('Studien der Bibliothek Warburg' 20, 1932: repr. Darmstadt 1963) Personen- und Sachregister s.v. "Descensus Motive... Zerbrechen der Tore" and "Torwächter der Unterwelt"; M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford 1950) D162 ("To be at Death's door") etc. A similar concept underlies the related notion of a narrow bridge leading to Hell, Paradise *vel sim.* [On the general picture involved see K. Ranke in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. "Brücke (4:

instances – as did Karl Meuli ⁽⁹⁾ before him – the folk-tale (familiar from the Brothers Grimm) of the young Prince dispatched in quest for the Waters of Life to heal his ailing father. The requisite draught is located within a paradisiacal garden, but when the youthful hero tries to carry it away, the iron gates against which he has been warned slam to, and though he leaps through in time, the end of one of his heels is nipped off. The other examples of narrow entrances to the Under- or Otherworld quoted by de Vries and Coomaraswamy ⁽¹⁰⁾ can be increased in number if we add the detail which relates how Thor and his company squeeze into the giants' castle through a closed iron grating in that visit to Utgardloki which is related in the *Prose Edda* and which Karl Meuli so convincingly demonstrated to be a disguised "Jenseitsfahrt" ⁽¹¹⁾.

In Greek myth and literature the most famous narrow entrance to the Otherworld is constituted by the *Symplegades* ⁽¹²⁾, the Clashing Rocks

Jenseitsbrücke)" (2.828ff.) and G. Petschel *ib.* s.v. "Brücke zur anderen Welt" (2.835ff.)). A number of instances of this (including the famous 'Lykewake Dirge' with its picture of the "Brig o' Dread, na brader than a thread" from which one reaches Purgatory) are assembled in Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* 2.483f. = *Teutonic Mythology* 2.834f. For further instances see Ranke's article cited above 829ff. and H. R. Patch, *The Other World according to descriptions in medieval literature* (1950), Index s. vv. "bridge" and "gate, entrance".

⁽⁹⁾ *Odysee und Argonautika* (Berlin 1921) p. 88 = *Ges. Schr.* 2.654. The reference is to tale no. 97 ("Das Wasser des Lebens") in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm* (= J. Bolte and G. Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Leipzig 1917, 2.394ff.): an English translation in R. Manheim, *The Penguin Complete Grimm's Tales* (London 1977) pp. 339ff. This is item H1321.1 ("Quest for water of life": cf. E80) in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. See further Coomaraswamy (sup. cit. [n. 8]) pp. 466f., 477 and n. 26, 481ff. and R. Crahay, *L'eau de la vie: la méthode mythographique des frères Grimm*, "Mémoires et Publications de la Société Hainault" 77, 1963, 130ff. The clipping off of the prince's heel corresponds (within the Argonautic legend: see nn. 12-13 below) to the loss of the Argo's stern ornament (Ap. Rhod. 2.601); the Water of Life to the ambrosia carried by the doves who have to brave the Planctae (*Od.* 12.62ff.); cf. Coomaraswamy (sup. cit. [n. 8]) p. 468. The legend of the Argonauts concludes, if not with the healing of a sick father by the Water of Life, at least with the rejuvenation of Jason's father thanks to Medea's cauldron of immortality (see *Nostoi* fr. 6 Davies (*EGF* p. 68f.) etc.).

⁽¹⁰⁾ As cited above nn. 8 and 9. Note in particular the words of Christ at *Matthew* 7.14: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Cf. n. 1 above.

⁽¹¹⁾ Text in *Snorri Sturluson Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning* (ed. A. Faulkes, Oxford 1982) pp. 36ff. (translated into English by Faulkes himself, London 1987, pp. 37ff.). Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 9]) pp. 106ff. = *Ges. Schr.* 2.667ff. Cf. my remarks in "CQ" 38, 1988, 284ff.

⁽¹²⁾ For the distinction (or confusion) between the *Symplegades* and the *Planctae* (the

(13) that bar the way to the Argonauts. That the Argonautic expedition was originally a "Jenseitsfahrt" has long been accepted (14), and the rocks that clash fit perfectly in this context as a dangerous barrier and narrow entry to the Under- or Otherworld (15).

The Argonautic voyage to the Otherworld is located, of course, in the East (16). But the West provides an even more appropriate background for such an exploit (17), and it is in the West that two labours of Heracles which

clashing and the wandering rocks) see e.g. Page's note on Eur. *Med.* 2 in his commentary (Oxford 1938, p. 62) and B. K. Braswell's note on Pind. *Pyth.* 4.208 in his (Berlin 1988, p. 290); also Cook (sup. cit. [n. 8]) p. 975f.

(13) For further examples (and discussion) of the folk-tale phenomenon represented by "Die Klappfelsen" guarding the way to the Otherworld see e.g. Cook (sup. cit. [n. 8]) pp. 976ff., Coomaraswamy (sup. cit. [n. 9]) p. 474f., H. von Beit, *Symbolik des Märchens* 1 (Bern 1981⁶) p. 44f. with bibliography in p. 45 n. 2. These rocks often close behind the hero to kill his pursuer: Coomaraswamy p. 469 observes the like function of cutting reeds in several folk tales and explains in these terms *Exodus'* story of the overwhelming of the Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea or Sea of Reeds after Moses and the Israelites have crossed over from "The Egyptian Darkness" of the Underworld (cf. Coomaraswamy p. 472 and n. 15, p. 477). For the association of this sea with Sheol and the land of the Dead cf. W. Wifall, "Zeitschrift für die Alttest. Wiss." 92, 1980, 327f.). A similar function to that of the cutting reeds is fulfilled by the flaming (and revolving) sword that guards the gate to Eden in *Genesis* 3.24. See T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (London 1969) p. 48f., etc.

(14) See, in particular, Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 9]) pp. 15ff. = pp. 604ff. For a bibliography of later studies pointing in the same direction see Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 282 n. 29. In addition to the considerations there mentioned one might also adduce the evidence of Pind. *Pyth.* 4.159f. κέλεται γὰρ ἐὰν ψυχὰν κομίζει Φρίξος. The phrase is notoriously problematic (see Braswell *ad loc.* (sup. cit. [n. 12]) p. 241) but surely the likeliest interpretation sees this as a vestige of the original "Jenseitsfahrt" and its original motive, analogous to Heracles' rescue of Theseus, Orpheus' of Eurydice etc.

(15) See e.g. W. Kranz, "Hermes" 50, 1915, 100 ("beide Tore aber sind gar nicht weit voneinander gedacht"), Preller-Robert, *Gr. Myth.* 1.620, Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 9]) p. 87 = p. 653 etc. Note further that Carystius of Pergamon ap. Σ Theocr. *Id.* 13.22 (p. 261 Wendel) states that the Symplegades ὑπὸ θεῶν "Ὀρκου πύλας κεκλησθαι. For the equivalence of "Ὀρκος to Orcus and Hades see Zielinski, "Philol." 55, 1896, p. 509 n. 16 = *Iresione* p. 291 n. 1; Hirzel, *Der Eid*, Leipzig 1902, p. 155 n. 1. Meineke's Φόρκου πύλας (accepted by Wendel: cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Academic Papers* [III] *Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea* p. 214) is therefore unnecessary. Even if correct, however, it would not tell against the identification of the Symplegades with the doors of the Underworld: Phorcys is an Old Man of the Sea (cf. West on Hes. *Th.* 270ff.) and for this figure's links with the dead and the Underworld see Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 284.

(16) For the exceptional placing in the West presupposed by one or two authors (and easily explicable in the light of the next note) see Meuli (sup. cit. [n. 9]) p. 86 n. 1 = p. 652 n. 3.

(17) See West (sup. cit. [n. 3]) General Index s.v. "underworld... not clearly distinct

have as their basis an Otherworld voyage are situated: the quest for the apples of the Hesperides and the rustling of Geryon's cattle. Again there can be little room for controversy over the status of these two tales and their basic equivalence to the other Heracleian labour involving a journey to the Underworld, the bringing back of Cerberus. In the case of the Hesperides story, with its pictures of the apples of immortality (or eternal youth) tended by nymphs and guarded by a dragon in a paradisiacal garden, the equivalence should be obvious to all ⁽¹⁸⁾. The labour involving Geryon is a little more oblique in its status as "Jenseitsfahrt"; but the island stained red by the setting sun on which dwells the death-demon named "Roarer" with the cattle which symbolise the souls of the dead turns out in fact to be an apt and transparent metaphor for the world of Beyond ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The question then naturally arises: is there any vestige of the narrow door leading into the Otherworld in Heracles' occidental labours? Have they any detail that matches the role of the Symplegades within the Argonautic legend? And the answer comes back (I think) "yes". We know from a passage in Strabo that Pindar, in a now lost poem, referred to the straits of Gades (modern Cadiz) as a gate through which Heracles passed (fr. 256 Snell: εἰς Πύλας Γαδειρίδας... ὑστάτας ἀφίχθαι... τὸν Ἡρακλέα). Those (late) authors who provide the most detailed accounts of the labours in the West describe Heracles as making his way through the straits of Gibraltar, where he sets up the pillars that bear his name ⁽²⁰⁾. As a matter of brute geo-

from world's edge" and Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 280 n. 19.

⁽¹⁸⁾ See in particular M. K. Brazda, *Zur Bedeutung des Apfels in der antiken Kultur* (Bonn Diss. 1977) pp. 84ff. Cf. Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 279 n. 10.

⁽¹⁹⁾ See Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) pp. 278ff. In this discussion I might have mentioned the evidence of Eratosthenes ap. Strabo 3.148 (fr. III B 122 Berger) who termed Erytheia the νῆσος εὐδαίμων (see below n. 24). Cf. Artemidorus fr. 11 p. 210 Stiechle and Pytheas fr. 8 Mette.

⁽²⁰⁾ Apollod. 2.5.10 and Diod. Sic. 4.18.5. On the detail of the narrowed straits in Diodorus' account see further J. P. Brown, "TAPA" 99, 1968, 55. For a close connection between Western and Eastern doors to the Otherworld in this context see Cook (sup. cit. [n. 8]) p. 978 (3): "Others, impressed apparently by the fact that Tartessos sounds like Tartarus (Strab. 149), transferred both the Planctae and the Symplegades to the neighbourhood of Gadeira and identified them with the pillars of Heracles (Strab. 170, quoted by Eustath. in Dionys. per. 64)". For the equivalent picture of pillars of Heracles in the East see Brown sup. cit. p. 45. Cook (p. 978f. 4) also cites "an oriental analogue to the Planctae" in the *Ambrosiae Petrae* of Tyre which Nonnus *Dion.* 40.422ff. links with Heracles. As he points out (p. 979f.) various bronze coins of Tyre from 211 A.D. onwards depict these πέτραι in the form of στῆλαι and one (Cook fig. 787, p. 980) shows Heracles pouring a libation over a burning altar above which appear the two aforesaid stelae. The streams issuing from the bases of these objects are identified by Cook (p. 981) with

graphical fact the two continents in question lie twelve miles apart; but one receives a very different impression from either of the (incompatible) explanations which are appended to Heracles' exploit in Diod. Sic. 4.18.5: he narrowed the gap between Africa and Spain to keep occidental sea-monsters out of the Mediterranean; he cut a passage where none had existed before between the two land masses.

There is an important confirmation for this way of interpreting the tale in a rather unexpected source: the Roman historian Sallust. A fragment of his lost *Historiae* ⁽²¹⁾ preserved in a scholium on Juvenal ⁽²²⁾, reveals that he applied the phrase *angustissimo divortio* to the Gibraltar straits. The context of this description is enlightening in view of the considerations outlined above. We may infer from Plutarch that the detail occurred within the tale of Sertorius' memorable encounter with seafarers who had just returned from a voyage to the Fortunate Isles ⁽²³⁾. The mention of that fabulous locale ⁽²⁴⁾ confirms that once more we are dealing with the representation of an Otherworld which is to be reached through a narrow entry ⁽²⁵⁾.

All the foregoing should be borne in mind in evaluating an interpretation of Soph. Tr. 101 (which pictures Heracles δισσαιῖσιν ἀπείροις κλιθείς).

the Water of Life (cf. n. 9 above). See further on these coins Brown as cited above p. 49f., du Mesnil du Buisson, "Revue de l'Histoire des Religions" 164, 1963, 133ff. Visual depictions of other myths likewise depict rocks in the form of pillars: thus Prometheus can be shown fastened to a column (Th. Gelzer, "Mus. Helv." 36, 1979, 170ff.) as can Andromeda.

⁽²¹⁾ Cf. frs. 100-102 in L. D. Reynold's new Oxford text (1991), p. 170f. Ingeniously identified by the late Sir Ronald Syme ("Eranos" 55, 1957, 171ff. = *Roman Papers* 1.336ff.) who was particularly impressed by the "portentously rare" word *divortium* used "as a synonym for 'fretum'". For the purposes of this article it is interesting to note Syme's further reminder that Tacitus adapted Sallust's phrase by transferring it from furthest West to furthest East: *namque artissimo inter Europam Asiamque divortio Byzantium in extrema Europa posuere Graeci* (Ann. 12.63.1).

⁽²²⁾ Σ Juv. Sat. 10.1 (p. 162 Wessner): <Gades> sunt in Atlantico mari[s] Hispaniae proxim<a>e, ubi se angustissimo divortio inter columnas Herculis in medi[o]terraneos sinus Oceanus infundit.

⁽²³⁾ The story is recounted in Plutarch's *Life of Sertorius* 8f., generally acknowledged (cf. Syme (sup. cit. [n. 22]) p. 171 = p. 336 n. 3) to have drawn on Sallust's *Historiae* as a source. Cf. Syme, *Sallust* (Los Angeles 1964) p. 193f. on this work's penchant for "descriptions of far countries and peoples, not eschewing fable and the picturesque".

⁽²⁴⁾ On the Island of the Blest and related concepts in this context see Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 280 n. 18.

⁽²⁵⁾ Plutarch as cited above (n. 23) tells us that the sailors whom Sertorius met up with were returning from two Atlantic islands which were separated from each other by a "narrow strait" (λεπτὸν πορθμῶν). They are called the (νήσοι) Μακάρων and in them are located the Elysian Fields (cf. n. 24 above). Cf. Sallust fr. 101* Reynolds.

According to Lloyd-Jones ⁽²⁶⁾ the phrase conjures up the image of "Heracles as resting from his labours with an arm around each of the gigantic columns" which he erected at the Straits of Gibraltar. Although some scholars have approved ⁽²⁷⁾, the majority has jibbed at the notion of a huge and superhumanly straddling Heracles which they take this interpretation to presuppose ⁽²⁸⁾, and attempts to meet this objection have either defended the possibility of a gigantic hero ⁽²⁹⁾ or supposed "that Sophocles was either ignorant of or permissibly indifferent to the actual size and distance apart of the Pillars of Hercules" ⁽³⁰⁾. If the argumentation of the present article is correct, Sophocles was not so much ignorant of or indifferent to geographical realities as working within a quite different (mythical) framework. The possibility that the reference is not merely to the Pillars as one furthest limit of the known world ⁽³¹⁾, but also to them as the threshold and entry to the Otherworld or Underworld, is perfectly in keeping with the context of the line: at the start of the *Trachiniae*, both in the prologue and in the *parodos* which resumes so many of the prologue's themes, uncertainly as to whether Heracles is living or dead forms a recurrent motif. In the Euripidean *Heracles* the self-same uncertainty is conveyed by reference to the hero's 'last' labour, his descent to Hades to fetch Cerberus ⁽³²⁾. In Sophocles' tragedy an analogous point seems to be expressed by allusion to the two equivalent journeys to the Otherworld in the West.

If we proceed to consider the origins and significance of the Pillars of Heracles, the picture of the hero leaning upon these columns may gain further illumination. They have in fact been taken to represent the gates of the Sun-god's house ⁽³³⁾. The idea that Heracles was ever a "solar hero"

⁽²⁶⁾ "CQ" 4, 1954, 92 = *Academic Papers* [I] *Greek Epic, Lyric and Tragedy* p. 361f. See now his and Wilson's discussion in *Sophoclea* (Oxford 1990) p. 153.

⁽²⁷⁾ E.g. Holger Friis Johansen, "Lustrum" 7, 1962/7, 261 ("Lloyd-Jones... has for the first time since antiquity made this passage intelligible"), K. J. Dover, *Miscellanea Tragica in honorem J.C. Kamerbeek* (1977) p. 53 = *Greek and the Greeks* p. 189.

⁽²⁸⁾ For some bibliography see Lloyd-Jones himself, "CR" 31, 1981, 171. Perhaps Lloyd-Jones made his interpretation less attractive than necessary by automatically assuming that the pillars must be envisaged as "gigantic". Note, for instance, that Ibycus fr. 336 described the pillars of heaven as "slender" (παῖδες).

⁽²⁹⁾ Lloyd-Jones (sup. cit. [n. 28]) comparing the famous metope at Olympia showing Heracles supporting the sky on Atlas' behalf: cf. Stinton, "CQ" 36, 1986, 340ff. = *Collected Papers on Greek Tragedy* p. 449, and below n. 40.

⁽³⁰⁾ Lloyd-Jones sup. cit. [n. 26].

⁽³¹⁾ For a useful survey of references to the pillars in ancient literature see A. Schulten ap. O. Jessen, *Die Strasse von Gibraltar* (Berlin 1927) pp. 174ff.

⁽³²⁾ See, e.g., Bond on Eur. *Her.* 23ff. (Oxford 1981, p. 68f.).

⁽³³⁾ So Brown (sup. cit. [n. 20] p. 52: "A plausible interpretation of the Western pil-

has long since gone out of fashion, but his use of the Sun's bowl to get to Geryon's island in the West shows that in one specific and defined instance he is capable of taking the Sun's place. For quite independent reasons, Heracles has been compared (since antiquity) with the hero Milton called "Herculean Samson" ⁽³⁴⁾ (*Paradise Lost* 9.1060), a figure whose name and career have suggested that he is a "solar hero" (Hebrew *šemeš*: "sun") ⁽³⁵⁾. Here too we have a figure that leans upon columns: at least, Samson pulls down the two posts of the city gate of Gaza (*Judges* 16.3: "the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts... bars and all") and the pillars of the house of Dagon (*Judges* 16.29f.: "And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up" etc.).

We may go further. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.20.6f. tells us *nec Hercules a substantia solis alienus est* and that *deus Hercules religiose quidem et apud Tyron colitur*. The Pillars of Heracles were located near Gades and it has been argued ⁽³⁶⁾ that "the cultic origin of the temple-pillars at Gades is the two *stêlae*, probably free-standing, of the principal temple of Heracles at

lars would be that the sun-god went through them into his house or pulled them down at sunset. But no texts state this *explicitly*" (my italics). Brown is obviously unaware that Coomaraswamy (sup. cit. [n. 8]) pp. 476ff. and 480f. had already assembled interesting material to illustrate the widely-spread and primeval notion of a Sundoor or the Sun as an active door (e.g. the Irish motif of the speedily revolving castle whose entrance can never be found after sunset). Compare the interpretation of certain middle Eastern pillars as symbols of the two mountains from between which the sun-god comes forth (J. Scott, "Journal of Biblical Literature" 58, 1939, 144): see below n. 38. For the idea that the Sun sinks into the Underworld in the West see Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 280. For links between Under- or Otherworld and pillars in general see Patch (sup. cit. n. 8), Index s.v. 'pillar'.

⁽³⁴⁾ See, for instance, the *Chronicon Pascale* (ed. L. Dindorf, 'Corp. Script. Hist. Byzant.' 1.152f.) καὶ παρὰ τισι τὰς πράξεις αὐτοῦ (Samson) παραβάλλεσθαι ταῖς τοῦ Ἡρακλέους φασί. For similar comparisons from antiquity onwards see F. Michael Krouse, *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition* (1949, repr. 1963) p. 44f. (largely patristic authors) and Index s.v. 'Hercules'. For a detailed account of the similarities see F. Dornseiff, "Archiv f. Orientforschung" 14, 1944, 84ff. = *Antike und alter Orient* 351ff.

⁽³⁵⁾ See, in general, Brown (sup. cit. [n. 20]) p. 51f. Scepticism was expressed by, for instance, T. H. Gaster, (sup. cit. [n. 13]) p. 434 (cf. p. 535f.) concerning the popular assumption that Sampson represents a "solar hero", but the evidence seems strong (see Dornseiff as cited in the previous note who compares the role played by pillars in the careers of both heroes).

⁽³⁶⁾ Brown (sup. cit. [n. 20]) p. 49. Similarly and independently U. Täckholm, *Tartessos und die Säulen des Herakles*, "Opusc. Rom." 5, 1965, 187: "Die Ursache dessen, dass Griechen und Römer Herakles (Hercules) mit diesen orientalische Säulen in Verbindung brachten, ist seine Identifizierung mit dem tyrischen Melqart, Baal von Tyros".

Tyre", mentioned by Herodotus 2.44. The god here worshipped, who was called in Greek Heracles, had the local name of Melqarth (in Greek Μέλκαρθος or Μέλκαθρος) ⁽³⁷⁾, a god who was, in fact, originally, represented as a pillar. An impressive body of evidence has been cited ⁽³⁸⁾ to establish the Phoenician origin of the device of two pillars placed on either side of a temple and in front of the building such as seems implied by the account of Solomon's temple in *I Kings* 7.15-22 and *II Chron.* 3.15-17.

Another link is with Atlas, who (as J. P. Brown has observed) ⁽³⁹⁾ "varies between man, mountain, and pillar. Heracles temporarily takes his place, at another time sets up his own pillars". To be more precise, Homer represents Atlas as "supporting the columns which hold the sky up from the earth" ⁽⁴⁰⁾. Here too we come close to the desiderated picture of Heracles leaning against pillars ⁽⁴¹⁾, and the hero's temporary assumption of Atlas'

⁽³⁷⁾ For the identification of Heracles and Melqart see Brown (sup. cit. [n. 20]) pp. 47ff. with bibliography in p. 61 n. 85; Täckholm (sup. cit. [n. 36]) p. 187f.; van Berchen, "Syria" 44, 1967, 307ff. See further Hdt. 2.44 with Lloyd ad loc. (Leiden 1976) 2.205f.) and Philo of Byblus *F.Gr.Hist.* 790 F2 (27) with A. I. Baumgarten ad loc. (*The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos. A commentary*, Leiden 1981, pp. 209ff.). For scepticism about some (rather extreme) results of the identification in the hands of modern scholars see Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Los Angeles 1979) p. 177 n. 1. Similarities include the death by fire of both figures (cf. Brown p. 49) and their resurrection (Burkert p. 188 n. 10).

⁽³⁸⁾ See Täckholm (sup. cit. [n. 36]) pp. 185ff. (with bibliography). Professor Boardman reminds me that a common feature on early bowls imported from Phoenicia to the Mediterranean (for which cf. G. Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*, 1985) is a figure standing frontally between two columns in a sort of niche. He suggest this as a further possible source of inspiration for the nexus of ideas under considerations. It would be another instance of a possible "influence of foreign images which are reinterpreted by Greek artists" which he discusses in an article *Heracles at Sea* in the 'Festschrift for Himmelmann' (1989) pp. 191ff.

⁽³⁹⁾ Sup. cit. [n. 20] p. 46. The similarity between the earlier of Samson's two relevant achievements and Atlas' perpetual duty is exploited by Milton in *Samson Agonistes* 146ff.: "Then by main force pulled up, and on his shoulders bore | the gates of Azza, post and massy bar, | ... | Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up heav'n".

⁽⁴⁰⁾ M. L. West (sup. cit. [n. 3]) on Hes. *Th.* 517 citing *Od.* 1.52ff. and *PV* 348ff. On Atlas in general see West, Index I s.v. and K. Ranke in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. (1.954f.); on the (rather confused) picture of him supporting a pillar that holds up the sky see Barrett on Eur. *Hipp.* 746f. and H. Richardson, "CQ" 20, 1926, 129ff. (a different view in T. Worthen, "Glotta" 66, 1988, 11f.); on his temporary replacement by Heracles in the course of his quest for the apples of the Hesperides see Ranke *ib.* and Brown (sup. cit. [n. 20]) p. 50f. On Atlas' depiction in art see *LIMC* s.v. (III.1.2ff.); cf. Th. Gelzer, "Mus. Helv." 36, 1979, 170ff.

⁽⁴¹⁾ For the absence of Heracles' Pillars from Greek art (confirmed by Professor Boardman, author of the mammoth article on Heracles in *LIMC* 4) cf. Täckholm (sup. cit.

duty is reminiscent of his loan of the Sun's bowl in connection with the labour involving Geryon's cattle.

In conclusion, the allegedly baffling picture of Heracles resting on twin continents ceases to baffle when seen against the wider background of popular beliefs sketched in this article. The twin continents of Europe and Asia are imagined as divided by the thinnest of spaces because they represent the narrow entry to the Other- or Underworld. The hero leaning upon his own pillars ⁽⁴²⁾ gains clarification from the independently attested links between Heracles on the one hand and Samson, Atlas and the Sun-god on the other. It must still be admitted that there is as yet no direct literary analogy for Heracles resting upon his own pillars. The *argumentum ex silentio*, however, need not be as conclusive as some have supposed ⁽⁴³⁾. There is no direct parallel ⁽⁴⁴⁾, for instance, for Pindar's description of the Straits of Cadiz as a gate (fr. 256), a detail we should be totally ignorant of, had not Strabo happened to quote it. The Sophoclean passage too may be an isolated vestige of a picture that fits within a wider scheme of ideas with which the *Trachiniae*'s original audience would have been perfectly familiar. It is this scheme of ideas which this article has been at pains to illuminate.

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[n. 35]) p. 184. M. L. West's complaint ("BICS" 26, 1979, 110) that Lloyd-Jones' interpretation lacks any "support in ancient literature or art" fails to take this absence from the latter into account.

⁽⁴²⁾ If Heracles is to be conceived as resting against his pillars, one also thinks of the famous fragment of Mimnermus (fr. 12.10) which represents the sun as resting from his day's labours while carried back to the east in precisely the same golden bowl which Heracles borrows for the expedition against Geryon.

⁽⁴³⁾ Täckholm (sup. cit. [n. 35]) p. 184 states that in Pind. *Nem.* 3.20ff. the pillars of Heracles are not linked with any labour and believes that such a link is probably a later addition. But (cf. Barrett on Eur. *Hipp.* 744f.) it seems clear from *Nem.* 3.24f. that the pillars are associated with Heracles' combat with the Old Man of the Sea and therefore (cf. Davies (sup. cit. [n. 11]) p. 283f.) either with the labour involving the Hesperides or that relating to Geryon's cattle. See further Boardman as cited above (n. 38).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The lack of such a direct parallel for this picture is often alleged – e.g. Stinton (sup. cit. [n. 29]) p. 342 = p. 453, West (sup. cit. [n. 41]) – as an argument against Lloyd-Jones' interpretation. Visual art does show a general interest in depicting the resting Heracles: see E. Hostetter, "HSCP" 91, 1987, 367ff.