

PEDIASIMUS, HERACLES, AND THE MID-DAY HEAT

The ultimate aim of this note is illumination of a single phrase in one of the lesser works of Johannes Pediasimus (c. 1240 - 1310/14 A.D.), but to reach it I must first go forwards and then backwards by several centuries. Since the publication in 1967, by Edgar Lobel, of extensive fragments of the lyric poet Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*¹, classical scholars have been able to infer that the detailed account of Heracles' tenth labour, to rustle the cattle of Geryon, which we find in the mythographer Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* 2.106-110, derives, at whatever remove, from the afore mentioned lyric narrative². Before 1967, we already possessed a citational fragment from the same poem³, which tells of the golden cup of Helios, the sun god, used by Heracles to get to and from the goal of his labour. Apollodorus' account supplies the context for the hero's receiving the cup on loan: Heracles, passing through Libya, had grown overheated by the Sun (107.5 θερόμενος ὑπὸ Ἡλίου) and drew his bow against him. In admiration of his valour, the Sun god lent his cup.

The most natural time of day for Heracles to be excessively heated by the sun's rays, especially in Libya, would be at mid-day. Consideration of folk-tale values reinforces this assumption. The general plot of the *Geryoneis* has been shown⁴ to conform to the pattern established by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp in his epoch-making monograph *The Morphology of the Folktale*, and the episode of the encounter between Heracles and the Sun god closely matches the requirements of Propp's pattern for the folk-tale hero's encounter with a helper who tests him and then donates a magical agent to transport him to the goal of his quest⁵. Several other passages in Greek literature influenced by folk-tale idiomatically locate a hero's encounter with a helper figure at mid-day: Menelaus' encounter with Proteus,

¹ *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* vol. XXXII.

² See especially D. L. Page, "JHS" 93, 1973, 144; also the forthcoming commentary on Stesichorus by Patrick Finglass and myself. The standard text of Apollodorus is the Teubner edition by Richard Wagner (*Mythographi Graeci* I, Lipsiae 1926²), from which I quote. The relevant passage occurs on p. 83.

³ Preserved by the second century A.D. writer Athenaeus, 11.469e = fr. 8a Davies and Finglass.

⁴ See in particular Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Los Angeles 1979) 84 and M. Davies, *Stesichorus' Geryoneis and its folk-tale origins*, "CQ" 48, 1988, 277-9.

⁵ On the magical agent see, for instance, M. Davies, *The folk-tale origins of the Iliad and Odyssey*, "WS" 115, 2002, 7-8.

Old Man of the Sea, at *Odyssey* 4.450 ff.⁶, Simichidas' with Lycidas in Theocritus *Idyll* 7.31-3,⁷ Jason's with the Heroines of Libya (the same locale as Heracles') at Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* 4.1312 ff.⁸. Significant mid-day meetings with numinous beings are very much at home in the world of folk-tale⁹.

Tout se tient. And there is further confirmation: John Pediasimus, with whom we began, composed a prose summary of the Twelve Labours of Heracles which specifically states, in connection with the Tenth, that the overheating of the hero occurred μεσημβρίας ούσης ἡλίῳ θερόμενος¹⁰. Johannes Pediasimus' is not a name much conjured with by classical scholars¹¹, and the summary in question is supposed to derive entirely from Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*, and thus to have no independent value, other than as a further source of manuscript readings¹². In fact, Pediasimus does very occasionally add a detail not in Apollodorus' account. But usually his source is either (a) *common sense*, as when he tells us that the ghosts of the dead fled

⁶ M. Davies, *Proppian light on the Aristaeus episode in Vergil's Fourth Georgic*, "Prometheus" 29, 2003, 57-64.

⁷ M. Davies, *Theocritus' Seventh Idyll and the Folk-tale*, in *Homenaje Juan Antonio López Férez* (Madrid 2013) 231-5.

⁸ M. Davies, "SCO" 48, 2002, 57. Since Pan can function as helper figure (see esp. Herodotus 6.105-6, on his epiphany to Phidippides before Marathon) one should recall his association with mid-day and his sending of help to mortals via noon-time dreams: see P. Borgeaud, *Recherches sur le dieu Pan* (1979) 123 = *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece* (1988) 111.

⁹ See the remarks of B. Bönisch-Brednich in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (13, p. 166 (3.2)) s.v. 'Tageszeiten': "Das Gebot der Einhaltung des Mittagsruhe beruht auf Glaubens – vorstellungen, nach denen zu Mittag ebenso wie um Mitternacht eine Konzentration numinöser Kräfte vermutet wurde. Eine Erklärung hierfür besteht in der Gefährlichkeit der sommerlichen Mittagshitze, die zu Überhitzung (Hitzschlag) führen kann". See further, on mid-day demons and the like, Th. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (London 1967) 770f. and 852, M. Davies, *The Sirens at Mid-day*, "Prometheus" 31, 2005, 225-28. Further bibliography, esp. E. Blum, *The Dangerous Hour* (1970) 328 ff., in E. L. Brown, "HSCPh" 85, 1981, 93 n. 163.

¹⁰ Pediasimus' summary of the labours is printed by Wagner (n. 2 above), as an adjunct to his text of Apollodorus. The words in question stand on p. 257 (10.107.14).

¹¹ He is No. 22.235 in the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (edd. E. Trapp et al., Vienna 1971-95). For further discussion of his life and work see most recently Inmaculada Pérez Martín, *L'Écriture de l'Hypatos Jean Pothos Pédiasmus d'après ses scholies aux Elementa d'Euclide*, "Scriptorium" 64, 2010, 111-3.

¹² See Wagner (n. 2) IXL-XLI, esp. the first paragraph: "cum totus ex Apollodori bibliotheca... depromptus sit, id solum inest pretium, ut quasi codicis cuiusdam Apollodorei varias lectiones praebeat". A specimen is to hand in the very passage we are discussing, where Wagner's *app. crit.* reads "θερόμενος *R Pedias. 26: θερμαινόμενος A". On the last sentence of the Third labour again see Wagner's *app. crit.* ("haec verba ab Apollodoro aliena recte delevit All[atius]").

from Heracles – visiting Hades on his Twelfth labour – *because they were afraid*. Larger-scale (but no less banal) instances are the final portion of the first sentence of the Fourth labour: faced with the challenge of the Erymanthian boar, Heracles did not underestimate his opponent; or the first sentence of the Fifth: since Heracles emerged successful from the previous labours, further labours were devised, which he carried out as commanded, and, as son of Zeus, proved his parentage by his deeds. Alternatively (b), the added detail derives from *widely available mythological knowledge*, as when, at the start of the Fifth labour he reminds us that the Diomedes here featured is not the same as the younger Homeric hero; or at the start of the Seventh, that Minos was son of Zeus and brother of Rhadamanthus.

In the case of the mid-day heat, Pediasimus' native common sense may perhaps be invoked (the detail is mentioned nowhere else). It is also conceivable that, here alone, Pediasimus has preserved a phrase not essential to the sense, which has dropped out of Apollodorus' manuscript tradition. Whatever the truth, our speculation above as to the time of Heracles' encounter with Helios receives a degree of confirmation.

And there may be another specific locating of Heracles' overheated state at mid-day. An anonymous poem of 211 iambic trimeters on the hero's Twelve Labours, by the so-called 'Anonymus Upsaliensis', has been partially preserved in the MS Paris. gr. 2722, and the relevant portion of the account of the tenth labour (fol. 132^v) was plausibly restored on p. 417 of the *editio princeps* as [κε]καυμένος... τῇ [σφοδρᾷ μεσημβρίᾳ]. The first editor¹³ dated the composition to the sixth or seventh century A.D. on metrical grounds. Aubrey Diller later argued¹⁴ that "classical metrics were revived in Pediasimus' time and he himself is known as a poetaster from his πόθος¹⁵. The possibility of a separate branch of tradition appearing in the seventh and fourteenth centuries seems very remote. Moreover scholia common to the verse and prose works are taken from the *Etymologica*, which are almost certainly of medieval origin". Diller consequently concluded that "it is possible and, in view of the paucity of the tradition, probable that the manuscript was connected with Pediasimus", and that he was, indeed, also the author of the iambic poem, "since it has many peculiarities in common with the prose work" (the placing of Heracles' overheating at mid-day would be one of these 'peculiarities' or features).

However, I am advised by Byzantinists whom I have consulted that the

¹³ B. Knös (with help from Paul Maas) in "ByzZ" 17, 1908, 397-429. For a full account of MS Paris. gr. 2722 see Diller as cited in the next note.

¹⁴ *The Text History of the Bibliotheca of Pseudo-Apollodorus*, "TAPhA" 66, 1935, 306 = *Studies in Greek Manuscript Tradition* (Amsterdam 1983) 209 and n. 22.

¹⁵ On this see Pérez Martín as cited above n. 11.

number of deviations in the poem from later Byzantine practice strongly tells against Diller's argument and for the dating proposed by the first editor. Resolutions and anapaestic substitutions disappear from iambic verse after George of Pisidia (*fl.* c. 610-35 A.D.), and proparoxytone verse endings become very rare after the seventh century and oxytone verse endings are avoided¹⁶. So it is likeliest that either the Anonymus Upsaliensis and Pediasimus following him¹⁷, or the two authors separately and independently, preserve a precious fragment of folk-tale values.

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ABSTRACT.

The detail that it was at mid-day that Heracles became overheated by the sun during his Tenth Labour, found in two passages of late Greek literature, is shown to conform to folk-tale values.

KEY-WORDS.

Stesichorus, Pediasimus, Anonymus Upsaliensis, mid-day, folk-tale.

¹⁶ See M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982) 184-5; M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres* (Vienna 2003) 222 n. 28. West p. 184 n. 72 finds the seventh century a likelier date. Professor Lauxtermann informs me that he thinks the late sixth century somewhat likelier.

¹⁷ That Pediasimus here alone in his entire summary should have borrowed a detail from an external source seems to me decidedly unlikely.