

TWO VIRGILIAN SIMILES AND THE 'ΗΡΑΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΑΒΑΣΙΣ

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*quam multa in silvis autumnis frigore primo
lapsa cadunt folia, aut ad terram gurgite ab alto
quam multae glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus
trans pontum fugat et terris immittit apricis.*

[*Aeneid* 6.309–312]

THE 'Ηρακλέους κατάβασις is the name given by Eduard Norden to an early epic account of the Descent of Heracles which is no longer extant. Its existence was conjectured by Norden, who explained certain remarkable similarities in some passages of Bacchylides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Virgil, and Apollodorus in terms of an archetype which influenced the five authors mentioned.¹ In particular the supposition that Virgil was influenced by the 'Ηρακλέους κατάβασις enabled Norden to explain an alleged inconsistency in the *Αλνείου κατάβασις* and thereby answer an ancient ζήτημα. Servius had alleged that the location of Cerberus in the Underworld as referred to by Charon

*Tartareum ille manu custodem in vincla petiit
ipsius a solio regis traxitque tremantem*

[*Aen.* 6.395 f.]

is inconsistent with Cerberus' appearance immediately across the Styx

*Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci
personat adverso recubans immanis in antro.*

[*Aen.* 6.417 f.]²

Since Heracles is said, however, by Apollodorus to have asked Pluto for permission to capture Cerberus and to have found the dog "at the gates of Acheron,"³ Norden infers that Heracles in the 'Ηρακλέους κατάβασις

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¹The catabatic features which Norden traces in these authors are discussed fully in the passages indicated in note 2 on page 5 of his commentary *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis Buch VI*³ (Leipzig-Berlin 1926). Our knowledge of epic *catabaseis* generally is extremely fragmentary; see Ganschietz in his monumental article "Katabasis" in Pauly Wissowa, *RE* 10, esp. 2401–2402.

²Servius remarks on *ipsius a solio regis: atqui Cerberus statim post flumina est, ut* (417) . . . : *nam illic quasi est aditus inferorum, solium autem Plutonis interius est. ergo aut ad naturam canum referendum est qui territi ad dominos confugiunt: aut solium pro imperio accipiendum est.*

³Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12: αἰτοῦντος δὲ αὐτοῦ Πλούτωνα τὸν Κέρβερον, ἐπέταξεν ὁ Πλούτων ἄγειν χωρὶς ὧν εἶχεν ὅπλων κρατοῦντα. ὁ δὲ εὐρών αὐτὸν ἐπὶ ταῖς πύλαις τοῦ Ἀχέροντος, κτλ.

must have walked to Pluto's palace in order to obtain permission and then back to the gates of Acheron to collect Cerberus. All who accept Servius' view that the dog in Virgil's *Aeneid* was taken by Hercules from Pluto's throne have wrongly taken *ipsius a solio regis* with *traxitque* instead of with *petiuit* and have failed to see that the order of events as described by Apollodorus fits that in the *Aeneid* also.⁴ The supposition that Virgil drew on the Heracles *catabasis* also explains the apparent difficulty when the Sibyl commands Aeneas to draw his sword as he enters the Underworld

tuque invade viam vaginaque eripe ferrum [Aen. 6.260]

and subsequently commands that he should not use it

*corripit hic subita trepidus formidine ferrum
Aeneas strictamque aciem venientibus offert,
et ni docta comes tenuis sine corpore vitas
admoneat volitare cava sub imagine formae,
inruat et frustra ferro diverberet umbras.* [Aen. 6.290-294]

For Apollodorus records how Hermes told Heracles not to use the sword against the ghost of the Gorgon Medusa: ὀπηνίκα δὲ εἶδον αὐτὸν αἱ ψυχαί, χωρὶς Μελεάγρου καὶ Μεδοῦσης τῆς Γοργόνης ἔφυγον. ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν Γοργόνα τὸ ξίφος ὥς ζῶσαν ἔλκει, καὶ παρὰ Ἑρμοῦ μανθάνει ὅτι κενὸν εἰδωλὸν ἐστὶ (*Bibl.* 2.5.12).⁵ And this passage, as pointed out in note 22 below, has close parallels in Bacchylides and Aristophanes and in Homer too. It is my main purpose, however, rather than re-examine the evidence for the existence of the Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις as a whole, to limit the argument to the study of the two similes quoted at the head of this article in which Virgil likens the souls of the dead to migrating birds and falling leaves together with their prototypes and to make reference to Norden's hypothesis chiefly on the evidence of the similes alone. This inquiry is moreover called for by the discovery of new evidence presented by Edgar Lobel and Hugh Lloyd-Jones, and new light can also be thrown from a passage in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.

Implicit in Norden's reconstruction of the prototypes of the Virgilian similes is the assumption that poets derive their similes from earlier sources. Briefly Norden's view is that since Homer has one simile involving leaves (*Iliad* 6.146 ff.) and so has Bacchylides (*Epinician* 5.63 ff.), and another involving birds (*Iliad* 3.2 ff.) and so has Sophocles (*O.T.*

⁴Cf. E. Norden, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1) 238. However, the old view still lives on, as several modern translations of the *Aeneid* reveal. And H. E. Butler in his commentary *The Sixth Book of the Aeneid* (Oxford 1920) 168 simply quotes Servius (see n. 2) with the remark that Servius' first reason is correct, and thus ignores Norden's solution. Norden's views are ignored also by Sir Frank Fletcher and M. Delaunoy in their more recent editions of the Sixth Book.

⁵Cf. E. Norden *op. cit.* 206-207.

175 ff.), and since Virgil has both similes side by side (*Aen.* 6.309–312), Bacchylides, Sophocles and Virgil must have found both similes collected and equipped with Homeric characteristics in the 'Ηρακλέους κατάβασις. Bacchylides borrowed the one; Sophocles borrowed the other; Virgil took both.⁶ It is well recognised that there is a common literary stock of similes,⁷ but that is not to say that no poet ever invents or adapts. Norden's assumption about the mode of transmission in the case of Virgil's leaf- and bird-similes thus calls for close examination; for unless there is compelling evidence it would seem unlikely that Homer should have recorded two similes separately, that these were then collected by the author of the *Heracles catabasis*, that each of the two similes was then taken separately by Bacchylides and Sophocles, but both together by Virgil. We shall therefore examine each of Virgil's similes and their alleged prototypes in turn, and we take the leaf-simile first.

Norden correctly remarked on the striking similarity between Virgil at *Aeneid* 6.309–310 and Bacchylides at *Epinician* 5.63–67, where Heracles in Hades sees on the banks of Cocytus the spirits of the dead, which are compared to rustling leaves on Mount Ida. We may note that Mount Ida has little to do with Heracles but it was reputed to be well-wooded and would be known to Bacchylides through Homer.

⁶*Ibid.* 223–224. The passages cited are:

Iliad 6.146 ff.:

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δὲ θ' ὕλη
τηλεθώσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη.
ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεή ἢ μὲν φύει, ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Bacchyl. *Epin.* 5.63 ff.:

ἔνθα δυστάνων βροτῶν
ψυχὰς ἐδάη παρὰ Κωκυτοῦ ρέεθροις,
οἶά τε φύλλ' ἄνεμος
"Ιδᾶς ἀνὰ μηλοβότους
πρώνας ἀργηστὰς δονεῖ.

For the views of commentators on this leaf-simile see M. R. Lefkowitz, "Bacchylides' Ode 5," *HSCP* 73 (1969) 66.

Iliad 3.2 ff.:

Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῇ τ' ἐνοπῇ τ' ἴσαν ὄρνιθες ὥς,
ἥντε περ κλαγγῇ γεράνων πέλει οὐρανῷ πρό,
αἶ τ' ἐπεὶ οὖν χειμῶνα φύγον καὶ ἀθέσφατον ὄμβρον,
κλαγγῇ ταί γε πέτονται ἐπ' Ὀκεανοῖο ῥοάων
ἀνδράσι Πυγμαίοισι φόβον καὶ κῆρα φέρουσαι.
ἥρεια δ' ἄρα ταί γε κακὴν ἔριδα προφέρονται.

Soph. *O.T.* 175 ff.:

ἄλλον δ' ἂν ἄλλω προσίδοις ἅπερ εὐπτερον ὄρνιν
κρείσσον ἀμαιμακέτου πυρὸς ὄρμενον
ἄκταν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ.

The Virgilian text is quoted at the head of this article.

⁷For example by C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London 1952) 276 ff. and T. B. L. Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer* (London 1960) esp. 42, 82, 216, 223 ff., 280.

The supposition that Virgil's leaf-simile is indebted to the influence of a 'Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις is substantially strengthened by the publication of a new fragment preserved in *P.Oxy.* 2622 which tells of Heracles' initiation at Eleusis by Eumolpus. By brilliant insight Hugh Lloyd-Jones in a recent article⁸ makes it highly probable on several counts that Pindar, almost certainly the author of the fragment, drew on the same 'Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις as did Bacchylides, Aristophanes, Virgil, and Apollodorus. I transcribe a passage relevant for our purposes from the text as published by Lloyd-Jones in the aforementioned article:

αὐ]τίκα νιν φθιμένων [
]τρέφεται καὶ ὄσ' ἐν πόντῳ [
]μενος[]
]α μ[έγα]ν Διὸς υἱὸν [
 . . . [a: 12-15]

The word Με]λέαγρον a few lines later led Edgar Lobel, the first editor of the papyrus, to suggest that Heracles saw Meleager and the countless ghosts in Hades in *P.Oxy.* 2622 as in Bacchylides' fifth *Epinician*. To this scene the description in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* 2.5.12 corresponds, but no similes are there recorded. Indeed no similes appear for certain in the Pindaric fragment but Lloyd-Jones infers from the word πόντῳ that "earth" stood in the preceding clause and conjectures from the parallel scene in Bacchylides that Pindar likewise compared the souls to leaves in the "earth" clause.⁹ Support may be found, if such is needed, for the contrast between earth and sea in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 4-5:

οἰωνούς τε διυπετέας καὶ θηρία πάντα,
 ἤμην ὄσ' ἥπειρος πολλὰ τρέφει ἢ ὄσα πόντος.¹⁰

and one might almost infer that creatures nourished by land and sea could have formed part of Pindar's simile, but the striking resemblance between Bacchylides at 5.63 ff. and the Pindaric fragment remains a powerful reason for preferring Lloyd-Jones' conjecture that the ghosts were compared to leaves. It thus seems even more probable than when Norden wrote that Aeneas' meeting in the Underworld with the leaf-like souls of the dead owes much to a *catabasis* featuring Heracles.

It remains to note that if the comparison of the generations of men to leaves by Glaucus in the sixth book of the *Iliad* influenced the author

⁸Hugh Lloyd-Jones, "Heracles at Eleusis: P. Oxy. 2622 and P.S.I. 1391," *Maia* n.s. 19 (1967) 206-229. The papyrus was first edited by E. Lobel, *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 32 (London 1967) 63-65.

⁹For τρέφειν of the earth see Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8) 215, n. 17. Compare other leaf-similes at *Iliad* 2.468, 800 and *Od.* 9.51.

¹⁰I am indebted to the late J. W. Fitton who so kindly drew my attention to this parallel and others which illustrate the point; see W. S. Barrett's recent commentary on Euripides' *Hippolytus* 1277-1280.

of the Heracles *catabasis*,¹¹ it has been completely transformed. For the Homeric poet was thinking of the whole cycle of birth, maturity, and death, while the poet of the *catabasis* thought only of the autumnal aspect of falling leaves as similar to fluttering souls.

We turn now to the "bird-simile" where the mode of transmission is, as I believe, far less certain than Norden makes out. Virgil's simile might be translated thus: "as many as the birds which flock towards the shore from the deep when the freezing year routs them across the sea, sending them to sunny lands." These birds are compared to souls yearning to make their last crossing over the Styx. Have these birds assembled before or after migration? "Virgil compares the souls . . . to birds assembling on the seashore before migrating" according to Lloyd-Jones.¹² The words *ad terram gurgite ab alto* perhaps indicate, however, that the birds have already crossed seas, and one might deduce from *trans pontum fugat . . . terris immittit apricis* that they were arriving at their journey's end. There the analogy ends; though in accordance with the poetic situation we might expect the birds only to have reached a temporary resting-place before finally taking off for summer lands. In any case the essential point is that Virgil's birds are timid and bedraggled; they, like the souls, have been on a long journey and are nearing home. In Sophocles the birds are not viewed from the point of their destination, but from the point of their departure, and they are not mingling in a mass but are flying off one by one vigorously. The essential feature about the birds which are made to illustrate the onrush of the Trojans in Homer is that they are

¹¹Norden does not raise the possibility that the Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις might have been a pre-Homeric poem. The passage in the *Nekyia* which includes Heracles (*Od.* 11.601 ff.) may be indebted to a pre-Homeric poem which perhaps existed as a *catabasis* of Heracles; cf. P. Von der Mühl, "Zur Erfindung in der *Nekyia* der *Odyssee*," *Philologus* 93 (1938) 8-11 and R. Merkelbach, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee* (Munich 1951) 191. The suggestion is thought unlikely, however, by D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford 1955) 49, n. 7 and Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8) 227, and cf. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 236. Cf. also schol. H. *Od.* 11.568: *νοθεύεται μέχρι τοῦ ὅς ἐλπὼν ὁ μὲν αἰδοῖς ἔδω δέμουν Ἀΐδου εἰσῶν* (627). Whether this Odyssean passage is a post-Homeric insertion or was incorporated from a pre-Homeric poem by Homer or a later scribe calls for a separate enquiry. Certainly, however, Lloyd-Jones is mistaken to say that Heracles is not frightened in our Heracles *catabasis*, for Bacchylides at 5.84 makes Meleager stay Heracles' arrow with the words "οὐ τοι δέος" (cf. *Aen.* 6.290 quoted on p. 245 above and see also E. Paratore, "Bacchilide e Virgilio," *WS* 69 [1956] 294). The argument that the author of our Heracles *catabasis* knew (and is therefore later than) the *Nekyia* because he wished his hero to improve on the performance of Odysseus who is frightened of the ghosts at the beginning (43) and is frightened at the prospect of seeing the Gorgonian head at the end (633) does not therefore bear examination. On this see further n. 22 below.

¹²*Op. cit.* (above, n. 8) 215. The same view is attributed to Long in J. Conington's note on *Aen.* 6.310. For further discussion see H. F. Macdonald, "Virgil's Migrating Birds," *G. & R.* 5 (1958) 185.

noisy and threatening. Nobody would assert that these Trojans are souls of the departed, nor are they at their journey's end. Thus Sophocles' bird-simile has little in common with Homer's, or Virgil's with Sophocles', while the only resemblance between Virgil's and Homer's is that the birds in both similes are migratory.¹³ There is thus no reason why Sophocles, who for this simile owed nothing to Homer, should not have invented it himself (if it was not already cliché). The notion that birds like souls flutter away beyond recall is natural enough. Norden himself cites references to Greek literature and art in which souls of the dead are depicted as birds.¹⁴ It is therefore unlikely that Sophocles drew on the Heracles *catabasis*,¹⁵ and since moreover neither Bacchylides nor Aristophanes nor Apollodorus records the simile there remains little from the evidence considered by Norden, as here re-assessed, to support the conjecture that Virgil's bird-simile, as distinct from the leaf-simile, can be traced back to the Heracles *catabasis*.

The Pindaric fragment again enables us to carry our enquiry further. In the lines already quoted above the $\delta\sigma'$ which begins the second clause implies a simile in which numerosity is the point of comparison. Lobel conjectured that the ghosts were likened to the waves of the sea, a comparison used elsewhere in classical antiquity to indicate an infinite

¹³Homer's simile is in fact imitated elsewhere by Virgil, at *Aen.* 10.264 ff.:

*quales sub nubibus atris
Strymoniae dant signa grues atque aethera tranant
cum sonitu, fugiuntque Notos clamore secundo.*

A vestige is to be found also at *G.* 1.374–375:

*... aut illum (sc. imbrem) surgentem vallibus imis
aëriae fugere grues,*

where *aëriae* ("flying in the air") echoes $\eta\epsilon\pi\iota\alpha\iota$ (usually translated "at early morning"); see Walter Leaf on *Iliad* 3.7.

¹⁴*Op. cit.* 165. For a more fully documented account of the classical and non-classical folklore belief that souls are winged see Th. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York 1969) 769, 850–851, and 881. To these instances one might add the observation that swallows are often shown on Greek tombstones; *RE* 2.776, s.v. "Schwalben und Segler" (section 1.g). The belief also appears in the oldest secular catabatic myth in Near Eastern literature and possibly the oldest in the world; for in Tablet 7, col. 4 of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Enkidu dreamed that he was transformed so that his arms became wings like those of a bird and that he entered the house of dust where the dead are clothed like birds with wings (see A. E. Speiser's translation in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*³ [ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton 1955] 87). It would not therefore have been surprising if an ancient Heracles *catabasis* had contained the bird-simile of the ghosts since the Akkadian language was the *lingua franca* of practically the entire literary world in the second millennium B.C. (see S. N. Kramer, "Cuneiform Studies and the History of Literature," *PAPS* 107 [1963] 487), and Heracles himself in many ways resembles Gilgamesh. However, there is no confirmatory evidence.

¹⁵This conclusion was also reached, but without detailed argument, by Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* 215, n. 16.

number.¹⁶ Lloyd-Jones considered the possibility of a comparison with grains of sand but rightly inclines to Lobel's suggestion as being poetically more satisfying.¹⁷ It would be gratifying had Pindar, like Virgil, likened the ghosts to birds: but we would then need to conjecture something like ποτάται/ὄρνεα and this in turn would require ἐπὶ for ἐν πόντῳ so that we are forced back to Lobel's original conjecture of a comparison to waves. We thus have still no firm ground for believing that Virgil took the bird-simile from the Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις, but the survival of *P.Oxy.* 2622 at least suggests that in Pindar Virgil had a precedent for including a pair of similes in a ghost-passage.

How could Virgil have known the Heracles *catabasis*? Norden believed that Virgil is likely to have derived his knowledge of this poem from a mythological handbook¹⁸—presumably because such a work might contain more motifs than any version contained separately. Lloyd-Jones inclines to the view that a mythographical handbook, even if fuller than Apollodorus, would be unlikely to contain such details as the similes. He believes that Virgil was therefore unlikely to have relied exclusively on such a source, and suggests that he took the comparison of the ghosts to leaves or waves from Pindar.¹⁹ If so Virgil must consciously have replaced Pindar's comparison to waves by the comparison to birds: but Lloyd-Jones offers no explanation for this change. Since moreover he does not suggest that Virgil borrowed from Bacchylides, it behoves us to compare what can be gleaned from the Pindaric fragment with the scene as described by Bacchylides.

The Pindaric fragment has been reconstructed largely from Bacchylides, but lacks one detail common to both Bacchylides and Virgil. This detail demands attention. In his summary of the contents of the *Aeneid* Lloyd-Jones remarked: "Next Aeneas and the Sibyl are ferried across the lake of Acheron in the barque of Charon (245 f.). In Bacchylides and, as we now see, in Pindar, the comparison of the countless souls to leaves came right at the start of the journey through Hades; but Virgil holds it back in order to apply it to the countless spirits waiting on the shores of Acheron to be ferried to the other shore (305 f.)."²⁰

¹⁶Lobel quotes σχήματα δ' ὀρχησις τόσα μοι πόρεν ὅσσ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ κύματα ποιέται χείματι νῆξ ὅλοη *ap.* Plutarch *Quaest. symp.* 932f. See further Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* 216, n. 18; and cf. Aesch. *P.V.* 89–90; Theocr. 16.60–61; Virg. *G.* 2.108; Martial 6.34.2–3.

¹⁷*Op. cit.* 216 and n. 19 for the citation of sand-similes at Pind. *Pyth.* 9.46–47 and Hom. *Il.* 2.800 and 9.385. Cf. the oracle in Her. 1.47 and the later examples of Catull. 7.3 and Virg. *G.* 2.106 for infinite number expressed by comparison to grains of sand. I notice a modern instance of a sand-simile used of ghosts in Ibsen's *Ghosts* where Mrs Alving says: "I should think there must be ghosts all over the country—as countless as grains of sand" (Act 2: Penguin trans. p. 61).

¹⁸*Op. cit.* 239 on *Aen.* 6.395 f.

¹⁹*Op. cit.* 228–229.

²⁰*Ibid.* 222.

This statement obscures an important clue since it implies the displacement of the simile by Virgil to a later part of the journey, whereas Virgil's location of it—and this is significant—corresponds very closely indeed to Bacchylides'. Heracles presumably sees the leaf-like souls on the inner bank of the Cocytus river, *παρὰ Κωκυτοῦ ῥέεθροις*, whereas Aeneas sees them before crossing over. And the souls which Aeneas sees are as much on Cocytus' shore as on the shores of Acheron or Stygian marsh.²¹ Virgil has thus located the simile, if anything, earlier than its corresponding position in Bacchylides.

The leaf-simile, with a remnant of the bird-simile, appears also in Dante's *Inferno* and, significantly, Dante, like Bacchylides and Virgil, locates the souls of the simile on the banks of the underworld river, called by Dante Acheron:

*Come d'autunno si levan le foglie
l'una appresso dell'altra, infin che il ramo
vede alla terra tutte le sue spoglie:
similmente il mal seme d'Adamo
gittansi di quel lito ad una ad una,
per cenni, come augel per suo richiamo.
Così sen vanno su per l'onda bruna,
ed avanti che sian di là discese,
anche di qua nova schiera s'aduna.* [Canto 3.112-120]

The simile is imitated in turn by Milton who describes Satan's evil spirits assembling on the beach

*Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High over-arched imbower.* [Paradise Lost 1.302-303]

If Virgil's simile *seems* to be located later than its Bacchylidean (or Pindaric?) prototype, that is partly because Bacchylides' underworld geography is less developed than Virgil's and partly because Aeneas had

²¹Aeneas, unlike Dionysus in the *Frogs*, is not exactly ferried across the "lake of Acheron," nor are the souls exclusively on its shores. Sir Frank Fletcher is probably right to envisage the *tenebrosa palus* of *Aen.* 6.107 as part of the Cumaeen topography as distinct from an underworld marsh, and in his Oxford commentary says on *Aen.* 6.295 ff. that "in Virgil Acheron is a river which flows up from below into Lake Avernus (107)"—or, as is sometimes thought, it flows into Lago Fusaro, the *Palus Acherusia* of ancient tradition: cf. Strabo 5.4.4, p. 243 and Sil. Ital. 12.126-129; see A. G. McKay, *Naples and Campania* (Vergilian Soc. Amer. 1962) 4-5. Virgil may have conflated the Acherusian and Avernian lakes, for Aeneas mentions the entrance to the Underworld closely with *tenebrosa palus Acheronte refuso* at 107, but the entrance is on the shore of Avernus at 126, 201, 240 ff.; cf. L. S. Hitchcock, "Selective Topography," *CJ* 28 (1933) 509-510 and 513-514. At all events Charon crosses *Stygiam paludem* (323, 369, cf. 374, 385, 414) which can be identified with *Stygios lacus* (134). Charon crosses this underworld lake and yet he is also guardian of (*servat*) Acheron and Cocytus (295 ff.). His barque is therefore to be envisaged as somehow crossing the Stygian marsh at the confluence of the rivers Acheron and Cocytus; and the souls are associated with Cocytus at 318, 323, 327, 330, and 384.

several experiences to go through before he reached Cocytus-Styx-Acheron. Virgil's river was therefore pushed deeper into the Underworld. The impression that Virgil "held the simile back" actually arises from the displacement forward of the monsters which Aeneas meets *vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci* (*Aen.* 6.273 ff.), for in other versions of the Heracles *catabasis* they are met after the crossing.²² Since it is unknown whether Pindar also alludes to Cocytus in the lost part of the fragment, we must leave open the possibility that Virgil may have known the detail of the location through an author other than, or perhaps in addition to, Pindar.

Virgil's use of Bacchylides is still an unexplored field. Bacchylides is hardly mentioned in any of the great commentaries like Conington's because he was little known before the great find at Al-Kussiyah in 1896. His importance to Virgil is still unassessed, and even Norden did not suggest that Virgil knew the Heracles *catabasis* through Bacchylides. E. Paratore, however, writing before the discovery of *P.Oxy.* 2622, believed that Bacchylides was well known in the Augustan age and that Virgil derived much from his fifth *Epinician*.²³ It is not unlikely therefore

²²Aristophanes indicates that Dionysus' Descent into the Underworld is modelled on Heracles', and Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* 219 and 221, rightly compares the monsters whom Aeneas meets to the snakes and beasts whom Dionysus and Xanthias expect to meet after crossing lake Acheron (*Frogs* 278 ff., cf. 143 ff.; and for a list of terrifying monsters see 465 ff. and cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche*,⁸ trans. by W. B. Hillis, 244, n. 6) and to the Gorgon Medusa whom Heracles meets in the Underworld in Apollodorus' version (*Bibliotheca* 2.5.12). The two female doorkeepers who in the *Frogs* tell how Heracles drew his sword and terrified them (564 ff.) should, as I believe, be regarded as comic doublets of the monsters whom Dionysus and Xanthias expect to meet. No ghostly monsters as such are encountered by Heracles in Bacchylides' version but the shade of Meleager who is presumably on the other side of Cocytus and who at *Epinician* 5.76-84 warns Heracles not to shoot at him corresponds not only to the two females and the monsters in Aristophanes and to the ghost of the Gorgon in Apollodorus and to the ghostly horde of monsters including Gorgons in the Virgilian Underworld, but also to Hermes who in the Apollodoran version warns Heracles not to attack the ghost of the Gorgon with his sword. In Virgil's *Αἰνέλου κατάβασις*, Hermes' role is given to the Sibyl who forbids Aeneas to strike at the shades (*Aen.* 6.290-294; see p. 245 above). At the end of Homer's *Nekyia* Odysseus contemplates attacking the *Γοργεῖν κεφαλὴν*, which, however, does not actually appear. The relation of this passage to Norden's *Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις* deserves a special study (see also n. 11 above). The location of Dante's beasts at *Inferno* 1.31 ff. corresponds with Virgil's, that is at the beginning of the journey and before the river-crossing, but their function is slightly different.

²³See E. Paratore, "Bacchilide e Virgilio," *WS* 69 (1956) 289-296 and esp. 290 for mention of Bacchylides' popularity in the Augustan age. On these similes Paratore says (293 f.) that "I ritocchi che nei vv. 309-10 di Virgilio subisce la similitudine bacchilidea dei vv. 65-67 obbediscono al tipico bisogno della fantasia virgiliana di arricchire di più precise determinazioni lo spunto mutuato da un precedente testo poetico: lo οἶα τε φύλλ' ἄνεμος . . . δανεῖ di Bacchilide diventa il *quam multa in silvis autumnum frigore primo lapsa cadunt folia*," but no reference to Cocytus is specifically made.

that Virgil was indebted to Bacchylides for the geographical allusion to Cocytus.

Previous commentators on the 'Ἡρακλέους κατὰβασις have overlooked a relevant passage in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* which may throw fresh light on the possibilities of transmission of the Virgilian similes. Apollonius tells us that when Jason launched out on to the river Phasis when returning from Aea with the Golden Fleece, Aeetes and the Colchians poured along the river bank countless as the waves of the sea when crested by the stormy wind or as the leaves that fall in Autumn:

ὅσσα δὲ πόντου
κύματα χειμερίοιο κορύσσεται ἐξ ἀνέμοιο,
ἢ ὅσα φύλλα χαμᾶζε περικλαδέος πέσεν ὕλης
φυλλοχόῳ ἐνὶ μηνί—τίς ἂν τάδε τεκμήραιτο;—
ὥς οἱ ἀπειρέσιοι ποταμοῦ παρεμέτρεον ὄχθας,
κλαγγῇ μαιμώνοντες· [Argon. 4.214–219]

Since the Argonautic voyage has clearly been fitted into a catabatic framework,²⁴ could it be that Apollonius incorporated these similes from the Heracles *catabasis*? If so the Colchians would approximate to the *ψυχαί* and the river Phasis (almost certainly an otherworldly river in origin)²⁵ becomes the counterpart of Bacchylides' underworld river Cocytus. Lobel's suggestions that Pindar's second simile was a comparison to waves and that Pindar's μένος refers to the "might" of the winds are also strengthened if we assume that Apollonius' knowledge of the Heracles *catabasis* is derived at least in part from the Pindaric fragment. We may note also that Apollonius has ὅσσα . . . κύματα and ὅσα φύλλα where Bacchylides had οἶα . . . φύλλ', and that one ὅς survives in the Pindaric fragment.

²⁴Professor Joseph Fontenrose, for instance, remarks that the Argonautic voyage "belongs to the story type wherein a band of heroes, each possessed of remarkable powers, sails over the sea to the land of the dead, where they meet a demonic being, overcome obstacles, perform difficult tasks, finally defeat the forces of death, and achieve their object. And this is but a maritime variant of the story in which the heroes go underground or to the edges of the world on foot" (*Python* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1959] 485–486).

²⁵The Phasis in Argonautic legend was at the ends of the world, Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.1261 and cf. Hes. *Cat. Women* fr. 45 and 45a, ed. Evelyn-White; *Mimn.* fr. 11.5 ff. ed. Bergk; Hecat. *ap. schol.* Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.259; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.211. It marks the bounds of the world in the east as the Pillars of Heracles mark its western limits, Plato *Phaedo* 109a–b and cf. Pind. *Isth.* 2.41. J. D. P. Bolton suggests that the Argonautic Phasis, which Herodotus identifies with the modern Rion, was once no other than the Tanais (= modern Don) and was believed originally to be straits leading from Palus Maeotis (= modern Sea of Azov) to Ocean; Ocean did not exist and the legendary "straits" turned out to be a river, the Tanais-Don (*Aristeas of Proconnesus* [Oxford 1962] 55 ff.). In short Phasis must be regarded as a Pylos- or Avalon-type name denoting the Otherworld.

Apollonius goes on to describe how the pursuit of the Colchians resembled less a fleet of ships than countless flocks of birds:

οὐδέ κε φαίης
τόσσον νηίτην στόλον ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' οἰωνῶν
ἱλαδὸν ἄσπετον ἔθνος ἐπιβρομέειν πελάγεσσιν.

[*Argon.* 4.238–240]

And for this passage Apollonius may have borrowed from *Iliad* 2.459 ff.²⁶ Might it not have occurred to Virgil, reading both Argonautic passages together, that birds indicate the manner of ghosts as well as their numerosity and that they are more suitable than waves? He probably took the comparison to birds from the second of the two Argonautic passages and used it in place of the waves-simile. In that case Virgil, writing *quam multa . . . folia* and *quam multae . . . aves*, was the first to compare the ghosts to leaves and birds.²⁷

Even if Virgil's immediate source is Apollonius,²⁸ he must also have known the Heracles *catabasis* through a source other than Apollonius because he restored the similes (with the change noted) to their proper application, namely to ghosts on the banks of Cocytus. One may note also that the order of the Virgilian similes follows that in Pindar where, as in the *Aeneid*, the comparison to leaves comes first. We have therefore no reason to deny Virgil's additional use of Pindar and Bacchylides in the manner already indicated above.

In sum, we have conducted an *examinatio* into Norden's thesis that Virgil derived two similes from the lost Heracles *catabasis* and have found supporting evidence for the one simile, but a somewhat different line of descent is suggested for the other. We have also found grounds for extending the range of influence of a Heracles *catabasis* to Pindar and Apollonius and also, possibly, to Homer (though no such claim is made for its alleged influence on Sophocles) and have shown the tenacity of certain other catabatic features. Whether Norden was right to postulate an archetype from which the extant versions derived their common

²⁶See G. W. Mooney on Ap.Rhod. *Argon.* 4.238. Virgil may have had *Iliad* 2.459 ff. in mind as well as the Argonautic passage, but the Homeric passage alone cannot account for Virgil's simile.

²⁷H. E. Butler, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 155–156, has already asserted that the comparison of ghosts to birds is Virgil's own. His commentary often shows a healthy scepticism towards Norden's more daring reconstructions, but he shows himself to be too ready to refute Norden here (see also n. 4 above) and he states his opinion without argument.

²⁸In "The Subject Matter of Vergil's Similes," *BICS* 8 (1961) 63–75 esp. 71 M. Coffey makes the interesting point that "Vergil is nearer to Apollonius Rhodius than to Homer in the range of the subject matter of his similes, and even restricts the range of Apollonius." He does not, however, refer to Apollonius in connection with the two Virgilian similes in question.

features must still remain conjectural. But certain definite resemblances between versions point to a well-defined tradition which Virgil received and *suo more* altered. Bacchylides himself recognised the principle of poetic borrowings:

ἕτερος ἐξ ἑτέρου σοφὸς τό τε πάλαι τό τε νῦν·
οὐδὲ γὰρ ῥᾷστον ἀρρήτων ἐπέων πύλας ἐξευρεῖν. [fr. 8 Edmonds]

Thus in putting forward these views I do not feel called upon, as one would have felt a few decades ago, to defend Virgil against the charge of plagiarism: instead I take them to be further confirmation of his method of writing poetry as stated by W. F. Jackson Knight: "He [Vergil] seems to try to neglect tradition as little as he can, but to take every chance to alter it and combine versions together."²⁹

Since Virgil was fond of repeating his own similes and phrases, often with slight modifications,³⁰ it is worth noticing the subtle differences between the similes as they occur in the *Aeneid* and their earlier appearance as a compressed simile in the fourth *Georgic*:

*at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,
quam multa in foliis avium se milia condunt,
vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber,
matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,
impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum,
quos circum limus niger et deformis harundo
Coccyi tardaue palus inamabilis unda
alligat et novies Styx interfusa coercet.* [G. 4.471-480]

Virgil here describes the effect of Orpheus' music on the souls of the dead. The list of souls in 475-477 (which follows the simile) appears again at *Aeneid* 6.306-308 (preceding the similes) and corresponds almost verbatim to the list of souls which flock to the trench in *Odyssey* 11.36-41. In the *Aeneid* the ghosts have not yet crossed over, and the similes refer to them still on the near shore. In the *Georgics* the ghosts are on the far side, as their ghostly prototypes in the Homeric *Nekyia* are on the other side in Erebus; the location of the simile here corresponds precisely with that in Bacchylides. Thus Virgil had it both ways.

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²⁹*Roman Vergil*³ (Harmondsworth 1966) 141.

³⁰On recurrent similes see recent studies by D. West, "Multiple-Correspondence Similes in the *Aeneid*," *JRS* 59 (1969) 40-49 and J. N. Grant, "Dido Melissa," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 380-391.