

SAILING TO ELYSIUM: MENELAUS' AFTERLIFE (*ODYSSEY* 4.561–569) AND EGYPTIAN RELIGION

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J'ai rencontré plus d'un vieux voyageur qui
affirmait avoir vu voguer dans l'air des canots
d'écorce, remplis de "possédés" s'en allant voir
leurs blondes, sous l'égide de Belzébuth.

H. Beaugrand, "La Chasse-galerie"

I sailed away on that little boat to Heaven . . .

F. Loesser, *Gyps and Dolls*

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? Our soul leaves the body that is our self (*Il.* 1.4; *pace* Archil. fr. 5.3 West) and squeaking like a bat (*Od.* 24.6) flies to the underworld, there barely to exist, reft of light, strength, and joy (cf. *Od.* 11.15–19, 29, 94); so the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* consistently say. Moreover, this yields the *Iliad*'s moral code, for the presence of countless, ineluctible fates of death makes heroes risk their lives for the ersatz immortality of fame (12.326; cf. Tyrt. fr. 12.32 West). Stark witness to this bleak vision is Achilles' regret, once he has tasted death, that he chose a short life of fame over a long, nameless one (*Od.* 11.488–491). Yet there is one exception, for Proteus tells Menelaus, when stranded in Egypt, that he will not die, for the gods will give him a care-free lot in Elysium (4.561–569). Whence comes this view, so at odds with that found elsewhere in both epics? J. Puhvel (1969 = 1981: 210–215) has argued for an Indo-european provenance and W. Burkert (1961) for a Greek. Many scholars, however, have thought both name and concept foreign, just as many have suspected of Proteus.¹ G. Alford

I quote *Pyramid Texts* (here abbreviated *PT*) from Sethe 1948–62 and Faulkner 1969, numbering utterances in boldface and verses in standard type preceded by the symbol §. For photo-reproductions of the originals, see Piankoff 1968. I cite *Coffin Texts* (*CT*) following Faulkner 1973–78; transcriptions of the originals are in de Buck 1935–61. The text of the *Book of the Dead* (*BD*) I quote from Budge's 1895 edition, citing the vignettes by plate-number from Wasserman's 1998 publication of the papyrus of Ani (British Museum 10470/1) recension, which Budge (1895: cxlv) dates—perhaps too early—to ca 1500–1400. Passages from Pritchard 1969 I cite as *ANET*³. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has generously supported this work. I read part of it at a conference on Homeric contexts at York University on 14 October 2000; I am grateful to Jonathan Burgess and Matthew Clark for inviting me and to the participants for much helpful discussion. I thank Jonathan Edmondson, Micah Ross, Gay Robins, an anonymous referee for *Phoenix*, and especially Erwin Cook for helpful suggestions. Remaining errors are my own.

¹Though Πρωτεύς seems a variant of πρῶτιστος, *primus* (Timoth. *Pers.* 791.236 *PMG*; cf. πρᾶτεύς, Pythagoras *ap.* Syrianus *ad Arist. Met.* 10.4), Bérard (1933: xvii–xviii) and Jackson Knight (1968: 111–112) relate it to Egyptian "Prouti," alleged biform of *Pr*-ʿ3, "great house," "pharaoh." While rejecting this, Lloyd (1993: 3.43–44 *ad Hdt.* 2.112) notes that the Nile-god *H'pi* might have suggested an "old man of the sea." Meanwhile, Lefebvre (1988: xvi–xvi, 140) moots that Proteus' shape-shifting tendencies—which classicists (e.g., Davies 1991: 59 *ad Soph. Trach.* 10) typically put

(1991) has compiled a strong brief to support the old view that Elysium comes from the Egyptian Field of Reeds (*šbt i3rw* CT 30, BD 17 §54, etc.), that suburb of the heavenly other-world of the Duat (*d3.t* ≈ Amenta, lit. “the west”) wherein dead pharaohs, and later commoners too, spend eternity.²

I will not recite arguments that Alford and others have already thoroughly aired; but I do want to lend two props to their view. First, I will show that three small parts of pharaoh’s last trip—the heavenly river flowing through the Field of Reeds, the flying ferry wherein he sails, and the boat’s backward-glancing helmsman—have left traces elsewhere in the *Odyssey*. Second, I will show that Egyptian royal succession is the best context for understanding Menelaus’ good luck. I will argue that this evidence is best explained by positing Egyptian influence during the Bronze Age that survived into the sixth century in the context of mystery cults. An appendix argues that Homer knew of the annual Nile flood. By themselves these are fine points perhaps not worth noting. Yet that all occur in the *Odyssey* in contexts that allude to Egypt lends credibility to an Egyptian source for Elysium. This hypothesis, bearing as it does on early European views of the afterlife, is indeed worth our critical gaze.

I. WHAT EGYPTIANS THOUGHT OF THE AFTERLIFE

First, a word about the evidence. Our earliest pertinent record is the *Pyramid Texts*, first carved in the fifth-dynasty pyramid of Unas (reigned ca 2375–45), a millennium and a half before Peisistratus (obit. 528/7) ordered a reference-text for performances of epic at the Panathenaea (cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.137), a millenium before Troy VIIa fell, giving the bards their central theme (ca 1250),³ and perhaps even before Greeks entered the Aegean.⁴ Moreover, these spells may have been composed long before being written down. There is thus no chance that their actual texts directly influenced Greek belief. However, Egyptian culture is steeped in the past, and the spells never fell out of use, but were embellished first as the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640) *Coffin Texts*, then, in the eighteenth dynasty (1540–1292) when Egypt was preeminent in the Mediterranean, as the *Book of the Dead*. It is the latter, as we shall see in Part iv below, that could have influenced Greek epic. In presenting the evidence, I will give each motif’s ultimate source in

down to his role as water-spirit like Achelous and Thetis—might have been inspired by the feats of Bata in the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers* (I thank Micah Ross for this reference). That a god could be old is itself an indication of non-Greek origin (Burkert 1985: 201).

²Lauth 1867: 5 (the official judgement on Lauth is unflattering; cf. Dawson and Uphill 1972: 164); Nilsson 1950: 619–633; Edwards 1961: 30. The word Ἠλύσιον may come from *šbt i3rw*, “Field of Reeds”: see Griffith 1999, with bibliography (henceforth “bibl.”). Hesiod (*Op.* 171) calls Elysium the “Isles of the blessed” (μακάρες = ? Egyptian *m3'-hrw*, the righteous dead): see Krappe 1940; Daniel 1962. Other Near Eastern sources for Elysium have been suggested: for example, Cocco (1955) links the term to Ugaritic *sd'ʾ*, “field of God.”

³Hiller 1991, with bibl.

⁴Mallory 1989: 66–71.

the *Pyramid Texts* as well as the immediate source in the *Book of the Dead* for the good reason that one grasps Egyptian beliefs better the closer to their beginning one looks at them, before successive generations had encumbered them with often extraneous additions. So too Egyptologists publish hieratic texts transliterated into the earlier hieroglyphic script.

Many *Pyramid Text* utterances (for example, 215, 216, 245, 248, 302) say that at death pharaoh's soul or ba (*b3*) flew heavenward to become immortal as a star, often specifically in the constellation Orion (*S3ḥ*), heavenly abode of the god Osiris, Lord of Amenta, the other-world (*ʿImntt*, *PT* 219 §186a, 442 §820).⁵ Since the eighteenth dynasty the hieroglyph for ba shows a human-headed bird sitting by a smoking incense-bowl (R7 + G53 in A. Gardiner's sign-list), probably as a concrete image of this idea.⁶ It is an old one, for already the first-dynasty mastaba-tombs helped the dead ascend to the sky,⁷ and the fourth-dynasty pyramid of Khufu (Cheops), which like many pyramids is aligned with the stars,⁸ contains a shaft pointed at the time of building (ca 2589–66) from the burial-chamber to the pole-star, Thuban (α Draconis), and another to Orion to guide the king on his voyage, though precession of the equinoxes has since changed these alignments.⁹ Mycenaean would have understood the ba, for they too often saw the soul as a bird.¹⁰

For Nile-dwelling Egyptians, the natural vehicle for joining the gods among the stars was a boat, and we hear of one, whose name, "it flies, it alights" (*p3s ḥnīs* *PT* 310 §494b), paints it as a sort of bird,¹¹ which brings the dead to their new home in the Duat. Starting in the sixth dynasty, the mummy often shared his tomb with scale-model boats to aid him on the trip: the eighteenth-dynasty Tutʿankhamūn, for one, had a fleet of thirty-five.¹² Such models were cost-cutting relics of more lavish days, for Khufu and his heir, Chephren, were equipped with five life-sized boats each, perhaps one to carry their bas to the four cardinal points and the fifth the very hearse that bore them to the tomb, for which, after that great service, no lesser use would ever again be worthy. One of these, found disassembled but perfectly preserved south of Khufu's pyramid on 26 May 1954,

⁵ Faulkner 1966; Jacq 1986: 172–173; Allen 1989; Krauss 1997. Post-Homeric Greeks sometimes view stars as the home of dead souls (e.g., Heraclitus 22 A 15 Diels-Kranz; Eur. *Supp.* 531–534, *Hel.* 1014–16): see Lattimore 1942: 26–43, §§3–4.

⁶ Edwards 1961: 34; Erman and Grapow 1971: 1.411.

⁷ Badawy 1956.

⁸ Its sides face the cardinal points deviating just 3" of arc: see Smyth 1867; Krupp 1978.

⁹ These shafts were not for ventilation, as was once assumed, for they were originally closed on both ends: see Badawy 1964; Trimble 1964 = 1992: 3–8.

¹⁰ Vermeule 1976: 65.

¹¹ Sethe 1948–62: 2.333 *ad loc.* The verbs are third singular feminine *šdm.f* active with the feminine subject *mḥn.t* ("ferry-boat") understood. Such antitheses, like *šmt iwt* ("coming and going"), are a hallmark of Egyptian style. *P3it ḥnn.t* ("what flies out and back") is a kenning for "bird": see Erman and Grapow 1971: 1.494.

¹² Jones 1990.

and restored by A. Y. Moustafa, is housed in its own museum above the pit where it was buried.¹³ Powered by five pairs of oars up to 8.5 metres long with two more steering-oars across the stern, it has no mast or sail.¹⁴ Its prow and stern rise 7.6 metres above the keel-line, more like those of sea-faring Viking drakkars than the river-craft one expects on the Nile. Though made of cedar of Lebanon, it mimics reed-floats with papyriform finials carved on both ends. The reed-float is remarkably durable.¹⁵ T. Heyerdahl (1971) sailed two across the Atlantic, though scholars doubt Egyptians themselves made the trip.¹⁶ The bier that bore the scribe Ani to his tomb had just such a papyrus-shaped prow and stern (vignette to *BD* 1 = Wasserman 1998: plate 5).

The place whither pharaoh sails is a realm of earthly delights, an ideal form of the Nile's banks, which by the eighteenth dynasty Egyptians were calling the Field of Offerings (*šbt ḥtpw*) or, as we have said, the Field of Reeds. The *Book of the Dead* makes clear that at this time too the dead arrived there by boat (58 §1–7, 110 §12).

II. HOW MENELAUS GOT TO ELYSIUM

While not saying how the gods will send Menelaus to Elysium, Proteus clearly implies that he will arrive alive and in the flesh. We note, too, that Homer calls the Nile as well as several other rivers διπετέος ποταμῶιο (*Od.* 4.477, 581, etc.), usually translated, “sky-fallen (i.e., rain-fed) river” (for example, LSJ s.v. διπετής). H. Lüders (1959: 1.11) quotes a similar passage in the *R̥gveda* (*ṛtām sindhavo vāruṇasya yanti . . . vāyo nā paptū raghuyā pārijman*, “the rivers run by Varuṇa’s commandment . . . swift have they flown like birds in air around us,” 2.28.4) and moots that Homer’s phrase really means “river flying in the sky,” “heavenly river” (cf. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 4; Nonnus *Dion.* 5.200). While accepting this, I have argued elsewhere (1997a) that it is no vestige of an Indo-european poetic formula like the pair κλέος ἄφθιτον (*Il.* 9.413, etc.) / *śrāvas āksitam* (*R̥gveda* 1.9.7, etc.),¹⁷ as Lüders thought, but refers instead to the annual Nile-flood, of which the epic bards knew (see Appendix). The earthly Nile has an echo in the sky to which the *Pyramid Texts* often allude (263 §340d, 359 §594b, etc.; *CT* 18, etc.). Some scholars transcribe its name as *mr n ḥ3*, “waterway of destruction,” and others, using different word-division, as *mr nḥ3*, “winding (i.e., crooked) waterway.” V. L. Davis (1985) adopts the latter reading, but translates as “shifting

¹³ Kadry 1986, with bibl. Yet earlier funeral boats have been excavated: see Dal Maso 2000.

¹⁴ Vase-painting shows sailboats in Egypt ca 3200: see Bowen 1960.

¹⁵ “Reed-float” = *zḥn*: *PT* 222 §201b; *k’li-gōme’* or *’aniyyah ’ēbbeh* in Hebrew (Isaiah 18:2; Job 9:26) and βάρης (παπυρίνη) in Greek (Aesch. *Supp.* 874; etc.) < late Egyptian *br*. For papyrus, cf. *Od.* 21.390–391. See Lewis 1974: 29–31. On the reed-float utterances, see Sethe 1948–62: 2.27–36.

¹⁶ Pace Carter 1957; Ferguson 1958: 244–247; Fell 1976: 253–276.

¹⁷ Edwards 1988, with bibl. Other possible traces of proto-Indo-european verse have been found, e.g., in ἱερὸν μένος (*Od.* 7.167) / *iṣirēna mānasā* (*R̥gveda* 8.48.7) and δοτήρες ἑάων (*Od.* 8.325; Hes. *Theog.* 46) / *dātā vāsūnām* (*R̥gveda* 8.51.5): see Durante 1976: 2.94–95.

(i.e., pivoting) waterway,” and equates it with our galaxy (= *mstkt* PT 254 §279, etc.; CT 259, etc.; BD 66 §15, etc.), which, though to English-speakers a path (“the Milky Way,” “Watling-street”), struck Egyptians, like the Chinese,¹⁸ as being a river. R. Krauss (1997: 53–54) sees this watercourse as a reference instead to the invisible, imaginary line of the ecliptic. Whatever its astronomical referent, it was the way on which—over two and a half millennia before Lucian claimed that his sailors crossed the sky (*Ver. hist.* 1.9–10; cf. Antonius Diogenes apud Phot. *Bibl.* 111a)—Egypt’s pharaohs rode “it flies, it alights” to the stars.¹⁹ This idea still lived in the eighteenth dynasty, for the Hymn to the sun-disk (*itm*) from the tomb of Ay at Amarna speaks of an “inundation in heaven” (*ḥꜥꜣꜣ m ꜥꜣꜣ*).²⁰

Nor is the sky-river the *Odyssey*’s only debt to Egypt, for in a context rich in Egyptian echoes, like ghosts who tell the truth if properly fed (11.95–96)²¹ and a cattle-ranching sun-god (11.108–109; cf. 1.8–9; 12.127–141),²² Teiresias tells Odysseus that death will come to him from the sea amid folk who have never known “well-fitted oars, which are wings for ships” (εὐήρε’ ἐρετμά, τά τε περὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται, 11.125 = 23.272).²³ This strikes us, for epic, fond of similes, tends to shun metaphor.²⁴ It also lacks precedent in Greek. True, from the Late Helladic IIIC period Greeks painted eyes on ships’ prows (Aesch. *Pers.* 559; *Supp.* 716; Siren Painter *ARV*² 289,1),²⁵ and their verse treats ships as living things, rejoicing (ἀγαλλόμεναι), for example, in a breeze of Zeus (*Od.* 5.176) or even speaking (Aesch. fr. *20 *TrGF*; Pherecydes 3 F 111a *FGH*; Ap. Rhod. 1.526; 4.580–583; Catull. 4.2).²⁶ Yet when we can assign species to these sentient boats, we find them to be horses rather than birds.²⁷ So we have “horses of the salt (sea),” (ἄλδος ἵπποι, *Od.* 4.708; cf. Old Norse *brims blakkr* and

¹⁸ See, e.g., Frodsham 1970: 45. I thank Neil McCartney for bringing this to my notice.

¹⁹ Apotheosized Romans travelled by road: Varro *Men.* 560b; Sen. *Apoc.* 1.2.

²⁰ Hymn to the sun-disk from the tomb of Huy at Amarna: *ANET*³ 371. The original text is printed in Davies 1908: pl. XXVII cols. 9–10. Like a calm pool the sky mirrors the earth, being split into “two heavens” (*ꜥꜣꜣ*) echoing the “two lands” (*ꜣꜣꜣ*) of Upper and Lower Egypt.

²¹ I have argued (1997b) that this idea stems from an Egyptian source, the *ḥtp di nsw.t* formula, meaning “der König sei gnädig und gebe”: Erman and Grapow 1971: 3.186.

²² Helios has 350 cattle (*Od.* 12.129–130), the days of the year reckoned in a septimal system (= 7 times 50). His Egyptian counterpart has seven cows (BD 148), the sarcophagus of Chensuemrenpa in the Munich Museum shows the solar barque drawn by four beasts called “white cows of the sun-god” (*ḥꜣꜣꜣ ꜥꜣꜣ n Rꜣ*), and in Genesis pharaoh dreamed of seven cows (41:1–36). See Lauth 1867: 4–5; Sayed *et al.* 1980: 357–390. Uṣaš’ car is also drawn by ruddy kine (*Rgveda* 1.92.2; 124.11; 5.80.3).

²³ For Homer’s noun-epithet formulae for “ships,” see Parry 1971: 109–113; Alexanderson 1970 (neither mentions the oar-wings). For relative pronoun + τε, see Ruijgh 1971: 358–452; πέλονται is here used *metri causa* for the syntactically correct πέλεται.

²⁴ Stanford (1936: 135) calls it one of Homer’s “first undoubtedly imaginative metaphors.”

²⁵ Cf. the Late Helladic IIIC stirrup-jar from Scyros shown in Boardman 1974: 107. For other illustrations of ships, see Casson 1975, with bibl. Egyptians sometimes painted the *wad3.t* (magic eye of Horus) on the prows of barques and on the blades of steering-oars.

²⁶ Kurt 1979; Henderson 1991: 161–166 = §§258–278.

²⁷ Indo-europeans brought horses to Greece (Vermeule 1964: 261). Skt. *āśvaḥ*; Linear B *i-go* (KN Ca 895); Greek ἵππος, ἵκκος (*Etym. Magn.* 474.12); Lat. *equus*, etc. all derive from a common **ekwos*

Old English *sæhengest*, *sæmearh*), the flotsam of his raft that Odysseus rides “like one spurring on a race-horse” (κέληθ’ ὥς ἵππον ἐλαύνων, 5.371), and an epic simile equating the Phaeacians’ ship with a four-horse chariot (13.81–83). Both ships and horses belong to Poseidon, horse-taming (*Il.* 23.277, etc.) god of the sea (15.187–193, etc.), and the wooden horse that loosed Troy’s coronal (*Od.* 4.271–289; 8.499–520; 11.523–532) is ship-like.²⁸

If first attested in the *Odyssey*, the bird-ship soon came into vogue, and so many non-Homeric texts speak of ships’ wings that we find the metaphor almost inevitable. That it is at bottom unnatural, however, we see from other poets, who tend to give the bird-ship sails not oars for wings.²⁹ (The Odyssean view was original, for both comparative linguistics and archaeology show that rowing—itsself refined from more primitive paddling—predates sailing.)³⁰ The metaphor is at odds with much Greek cosmology, for it implies a watery sky, known in the Near East (for example, *Enûma eliš* IV 137–140 [= p. 67 *ANET*³]; Genesis 1:6–7, 7:11–12; II Kings 7:2, 19; Psalms 104:3, 13; 148:4; Revelation 4:6) and Egypt (cf. *mr nh3*, *h’py m p.t*) and perhaps even in proto-Indo-European, but not to Greeks, who typically thought the sky a solid bronze or iron vault.³¹ Pharaoh sailed to the afterlife on a boat aptly named “it flies, it alights,” even in the eighteenth dynasty, for we read in the *Book of the Dead* of the “beautiful rudder of heaven” (*hmy nfr n p.t*) that belongs to the pilots of the Duat (148 §8), and ten oars were set beside Tut‘ankamūn’s coffin.

A literally winged ship was ideal to reach the gods on a sky-river, and ships bore things to and from gods in ritual, both Egyptian and Greek. Painted pots of the predynastic Naqāda II period show ships bearing movable structures, seeming ancestors of the elegant cabins of Khufu’s and later craft. These sport emblems like the banner flying on a pole, which was in historic times the determinative for *ntr*, “god” and *ntry*, “sacred,” and so, E. J. Baumgartel (1955: 1.11–14) suggests, served religious ends, being best called “chapels.” In the historic period, Egyptians housed gods’ images in portable shrines, which they called *inter alia* *db3.t*, “shrine,”³² and Greeks ναοί (Hdt. 2.63; Diod. Sic. 1.15.3), that they carried on feast-days out of the sanctuary among the people, as Hindus do in the festival

(the aspirate was confined to Attic [Aul. Gell. 2.3.2]; cf. Γλαύκιππος, Λεύκιππος); also Linear B *po-ro* = πῶλος (KN 82). Despite the later fame of Egypt’s cavalry (*Il.* 9.382–384; Genesis 47:17; Exodus 9:3, 14:9), she had no horses before the Hyksos period, when she named them *ssm.t* (< Semitic; cf. Hebrew *sūs*).

²⁸ Van Leeuwen 1901; Bethe 1914–27: 3.36, n. 5.

²⁹ Oars: Aesch. *Supp.* 734; *Pers.* 559; *Ag.* 52; sails: ps.-Hes. fr. 205.7 Merkelbach-West; ambiguous: Hes. *Op.* 628; Eur. *Tro.* 1085.

³⁰ Chantraine 1928: 24.

³¹ A celestial ocean may lie in the distant background of Greek cosmology, for the *R̥gveda* speaks of one (10.98.5, 12); cf. Nagy 1990: 99. Greeks saw the sky as a vault (Diogenes 64 A 12 Diels-Kranz; Cratinus fr. 167 PCG; Ar. *Nub.* 96; *Av.* 1000–1) of bronze (*Il.* 17.425; Pind. *Nem.* 6.3–4) or iron (*Od.* 15.329 = 565).

³² Steindorff 1903: 205, n. 16.

of Jagan-nātha at Puri in Orissa. These “floats” they often shaped like ships. Most important were the boat-shrines of the Theban triad—Amun, Mut, and Khonsu—borne in procession on New Year’s day from Karnak to the Nile, towed to Opet (*ip.t* “the harem [of Amun],” modern Luxor) to receive sacrificial geese from offering-tables,³³ then returned (Diod. Sic. 1.97.9), a festival of unclear meaning, perhaps a sacred marriage (ἱερός γάμος) of Amun and Mut,³⁴ whose prestige was enhanced, when a century before Troy fell Amenhotep III (arguably the Memnon of the Greeks)³⁵ adorned the temple until “its towers reach[ed] heaven, and mingle[d] with the stars” and replaced Amun’s boat-shrine with an electrum-plated one of cedar.³⁶ The “good (or beautiful) festival” (*ḥb nfr*) of Opet enjoyed broad influence, perhaps inspiring the Ark of the Covenant that Israelites paraded in a cart (II Samuel 6:1–5). The Bible calls this object ‘*arōn*’ (Numbers 10:35, etc.), but in post-Biblical Hebrew *tebah* denotes the box that holds the Torah-scroll in a synagogue (hence its other meaning, “word”). *Tebah* is a quasi-nautical term denoting Noah’s ark (Genesis 6:14) and the chest in which baby Moses’ mother exposed him (Exodus 2:3). That it was the first name for the Ark is suggested by Ge’ez, the Ethiopian liturgical tongue, which calls the Ark *tabot* (*Kebra nagast* ch. 48, etc.), a word derived, via Aramaic, from *tebah*.³⁷ Given the Jews’ sojourn in Egypt, scholars derive *tebah* in turn from Egyptian *db3.t*,³⁸ also sailors’ cant, for a god can “sail his shrine” (*ḥnti db3.t*),³⁹ though some once thought that the derivation went the opposite way.⁴⁰ An Opet-like festival was also held on Bronze-Age Thera,⁴¹ whose North African ties, says Pindar, go back to the Argonauts (*Pyth.* 4.42–43; *Ap. Rhod.* 4.1731–64; *cf. Hdt.* 4.179).

Greeks, too, may have known the Opet-festival: they had met Amun, though perhaps not before the foundation of Cyrene (modern Al Jabal al Akhdar) with its oracle in 630 (*cf. Pind. Pyth.* 4.16; 9.51; frs. 36, 58 Maehler),⁴² they carefully watched the heliacal rising of Sirius (*Il.* 5.5–6; *cf. Hes. Op.* 417),⁴³

³³ For geese associated with Amun, see Guglielmi and Dittmar 1992. For Egyptian offering-tables, see Habachi 1977. Despite the prominence of altars in their religion, Greeks too used offering-tables, esp. in Mycenaean times: see Gill 1991; Cox 1996.

³⁴ Bleeker 1967: 78.

³⁵ Griffith 1998, with bibl.

³⁶ Many surviving shrines are published in Roeder 1914. For Amenhotep’s dedicatory inscriptions, see Breasted 1906: 2.357–359, nos. 886, 888. For the festival itself, see Wolf 1931: 72–73; *The Epigraphic Survey* 1994. The Amun-priesthood was divided into four watches (ἑῴω, φυλαί) suggestively called “the bow, stern, port, and starboard watches” (*imy-wrt*, etc.).

³⁷ Ullendorff 1956: 233, n. 6.

³⁸ For example, Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm 1999: 4.1678 s.v. *tebah*.

³⁹ Steindorff 1903: 2.5, n. 16.

⁴⁰ For example, Bruce 1790: 1.394–395.

⁴¹ Morgan Brown 1978: 644.

⁴² Assuming that Amun indeed = Ammon: see Classen 1959.

⁴³ Astronomy was central to the Homeric world-view: see *Il.* 18.483–489; *cf. Wenskus* 1990: 33–40. Nevertheless, Homer devotes scant space to the subject: see J. B. Hainsworth *ad Od.* 5.272–277 in Heubeck *et al.* 1988: 1.276–277, with bibl.

which, as "the going up of Sothis" (*pr.t Spd.t*), marked the Egyptian New Year, and Luxor itself they knew by name, their "hundred-gated Thebes" (*Il.* 9.381, etc.) apparently merging the Egyptian name with prefixed feminine article (*t3*) with the form familiar from the "seven-gated" Boeotian city (4.406; *Od.* 11.263; Linear B *te-qa* MY X 50). Amun's Greek counterpart, Zeus (cf. *Hdt.* 2.42.5), moreover—whom an Egyptian-style (cf. *Pl. Grg.* 482b5) "oath of Rhadamanthys" (Sosicrates 461 F 3 *FGH*)⁴⁴ links to geese (*vñ/ μὰ τὸν χῆνα*, Cratinus fr. 249 *PCG*; *Ar. Av.* 521; Zenobius 5.81, a pun on *vñ/ μὰ τὸν Ζῆνα*)⁴⁵—had a sacred marriage with his wife in the *Iliad* (14.346–350; alluded to in *Diod. Sic.* 1.97.9).

Whether inspired by the Opet-feast or not, Greeks used boats, sailed, carried like litters, or mounted on wheels, to bring divine images or offerings to and from temples, notably while giving Athena her *πέπλος* in the Panathenaea, and also during the feast of Dionysus at Smyrna, and the *θεωρία* to the Delian Apollo.⁴⁶ The latter involves the very ship (cf. *Pl. Phd.* 58a10–c1; *Plut. Thes.* 23.1) that once bore Athens' tribute to the labyrinth and its Minotaur (Simon. 550 *PMG*; Bacchyl. 17.1–116)—not immortal, for Theseus would slay him, but the only Greek figure who recalls Egypt's animal-headed gods. Though scholars debate when the Panathenaic rite began (the ship is missing from the east frieze of the Parthenon of 432, for example), it is of indisputably ancient lineage (*Il.* 6.86–98, 263–310; Alcman 1.61 *PMG*, *PMGF* = 3.61 Calame; Paus. 3.16.2; 5.16.3).⁴⁷ Moreover, such rituals may underlie the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, which describes the god's ship-board epiphany (2; cf. Exekias *ABV* 146,21).⁴⁸ Some Greek bards even imagined temples as a kind of ship, as I (forthcoming) argue elsewhere.

Describing Daedalus fleeing Crete, Vergil inverts Homer's metaphor as "the oars of wings" (*remigium alarum*, *Aen.* 6.19; cf. *Ov. Met.* 8.228),⁴⁹ and euhemerizing accounts say that he sailed rather than flew, having invented sails, not wings (Paus. 9.11.4–5; *Diod. Sic.* 4.77.6). Just this context in Vergil's polymathic⁵⁰ text suggests an eastern source for the metaphor, for Daedalus' myth was influenced by

⁴⁴ Rhadamanthys is Egyptian **r(w)d-ḫmntt* (cf. *nb-ḫmntt*), "man of Amenta": cf. Lauth 1867: 26.

⁴⁵ Thompson 1936: 329.

⁴⁶ Panathenaea: Strattis fr. 30 *CAF*; *IG* 2² 657.14 = *Syll.*³ 374; *IG* 2² 3198 = *Syll.*³ 894; Himer. *Orat.* 3.12; Heliodorus *Aethiopica* 1.10.1; Norman 1983. Smyranean Dionysia: Philostr. *VS* 1.25.1; Aristides *Or.* 15 (= 1.373 Dindorf), 22 (= 1.440 Dindorf); Burkert 1985: 166, 413, n. 38, with bibl. Delian Apollo-festival: Aesch. *Sept.* 856–860; Bacchyl. 17.130–131.

⁴⁷ For Bronze-Age robe-offerings to a goddess (not, however, involving ships), cf. Linear B *te-o-po-ri-ja* (i.e., *θεοφορία*, CN Ga 1058; *Od.* 696) with Hiller 1984. Frescoes from Thera and Tiryns seem to show such a rite: see Boulotis 1979; Peterson 1981.

⁴⁸ Boardman 1958.

⁴⁹ For the inversion, cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 52; Eur. *IT* 289; Ap. Rhod. 2.1255. It occurs in Verg. *Aen.* also at 1.300–301.

⁵⁰ On the subtlety and erudition of Vergil's literary allusions, see Schlunk 1974.

Phoenician,⁵¹ frequent channel for Egyptian ideas,⁵² even, Gardiner has suggested (1916; cf. 1961: 25–26), with the best Phoenician gift to Greece—the alphabet.

Greeks owed to Egypt a crucial naval technology, for the papyrus used in ropes, rigging, and tackle (ὄπλον . . . βύβλινον, *Od.* 21.390–391), sleek substitute for the clumsy native strips of ox-hide (βοεύς, 2.426; 12.423; *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 407; cf. Cato *Agr.* 3.5, 12, 63) as paper later was for parchment, must (*pace* Eustath. *ad Od.* 21.390–391) have come from there (cf. Hdt. 2.35; 7.25, 34; Hermippus fr. 63.12–13 *PCG*).⁵³ I suggest that Greeks also took thence the image of ships flying with oar-wings on lofty rivers to bring souls to the gods. In so doing, they radically secularized it, not least because, save Hermes the psychopomp and Hades, their gods brooked no contact with the dead (Aesch. *Sept.* 217–218; Eur. *Alc.* 22, *Hipp.* 1437–38; Plut. *Ant.* 75.3–4) or even graves (Thuc. 3.104.1; Polyb. 8.30; Paus. 1.43.3), whence the *evocatio*-like theft of the Palladium from Troy let them slaughter Trojans (Serv. *ad Aen.* 2.166; Sil. Ital. 13.36–50). This aversion is elsewhere linked to sailing, for Athenian courts could put no one to death until the theoric ship came back from Delos (Pl. *Phd.* 58b; Xen. *Mem.* 4.8.2). As with other such loans, we may suspect Semitic middlemen, and the Akkadian hymn to Šamaš, the Sun-god from Ashurbanipal's (reigned 668–633) library at Nineveh says, "You save from the storm the merchant carrying his capital, The [.]. who goes down to the ocean you equip with wings" ([^u*tamkà*]ru (dam.gà)r) na-āš ki-si ina e-de-e tu-še-zib/ [.]. a-ri^d za-nun-ze-e tu-šā-āš-kan kap-pa, lines 69–70).⁵⁴

This is why, when the *Odyssey* describes the "well-known" (12.70) Argo passing through the Planctae,⁵⁵ border between the real world of Thessaly and Colchis, Egyptianesque (Hdt. 2.104–105)⁵⁶ realm of Helios' son, Aeetes (*Od.* 10.138), where Helios' own bedroom is (Mimnermus fr. 11a West), on its way to fetch home Phrixus' soul (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.159),⁵⁷ it likens her to the doves who bring ἀμβροσία—literally "immortality"—to Zeus (12.61–65; cf. Ap. Rhod. 2.549–577), a motif with Near Eastern ties (*Gilgamesh* 11.146–154 [= pp. 94–95 *ANET*³]; Genesis 8:6–12);⁵⁸ why, in a metaphor that Ennius drops from his adaptation (fr. 103 Jocelyn), Euripides boldly says that the Argo "flew"

⁵¹ Morris 1992: 150–194.

⁵² Elements of Daedalus' story suggest an Egyptian source, esp. the "labyrinth" built by Ammenemes III at Hawarēt el-Makṭa' in the Fayoum (Hdt. 2.148); cf. Armayor 1985, with bibl.

⁵³ Lewis 1974: 12, 24–26.

⁵⁴ Lambert 1960: 130–131 (*ANET*³ 387–389 also gives the text, but omits the line in question because it is fragmentary), quoted by West 1978: 315 *ad Hes. Op.* 625; cf. West 1997: 79.

⁵⁵ There are no clashing rocks in the *Pyramid Texts*, but "it flies, it alights" sails between a pair of doors that open to receive it (246 §255) and then close to shut out the plebs (373 §655) like the "gate of heaven" (*ša'ar haššamāim*) of Genesis 28:17 or the pillars of Heracles; cf. Gwyn Griffiths 1966–67; Hornung *et al.* 1979–80.

⁵⁶ Hecataeus says that the Argonauts returned from Colchis via the Nile (1 F 18a *FGrH*). See Armayor 1978; Lloyd 1993: 3.21–22.

⁵⁷ For the "laying" of ghosts in Homer, see *Il.* 23.65–74 (Patroclus); *Od.* 12.10–15 (Elpenor).

⁵⁸ Lindsay 1965: 13–14. Burgess 1999 compares the *Epic of Gilgamesh* with the *Odyssey*.

(διαπτάσθαι, *Med.* 1; cf. *Andr.* 861–865; *Theoc.* 13.24) through the crashing rocks; and why astronomers found her in the constellation Argo (*Aratus Phaen.* 342–352; *Eratosth. [Cat.]* 35; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.44).

Above all, only if the *Odyssey* knows of “it flies, it alights,” can we explain a small part of the Phaeacian story. These folk dwell “near the gods” (ἄγγιθεοί, 5.35; cf. 7.205–206) midway between the fairytale realm of the Apologue (books 9–12) and the real Aegean.⁵⁹ Long ago, F. G. Welcker (1832 = 1845: 2.1–79) argued that they were ferry-men of the dead. Deriving their name from φαῖός, “dusky,” “dun,” or “gray,” for mist is prominent in their episode (8.568 = 13.150, 176, cf. 189), he and his followers linked them to the Gray Men who ferry the dead by night to the island of Brittia in Teutonic myth (cf. *Procop. Goth.* 4.20.48–58; *Tzetzes ad Hes. Op.* 171; *ad Lyc.* 1204). They noted that Alcinoos knows that Odysseus will be asleep when they bring him home (*Od.* 7.318; and indeed he falls into a sleep “most like death,” 13.79–80),⁶⁰ that we are told for no reason that a former fare was Rhadamanthys (7.323), dweller in the Elysian plain (4.564), and that the chthonic region of Epirus⁶¹ contained a town named Βαϊάκη (*St. Byz. s.v.* = *Hecataeus* 1 F 104 *FGrH*). This theory could also explain why, despite all signs to the contrary, Athena calls the Phaeacians unfriendly (*Od.* 7.32–33) and why Odysseus, waking befuddled on Ithaca, curses them (13.200–214).⁶² Repelled by Welcker’s claim that Homer borrowed from Germans, scholars have rejected it,⁶³ but E. F. Cook (1992: 252) has shown that one need not accept a German origin for the motif to accept the Phaeacian/ferry-man equation. This is relevant here, for if the Phaeacians are ferry-men of Elysium, we might expect them to have a bird-like boat like their Egyptian counterparts, and indeed Homer likens their ship to a falcon (13.86–87).

There is yet a third echo of the Reed-Field in the *Odyssey*. The pilot of “it flies, it alights” is Mahaf (i.e., *M3-ḥ3.f*), meaning, “Who looks behind”⁶⁴ (*PT* 270 §383 etc.; *CT* 396; *BD* 99 *passim*), “Whose face is behind” (*Hr.f-ḥ3.f*, *CT* 474 §23c; *BD* 125), or “Who looks before, who looks behind” (*Hr.f-m-ḥnt-ḥr.f-m-mḥ3.f*, *PT* 310 §493b). His distinctive pose was still basic in the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, as proved by the vignette to the *Book of the Dead* Chapter 93 in the papyrus of Ani (*Wasserman* 1998: plate 16), which shows him sitting in his boat, the ladanum-gatherer’s three-swippled “flail” (*nḥ3ḥ3*) that links him to Osiris (cf. *PT* 578 §1535) perched on his knee;⁶⁵ before him stands the deceased, clad in

⁵⁹ Segal 1962 = 1994: 12–64.

⁶⁰ Schwartz (1924: 189, 226), Merkelbach (1969: 211), and Cook (1992: 245) follow Welcker in seeing this sleep as a sign that Phaeacians are ferry-men of death.

⁶¹ An Epirote priest showed Hammond (1967: 163) where the river Acheron plunges into Hell.

⁶² Rose 1969.

⁶³ J. B. Hainsworth in Heubeck *et al.* 1988: 1.289; Garvie 1994: 21, with bibl.

⁶⁴ Smith (1984: 197) translates as “The-Faculty-of-Sight-Is-Behind-Him.”

⁶⁵ Newberry 1929.

his best linen robe, sized with starch and neatly goffered, holding in one hand this very book, while with the other he greets the ferry-man. The latter looks over his shoulder, as his ancient name dictates.⁶⁶ Charon, who mans the tiller of the ferry bearing dead Greeks to their underworld (*Minyas* fr. 1 Davies, Bernabé; Aesch. *Sept.* 856–860; Eur. *Alc.* 438–445; Ar. *Ran.* 180–208), including Elysium, is also shown once, on a fifth-century Attic white-ground lekythos, looking over his shoulder.⁶⁷ Homer does not mention Charon, but speaks of Death (*Il.* 16.454, etc.), whom Byzantines called Χάρων or Χάρωντα—though whether by syncretism or survival of an Ur-identity is unclear.⁶⁸ That Mahaf's weird stance makes him avert his gaze Perseus-like (cf. Eur. *Alc.* 1118) from his passengers is a by-product, and not its motive cause, for Greek rather than Egyptian gods were wont to shun the dead, and in the vignette to *BD* 93 (Wasserman 1998: plate 16) just mentioned, Mahaf, as he looks back, trades glances with the late Ani.

R. O. Faulkner (1985: 90) suggests that *M3-ḥ3.f* once meant “the stern is behind him,” i.e., “helmsman,” for, like Charon (Lucian *Dial. Mort.* 22; cf. *Men.* 10; *Dial. Mort.* 10), he mans the rudder not the oars of his craft, which is self-propelling, unlike the Phaeacians', which needs rowers (*Od.* 13.76–78) but no helmsman (8.556–561), and *m3* is perhaps the rudder of a sacred boat (*wi3*),⁶⁹ written due to the similar shape by the hieroglyph for “sickle” (U1 on the sign-list). Because *m3*, “rudder” sounds (assuming the same vocalization, /ma/) like *m3*, “he sees,” the name was early misconstrued, Faulkner contends, as “he who sees behind him.” On this view “*Ḥr.f-ḥ3.f*” arose as a gloss, also early, for as we saw above already the *Pyramid Texts* call the pilot both names. Perhaps ritually enacting Mahaf's pose, the priest who leads Ani's boat-shaped bier to the tomb also looks over his shoulder (vignette to *BD* 1: Wasserman 1998: plate 5).

The gondolier's pose is neither comfortable nor natural.⁷⁰ True, the captives whom the early dynastic king Na'rmer clubs to death on the verso of his commemorative slate palette (Cairo Museum CG 14716) are so depicted, but this conveys their agony.⁷¹ Again, a sixteenth-century demotic magical papyrus describes “those who are yonder” (the dead) entering a room with faces reversed to kiss, and perhaps abduct, a woman's sleeping baby (Berlin Papyrus 3027 recto

⁶⁶ Faulkner 1985: 94 with plate; cf. the commentary by O. Goelet in Wasserman 1998: 163. The backward-glancing Mahaf appears also in the late twenty-first-dynasty papyrus BM 10001: see Niwiński 1989: plate 40b. Another supernatural attendant of the deceased is described as “you the back of whose head is behind him,” i.e., who looks straight ahead (*PT* 321 §517) to distinguish him from Mahaf. See also Jacq 1986: 46–47.

⁶⁷ Vermeule 1976: 71, fig. 28.

⁶⁸ For example, Trypanis 1951: 86–87, no. 81. See Krüger 1866; De Ruyt 1932. Homer's Thanatos is more like the stretcher-bearer from a field-hospital than a ferry-man. Cf. Lawson 1909: 98–117.

⁶⁹ Erman and Grapow (1971: 2.6) define *m3* as “das Hinterende . . . des Schiffes,” while Jones (1988: 166–167, no. 63) lists the meaning of *m3* as “unknown.”

⁷⁰ Some animals, however, are regularly so portrayed: see Hermann 1932. There are also bicephalous figures who look Janus-like both back and front.

⁷¹ Schäfer 1974: plate 8.

i 9–ii 6 [= p. 328 *ANET*⁷³]), but this is an uncanny sign of the revenant, like the demonic “Radiant One who comes out after having turned back” in the underworld (*BD* 17 §105). Egyptologists are divided over the reason for Mahaf’s pose. D. Mueller (1972: 104) explains it by the need of one rowing a skiff to keep turning round to see; yet as we have said, Mahaf’s boat seems to be self-propelling. D. Bidoli (1976: 47–48) notes that *Coffin Texts* 473 §3c–d, etc. call the ferry-man a fisher (of the dead), and thinks that he is looking round to check his nets, but this would have to be a later addition, for the name precedes his role as fisher. L. Depuydt (1992: 37) has suggested on the basis of the name, “Who looks before, who looks behind,” that the ferry-man has two faces like Janus, while Krauss (1997: 67–85), noting among other things a similarity between the words for “ferry-man” and “moon” (*i‘ḥ-3t* and *i‘ḥ*), suggests that Egyptians identified Mahaf with the moon, whose waning crescent points opposite the direction of its celestial motion. Against the last two theories one might argue, as Depuydt (1992: 38) concedes, that the *Book of the Dead* portrays Mahaf with a single human face. For his part, the commentator, K. Sethe (1948–62: 2.116) explains Mahaf’s pose by his need to stay on course, absurdly, for in steering one looks forward. Looking back shows whence one has come, also vital when navigating, since landmarks may look different from the other direction—but only if one plans to go home again (steering by reference points, as the track of oar-blades is unclear). This explains why he looks back, since humans, subject to the day, cannot reverse time’s arrow and see death as a one-way trip whence they say that no-one returns;⁷² while as a god, Mahaf travels both ways.

Another figure whom Egyptians normally show looking back is the avatar of Osiris’ celestial home, Orion.⁷³ They carved the determinative for his name on the north face of the coping-stone (*bmbn.t*) from Ammenemes III’s (reigned 1842–1797) pyramid at Dashur, now in the Cairo Museum, armed with a sceptre, marching forward, turning back, and stretching behind him his left hand, which holds the star.⁷⁴ He is shown in this pose astride a boat on the star-charts—short shrift versions of the star-targetting shafts of Khufu’s pyramid—that adorn the tomb-ceilings of Senmut, major-domo of Hashepsowe (Hatshepsut, reigned 1503–1482) and of Sethos I (reigned 1318–04).⁷⁵ The star Sirius (*Spdt*), heavenly home of Osiris’ sister/wife, Isis (Plut. *Mor.* 359c, 365e),⁷⁶ is called Orion’s guide (*PT* 443 §822b, 477 §965; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 370a), but Sirius actually follows him in the circumvolution of the stars (cf. Avienus *Aratea* 725) and can be his guide only thanks to the glance with which he turns back toward her.⁷⁷

⁷² For the cliché that death is the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns, cf. *Il.* 9.408–409; see further West 1966: 370 *ad* Hes. *Theog.* 769–773.

⁷³ Wilkinson 1992: 130, fig. 1.

⁷⁴ Maspero 1902. On the coping-stone and its name, see Baines 1970.

⁷⁵ Krupp 1984: 307.

⁷⁶ Lafaye 1881 (I thank Cathy Jupp for this reference).

⁷⁷ Krauss 1997: 151–156.

We see why the god who brings the ba to its final home in the stars and the one who receives him there are regularly shown in the same odd pose, if we recall how Egyptians oriented themselves. In time, while moderns look forward, ancients generally were “in the grip of the past,”⁷⁸ while for them the door of the future was closed. Greek literature abounds in etiologies (for example, Callim. frs. 1–190 Pfeiffer), lauds inventors of the bridle (Athena: Pind. *Ol.* 13.69), lyre (Hermes: *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 25), wine (Icarius: Eratosthenes *ap. schol. Il.* 22.29; cf. Genesis 9:20–21), or the saw (Talus or Perdix: Diod. Sic. 4.76.4–7; Paus. 1.21.4),⁷⁹ and casts habitual actions, for which moderns use the timeless present, in the simple past or aorist, since a thing is proved generally true by having happened already.⁸⁰ So, too, as Cicero says (*Att.* 1.16.1), Homer is fond of *hysteron proteron* and narrates mythic examples in literally preposterous order (for example, *Il.* 24.599–620), a habit that peaks in Pindar (especially *Pyth.* 4). Such an orientation is further implied in the very word “before” (πάρῳιθε) with both its spatial and temporal meanings. In Hebrew we see such grounding in the past in the phrase פְּעֹלָם, which the Septuagint renders as ἕως εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, “forever” (for example, Isaiah 30:8), that shares the same trilateral root with the verb אָלַם, “to conceal” (Psalms 90:8 etc.), as if eternity were hidden. Egyptian script shows the same thing, for, as with Hittite,⁸¹ its hieroglyphs may be written in either horizontal direction, with the therio- and anthropomorphic signs always pointing to the inscription’s start whence they have come so that, much to Herodotus’ dismay (2.36.4), they face opposite the direction of reading and writing.⁸² Egyptians also often speak of “the first time,” “*Urzeit*,” or “creation” (zḫ tḫi: cf. *PT* 338 §551e; *BD* 9 §1) as a model for conduct.

In space, while Hebrews looked east, so *yāmīn* means both “right hand” (Psalms 89:13) and “south” (Exodus 29:22) and *šmāl* means “left” (Genesis 48:14) and “north” (Job 23:9), and while Greeks, who later established cartographic conventions (Anaximander 12 A 6 Diels-Kranz), turned north so the Scaean, or left-hand, gates were west of Troy (*Il.* 3.145 etc.), Egyptians faced south to the “God’s-land” of Punt and the source of the Nile, which gave them the land itself (Hdt. 2.5).⁸³ *Hnti* (“southward”) and *hnti* (“to sail south”) both come from the

⁷⁸In B. A. van Groningen’s memorable phrase; see Bettini 1991: 151–157.

⁷⁹Kleingünther 1933.

⁸⁰For example, ἤριπε δ’ ὥς ὅτε τις δρῶς ἤριπεν (*Il.* 13.389), versus *e caddi, come corpo morto cade* (Dante *Inf.* 5.142) or ξυνὸς Ἐνύαλιος καὶ τε κτανεόντα κατέκτα (*Il.* 18.309) versus the New Testament’s πάντες γὰρ οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀπολοῦνται (Matt. 26.52); see Chantraine 1953: 184–187, §272–275. *Il.* 18.309 (cf. Archil. fr. 110 West) and Matt. 26.52 are compared for their content by Weil 1953: 21.

⁸¹Gurney 1954: 127.

⁸²Gardiner 1957: 25; Fischer 1977: 6, §4. This normal convention is sometimes broken by “retrograde” writing, usually in mortuary texts.

⁸³“God’s-land” (*ἰ3-nṯr*) is the name of Punt (= ? modern Somalia) in reliefs in Hashepsowe’s temple at Deir el Bahri: see Breasted 1906: 2.102–122. At 2° N. latitude, Mogadishu experiences its longest period of daylight (of twelve hours) at the equinoxes, with but a small reduction at either

preposition *bnt*, “in front of” (likewise *i3by* = “left” and “east” and *imn* = “right” and “west,”⁸⁴ an equation found in painting, as when the *Book of the Dead*’s hero marches rightward across the page bound for Amenta), and tribute-lists are regularly arranged geographically, starting with the south. This had many results, as that one entered pyramids from the north, facing the chief cardinal point. Notable among these was that facing south, one turned one’s back to the pole-star. Around Polaris are tethered (i.e., revolve) the stars that never set. Egyptians called them *ihm-sk* (“imperishable”) unlike the merely “unwearying” (*ihm-wrd*) ones, while to Greeks they were “not bathed in [the river] Ocean.”⁸⁵ The circumpolar stars give Mahaf his bearings (*PT* 437 §802a; 520 §1222c; 481 §1000d; 519 §§1201–3) as he brings his fares to live forever with Osiris in Orion.⁸⁶

The acts of facing so the future, including eternity, is behind and facing so the deathless, unwashed stars of immortality are behind come to the same thing.⁸⁷ The forward gaze pointing mortals to the past is part of the human condition, for we do not know the future, to which only gods, above all those who grant immortality, can look “back.” The Bible tells us not to look at God and His operations, as Lot’s wife turned to watch Him lay waste the cities of the plain (Genesis 19:17, 26; cf. Luke 17:32),⁸⁸ and classical literature links this taboo to the soul’s posthumous fate in the tale of Orpheus—merely human, though once an Argonaut (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.177; Ap. Rhod. 1.23–34; *pace* Pherecydes 3 F 26 *FGrH*) and perhaps like Mahaf a fisher of souls (cf. ὀρφεύς, “great sea perch,” Marcellus Sidetes 33)—who failed to resurrect Eurydice when he turned too soon as he led her up from Hades (Verg. *G.* 4.489–490).

The *Odyssey*’s hero spurns the goddess Calypso’s request to live with her forever on Ogygia, and opts to go back to humankind, again a Near Eastern motif (cf. Gilgamesh, who rejects Ištar, *Gilgamesh* 6.22–78 [= p. 84 *ANET*³], and

solstice. Curiously, an equal share of day and night marked the just dispensation of the gods in Sicilian thought also (cf. Parmenides 28 B 9.3–4 Diels-Kranz; Pind. *Ol.* 2.61–62); cf. Woodbury 1966 = 1991: 151–167. I thank Laura Gagné for helpful discussion.

⁸⁴ Sethe 1923.

⁸⁵ ἄμμορ[οι] . . . λοετρῶν ὤκεανοῖο (*Il.* 18.489 = *Od.* 5.275) or κυανέου πεφυλαγμένα ὤκεανοῖο (Arat. *Phaen.* 48; cf. Verg. *G.* 1.246) in contrast to those λελούμεν[οι] ὤκεανοῖο (*Il.* 5.6). For the Egyptian circumpolar stars, see Barta 1980.

⁸⁶ Osiris is perforce seen as a “perishable,” i.e., non-circumpolar constellation, for death and resurrection are the core features of his myth. Foremost among the “imperishable” stars was the Big Dipper (Ursa Major = *Mshitiw*), heavenly equivalent of the adze (also called *mshitiw*) with which the living heir performed upon his late predecessor the ritual Opening of the Mouth, the last stage of mummification; see Wainwright 1932.

⁸⁷ For the link between spatial and temporal orientation, cf. Austin 1975: 241.

⁸⁸ On the taboo against turning around, see Hainsworth in Heubeck *et al.* 1988: 1.283 *ad Od.* 5.350, with bibl. The taboo often involves necromancy, e.g., *KUB XXVII* 67 (iv 3) = *ANET*³ 348b and *Od.* 10.527–529, which is not what I am considering here. It is God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah that Lot and family must not see; I have scant sympathy with Pitt-Rivers’s (1977: 136) view that they are to turn their backs on non-endogamous mating practices.

Hittite heroes who shun Šauška).⁸⁹ He sets sail, but a storm that wrecks his raft nearly drowns him, and his patron-god and constant helper, Athena, saves him (5.382–387). Before this, Leucothea makes her only appearance (333–365) in a crisis-vision like Shackleton's delusion or the voice that bade Reinhold Messner, alone and freezing high on Everest, make dinner.⁹⁰ Once the mortal daughter of Cadmus, named Ino, Leucothea had fled her husband Athamas (father by Nephele of Phrixus, whose ghost the Argonauts had laid to rest) by leaping with their baby, Melicertes, into the sea, where "she now shares the lot of the gods" (334) as Leucothea, the "White Goddess," while her son has become the baby-hero, Palaemon, in whose honour the Isthmian games were held (Alcman 50(b) *PMG*, *PMGF* = 124 Calame, etc.). Here she offers Odysseus an "immortal" silk(?) veil (*Od.* 5.346–347)⁹¹ that he must bind as a magic life-jacket round his chest to bring him safely ashore. (Interestingly, in *PT* 696 §2163 the deceased offers the ferry-man a piece of cloth [*szf*, *nnit*] as payment for his services.)⁹² Once there, Odysseus must throw the veil back "into the wine-dark sea" (349) while "himself turning away" (αὐτὸς δ' ἀπονόσφι τραπέσθαι, 350, cf. 458–462). This shocks us, for the *Odyssey* elsewhere (11.602–604; contrast *Il.* 18.117–119) implies that no mortal but Heracles had become a god (cf. ἥρωες θεός, Pind. *Nem.* 3.22; cf. Hdt. 2.44),⁹³ nor does drowning make one immortal as it can in Hellenistic and Christian thought,⁹⁴ yet it makes theological sense in an Egyptian setting, for the *Pyramid Texts* hint that Osiris, and so pharaoh after him, suffered a sea-change when the gods deified (*sntri*, ἀποθεοῦν) him by drowning (cf. 33 §24d; 364 §615d; 423 §766d), an idea still current in New Kingdom times (ca 1540–1075; cf. the Shabaka stone = *Denkmal memphitischer Theologie* 8, 11a),⁹⁵ which is why relatives could not touch those found drowned, who were buried instead by Nile-priests (as were victims of crocodiles, which merely finished the river's work, Hdt. 2.90), and also why Greek magical papyri call Osiris and other *noyēs* Ἑσινῆς (*JDAI* 32 [1917] 201 [Memphis]; *PGM* 3.1, 4.875, 5.269, etc.; cf.

⁸⁹ Güterbock 1983; Crane 1988: 63–85, cited with approval in Morris 1997: 617, n. 63. Cf. West 1997: 411–412. On Šauška, see Gurney 1954: 135. Hippolytus rejects Ištar's Greek counterpart, Aphrodite, but in a different sense.

⁹⁰ So Shay 1994: 51 interprets Thetis' appearance to Achilles in *Iliad* 19.

⁹¹ Homeric veils—translucent (*Il.* 14.185), sleek (*Od.* 1.334), revealing (18.210–213)—were perhaps of wild silk, which would explain why Ino's is an immortal talisman, for coming from a pupa (νεκύδαλος, lit. "little corpse," Arist. *Hist. An.* 5.19.6), the moth (ψυχή, lit. "soul") symbolically overcomes death: see Bremmer 1983a: 82. Bronze-Age Aegeans used silk (Panagiotakopulu *et al.* 1997) like Egyptians (Lubec *et al.* 1993) and Israelites (cf. *mešī*, Ezekiel 16.13).

⁹² Jacq 1986: 69.

⁹³ For an oriental origin for Heracles, see Burkert 1979: 80–83; Merkelbach 1977: 77–83; Griffith 1998: 227.

⁹⁴ Hellenistic thought: e.g., Theoc. 13.72, of Hylas; cf. Nymphis [lived ca 310–245] 432 F 5 *FGrH*, of Bormus; Diod. Sic. 5.55.4–7 of Halia/Leucothea and 5.62 of Molpadia/Hemithea; cf. the story of Hadrian's beloved, Antinous; Christian thought: Colossians 2.12.

⁹⁵ Gwyn Griffiths 1970: 34; 1980: 107–113, with bibl.

Tert. *De bapt.* 5) < Coptic (Sahidic) ϣαϣϯ, “drowned person”⁹⁶ < Egyptian ḥsī, “praised, favoured.” Plutarch, meanwhile, replaces drowning as Osiris’ cause of death with the not always fatal Greek motif of exposure in a floating chest (*Mor.* 356c).⁹⁷

This brief doublet of Athena’s rescue, prompted by no need of the story, is a breach of narrative-grammar best explained intertextually.⁹⁸ Greek myth makes Ino a Semite: her father was Phoenician,⁹⁹ her husband a child-slayer like the devotees of Moloch (II Kings 23:10), in life her son’s name recalls the Tyrian Melqart (cf. I Kings 18:4–13), and in death he was called Παλαίμων, ostensibly “the Wrestler,” but perhaps corrupted from Phoenician *Ba‘al-hāmōn*, “Lord of the Multitude.” In her honour the Laconian Epidaureans threw into a pond bannock (μᾶζα, Paus. 3.23.8), which has a Hebrew counterpart (*matstsah*, Genesis 19:3, etc.).¹⁰⁰ Ino was an aunt of Dionysus, whom Herodotus equated with Osiris (2.42.2, etc.); hence J. Fontenrose (1948: 147) guessed that she was once named *Οἰνώ < οἶνος, “wine” (a pan-Aegean word; cf. Latin *vinum*, Ugaritic *yn*, Hebrew *yayin*). A tale that blends the classical cliché of the *saeva noverca*¹⁰¹ with levantine harem-intrigue says that she faked a Delphic oracle bidding Athamas sacrifice his first-born, Phrixus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.1 = Parke and Wormell 1956: 2.82, no. 196 [not in Fontenrose’s catalogue]; cf. Hdt. 7.197), whom Nephele spared by sending the ram that swam him to safety (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.161).¹⁰² This tale, too, has Biblical echoes in Sarah’s envy of Ishmael (Genesis 21:10) and Abraham’s barely averted sacrifice of Isaac, in which the ram is a stand-in, not a get-away vehicle (22 *passim*). As we have seen, the phrase “into the wine-dark sea,” which here rubs shoulders with the ban on retrospection, was also Near Eastern.

Thus, by not looking as he flees eternity on Ogygia at the deathless veil of one deified like Osiris by drowning, Odysseus obeys the pan-Aegean rule that only the ferry-man of the Duat/Hades and Osiris, Lord of Amenta can look back to eternity and immortality.

⁹⁶ Smith 1983: 71.

⁹⁷ Holley 1949: 42–47.

⁹⁸ Riffaterre 1978: 164–165.

⁹⁹ Proof of Phoenician origin for the tale that Cadmus came from Phoenicia seeking Europa is that both names are transparently Semitic with appropriate Greek endings added, namely *qdm*, “in front,” hence “east” and **rb*, “to go down (of the sun, etc.),” hence “west.”

¹⁰⁰ On the Semitic origin of Ino, see Astour 1967: 204–212, with bibl. On Melqart, see Bonnet 1988: 203–236; on μᾶζα, see Olson 1998: 67–68 *ad Ar. Pax* 1, with bibl.; on its relation to *matstsah*, see Brown 1995: 337. On Ino’s cult, see Burkert 1983: 206, n. 11. One might object to the Melqart/Melicertes equation that Herodotus equates Melqart with Heracles (2.44; cf. Menander 783 F 1 *FGrH*), but see West 1997: 58. His name, which means *Melk-qart*, “king of the city,” is apt for a baby hurled to his death: cf. Ἀστύαναξ.

¹⁰¹ The phrase is Vergil’s (*G.* 2.128), but the theme inveterate (cf. Hdt. 4.154.2): see West 1978: 363 *ad Hes. Op.* 825. For stepmothers trying to kill stepsons, see Juv. 6.627–628.

¹⁰² On the ram, see Robertson 1940; on the sacrifice, Hughes 1991: 92–96.

III. WHY MENELAUS GOT TO ELYSIUM

Proteus says that Menelaus owes his good fortune to no virtue of body or soul or any saving grace of the Olympians, but to being Zeus' son-in-law (*Od.* 4.569–570). Zeus' nepotism is a wonky affair, if the mightiest god, who could not save the son for whom he rains blood (*Il.* 16.431–461), can forever reprieve a non-relative, yet there is no mistake, for next to arrive in the blessed isles are Nereus' son-in-law, Peleus, and Ares' son-in-law, Cadmus (*Pind. Ol.* 2.68–83; *Eur. Bacch.* 1329–40).

Sons-in-law had special standing: Menelaus himself won the Spartan throne, as Buxtehude his organist's job at Lübeck, by marrying the incumbent's daughter, and Penelope's suitors assume that whoever wins will be not just her husband but also king of Ithaca—rightly, it seems, for no one corrects them (but cf. *Od.* 1.386–387). The clearest case in epic where a son succeeds his father is Oedipus, who took the Theban throne from Laius by mistake, while coincidentally marrying an heiress (*Od.* 11.271–280). From these and other tales, M. Finkelberg (1991: 306–307) claims, assuming on scant evidence that the queen was hereditary priestess of the local goddess, and despite the overwhelmingly patriarchal cast of heroic Greek society,¹⁰³ that royal succession was regularly matrilineal.

Yet two customs whereby Greeks paid back families for daughters, whose loss through marriage they felt only since the bride moved to her husband's home, refute this claim. Though in discussing marriage Homer may hint obliquely at dowries (for example, *Il.* 1.277–278 [= 2.196–197]; 2.53–54, 132–133), he often names the bride-price (ἔδνα) as the way the groom won the bride (16.178, etc.); should she prove unfaithful, the cuckold could demand it back (*Il.* 16.173–192; 22.467–472; *Od.* 8.313–320; 16.386–392).¹⁰⁴ At sundry times in history, self-absorbed Greek fathers (cf. Pl. *Lach.* 179d–e) trusted their sons to the care of teachers (*Il.* 16.139–144 = 19.388–391), pederasts (Aesch. fr. 228–229 *TrGF*; cf. Pl. *Symp.* 180a), whose cups they bore at parties (*Il.* 20.232–235; *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 202–206; *Pind. Ol.* 1.44–45; cf. *Il.* 1.470; 9.175; 20.234; *Od.* 1.148), or in the limit-case of infant-exposure whatever kind soul might rescue them (Soph. *OT* 717–720; Hdt. 1.110; *Eur. Ion* 17–20, etc.).¹⁰⁵ Boys were close to their mothers (for example, *Il.* 1.359–361; *Pind. Ol.* 1.46; *Pyth.* 4.186; 8.85) and surrogates were often her male kin, as Achilles left Neoptolemus with Lycomedes, and Odysseus got his scar while hunting with Autolycus and sons (*Il.* 19.321–327; *Od.* 19.392–412; cf. *Il.* 11.221–228).¹⁰⁶ Thus the family reft of its daughter claimed, if but for a time, her son,¹⁰⁷ so strengthening the bond that Greek girls like Althaea

¹⁰³ Wohl 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Lacey 1966.

¹⁰⁵ For education, see Robbins 1993; for pederasty, see Bremmer 1990; for exposure, see Redford 1967b.

¹⁰⁶ Bremmer 1976; 1983b.

¹⁰⁷ Duby 1978: 6 (I thank Curtis Nadj for this reference).

and Antigone felt for their brothers, barbarian Medea being the exception that proves the rule (*Il.* 9.565–572; *Soph. Ant.* 908–913; *Arist. Rhet.* 3.16.9; *Eur. Med.* 1333–35; but cf. *Hdt.* 3.119).¹⁰⁸

Though rare at best in Greece, matrilineality was basic to contemporary Egyptian dogma, for to legitimize their power after the foreign disruption of the shepherd kings in the Second Intermediate Period (Manetho frs. 42, 54; cf. *Hdt.* 2.128),¹⁰⁹ and in keeping with the ancient royal title *s3 r*‘, “son of Ra,” Tuthmosid pharaohs claimed divine descent. Since the divine parent had to be male, for everyone knows one’s mother, while fatherhood is moot (*Od.* 1.215–216; cf. *Men. fr.* 227 Koerte), they forged a myth of divine *droit de seigneur*, as in Heracles’ tale (*Hes. Scut.* 27–56), whereby Amun came in pharaoh’s garb to the great king’s wife and begat the heir apparent, as official lives say of Hashepsowe and Amenhotep III.¹¹⁰ Here too there is ancient precedent in the mythic conflict of Horus with his maternal uncle Seth (*P. Chester Beatty* 1, recto), which to some suggests matrilineal descent.¹¹¹ (It was once thought that the title *ḥm.t-ntr Ḳmn*, “priestess [*lit.* god’s wife] of Amun,” borne throughout the dynasty by the main queen, also implies this role, but Egyptologists have now disproven this.)¹¹² As a practical outcome, the bloodline passed from queen to daughter, pharaoh ostensibly standing in for his heir’s true father, Amun. This actually happened with the dynasty’s first queen, Ahmose Nofretary, first to be called “god’s wife of Amun” (cf. the “Donation” stela from Amun’s temple at Karnak).¹¹³ She was her husband’s sister, as a vase from Sinai proves,¹¹⁴ and Egyptologists assume for want of counter-evidence that she also bore both his successor, Amenhotep I, and his principal wife, Meritamun. By the dynasty’s end Tut‘ankhamūn’s widow could still ask Hittite king Šuppiluliuma to marry her to one of his sons, who would be the new pharaoh (*KUB A iii* 1–24),¹¹⁵ and the queen’s status is shown by Tušratta of Mitanni, who, when ill-used by Amenhotep IV, grieved not to him but to Queen-Mother Teye (*EA* 26).¹¹⁶ Egyptians perhaps tried to blend this matrilineal tendency with their own patriarchy by strict endogamy, for pharaoh often took his sister as first wife. Alternatively, as G. Robins (1983) has argued, pharaohs may have wed their sisters to mimic the gods, emphasizing their divinity and distancing themselves from commoners, who eschewed the practice,¹¹⁷ in

¹⁰⁸ Golden 1990: 121–135.

¹⁰⁹ On legitimation of power, see Otto 1969; Baines 1995.

¹¹⁰ Hashepsowe: Breasted 1906: 2.80; Amenhotep III: Campbell 1912: 25. The Egyptian myth perhaps influenced the Greek: see Burkert 1965: 167–169.

¹¹¹ Köhler 1972: 19; Leach 1976: 2. The text is translated in Lichtheim 1976: 2.214–223.

¹¹² Sander-Hansen 1940; Troy 1986: 102–114; Ward 1986: 10; Robins 1993.

¹¹³ Gitton 1976: 71.

¹¹⁴ Petrie 1906: 137, with fig. 144[2]. The vase-inscription calls her “Great royal wife, daughter of a great royal wife, royal mother, Aahmes Nefertari, living for ever.”

¹¹⁵ Güterbock 1965: 94–95.

¹¹⁶ See Redford 1967a: 71; Ratié 1979: 16, 23–31; Moran 1987: 84–85. For a recent discussion of Egyptian kingship, see the studies in O’Connor and Silverman 1995.

¹¹⁷ Černý 1954.

which case matrilineality was a byproduct of incest rather than its cause. Either way, it keeps power all in the family lest the king be beholden to his wife's kin (cf. Hdt. 3.53.3),¹¹⁸ and however the causality worked, the two customs were inextricably linked. Greeks knew of royal Egyptian incest and it made them sick (Aesch. *Suppl.* 387–396, 931–932),¹¹⁹ though the Ptolemies would later follow suit. It follows that they also knew cases of Egyptian matrilineal descent.

These facts bear on Menelaus. Zeus came to rule by overthrowing Cronus, who had himself deposed Uranus, like Teshub in the Anush-Kumarbi-Teshub line of Hittite myth. Fearing a son still unborn who might oust him in turn, Zeus swallowed Metis when she was bearing what would prove to be his loyal daughter, Athena (Hes. *Theog.* 886–900), and, in a deliberate ploy to shift strife from heaven to earth,¹²⁰ wed Thetis to Peleus when he learned that she should bear a son greater than his father (Pind. *Isth.* 8.26–36; ps.-Aesch. *PV* 907–927), a myth alluded to in the *Iliad* (1.404).¹²¹ One could say that, as Thetis' and Peleus' child, the Iliadic hero was living proof of Zeus' succession-Angst.

In a small pantheon short on nubile goddesses,¹²² both Cronus and Zeus were born of incest, so their succession was patriarchal and matrilineal at once. On this pattern, Zeus' drastic attempts not to beget a rival would fail unless he dealt with Helen's husband, the more so since she was worshipped, perhaps as a moon-god ('Ελένη < ? σελήνη), at Therapne near Sparta (Hdt. 6.61).¹²³ So he hatched a plan (the Διὸς . . . βουλή of *Il.* 1.5; *Cypria* fr. 1.7 Davies, Bernabé) to part Helen and Menelaus after Hermione's birth but before they could have a son.¹²⁴ For all its cost in human lives, the project failed when Helen rejoined Menelaus after the war, and a new strategy was called for.

Elysium has perfect weather (*Od.* 4.561–570) and, like Ogygia, is a make-believe, "holodeck" form of Olympus (cf. 6.41–46; *Lucr.* 3.18–22). By sending Menelaus there in perpetual, if anodyne exile from the real McCoy, no less than by swallowing Metis and marrying Thetis off below her station, Zeus may have seen himself as forestalling a palace-coup.

IV. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

The simplest would be pure chance. Many aspects of the *Odyssey's* Elysium are echoed piecemeal in diverse Indo-european sources: we meet the plain in Yama's otherworldly cowpasture (*gāvyūtīḥ*, *Ṛgveda* 10.14.2) and the meadow

¹¹⁸I thank Gregory Nagy for this reference; cf. Robins 1999: 172.

¹¹⁹MacKinnon 1978: 78.

¹²⁰Arthur 1982: 77; Mayer 1996.

¹²¹Slatkin 1991: 53–82.

¹²²West 1966: 37. There were at any given time only twelve Olympians (Pind. *Ol.* 5.5, 10.49; etc.). An altar to them stood in the Athenian agora; see Travlos 1971: 458–461, with bibl.

¹²³Zeus' other divine daughters are virgins. Heracles is no threat to Zeus, since he owes his presence on Olympus to Zeus-given apotheosis. The other inhabitant of Elysium named in the *Odyssey*, Rhadamanthys, is Zeus' son by Europa.

¹²⁴Kullmann 1956.

mentioned in Hittite death-rituals (*wellu*, *KUB XXX 24 II.1–4*).¹²⁵ The magic Phaeacianesque ferry-men we find in Welcker's men of Brittia, noted above (222), and in Hárbard/Oðinn's ferrying in *Harbards-liod*.¹²⁶ From these scattered sources we might conclude that Indo-europeans thought the afterlife polarized between a dank and fusty Hell and a paradisiacal meadow reached by night on ships of supernatural speed with a special crew who row rather than sail, and that the *Odyssey's* Elysium is a vestige of that belief. There are problems, such as that the ferry-men imply that Indo-europeans, like Hesiod (*Op.* 171; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 2.70–71), thought paradise an island, while the *Odyssey* speaks rather of a plain (4.561–569). More tellingly, though, we can recover nothing in Indo-european lore that remotely equals the clear parallel between Egyptian *šbt i3rw*, "field of reeds," *m3' hrw*, "justified of voice" (the commonest name for its inhabitants), and **r(w)d-İmntt*, "man of the West" (i.e., Osiris, its divine judge) on the one hand and Greek Elysian plain, μάκαρες, and Rhadamanthys on the other.

If Greeks indeed borrowed Elysium from Egypt, the obvious date at which this occurred would be the orientalizing seventh century, when they adopted the alphabet and fixed the *Odyssey* in its final form, for the *Odyssey*-poet(s) were clearly interested in Thebes (4.126–127) and the Nile (14.257–265; 17.423–424), which Diodorus Siculus takes as proof of autopsy (1.12.9–10).

There are, however, two reasons to think that Elysium in Greek long predates this period. First is that the idea entered epic language deeply enough to produce its own semic system, for as I have suggested above it figures as a sky-river, sails like wings, Odysseus' eternity-spurning glance, and special status for Menelaus, as well as in Ἡλύσιον πεδῖον itself. Second is that the bards have highly adapted this last term. We might have expected *šbt i3rw* to appear in Greek as either **sekha(n)* Ἡλυσία(ν) or **donákwon* πεδῖον. For both loan-word and calque first to arise and then contaminate one another must have taken much time. One might think that a longstanding term would have wider currency than Elysium, a hapax in the *Odyssey*, which does not recur until Apollonius (4.811), yet there is a narrative reason for its rarity since Menelaus is its only denizen linked to the War, Peleus and Cadmus never having gone to Troy. There is also an extrinsic reason, as we shall see.

There is one much earlier period at which Egyptian influence on Greek is possible, namely the thirteenth century, the era both of the fall of Troy VIIa that gave the bards their central theme and of the Egyptian cultural zenith of the eighteenth dynasty. Archaeology proves pan-Aegean contact at the time,¹²⁷ and philologists now grant that trade in goods implies exchange of vocabulary and

¹²⁵ Puhvel 1969 = 1981: 210–215; Lincoln 1977.

¹²⁶ Vigfússon and Powell 1883: 1.117–123; cf. Lincoln 1980: 46–47.

¹²⁷ Cline 1994, with bibl.; Morris 1997: 602–603, seeing Egyptian influence as scant compared with Semitic. The late-Helladic shipwreck found off Ulu Burun near Kaş, Turkey in 1984 gives direct evidence of this pan-Aegean culture: see Bass 1987; Payton 1991.

myth.¹²⁸ This is most true when an artifact involves certain ideas. For example, carbonate of soda (Na_2CO_3), which Egyptians arguably shipped to Greece with baking soda, salt, and alum to aid in saving fish (cf. Hes. *ap.* Ath. 116b; Soph. fr. 712 *TrGF*; Tobit 6.5),¹²⁹ entailed the embalming for which they also used it, which introduced the rich religious beliefs whose ritual expression it was (cf. Hdt. 2.50).¹³⁰ Moreover, some Bronze Age words survive in the *Odyssey*,¹³¹ though often just vestiges of obsolete things that the bards themselves had forgotten—as we still issue “curfews” (< French *couvre feu*) while having no hearth to put out—, which hardly rescue its portrait of that time from errors, of which the list is long.¹³²

Formular in nature, the *Odyssey* was an oral poem¹³³ in constant flux until written down. This was after Greeks began to write, of course¹³⁴—probably not long, though clues are vexingly scant,¹³⁵ for comparison with other oral cultures and the witness of Greek vase-painting tell against the alternate, anti-evolutionary view, urged by G. S. Kirk (1985: 1.1–16), that oral bards reproduced a monumental text for centuries before anyone transcribed it. This state of flux was cleansing, as I. Morris (1986: 87) has stressed, though this did not apply to formulae fixed in the epic word-hoard like διπτερός ποταμός, which on a strict Parryist (1971: 128) reading means no more than “the only kind [of river] that there was in the heroic age.” A Greek audience in the centuries before 650 had scant interest in Egyptian eschatology. Still, they cared about Elysium as the charter for a world they themselves hoped to enter after death. No mere velleity, this hope they enshrined in the act of initiation in mysteries like Demeter’s at Eleusis, whose non-Greek component is proved by the intractable name

¹²⁸ Esp. Bernal 1987–91; Duhoux 1988; West 1988; 1997; Burkert 1992. These scholars’ views were to some degree anticipated by Bogan 1658; Lauth 1867; Parker 1917.

¹²⁹ Curtis 1991. The oxyrhynchus-fish hieroglyph (K4 on the sign-list) is the determinative in the word *ḥ3.t*, “corpse” (Bidoli 1976: 51); *w’bt* means both “place of embalming” and “kitchen.” Empedocles was once incarnated as a fish (31 B 117 Diels-Kranz).

¹³⁰ I argue (1994: 20–23) that *véκταρ* < Egyptian *ntry*, “carbonate of soda.” However, rival etymologies from within Indo-European abound: see Nagy 1990: 139.

¹³¹ Ruijgh 1957; West 1988: 156–159.

¹³² Finley 1965: 39; Raaflaub 1998.

¹³³ Parry 1930: 134–137 = 1971: 7; 1932 = 1971: 325–364. Cf. von Humboldt 1963: 254 (I thank Daniel Chamberlain for this reference).

¹³⁴ The two earliest Greek inscriptions seem to be those on an Attic oinochoe of ca 700 found near the Dipylon gate, on which see Powell 1988, with bibl., and a proto-Corinthian pyxis of ca 670 found on Aegina, on which see Payne 1931: 98, fig. 30. In general, see Carpenter 1933 and 1938; Powell 1991.

¹³⁵ The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* might have been finished by the first quotations, like the late eighth-century (Metzger 1965) inscription on “Nestor’s cup” (fr. 454 Hansen), which may allude to *Il.* 11.632–637 (but see West 1995: 205), and Simonides (obit 468; cf. *Marmor Parium* = 239 A 57 *FGrH*) fr. 8 West, which quotes *Il.* 6.146, though Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1913: 273–275) thinks it rather by Semonides (floruit 664–661; cf. *Suda* s.v.; cf. Mimnermus fr. 2 West). One could, however, have quoted parts of poems not yet complete; so Davison 1955. For allusions to epics in painting, see Lowenstam 1997, with bibl.

Persephone, which Greeks claimed to be of Egyptian origin (for example, Diod. Sic. 1.29, 96; Lactant. *Inst. Div.* 1.21). The mysteries promised a blessed existence after death (Pind. fr. 137a Maehler; Soph. fr. 837 *TrGF*; Isocr. 4.28), arguably in Elysium¹³⁶ and their κυκέων (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 206–211), if narcotic,¹³⁷ recalls the Egyptian νηπενθές (*Od.* 4.220–232). Tellingly this cult, though begun in Erechtheus' time (*Marmor Parium* 239 A 14 *FGrH*), peaked round 650, with the Telesterion and peribolos being greatly expanded under Peisistratus,¹³⁸ who had a tyrant's fondness for mystery cults, in a place whose name, Burkert (1961: 209) notes, recalls Elysium. This is relevant to Proteus' prophecy for whoever, like Cook (1995), thinks that the *Odyssey* reached its final form in Athens as a celebration of Athena's triumph over Poseidon (Hdt. 8.55) and of democratic rhetoric over aristocratic rule by force, for in their heyday it was Athens' archon basileus who oversaw the Mysteries. (If Elysium recalls them, the less said of it the better, as Aeschylus [test. 93–94 *TrGF*] and Alcibiades [Lys. 6; Andoc. *On the Mysteries*; Plut. *Alc.* 19] could aver, which may be another reason why few authors use the word.) The Ino-episode contains neither loan-words nor calques, but its mythemes too recall the Demeter-cult: the girl who paradoxically survives drowning, the goddess with the vinous name of (O)ino, and a ban on looking back at immortality all recall the girl who flees Hades, the grain-goddess Doso (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 122, Passow's emend.), and the order for initiates (μύσται) to keep their eyes shut (μύειν) until they beheld the ecstatic vision of the ἐποπτεία.

To conclude, we have seen that the river, ship, and ferry-man whom dead Egyptians met on their way to the Reed-Field left their mark on the *Odyssey* and that Menelaus comes thither thanks to Zeus' anxiety over a specifically matrilineal succession better attested in Tuthmosid Egypt than in Greece itself. We have also seen that there is a reason, quite unlike those that let bards adopt these ideas, that kept them alive into the seventh century. These facts make it yet more likely that the nub of Egyptian funerary myth, the Field of Reeds, appears therein as Elysium.

APPENDIX

The argument that follows supplements and supports my earlier (1997a) claim that epic bards knew of the most signal fact of Egyptian geography, the annual Nile flood.¹³⁹ Thales (11 A 16 Diels-Kranz), Hecataeus (1 F 302 *FGrH*), and Herodotus (2.19–27) know of it, which perhaps explains why the latter thinks Egypt the gift of the river (2.5). Strabo says that Homer knows it too (γνώριμον ἦν τὸ πάθος τοῦ ποταμοῦ τῷ ποιητῇ, 1.2.30 [C 37]), and some scholars try to show from the epics that he is right. R. Carpenter (1946: 176, n. †) and G. S.

¹³⁶ Guthrie 1935: 155–156; Mylonas 1961: 283.

¹³⁷ Wasson and Hofmann 1978; *pace* Burkert 1987: 108–109.

¹³⁸ Mylonas 1961: 77–105.

¹³⁹ Janssen 1987: 129, nn. 1–2, with bibl.

Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (1983: 12) suggest that bards identified the river Ocean with the Nile and used the epithet ἀψόρροος, “back-flowing” (*Il.* 18.399; *Od.* 20.65) not to describe the river as “encircling the earth and *flowing back* into itself” (LSJ s.v.), but rather in its annual flooding of the Delta and subsequent return within its banks. Yet the bards seem to have thought Ocean the Nile’s source, and not the Nile itself (*Il.* 21.194–197; Hes. *Theog.* 337–338). D. Bonneau (1964: 196–199), encouraged by P. Gilbert’s (1939) support for Diodorus Siculus’ claim that the *Odyssey*-poet knew Egypt first-hand, argues that the formula διηπετέος ποταμοῖο (used of the Nile at *Od.* 4.477, 581), which he renders as “venu des pluies” or “venu de Zeus,” implies that the bards knew why the flood occurred. Yet, as we said above, such a translation is suspect.

A better case can be made. P. V. Ernsted (1954), discussing *Od.* 14.257–258 (πεμπαῖοι δ’ Αἴγυπτον ἔϋρρείτην ἰκόμεσθα, / στήσα δ’ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ποταμῷ νέας ἀμφιελίσσας), argues against the usual view whereby both occurrences of Αἴγυπτος in these lines refer to the Nile. Noting such close repetition of the same noun, rather than the use of a pronoun in the second place, and the fact that ποταμός occurs in apposition to the noun in its second rather than its first occurrence,¹⁴⁰ he suggests that in its first use, Αἴγυπτος refers to the land of Egypt (as is certain a dozen lines earlier at 246) and to the Nile only in the second. He offers a parallel at 17.425–427 (ὄς [Ζεύς] μ’ ἄμα ληιστήρσι πολυπλάγκτοισιν ἀνῆκεν/ Αἴγυπτόνδ’ [i.e., “to Egypt”] ἰέναι δολιχὴν ὁδὸν ὄφρ’ ἀπολοίμην. / στήσα δ’ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ποταμῷ [i.e., “the Nile”] νέας ἀμφιελίσσας). It follows that the adjective ἔϋρρείτης in 14.257 cannot, *pace* LSJ s.v., mean “fair-flowing,” as in its one other Homeric occurrence (*Il.* 6.34), where it modifies the river-name, Satnioeis—for this would be nonsense as a description of a country. Ernsted, however, pointing out that the verb ῥέω, source of the second element of ἔϋρρείτης, means not only “to flow” but also “to be flowed over (by),” as in the formula ῥέε δ’ αἶματι γαῖα (*Il.* 8.65 etc.), suggests that *Od.* 14.257 treats ἔϋρρείτης as derived from ῥέω in this other sense, and translates as “abundantly watered” (обильно орошаемый).

Though pure linguistics, Ernsted’s remarks have a historical point, for Egypt was “abundantly watered” only in being flooded yearly by the Nile. That bards used this word, so construed, of the river “Egypt” suggests more clearly than ἀψόρροος or διηπετής that they knew of the flood long before Thales, Hecataeus, and Herodotus reported it.

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¹⁴⁰Such syntax is not unparalleled; cf. καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς ἐϋμμελίῳ Πριάμοιο, *Il.* 6.449 [= 8.552].

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