

## Nausicaa and Iphthime: The Dark Side of the Woman at the Well

The *Laistrygoneia* has traditionally been viewed as a close relative or doublet of the *Cyclopeia* on the basis of the shared occurrences of rock-hurling and man-eating giants; this paper proposes that the building blocks of *Laistrygoneia*'s narrative suggest that it is more closely related to the *Phaiakis*, and presents Indic comparanda for doublets which appear in both "positive" and "negative" versions.

As Fenik 1968 shows in regard to Iliadic battle scenes, Homeric scenes were frequently duplicated through a process in which sections of their narrative were re-purposed elsewhere with one or more elements altered to provide variety and to fit the new context. We see an excellent example of this in the similarities between the events on Pharos and Thrinachia at *Od.* 4.360-370 and 12.325-328: men trapped on an island / the winds won't blow / the men fruitlessly attempt to fish / the hero wanders off alone / divine interventions. It has even been suggested, on the basis of their shared characteristics, that the Circe and Calypso episodes are a pair of such doublets: e.g. the island settings, the visits from Hermes, the epithet-phrase "dread goddess with lovely hair," the singing and weaving, and the oath followed by sex (Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1884:115-125).

In the case of the *Laistrygoneia* and the *Phaiakis*, the salient shared narrative elements are as follows:

1. Description of the region's excellent natural harbor
2. The first contact is with a young woman,
3. ...whose father is the king of the region.
4. The hero meets the young woman at a water source.
5. The young woman directs the male characters to the high-roofed house at (7.77, 85) of her

father in town,

6. ...but doesn't escort the men there.
7. The second contact is with young woman's mother,
8. ...and then with her father.

Several of these resemblances have been noted before: Reece (1993:12) observed similarities between the meetings at the water source, and Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989:49) point out the commonalities in the descriptions of the two cities' harbors. After the initial encounter with Iphthime, of course, things go badly for Odysseus' men among the Laistrygones, and the two episodes diverge. Even the hostile reception, however, may once have been a shared element: Rose (1969) details the undercurrent of danger running through the Phaiacian narrative. If the origins of the Phaiakis do lie with the much darker Laistrygoneia, this formerly puzzling thread becomes much clearer.

If the Laistrygoneia and the Phaiakis do share a genetic connection, this would be the only pair of such Homeric episodes which demonstrate a polarization of this magnitude between the versions. To contextualize the discussion of "light" and "dark" versions of the same tale, this paper also briefly treats four episodes from Sanskrit epic which occur in similar configurations and rely on the relationship between female characters and their male relatives or associates for dramatic tension. In the first pair, we see very different outcomes in the Pāṇḍava brothers' meeting with the charming demoness Hiḍimbā at *Mahābhārata* 1.138-143 than in Rāma's encounter with the monstrous Śūrpaṅkhā in *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.16-17. A second pair concerns Indic heroes who wrestle crocodiles which become nymphs upon defeat (*Mbh.* 1.208-209 and *Brahmāṇḍapurāna Adyātma Ramāyaṇa* 7.22-29, *Rāmacaritamānasa* 6.57-58).

Evaluating artifacts of the oral-poetic compositional process in a Homeric scene is always interesting, but particularly so in the case of the events at Telepylos: the presentation of this scene (like that of the events on Thrinachia) is perennially mystifying in the contrast between the enormity of its impact on the narrative (a fleet of 11 ships destroyed) and the relative brevity of its presentation. The paper also argues, on the basis of comparanda, that the development and elaboration of the *Phaiakis* subsequently contributed to the diminution of the *Laistrygoneia*.

#### Works Cited

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