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EURIPIDES *TELEPHUS* FR. 149 (AUSTIN) AND THE FOLK-TALE ORIGINS OF
THE TEUTHRANIAN EXPEDITION

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Fr. 149 col. ii.11–24

Ἀχιλλε(ύς)	μῶν καὶ σὺ καινὸς ποντίας ἀπὸ χθονὸς	
	ἥκεις, Ὀδυσσεῦ; ποῦ 'στι σύλλογος φ[ί]λων;	
	τί μέλλετ'; οὐ χρῆν ἥσυχον κεῖσθαι π[ό]δα.	
Ὀδ(υσσεύς)	δοκεῖ στρατεύειν καὶ μέλει τοῖς ἐν τέλει	
	τάδ'· ἐν δέοντι δ' ἦλθες, ὦ παῖ Πηλέως.	15
Ἀχιλλ(εύς)	οὐ μὴν ἐπ' ἀκταῖς γ' ἐστὶ κωπήρης στρατός,	
	οὔτ' οὖν ὁπλίτης ἐξετάζεται παρών.	
Ὀδ(υσσεύς)	ἀλλ' αὐτίκα· σπεύδειν γὰρ ἐν καιρῶι χρεών.	
Ἀχιλλε(ύς)	αἰεί ποτ' ἐστὲ νωχελεῖς καὶ μέλλετε,	
	ῥήσεις θ' ἕκαστος μυρίας καθήμενος	20
	λέγει, τὸ δ' ἔργον [ο]ὐδαμοῦ περαίνεται.	
	κἀ[γ]ὼ μέν, ὡς ὁρᾶ[τ]ε, δρᾶν ἕτοιμος ὢν	
	ἥκω, στρατός τε Μ[υρ]μιδών, καὶ πλεύσ[ομαι	
	τὰ [τ]ῶν Ἀτρειδ[ῶν οὐ μένων] μελλήμ[ατα.	

23 suppl. Wilamowitz, 24 Page.

The above fragment[1] has been known for almost a century,[2] but not everything it has to say about the significance of the story of Telephus has been wrung from it. And yet, we have only to combine its contents with one or two other considerations, to learn a great deal. Let us take things by easy stages.

(1) Achilles and Odysseus: a clash of personalities

The most obvious feature seems at first sight to have nothing to do with *the story of Telephus*. In vv. 11–24 Euripides juxtaposes two antithetical and incompatible characters: Achilles, 'impatient of delay', and Odysseus who displays his 'traditional diplomatic' skill.[3] The younger hero is irascible and eager for action; the older and more experienced man is measured and meditative. The former wants to rush into the war straight away; the latter adopts a more cautious attitude. Other authors had already exploited a similar contrast between this pair of heroes. One thinks in particular of the episode at Il. 19.145ff. where Achilles, wracked with grief for the death of Patroclus, is eager to rush into battle immediately, while Odysseus pragmatically urges delay until the men have eaten. As Wolfgang Schadewaldt saw,[4]

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[1] Pap. Berol. 9908 = Austin, *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in papyris reperta* fr. 149 = Diggle, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* Eur. *Tel*. II (p. 133f.).

[2] Since 1907. For a recent bibliography see C. S. M. Collard *et al.*, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays* vol. 1 (London 1995), p. 17 (by M. J. Cropp, who also supplies a useful introduction to the play and its problems (pp. 17ff.), and a commentary (pp. 42ff.)). The fragment I am discussing is printed on p. 38 (with facing English translation).

[3] I quote from Cropp (as cited in the previous note) p. 50. As Pearson noted (cited below n. 9, 1.99), v. 18 of our fragment (σπεύδειν γὰρ ἐν καιρῶι χρεών) is virtually equivalent to the English proverb 'more haste, worse' (or 'less') 'speed'. For the exact context in the play which precipitates Achilles' impatience and Odysseus' cautious diplomacy see, e.g., M. Heath, *CQ* 37 (1987) 279.

[4] In *Iliasstudien* (Leipzig 1938) p. 133. Cf. my remarks on Feasting and Food in Homer: Realism and Stylisation, in *Prometheus* 23 (1997) 98 and 100.

two contrasting and incompatible views of life are there set in confrontation: 'Im Streit um das Essen kommt das "Leben wie es ist" zur Sprache, um eben im Gegensatz das höhere Leben des Heros um so tiefer fühlen zu lassen.'

But it is essential to realise that the contrast extends far beyond an Homeric and a Euripidean passage. The antithesis between Achilles and Odysseus as heroes (brute force against reason; might against intelligence) runs throughout the *Iliad* [5] and indeed the pre-Homeric tradition about the Trojan War,[6] and likewise colours post-Homeric literature.[7] It also operates in the same way within the story of Telephus and the Teuthranian Expedition. Thanks to Proclus' summary,[8] we know that the *Cypria* already contained an account of how the Greek force put in at Teuthrania, mistaking it for their destination of Troy, and ravaged the land. Its ruler Telephus sallied forth and killed one of the Greek leaders (Thersander, son of Polyneices) but was then seriously wounded by Achilles, after which the Greeks withdrew. Here we see Achilles again associated with force and strength, wounding Telephus with the famous spear (Πηλιάδα μελίην: *Il.* 16.143 etc.) which looms so large in the *Iliad*. By contrast, Odysseus' rôle in the story was characteristically concerned with *resolution* of the problem caused by Achilles' aggression. In Euripides' play, it would seem, Odysseus was instrumental in explaining the oracle which declared that Telephus would be cured by the very spear that had wounded him (ὁ τρώσας ἰάσεται: Apollod. *epit.* 3.20 etc.: cf. Parke–Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* 2.83) and that he would lead the Greeks to Troy. After the initial stichomythia which constitutes fr. 149.11–24 of the play, Odysseus persuaded an initially reluctant and objecting Achilles to heal Telephus with his spear and explained the oracle.[9] We have no direct evidence that Odysseus' conciliatory rôle already occurred in the *Cypria*. And at this stage of the argument it is enough to observe (and emphasise) that the attitudes and behaviour of Achilles, man of action, and Odysseus, the reflective and conciliatory hero, are apparent in the story as a whole, where the entire situation anticipates their antithetical pairing in the actual Trojan War.

The Teuthranian Expedition, then, *anticipates*, serves as a *doublet* of, the Trojan War itself, especially if we consider the rôles of Achilles and Odysseus. The next step is to make sense of these similarities. Do they merely suggest that, in the rather unsympathetic words of a recent critic,[10] the Telephus story is a '*pastiche* [my italics] derived from other more central episodes of the Trojan saga, perhaps developed as late as the seventh century'? Or is there any alternative interpretation?

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[5] So, for the *Iliad* as the poem of βία, the *Odyssey* the poem of μῆτις (symbolised by the two respective heroes), see, e.g., P. V. Jones in the Introduction to *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation* (Oxford 1997) p. 37f.; cf. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980) pp. 15 and 100f. etc. For Strength and Guile as antithetical values in the world of Folk-Tale see, e.g., K. Horn's article in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. 'List' (8.1097ff.), where she quotes Hegel's dictum (from *Jenenser Realphilosophie*), 'die breite Seite der Gewalt wird von der Spitze der List angegriffen'.

[6] See in particular Detlev Fehling, Die ursprüngliche Troja-Geschichte, oder: Interpretationen zur Troja-Geschichte, *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 15 (1989) 9ff. and, in greater detail, *Die ursprüngliche Geschichte vom Fall Trojas, oder Interpretationen zur Troja-Geschichte* (Verl. des Instituts für Sprachwiss der Univ. Innsbruck 75 (1991)).

[7] Note, in particular, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, where one of the play's central themes, the antithesis between βία and δόλος, is associated with the contrast between Achilles and Odysseus, and the latter offers the former's son the intoxicating prospect of becoming a super-hero who will combine the distinctive qualities of both (v. 119: σοφός τ' ἂν αὐτὸς κἀγαθὸς κεκλῇι' ἅμα).

[8] See my *EGF* p. 32.47ff.: ἔπειτα ἀναχθέντες Τευθρανίαι προσίσχουσι καὶ ταύτην ὡς Ἴλιον ἐπόρθουν. Τήλεφος δὲ ἐκβοηθεῖ Θέρσανδρόν τε τὸν Πολυνείκους κτείνει καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ Ἀχιλλέως τιτρώσκεται.

[9] See Heath (as cited in n. 3). Pearson (*Fragments of Sophocles* 1.95) writing in the days when our fragment was thought to be Sophoclean, already put his finger on the key issue: 'the ingenuity of [Euripides] . . . was taxed to solve the dramatic difficulty of converting Telephus, a declared foe, into a trustworthy friend.' The phrasing here inadvertently suggests the dilemma of heroes faced with extracting information from reluctant Old Men of the Sea and the like, and, as we shall shortly discover, this is no coincidence.

[10] Cropp (as cited above n. 2) p. 22. Other scholars too have detected shared details with the actual invasion of Troy (initial repulse of the Greeks; intervention of Greek hero Protesilaus who drives enemy off until he is killed; restoration of Greek fortunes by Achilles' pursuit of native champion etc: see *Cypria EGF* p. 32.68ff.)) from which they have deduced that the first episode is a doublet: see Ernst Howald, *Der Dichter der Ilias* (Zurich 1946) p. 125f., Rhys Carpenter, *Folk-Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Los Angeles 1946) pp. 55ff. etc.

(2) 'Preliminary adventures' and 'knowledgeable demons'

I have shown elsewhere,[11] in a quite different context, that Greek myths depicting the 'quest' of a hero or heroes[12] often involve him or them in a *Vorabenteuer* or 'preliminary adventure' with a demon or demon-like being.[13] When Heracles, on his quest for the cattle of Geryon, encounters Nereus; when Perseus, on his quest for the head of Medusa, encounters the Graeae; when Jason and the Argonauts, on their quest for the Golden Fleece, encounter Phineus; they are all typifying this adventure. And the being they encounter performs a very specific (and crucial) rôle within the story: he (or she) 'is endowed with relevant knowledge concerning the hero's route, and this must be extracted . . . against his will by force or cunning'. Furthermore, this being regularly acts as a sort of 'doublet' or *Doppelgänger* of the adversary whom the hero defeats at the climax of his quest. Thus, in the labour of Heracles referred to above, Nereus, in his rôle of Old Man of the Sea, is an analogue of Geryon, the death-demon; and Heracles' encounter with him anticipates, in a minor key as it were, his climactic battle against Geryon.[14]

Do these story-patterns cast any light on the story of Telephus? I believe they do; although I think the argument works better in terms of similarities between *situations* than between *individuals*. Still, even if we adopted the latter approach, a good case could be made for supposing[15] that Telephus[16] was originally a demon-like being endowed with relevant knowledge concerning the route which the Greek heroes must take to Troy. And Achilles' *wounding* of him[17] with the famous spear derived from his

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[11] Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* and its folk-tale origins, *CQ* 38 (1988) 278f. and 282ff.

[12] For the Trojan Expedition as deriving from the folk-tale motif of a 'quest' see Uvo Hölscher, *Die Odyssee: Epos zwischen Märchen und Roman* (Munich 1988) pp. 58ff. He notes how susceptible it is to analysis in terms of V. Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, and I have independently showed (see the previous note) the story of Heracles' rustling of Geryon's cattle to be similarly susceptible.

[13] The idea ultimately goes back to Karl Meuli's interpretation of 'Das Vorabenteuer mit dem wissenden Dämon': see *Odyssee und Argonautika* (Berlin 1921) pp. 101ff. = *Ges. Schr.* 2.664ff.

[14] See my remarks (as cited above n. 11) pp. 284ff.

[15] Ernst Howald (cited above n. 10) pp. 125ff. speculated that Telephus was originally a Greek god (cf. J. Schmidt's article s.v. 'Telephus' in *Roscher* 5 (1916) 292.49ff.), and the tale of his wounding a variant of the motif of the wounding of the Devil (cf. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*[2] G 303.16.19.19). But the analogy with the 'wissende Dämon' seems better paralleled. As outlined above, this being has 'relevant knowledge concerning the hero's route', which is certainly true of Telephus. The knowledge 'must be extracted . . . against his will, by force or cunning', and it might be argued that Achilles' initial assault represents the force, and Odysseus' later intervention the (more successful) cunning. In the story as it now stands, Telephus consents to lead the Greeks to Troy out of gratitude for the healing of his wound, and this resembles Phineus' decision to give the Argonauts information about their route out of gratitude for the Boreads' dispersal of the Harpies (for 'gratitude' as a folk-tale motif see M. Belgrader's article in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. 'Dankbarkeit und Undankbarkeit' (3.322ff.)). But a resisting Phineus may originally have had the information *forced* from him (see *CQ* 38 (1988) p. 283 with nn. 33–34) and the same may be true of Telephus.

[16] The most plausible etymology of Telephus' name (see Schmidt's *Roscher* article as cited in the last note, 292.4ff.) associates him with brightness and shining: compare the name of his mother *Auge*. Since light is most naturally connected with life (cf. R. U. Brednich in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* s.v. 'Licht' (8.1034ff.)), and is set against darkness and the Underworld (cf. V. I. Sanarov, *ib.* s.v. 'Hell und Dunkel' (6.794ff.)), this may seem to tell against the rôle of the 'wissende Dämon' which I wish to assign to Telephus. But in fact there are analogies for Telephus' significant name within the circle of stories which link Heracles to cattle-rustling and thus to journeys to the Underworld (cf. *CQ* 38 (1988) 288f.): see, for instance, Electryon ('the shining one'), or Augeas (one thinks of Telephus' mother). Heracles' encounters with them symbolise climactic conquests of death, and the 'wissende Dämon', as we have seen, provides a doublet or anticipation of such encounters. Note that Telephus' son Eurypylus, who died at Troy (see *Ilias Parva* fr. 7 and Proclus (*EGF* p. 52.14f.)) bears a name which associates him with the wide entrance to the *Underworld* (cf. L. Malten, *Kyrene: Sagengesch. und hist. Unters.* (Phil. Unters. 20 (1921)) p. 120f., Fontenrose, *Python* (1959) p. 482f.)).

[17] The motif of ὁ τρώσας ἰάσεται ('wound healed by same spear that caused it': Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index* D 2161.4.10.1) may actually be an instance of motif *transference* in the case of Telephus. The ambivalence of the daunting demon, who resists the hero's approach but does, under compulsion, provide beneficent information, reflects an ambivalence towards death-demons and, ultimately, death itself (see Meuli's *Ges. Schr.* Index 1 ('Sachen, Begriffe, Methodisches') s.v. 'Tote sind . . . bös und gut zugleich' and 'Projektion . . . der eigenen Gefühlsambivalenz'). For this reason it seems as if, in

father Peleus would surely rank as an anticipation (in the minor key) of the climactic *killing* of Hector with that same weapon, when the expedition's goal is finally reached and the Trojan War is underway.

However, it is the similarity in terms of *situation* that is most illuminated by the approach I am recommending. The Teuthranian expedition has all the signs of being a 'preliminary adventure', but one based rather on doublets or anticipations of *circumstance*. Are goals in war best achieved by force or cunning, strength or intelligence? These crucial questions, which are examined in the context of the Trojan War by means of the Achilles/Odysseus dichotomy, receive an advance exploration with the Teuthranian Expedition as background and the same two heroes to the front. And, foreshadowing the outcome of the war, Achilles' aggression ultimately comes off second best against Odysseus' wit and resourcefulness.

It might still be argued that this sophisticated technique proves the Teuthranian expedition to be a secondary accretion, a late addition to the story of the Trojan War.[18] But the frequency with which 'quest' stories feature the 'preliminary adventure' suggests to me that the episode might after all be early and integral.

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the Telephus story, the ambivalence of the demon, hostile but capable of good, has been transferred to the weapon that wounds him, or to its bearer, Achilles. Assimilation of Telephus to his adversary Achilles may seem unlikely, but for similarities between Telephus and the other relevant adversative hero, Odysseus, see Cropp (cited above n. 2) p. 23.

[18] So Howald (as cited above n. 10) took it that the figure of Telephus as originally conceived had nothing to do with the Trojan War, and that his coupling with that war is a later development. Similarly, Wilamowitz, *Hell. Dicht.* 2.232f. and Hölscher (cited above n. 12) p. 179 are unconvinced that the story of Phineus and the Boreads, though the earliest attested episode in the relevant tale, need have originally belonged to the story of the Argonauts. Cf. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford 1985) pp. 49f. and 84. But given the popularity of the motif of the 'preliminary adventure', perhaps this scepticism is excessive.