PEDIASIMUS, HERACLES, AND THE MID-DAY HEAT

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

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

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^{1} Oxyrhynchus Papyri vol. XXXII.
^{2} See especially D. L. Page, “JHS” 93, 1973, 144; also the forthcoming commentary on Stesichorus by Patrick Finlason and myself. The standard text of Apollodorus is the Teubner edition by Richard Wagner (Mythographi Graeci I, Lipsiae 1926), from which I quote. The relevant passage occurs on p. 83.
^{3} Preserved by the second century A.D. writer Athenaeus, 11.469e = fr. 8a Davies and Finlason.
Old Man of the Sea, at _Odyssey_ 4.450 ff., Simichidas’ with Lycidas in Theocritus _Idyll_ 7.31-3, Jason’s with the Heroines of Libya (the same locale as Heracles’) at Apollonius of Rhodes’ _Argonautica_ 4.1312 ff., Significant mid-day meetings with numinous beings are very much at home in the world of folk-tale.

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

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7 M. Davies, _Theocritus_’ _Seventh Idyll and the Folk-tale_, in Homenaje Juan Antonio López Pérez (Madrid 2013) 231-5.

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


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


12 See Wagner (n. 2) IXL-XLI, esp. the first paragraph: “cum totus ex Apollodori bibliothece... depromptus sit, id solum inest pretium, ut quasi codicis cuiusdam Apollodori varias lectiones praebat”. A specimen is to hand in the very passage we are discussing, where Wagner’s _app. crit._ reads “θερόμενος” _R Pedias. 26: θερμαινόμενος_ A”. On the last sentence of the Third labour again see Wagner’s _app. crit._ (“haec verba ab Apollodoro aliena recte delevit All[atus]”).
from Heracles – visiting Hades on his Twelfth labour – *because they were afraid*. Larger-scale (but no less banal) instances are the final portion of the first sentence of the Fourth labour: faced with the challenge of the Erymanthian boar, Heracles did not underestimate his opponent; or the first sentence of the Fifth: since Heracles emerged successful from the previous labours, further labours were devised, which he carried out as commanded, and, as son of Zeus, proved his parentage by his deeds. Alternatively (b), the added detail derives from *widely available mythological knowledge*, as when, at the start of the Fifth labour he reminds us that the Diomedes here featured is not the same as the younger Homeric hero; or at the start of the Seventh, that Minos was son of Zeus and brother of Rhadamanthus.

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

And there may be another specific locating of Heracles’ overheated state at mid-day. An anonymous poem of 211 iambic trimeters on the hero’s Twelve Labours, by the so-called ‘Anonymus Upsaliensis’, has been partially preserved in the MS Paris. gr. 2722, and the relevant portion of the account of the tenth labour (fol. 132⁵⁷) was plausibly restored on p. 417 of the *editio princeps* as [κε]καυμένος... τῆ [σφοδρὴ μεσημβρία]. The first editor¹³ dated the composition to the sixth or seventh century A.D. on metrical grounds. Aubrey Diller later argued¹⁴ that “classical metrics were revived in Pediasimus’ time and he himself is known as a poetaster from his ποθος¹⁵.” The possibility of a separate branch of tradition appearing in the seventh and fourteenth centuries seems very remote. Moreover scholia common to the verse and prose works are taken from the *Etymologica*, which are almost certainly of medieval origin”. Diller consequently concluded that “it is possible and, in view of the paucity of the tradition, probable that the manuscript was connected with Pediasimus”, and that he was, indeed, also the author of the iambic poem, “since it has many peculiarities in common with the prose work” (the placing of Heracles’ overheating at mid-day would be one of these ‘peculiarities’ or features).

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

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


¹⁵ On this see Pérez Martín as cited above n. 11.
number of deviations in the poem from later Byzantine practice strongly tells against Diller’s argument and for the dating proposed by the first editor. Resolutions and anapaestic substitutions disappear from iambic verse after George of Pisidia (fl. c. 610-35 A.D.), and proparoxytone verse endings become very rare after the seventh century and oxytone verse endings are avoided16. So it is likeliest that either the Anonymus Upsaliensis and Pediasimus following him17, or the two authors separately and independently, preserve a precious fragment of folk-tale values.

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

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

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

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