

## Folk-tale elements in the *Cypria*

It is, or at least once was, a standard joke among English-speaking classical scholars to recall the words of a headmaster to his pupils: “Boys, this term you are to have the privilege of reading the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles, a veritable treasure-house of grammatical peculiarities”.<sup>1</sup> The humour, of course, lay in the perversity which overlooked literary greatness in favour of matters of much less importance. We are no longer in a position to be able to read much of the *Cypria*, or, indeed, the rest of the Epic Cycle. But even with the limited means at our disposal, we can confidently deduce that the *Cypria*, especially in contrast to the *Iliad*, was a veritable treasure-house of folk-tale motifs, and I do not think we will be doing any disservice to its literary merits if we regard that as probably its most interesting feature. Considerations of space, have led me, in what follows, to confine my examples almost entirely to cases where we are explicitly told, by extant fragment or by Proclus’ summary that the detail in question occurred in the *Cypria*.<sup>2</sup>

Folk-tale values are apparent almost instantly, and in a decidedly spectacular form, since in a fragment which, by most criteria, is likely to have appeared very near the epic’s start, we find a version of the primeval motif whereby a human catastrophe is caused by gods as punishment or attempted annihilation of mortals and their wicked ways. In this particular instance, Zeus is said to have caused the Trojan War, with its inevitable tally of deaths, as part of a cosmic plan to lighten the burden of the earth, which was being trodden under foot by more and more human beings (fr.1). It is well known by now that a similar motif had occurred in the Babylonian story of the flood, a story preserved in the epic of *Atra-Hasis* from Mesopotamia.<sup>3</sup> Here, plague, famine and flood were successively unleashed from heaven to deal with the problem caused by an over-populated earth. It is slightly less well known that the Indian epic the *Mahabharata* also employed a similar motif: the god Brahma created death in order to alleviate the suffering of the overburdened earth.<sup>4</sup> A scholar particularly well

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<sup>1</sup> First reported, apparently, in Sir Maurice Bowra’s address to the Classical Association: *A Classical Education*, Oxford 1945.

<sup>2</sup> “Folk-tale” is a term notoriously difficult to define. For a recent attempt see Hansen 2002.

<sup>3</sup> For text and translation see Lambert and Millard 1969:72 ff. [Tablet II col. i]: “Twelve hundred years had not yet passed / When the land extended and the peoples multiplied. / The land was bellowing like a bull. / The god got disturbed with their uproar” etc. For discussion see e.g. Burkert 1984:96–98 = 1992:100–104, West 1997:480–482.

<sup>4</sup> For bibliography of discussions see West 2007:23n56, to which add Marcovich 1969:24–31 = 1991:5–10. For lists of relevant passages see West and Marcovich. I here cite one (*Mahabharata* 11.8.20–6) as rendered in the useful Chicago translation (Fitzgerald 2004:41): “I saw all the gods gathered there and all the divine seers.... I saw that Earth had come before the gods because she needed something done.... [the gods’ response follows]:the lords of the earth will gather together on the field of Kuru and attacking each other...they will kill each other. And so,

qualified to judge has declined to suppose that we should think in terms of an Indo-European tradition to explain the occurrence of a similar idea in two widely separate poems. Rather, he believes we should instead conclude that “the Greek and Indian poets were both using a motif somehow derived from Mesopotamia, not one inherited from Graeco-Aryan antiquity”.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the truth in this matter of influence and origin, we are certainly dealing with a primeval and widespread story-pattern and, especially in the light of the Indian epic and other Indian comparative material, I would agree with the scholar who placed the motif within the wider and primitive circle of stories which set out to explain the existence of death<sup>6</sup>—an aetiology which is certainly popular within the world of folk-tale, but markedly absent, at least in undisguised form, from Greek literature.<sup>7</sup> Since we can approximately date the Indian and Babylonian epics in question, we are in the fortunate position of being able, right at the start of our enquiry, to know with certainty that the relevant motif is earlier than the *Cypria*, whatever date one assigns to that work. It is often stated, perfectly accurately, that we can rarely be sure that a later attested folk-tale motif already existed in ancient Greece. Here is a satisfying counter-example.

With the next stage of the *Cypria*'s narrative, preserved by Proclus, the intrusion of Eris, personified Strife, as uninvited guest at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, we come face to face with another primeval and widespread folk-tale motif, the offending of a deity by some mortal act (of commission or omission) and the punishment consequently exacted by the deity. The *Cypria* itself will, in a later episode, provide an instance of the pattern “deity offended by act of commission”, with its story of Agamemnon's offence against Artemis. In the present instance, we have the sin of omission, whose best known exemplification in folk-tale is the story of Sleeping Beauty, where a fairy exacts revenge for a father's failure to invite her to his daughter's christening. Greek literature can show several examples, all sharing the pattern of a deity offended at failure to receive sacrifice: compare, for instance, Artemis' anger and sending of the Calydonian boar, as recounted in the story of Meleager at *Iliad* 9.533 ff. But since Greek sacrifice to gods was originally conceived as a feast to which the gods were invited, there is no

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goddess, your burden will be eliminated in a war”. The resemblance between the motif in the Indian and the Greek epic was observed at least as early as Koehler 1858.

<sup>5</sup> West 2007:23.

<sup>6</sup> For a useful conspectus of those folk-tales, especially Indian ones, which explain the origins of death by recourse to the motif of the overcrowded earth see Schwarzbaum 1957.

<sup>7</sup> Davies 1987. For a summary view of the classes of folk-tale which variously explain how mankind came to be mortal see now H. Lox's article “Die Ursprung des Todes und seine Notwendigkeit” in *EM* 13.702, s. v. “Tod” [5.1]. A further relevant motif may be at work in the *Cypria* fragment, the one exemplified by the *byla* or Russian poem about heroes which deals with their catastrophic defeat, “Since when there have been no more heroes in Holy Russia”.

significant distinction between the two aspects of failure to sacrifice and failure to invite to a festival.<sup>8</sup>

The Judgement of Paris comes next in the *Cypria*'s contents, and its ultimate derivation from the story-pattern of an individual's significant life-choice—compare particularly the tale of Heracles at the Crossroads—marks it out as perhaps the prime candidate for consideration here. But so complex are the folk-tale issues it raises that I must relegate treatment of it to a separate section towards the end of this discussion. Still, one issue relating to it may be raised at this stage. The bribe which allowed Aphrodite to win the beauty contest was, of course, Helen, who must have featured extensively in the epic as a whole; and we have a quite lengthy fragment, extending to more than ten lines of direct quotation, which proves that Helen's parentage was mentioned (fr.7). The fragment tells us she was the offspring of Zeus and the reluctant goddess Nemesis, who tried to escape his attentions by fleeing over land and water, and, when he persisted and pursued, she changed into various animals, though only a fish is specified in the hexameters cited. The sequel is given by a different author (fr.8), who informs us that Nemesis eventually changed into a goose, in which form Zeus coupled with her, hence the egg from which Helen was hatched.

It has been alleged for some time<sup>9</sup> that a link exists between this tradition and the folk-tale pattern which passes under the rubric of the "Magic Flight".<sup>10</sup> This pattern takes two

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed account of the pattern of deity offended by mortal act of omission as exemplified in Greek literature see Davies 2010a. In there citing Catullus 68.74–6 as an instance of the motif of deity offended by omitted sacrifice, I should have mentioned Thomas 1978, which convincingly reinterprets the passage as referring not to an otherwise ill attested tradition of omission by Protesilaus or Laodamia, but "in periphrastic style and with neoteric concealment" to the sacrifice of Iphigenia. This view becomes still more attractive if we suppose that the reference is to the relatively little known tradition (see Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 20–24, treated in my article) that Agamemnon had promised to sacrifice the most beautiful creature born in his kingdom in a given year, not realizing that this would be his daughter. Iphigenia is more emphatically a victim in this account which, by very virtue of being much less familiar, constitutes a more markedly Hellenistic and neoteric allusion.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular Robert 1920:341n3.

<sup>10</sup> For a general survey of the pattern see the article in *EM* 9.13–24, s. v. "Magische Flucht". Cf. Hansen 2002:156–157. Examples are cited by Bolte and Polívka 1915:62 and 77–9. It ranks as 313 A2 "The girl as helper of the hero in his flight" in Aarne 1961. See Ashliman 1987:62–4. The folk-tale motif may seem too different from the alleged original, but this is possibly an index of the poet's skill in adaptation. Contrast the ineptitude of Hesiod in his *Works and Days*, who makes a considerable hash of adjusting pre-existing story patterns to their new context. I am thinking in particular of his use of the fable at lines 202–212, which crassly illustrates the dictum "Might is right", quite the opposite of what was intended. Also of the road imagery that follows, where even his most sympathetic interpreter (M. L. West, 1978 *ad loc.*) must confess that "Hesiod is rather awkwardly changing the picture...[producing] a nexus of similarly conceived images instead of one carried through consistently".

related but not identical forms. The first, which does not concern us here, has a young man and woman, destined for marriage, fleeing the pursuit of an ogre (usually her father), a witch, or the like. The girl casts behind her an ordinary object which at once converts to an insurmountable barrier (a comb becomes a forest, a mirror a lake, for instance), and this impedes, temporarily or permanently, pursuit. (It was long supposed that the Greek myth of Medea's killing and dismemberment of her brother Apsyrtus to thwart her father Aetes's pursuit of her and the Argonauts represents a version of this pattern.) The second form, which some have seen the *Cypria's* fragment as reflecting, likewise has a pair of lovers seeking to evade pursuit, but in this case the metamorphosis that thwarts pursuit involves themselves rather than an external object. The heroine again takes the initiative in most cases and transforms herself and her lover into two symmetrically related entities: thorn bush and rose, for instance, church and priest, vine and tendril, fish and pond, duck and lake. The pursuer fails to recognise the disguise and retires discomfited, a sequence normally repeated on three occasions, with different disguises each time. It is interesting to compare, but also to contrast, this alleged original with the *Cypria's* supposed reworking. The central notion of flight, pursuit and defensive transformation involving symmetry persists, the latter repeated in differing forms to meet the continued pursuit; the idea of a sexual union is also retained. But the metamorphosis has been divided between pursuer and pursued, and there is no equivalent of the former's frustration and temporary withdrawal. The differences may seem so great as to exclude the alleged folk-tale influence, but I think we should instead be impressed, as in the earlier detail of the overcrowded earth, by the ingenuity with which a pre-existing motif has been adjusted to fit its new role in the *Cypria*.

Let us stay with Helen and see how events involving her unfolded in the *Cypria* according to Proclus' summary. It has been pointed out how the pattern of a princess abducted and then made the subject of a search led by brother(s)—either her own or her husband's—is remarkably conformable to the scheme derived by the Russian folk-tale expert Vladimir Propp in his famous monograph *Morphology of the Folk-tale*.<sup>11</sup> The abduction of Helen would constitute the notorious *lack* which regularly sets such stories going. Even the remarkably inept instruction of Menelaus to his wife as he sets out for Crete, that she should provide Paris with everything appropriate, has been shown to possess a Proppian propriety.<sup>12</sup>

Paris had been entertained during his visit to Greece not only by Helen and her husband but by her brothers the sons of Tyndareus also known as the Dioscuri,<sup>13</sup> and the poet

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<sup>11</sup> See in particular Hölscher 1988:58–60 and Davies 2002:5–7.

<sup>12</sup> See Hölscher and Davies as cited in n.11, and for the pattern of abducted princess and brothers see Davies, "The abductions of Helen," forthcoming. Aeneas and Paris, as we learn from Proclus, operate in the *Cypria* as brothers who carry off the princess.

<sup>13</sup> On the various folk-tale aspects of the Dioscuri see W. Fauth's general survey in *EM* 3.681–688, s. v. The exceptionally dense concentration of folk-tale motifs in the various versions of their final fight is stressed by, for instance, Grant 1968:96–97.

of the *Cypria* had to explain why, as presupposed by the *Iliad*, they did not participate in the expedition to rescue her, in the manner the folk-tale pattern we have been examining requires. The motif of a cattle raid, that pre-eminently Indo-European story-pattern,<sup>14</sup> was brought in to explain how the Tyndaridae were killed by their cousins the Apharetidae. A quoted fragment of the poem shows that the episode contained a reference to the preternaturally sharp sight of the aptly named Lynceus (“the lynx-eyed”) who had served as one of the Argonauts, those descendants, in folk-tale terms, of the hero’s helpers with supernatural powers who often feature in stories of quests.<sup>15</sup> In the relevant part of the *Cypria*, Lynceus’ amazing eye-sight (fr.13) enabled him to survey the whole of the Peloponnese and see Castor and Polydeuces hiding within the hollow of an oak tree.

Proclus’ summary merely tells us that, after the killing of one of them in this fight, Zeus bestowed immortality by alternate days on both of his sons.<sup>16</sup> It is Pindar’s *Nemean* 10.75–90, in a narrative clearly deriving some of its details from the *Cypria*, which presents us with the moving picture of Polydeuces as devastated by his brother’s loss, and therefore turning down his father’s offer of the alternative of undiluted immortality on Olympus for him alone. I am attracted by one scholar’s suggestion<sup>17</sup> that this detail already occurred in our epic, with Polydeuces there making a noble and altruistic life-choice contrasting with the selfish and short-sighted life choice which we know Paris to have made in the same poem. Selfless devotion of one brother to another, sometimes extending even to literal self-sacrifice, is certainly a frequent feature of folk-tale, in whose world polar extremes of this sort are common (at the other end of the spectrum one thinks of the fraternal hatred of Polyneices and Eteocles).<sup>18</sup>

The actual arrival of the Greek expedition at Troy was delayed in the *Cypria*, as Proclus’ summary shows, for a remarkably long stretch of time by two retardations, if we may so term the process in question. The first, involving Telephus, is caused by the Greeks erroneously putting in at his kingdom in Mysia, mistaking it for the empire of Troy. The second retardation embraces the story of Iphigenia at Aulis. The principle of retardation is, familiar to us from the

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<sup>14</sup> See e.g. West 2007:451–452 and McInerney 2010:97–107.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Meuli was the first scholar adequately to grasp the point: see Meuli 1921:3–5 = 1975:594–596. On preternaturally sharp sight in folk-tale see further J.R. Klíma’s article in *EM* 1.994, s.v. “Auge”. For the helpers with superhuman powers see further Davies 2002:8–9 with n12 and now H. Lox’s article in *EM* 12.470 ff., s. v. “Sechs kommen durch die Welt”, the prototype of the pattern. Grant 1968:98 notes “how often the hollow tree is a hiding place in folktale narratives”: see Thompson *Motif Index* F811. 10.1 (“Hollow tree as residence for hero”) and R311 ff., and D. Ward’s article in *EM* 1.1372, s. v. “Baum”.

<sup>16</sup> Alternating immortality of a kind is apparent in the resolution of the story of Persephone.

<sup>17</sup> Merkelbach 1975:100n4 = 1997:50n20. For an account of which details in the *Cypria* Pindar is likely to have changed see in particular Severyns 1932.

<sup>18</sup> See M. Lüthi’s article in *EM* (2.845 and 849), s. v. “Bruder, Brüder”.

*Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and also from other portions of the Epic Cycle, especially the *Little Iliad*, where the final sack of Troy is postponed by the need to bring to Troy Philoctetes and out of Troy the Palladium. It is perhaps worth stressing that retardation is also a principle observable at work in folk-tale. The author of the entry on this topic in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, identifies as a ‘weaker’ or milder form of the device cases where the narrative is extended by some such statement as “after three years or after seven years”.<sup>19</sup> These are typical folk-tale numbers, so it is not irrelevant to observe that (to deviate very briefly from my guiding principle) we learn, not from Proclus but from the mythographer Apollodorus (*Epitome* 3.18), that an otherwise mysterious lapse of eight years, i.e. the folk-tale sequence ‘for seven years and in the eighth...’, occurred before the Greeks again gathered at Aulis to resume their expedition.<sup>20</sup> The same passage of Apollodorus states that two years elapsed between the original abduction of Helen and the first muster, and eight plus two presents us with that other folk-tale tally ten.

As regards the story of Telephus, I have pointed out elsewhere that it seems to derive ultimately from a very primitive folk-tale pattern, again conformable to that identified by Vladimir Propp in the monograph mentioned above.<sup>21</sup> In this, questing heroes, at an early stage of their quest, encounter an ambivalent helper figure who has to be forced or cajoled into giving them crucial information as to how to get to their goal. Telephus, I have argued, is the ambivalent figure in question, who finally consents to guide the Greek heroes to their goal, while Achilles and Odysseus are the two representative heroes whose polar qualities, force and cunning, exemplify the two most obvious modes of winning the helper figure’s support and of finally succeeding in the climactic quest.

The story of Iphigenia is the second instance of the offended deity syndrome which I mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> A striking feature of this pattern is that the offended deity’s anger is regularly vented not directly upon the perpetrator of the crime, but on a member of his or her family, more often than not an offspring, and within that category most often a daughter. So, in the fairy tale that is *Beauty and the Beast*, the father who intrudes on the Beast’s territory and tries to remove an object must, metaphorically, at least, sacrifice his daughter to the beast by

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<sup>19</sup> G. Haas’ article in *EM* 11.595–599, s. v. “Retardierende Momente”.

<sup>20</sup> For seven as a folk-tale number see Davies 2010b:34n53. Incidentally, the interval is also required for Iphigenia to reach adolescence, in order that the pattern of daughter punished for a father’s crime may operate.

<sup>21</sup> See Davies 2000. Proclus’ summary of the story of Telephus includes the statement that, on the way back from Mysia, Achilles put in at the island of Scyros, a detail which clearly presupposes the story (not included by Proclus in the appropriate earlier place) that Thetis tried to prevent her son’s participation in the Trojan War by hiding him on that island. On the folk-tale credentials of that story see Davies 2007.

<sup>22</sup> For a fuller treatment of the folk-tale pattern of the offended deity punishing a daughter for her father’s offence and its conformity to Propp’s *Morphology* see Davies 2010a:333–338.

marrying her to him. Likewise, in the version of the pattern which involves a sin of omission, the king's baby daughter in *Sleeping Beauty* is the victim of the uninvited fairy's anger, and the Calydonian Boar Hunt, ultimately caused by the anger of Artemis, ends in the death of Meleager, the son of the man who had originally omitted to sacrifice to that goddess. Indeed, so constant is this feature that, returning for a moment to the earlier episode of Eris as deity omitted from the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, I would advance the hypothesis that the original point of her intervention, though this motive is nowhere actually mentioned in our sources, was punishment of the offspring of the offender who failed to invite Eris in the first place, that is, of Achilles. The ultimate outcome of the quarrel over who is the most beautiful, with consequent resort to the Judgement of Paris, is, after all, the Trojan War in which Achilles dies.

That Iphigenia should literally be sacrificed to Artemis is therefore perfectly appropriate in the context of this folk-tale pattern. No less idiomatic is Artemis' last-minute substitution of a deer.<sup>23</sup> The crucial mitigation of the daughter's punishment in folk-tale takes such varied and divergent forms as the refinement whereby *Sleeping Beauty's* original punishment is converted from death to slumber, and in Greek tales the rescue in the nick of time of Alcestis by Heracles from personified Death, and Andromeda or Hesione from their respective monsters by Perseus and (again) Heracles. In the first of these instances, where newly-married wife rather than daughter is the object of punishment, the motif of omitted sacrifice is at work, in the second of them two gods have been offended by some other means.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, there is an analogy of sorts between the marriage of Beauty to the Beast and the pretext of marriage to Achilles which brings Iphigenia to Aulis.

In the folk-tale prototype the father's offence is regularly inadvertent. This is most obviously so in the version where omission rather than commission is involved, but even when the issue is a sin of commission, the rule holds true. For instance, in *Beauty and the Beast*, the heroine's father does not deliberately intrude on the Beast's territory. Eduard Fraenkel, in his commentary on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, suggested that the *Cypria* had Agamemnon not only boast about killing the deer but also do so on sacred ground. Accepting this hypothesis, I have recently argued that, in keeping with this key folk-tale feature of inadvertence, Agamemnon, in the original form of the story followed by the *Cypria*, did not intend to kill a deer sacred to Artemis or to intrude into her sacred precinct. He was merely (I exaggerate to make the point) "messaging about" in a forest, hunting to pass the time and unaware of doing anything wrong. A late-attested version (Servius in his commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*) explicitly states that Agamemnon was *ignarus* when he shot the deer.<sup>25</sup> If my hypothetical reconstruction of the tale's prehistory is correct, we may finally have the answer to the much debated question why

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<sup>23</sup> On the pattern of animal substitution in the context of human sacrifice see Davies 2010a:335.

<sup>24</sup> See Davies 2010a:334–335.

<sup>25</sup> Davies 2010a:335.

Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* dispenses with the *Cypria*'s motivation for Artemis' anger against the king: for Aeschylus did not wish to present his hero as initially innocent in the folk-tale mould, but rather as the prey of "inherited guilt". That this tragic concept did not apply in the original folk-tale pattern is proved by its repeated stress upon the innocence of the daughter who must be, in whatever sense, sacrificed.<sup>26</sup>

The only modification the poet of the *Cypria* has made to the folk-tale pattern is to have the seer Calchas announce the need for sacrifice. In the simpler world of folk-tale, the offended party directly reveals to the offender both his crime and the need for atonement: so it is with the uninvited fairy at Sleeping Beauty's christening or the Beast's announcement to Beauty's father. Given the ancient Greek attitude to the relative placing of gods and mortals, some intermediary in Greek adaptations of folk-tale is regularly required to convey the relevant information. A seer or oracle normally fulfils this function, and some sort of communal ill or public misfortune must first occur which is then interpreted as evidence of divine displeasure requiring expiation in the form of sacrifice of the offender's child. This sequence is easily detectable in such stories of offended deities demanding sacrifice as the last-minute rescues of Andromeda and Hesione. In the case of Iphigenia, the communal ill demanding expiation is, of course, the penning up of the Greek fleet by contrary winds.<sup>27</sup>

We are now confronted by the figure of Palamedes, whose intervention to bring Odysseus into the Trojan War when he was pretending to be mad (recorded by Proclus) might be termed "the trickster outwitted." This motivates Odysseus' consequent act of revenge, the killing of Palamedes while he is fishing (fr.20.). Rightly has it been said that "it is hard to imagine a scene more alien to Homer", and we can adapt the remark to fit Palamedes, since that figure is totally and literally un-Homeric, especially given his role as "culture hero".<sup>28</sup>

In other authors Palamedes is said to have masterminded the feeding of the Greek forces at Troy, which neatly brings us to the divergent tradition found in the *Cypria* that this tricky piece of logistics was achieved by the three *Oenotropoi*, daughters of Anius, and gifted with the capacity to supply the nutritive needs of the Greek army for almost a decade (fr.19). The concern with feeding and maintaining an entire army has an appropriately *Märchen*

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<sup>26</sup> Davies 2010a:336. One can even cite, as I there show, a Russian folk-tale which begins with a tsar hunting in a forest, like Agamemnon, and encountering the owner, a beast which compels him to promise, without fully understanding the promise (the *ignarus* motif!) his two newly-born children: see Davies 2010a:340. On inherited guilt in Greek tragedy see recently Sewell-Rutter 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Davies 2010a:336.

<sup>28</sup> For "hard to imagine" etc. see Griffin 1977:46. On the culture hero's un-Homeric status see Davies 2001:208. Hansen 2002:413 compares Odysseus' feigned madness with the motif of the clever man who plays the fool, as exemplified by Brutus in Roman myth. But in most such cases the supposed fool triumphs thanks to his pretence, which is not the case here.

flavour. Lack or superfluity of nourishment are common folk-tale themes,<sup>29</sup> while the implicit ease of supply in the present case reminds one of such phenomena as the Cauldron of Plenty. The relevant entry in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* lists several instances of miraculous nourishment which can be cited from Greek literature.<sup>30</sup> Then there are the girls' *redende Namen* Oeno, Spermo and Elais. It has been pointed out that in folk-tales the name of the main figure can epitomise his or her essence (Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, etc.). The *Cypria* itself provides an analogue for this in the figure of Protesilaus, the first Greek hero to jump ashore (and die) when the Greeks arrive at Troy. Compare also the case of Lynceus mentioned above in connection with the Dioscuri. It has also been observed that personal names can convey a contrasting typology (the antithetical brothers True and Untrue, for instance, or the beautiful and ugly daughters that are White Toes and Bushy Bride).<sup>31</sup> Our three sisters do not in this way display antithetically contrasting names, but rather the functions that their names convey (Wine-girl, Seed-girl and Oil-girl). The triad of females is indeed reminiscent of the three goddesses in the Judgement of Paris, of whom it has been said that they "do not actually stand for glory, power, and so forth- these things are in their gift".<sup>32</sup>

But we are, after all, seeking for folk-tale influence, and no narrative content has as yet appeared. There is a tale about the sisters preserved by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* XIII 650–679, in which Agamemnon forcibly abducts the girls to feed the army at Troy. They escape, variously to Euboea or Andros, and, on the point of being recaptured, are transformed into doves. There is no evidence whatsoever that such a story featured in the *Cypria* (our source for the fragment merely connects with our poem their father's promise that they would feed the Greek force if it stayed on in Delos). But one wonders whether some such narrative, not necessarily with metamorphosis as climax, was the folk-tale behind the relevant episode of the *Cypria*. Divinely endowed sisters can certainly come to a bad end in Greek literature. One thinks of the daughters of Pandareus in *Odyssey* 20.66–78: orphaned by the gods: in recompense they were fed by Aphrodite with cheese, honey and wine, while Hera made them pre-eminently beautiful and Athena gave them skill in handicraft. But during Aphrodite's absence consulting with Zeus about their marriage prospects, they were carried off by storm winds to be servants of the Erinyes. The roles here attributed to the relevant three goddesses have led some to assimilate the tale with that of the Judgement of Paris.<sup>33</sup> The daughters of Anius were given their powers by Dionysus, but the story of Midas' dealings with that god is a reminder that the gifts of

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<sup>29</sup> See L. Rubini's article in *EM* 12.990–1002, esp. 992, s. v. "Speise und Trank".

<sup>30</sup> E. Wimmer in *EM* 12.1005–10, esp. 1005–6 on "Ernährungswunder", s. v. "Speisewunder".

<sup>31</sup> See W. F. H. Nicolaison's article in *EM* 9.1157, s. v. "Name", and A. Brückner's article, *EM* 4.526, s. v. "Etymologie".

<sup>32</sup> Stinton 1965:7 = 1990:21.

<sup>33</sup> Stinton 1965:6n6 = 1990:21n20 states that the daughters "are carried off by winds or Harpies and set to work for the Erinyes—typical folk-tale motifs". They occur, for instance, in Apuleius' story of Cupid and Psyche.

Dionysus too were not invariably beneficial to their recipients. And that the gods' gifts are not always so beneficial is also, we may recall, one of the lessons of the Judgement of Paris.

This brings us appropriately to the final section of this study, where I wish to concentrate on just that particular episode from the *Cypria*: its general links with folk-tale, as we were reminded above, have long been recognised.<sup>34</sup> It is, in fact, precisely because the Judgement of Paris evokes so many resonances with so many different types of folk-tale that it becomes a fascinating but profoundly difficult task to decide which (if any) of the relevant categories the tale should be placed in. Indeed, on closer examination, it proves surprisingly difficult to reach a decision as to precisely what sort of story it is.

For instance, even the perceptive handling of this issue by the late Tom Stinton, at the start of his monograph on Euripides' treatments of the theme, fails to entirely convince.<sup>35</sup> Thus, he identifies and distinguishes two classes of tale to which the story can be related: i) the class centering on the question "what or who is the best?"; and ii) what he calls "the arbitration of a beauty contest". But how distinct are these two classes? Stinton exemplifies the latter *inter alia* with the tale of Cinderella. And yet this tale has as climax the prince's choice of the youngest daughter, despite her association with dust and ashes, over the two more ambitious and aggressive sisters. To that extent, then, it too deals with the issue of which is best, superficial show or inner worth. It thus resembles other narratives designed to illustrate the ultimate triumph of the superficially less appealing over the more obviously attractive option.<sup>36</sup> One thinks, for instance, of Heracles at the Crossroads.<sup>37</sup>

One thinks also of the folk-tale known as "Dear as salt" or "Lieb wie das Salz", where a king or other elevated person asks his daughters how much they love him and is disappointed by the youngest's response "as much as salt".<sup>38</sup> The father therefore sends her away, and she is befriended by a prince. The father is invited to their wedding but given food without salt, so that the folly of his anger is brought home to him and reconciliation duly follows. Folk-tale experts have certainly associated this story with that of Cinderella; yet what is perhaps the best known representation of the pattern, the tale of King Lear and Cordelia, where the latter is the least assuming and assertive of the three daughters, is ranked by Stinton with stories of his first group, "who is the best?". So is the narrative of the three caskets in Shakespeare's

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<sup>34</sup> See recently Davies 2004.

<sup>35</sup> See Stinton 1965:7 = 1990:21.

<sup>36</sup> See Davies, "All and Nothing': Existential Riddles and Cosmic Pessimism in Greek Tragedy and Shakespeare", forthcoming, on the various patterns mentioned in this paragraph.

<sup>37</sup> See Davies 2004.

<sup>38</sup> See C. Schmitt in *EM* 8.1038 ff., s. v. "Lieb wie das Salz".

*Merchant of Venice*, where gold and silver are found wanting in comparison with “base lead” (in Shakespeare’s probable source the gold and silver vessels contain symbols of death).<sup>39</sup>

Under the rubric “beauty contest”, Stinton also ranks two further alleged analogues, both preserved in the collection of German folk-tales by the brothers Grimm.<sup>40</sup> No. 152 (“Das Hirtenbüblein”) has a young shepherd, famed for his ability to solve riddles, winning the hand of a king’s daughter by supplying clever, paradoxical replies to three seemingly unanswerable questions posed by her father as to the number of drops of water in the sea, stars in the sky, seconds in eternity. That the hero here happens to be a shepherd like Paris, and that three questions are posed constitutes no very robust ground for assimilation and the story involves no significant element of choice. It really belongs, unlike the Judgement of Paris, in the realm of “tests of suitors”.<sup>41</sup> So does the other instance, No. 155 (“Brautschau”), where the hero, again a shepherd, chooses between three equally beautiful sisters by, on his mother’s advice, setting a piece of cheese before each. His preference alights on the girl who neither wolfs down everything, rind and all; nor discards the rind together with much edible material; but gets things exactly right, discarding neither too much nor too little. This looks like a female equivalent of the suitors’ test<sup>42</sup> (proving competence as housewife) and the element of choice, as in the tale of King Lear, is located as much with the three females as with the hero. This brings to the fore one very significant consideration. A feature inherited from folk-tale values is nicely encapsulated in the phrase “the Judgement of Paris”. When Stinton writes “Lear fails the test by failing to see the value of Cordelia”,<sup>43</sup> one’s initial instinct is to correct him: it is Lear who has set the test for Cordelia and her sisters. But at a deeper level Stinton is, of course, quite right. In these stories it is not only the participants whose qualities are subject to a process of testing. By the decision he makes, Paris, like Lear, is judged and found wanting.

Wide-ranging though his treatment was, Stinton did not mention a speculative but suggestive essay by Sigmund Freud which, in connection with the narratives embedded in *Cinderella*, *King Lear*, and the story of Cupid and Psyche, tried to answer the question why it is so often the youngest daughter who in such tales wins through.<sup>44</sup> His paradoxical answer was that she represents death. This does not seem a very promising approach for the role of Aphrodite in the Judgement of Paris, least of all in the version of the *Cypria*, where we know from direct quotations (fr. 4–5) that she was associated with the spring, with flowers and

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<sup>39</sup> See Stinton 1965:6n1 = 1990:21n17 (“the first [vessel] was made of pure gold...full of dead mens’ bones...the second...of fine silver, filled with earth and worms”).

<sup>40</sup> For a recent English translation of these two tales see Crick 2005:261 and 263.

<sup>41</sup> Though perhaps the three goddesses of the Judgment of Paris might just be regarded as surrogate potential brides. The successful candidate, Aphrodite, offers a mortal bride (Helen) in her stead.

<sup>42</sup> See E. Frenzel in *EM* 5.227–36, s. v. “Freier, Freierproben”.

<sup>43</sup> Stinton 1965:7 = 1990:21.

<sup>44</sup> Freud 1913:296 ff.

therefore with life. But by considering Freud's paradox we have at least encountered a factor which should make us pause for reflection. On one interpretation of this story which is open to so many readings, Paris was like the gullible man in the Old Testament's Proverbs 9.18, lured into her house by the female personification that is Folly. Of this man it is said "he knoweth not that the dead are there and that her guests are in the depths of Hell". Death, after all, is Paris' ultimate punishment, and the Old Testament Wisdom literature from which the cited passage comes can be shown to presuppose such stories as are linked with the Judgement of Paris.<sup>45</sup>

From what has been said, it should be clear just how hard it is to decide which of the numerous parallels at our disposal should be regarded as incorporating the "real" point of the story. And while I have hitherto followed the illuminating course of detecting features which the Judgement of Paris shares with other narratives, it can also be illuminating to note those features which are unique to the Greek tale and set it apart. Perhaps we should distinguish between two patterns (i) the notion of a paradoxical but right choice of a surprisingly humble and least obviously attractive quality—Cinderella (ash), Cordelia (representing, by her own account, *Nothing*), lead (in the tale of the three caskets of *The Merchant of Venice*); and (ii) the non-paradoxical but wrong choice represented by Paris' preferring of Aphrodite, whom we have no reason to suppose to be the youngest and least obviously attractive of the three goddesses (on the contrary, she is so clearly alluring).

I referred above to Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk-Tale*. As is well known, the theories incorporated within this book were based on the surprisingly slender body of evidence assembled in an equally famous anthology of Russian folk-tales published by the Russian folklorist Alexander Afanasev.<sup>46</sup> One of the shortest narratives in this collection, so short that I have often wondered whether it really qualifies as a "folk-tale", still less as a "wondertale", recounts what happens to an archetypal Russian peasant as he is journeying along one day.<sup>47</sup> He suddenly encounters the Sun, the Frost, and the Wind, and as he passes them utters a salutation. The three personifications fall to quarrelling as to which of them has been so greeted and hurry after him to learn the truth. On replying it was the Wind, the peasant is instantly assailed by the Sun and Frost with angry threats of broiling and cold respectively- only to be reassured by the Wind that his own presence will annul the ill effects of the first, his absence those of the second, threat.

Though this tale operates on a comparatively simple or even trivial level, with no ethical dimensions, one can detect several similarities between it and the Judgement of Paris.

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<sup>45</sup> Davies 2004.

<sup>46</sup> On Afanasyev see the article by I. Levin in *EM* 1. 127–137, s. v.

<sup>47</sup> The tale is not in the English translation of Afanasyev's collection by Guterman 1975 but I find it in the Italian translation thereof, Venturi 1953:26, and there is an apparently accurate English rendering in Downing 1956:71.

The idea of apparent personifications is common to both,<sup>48</sup> likewise the dilemma which the “hero” faces when, by gratifying one of the trio, he inevitably ensures the life-long enmity of the remaining two. This is, indeed, precisely Paris’ dilemma. The notion that the powerful protection of the favoured party can somehow overcome or outweigh the ill consequences of the fateful choice seems vestigially present in the *Cypria*’s sequel to Paris’ Judgement, where, as Proclus’ summary informs us, Aphrodite immediately set about aiding Paris by suggesting he build the ships which carried him to Helen, and commanding her son Aeneas to accompany him on the voyage. Equally idiomatic on the negative side is Proclus’ statement that Hera sent a storm which blew the eloping couple off course to Sidon. A scholar has recently observed<sup>49</sup> that “the dilemma of Intaphrenes’ wife”, who notoriously chose to preserve her brother’s life rather than her husband’s, “is similar to that of Paris....Paris, choosing Aphrodite, is gifted in love but is forever without talent in the civic and military spheres of his life”. A great contrast, one might add, to his brother Hector.<sup>50</sup>

I do not remotely wish to suggest that my comparison unlocks all the issues raised by the Judgement of Paris, though it is, I think, an appropriate ending to an examination of folk-tale elements. It is precisely because the Judgement of Paris resists simple categorisation that it has continued to fascinate through so many centuries. Still, examining some of its folk-tale credentials has, I hope, brought us a little closer to understanding some of its implications.

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<sup>48</sup> With the proviso (see Stinton above n.32) that “these things are in their gift”.

<sup>49</sup> Hansen 2002:65.

<sup>50</sup> Paris and Hector represent that archetypal folk-tale feature the contrasting pair of brothers, for which cf. Davies (2003) and Lüthi as above, n.18.

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