April 1990

Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod's Works and Days

Ralph M. Rosen

University of Pennsylvania, rrosen@sas.upenn.edu

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Recommended Citation

Reprinted from Classical Antiquity, Volume 9, Issue 1, 1990, pages 99-113. The author has asserted his right to include this material in ScholarlyCommons@Penn.

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Abstract
The section of Works and Days commonly known as the Nautilia (618-94), where the poet turns his attention from agriculture and "economics" to sailing, has both delighted and mystified students of Hesiod. The fascination that this passage elicits from all readers of the poem is easy to understand, for not only is the topic of sailing completely unexpected where it occurs, but the length of the digression is surprising in view of Hesiod's claim that he had little personal experience in the activity. Even more intriguing are the autobiographical details about his father's migration from Kyme to Ascra and his own competition at Chalcis at the funeral games for Amphidamas.

Comments
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Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod's
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The section of Works and Days commonly known as the Nautilia (618–94), where the poet turns his attention from agriculture and "economics" to sailing, has both delighted and mystified students of Hesiod. The fascination that this passage elicits from all readers of the poem is easy to understand, for not only is the topic of sailing completely unexpected where it occurs, but the length of the digression is surprising in view of Hesiod's claim that he had little personal experience in the activity. Even more intriguing are the autobiographical details about his father's migration from Kyme to Ascrea and his own competition at Chalcis in the funeral games for Amphidamas.

Recent critics have stressed the programmatic aspect of the autobiographical excurses. Griffith, for example, views Hesiod's father as a "negative paradigm" for Perses, in contrast to the wise man who concentrates on agriculture. Others find special significance in Hesiod's seemingly gratuitous evocation of the heroic age Greeks mustering at Aulis. Hamilton sees in these Greeks an echo of the earlier Myth of the Ages, where the Greeks of the Trojan War typify the heroic age. Nagy emphasizes Hesiod's contrast between his short voyage from Aulis to...
Euboea and the Achaean voyage from Aulis to Troy, and suggests that the passage might reveal "an intended differentiation of Hesiodic from Homeric poetry." Many have pointed out that lines 646–62 have a special unity of their own, and are inordinately concerned—four full lines, 658–62—with establishing a link between Hesiod’s treatment of sailing and the source of his knowledge on this subject, the Heliconian Muses.

I wish to pursue here Nagy’s suggestion that Hesiod may have cryptically, embedded in the verses concerned with his performance at Chalcis a comment on the nature of his own poetry. Many will surely feel uneasy at the mere thought of an Archaic poet making programmatic statements about his art in the manner of an Alexandrian poet. But the text itself, I believe, supports this claim. Hesiod’s reference to the Achaean’s voyage to Troy as a contrast to his own short voyage to a poetic agon in Chalcis inspired Nagy’s insight. Through a more detailed study of the diction and structure of the whole passage we can supplement his suggestion that lines 646–62, a passage that has come to be known as Hesiod’s "sphragis," might be as concerned with poetry as they are with seafaring.

I shall argue that the Nautilus, while it offers some basic practical advice about the dangers of seafaring, simultaneously functions as a declarative program about poetry. Specifically, Hesiod contrasts his inability to compose (or lack of experience in composing) poetry on a Homeric scale with his qualifications for composing his poem of the "earth." Works and Days. Hesiod, of course, did make one "sea voyage," as he tells us in lines 650–55, but by his own admission it was a trivial one (οὐ γὰρ πώ... ἐπίπλοον... ἐὰν μὴ ἐξ ἔβησαν ἐξ Ἀὐλίδος). The overt contrast between this voyage (a trip made for a poetic performance) and that of the Achaean on their way to Troy (Ἀὐλίδος ἅ ποτ'...}

3.  G. Nagy, "Hesiod," in Ancient Greek Authors, ed. T. J. Luce (New York, 1982) 66. W. Thalmann (Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry [Baltimore, 1984] 152–53) also finds the mention of the Achaean at Aulis significant: "by evoking heroic saga. Hesiod is putting his own compositions... on the same level, placing them within the poetic tradition. And the coincidence of Aulis as his own and the Akhaians' point of departure from the Greek mainland ranks Hesiod's exploit with the Trojan War and gives him something of the aura of the epic hero." This underplays, however, the distinct contrast that Hesiod is at pains to emphasize between his sailing (practically a non-event) and the sailing of the Homeric Greeks.


5.  "There is a built-in antithesis here with the long sea voyage undertaken by the Achaean when they sailed to Troy... Moreover, the strong Homeric emphasis on navigation as a key to the Achaean's survival (for example, II. 16.80–92) is in sharp contrast with the strong Hesiodic emphasis on the poet's personal inexperience in navigation." (Nagy [above, n. 3] 66).

6.  The term was first used by Nicolai (above, n. 4: 123–32), though he would have the sphragis include the verses about Hesiod's father, i.e., 631–62. Thalmann (above, n. 3: 195 n. 66) finds "sphragis" a "dangerously pseudotechnical term": I retain it here, nevertheless, partly for convenience, but also because it emphasizes just how unusual the autobiographical element of the passage is in its context.
The structure of the Nautilus is tripartite, with two sections on sailing, lines 618–45 and 663–94, enclosing a central section, lines 646–62, the sfragis, in which Hesiod digresses about his own experience in sailing and his poetic charge from the Muses. Clues within the sfragis that Hesiod is using sailing as a metaphor clarify several peculiar elements in the first and third sections.

In line 648, near the beginning of the sfragis, Hesiod says: δείξω δή τοι μέτρα πολυφρονούμενο τιθάσσω. West notes that here "μέτρα is loosely used of the rules and formulae known to the expert" (distinct from its other common use to refer specifically to quantity, i.e., a "measure"). It is apparent from the parallels quoted by West that in Archaic poetry the man who could discuss the μέτρα of something was a man who possessed οὐφίτα in that sphere of activity. Solon 13.52, Stesichorus S 89.71 Page, and Theognis 876, in particular, mention μέτρα in conjunction with οὐφίτα. Solon and Theognis, moreover, speak specifically of the poet who knows (poetic) μέτρα. West observes this connection between μέτρα and οὐφίτα makes it all the more unusual that in line 649, after having just claimed that he will discuss the μέτρα of the sea, Hesiod adds that he has, in fact, no οὐφίτα about the subject: οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεοφυσιμένος οὔτε τι νημον. Nevertheless, Hesiod will proceed to explain the "μέτρα of the sea" (which he has already begun in the first section, 619–40), and it soon becomes apparent that whatever οὐφίτα he possesses about sailing ultimately comes from the Heliconian Muses, in lines 658–60. His claim in line 648–49 that he will expound on matters requiring οὐφίτα, even though he lacks it, imparts a distinct irony to the passage, and suggests that the οὐφίτα of sailing that he has in mind is not merely a technical skill. In fact, as others have amply demonstrated, οὐφίτα and its cognate forms, though originally associ-

7. We are not told exactly what type of poem Hesiod performed at Chalkis; οὔτοι νομοίντα says little about its content (cf. West ad loc., 321) West (321), and Hesiod, Theogony [Oxford, 1906] 44–46 suggests that Hesiod performed the Theogony there, or a version of it. If sailing does, in fact, have metaphorical significance in this passage, the emphasis on his short voyage to Chalkis would support this contention well.

8. On the controversy over the structural divisions of the Nautilus, cf. Hamilton (above, n. 2) 67.

9. Note the verse end πολυφρονούμενο τιθάσσομαι, which has distinct associations with the Iliad (occurring there six times).


11. Solon 13.51–52 ἐλαίῳ Οἰλοφόρῳ Ὀλυμπίαν πούρα δοξη ἰδείχθησε ἱππεῖς σοφίς μέτρας ἐπιστήμονος. Theognis at 876 adopts the role of the poet who "has the measure of οὐφίτα": μέτρας ἱππεῖν οὐφίτα.

12. Note Ibycus, PMG 282.23–24, which has οὐφίταμα of the Heliconian Muses as dispensers of poetic knowledge: και τί ποτε τὰ μονον προφητήσανας Ἡλεκοῦντας τί λογοφα. In 659 Hesiod uses the same verb as Ibycus, ἱππεῖν, to describe the transmission of this οὐφίτα by the Muses to the poet. On 659, see below.
ated with artistry and manual expertise, in Archaic poetry commonly referred to poetic skill. With the participle οροφημένος in line 469, therefore, Hesiod claims on another level a poetic inability to sing of sailing. that is, he is not skilled in the type of poetry that deals with such affairs.

As the passage continues, it becomes even clearer that Hesiod is playing with the semantics of οοφία. With the clause beginning τί μή in line 651 he reconsiders his qualifications to speak of sailing, and suggests that perhaps his voyage to Aulis might count as sufficient οοφία; syntactically we are still in the same period that includes his denial of οοφία. As commentators have often noted, for Hesiod to claim that such a voyage would give him οοφία about sailing is absurd; yet this very absurdity suggests that we are to understand his claim as metaphorical. Furthermore, Hesiod's claim to οοφία in sailing introduces a twelve-line digression that juxtaposes his own voyage with that of the Homeric Greeks and culminates in a reassertion of the divine source of his poetic inspiration. This digression removes us from the realm of practical advice and compels us to focus on the poet's authority as a singer rather than an expert on sailing. Line 660 illustrates this in a striking manner: τόσον τοι νηρόν γε πεπεζόμενι πολυγρόμοιν. The τόσον refers specifically to Hesiod's brief voyage to Euboea, last mentioned in verse 655. Four intervening lines amplify and describe what happened there: they


χρή Μοναὶον θράσποτα καὶ ἀγγίζω, τ᾿ οί περίσσων
εἰδέθη, οοφής μη φθορέσων τελθήσων.

άλλα τα μή μοιένα, τα δέ δεικνύον, δόλα δὲ μοιλῖν,

τί οὖν χρήσατο μποϊνος Επίκενθος:

The meaning of line 771 is controversial; see A. Ford, "The Seal of Theognis," in Figueira/Nagy 93: Edmunds 107–9. The exhortation for the poet to "display [δεικυμένοις] some things" is precisely what Hesiod claimed to do in 648 (δεικνὺς . . . μέτρα). The display of Theognis, however, is a function of his poetic οοφής, whereas Hesiod offers a display in spite of his lack of οοφή (649).

The phrase Μοναὶον θράσποτα in 769 above may or may not allude to Hesiod himself (7h. 100), but it certainly illustrates that each poet viewed his relationship with the Muses similarly; cf. G. Nagy, The Best of the Achaeans (Baltimore, 1979) 304-7. All references to Theognis are from M. L. West, Lambi et Elegi Graeci (Oxford 1973) vol. II.

14. This participle, σοφοφημήνους, is usually taken to refer simply to the expertise of a sailor. While I would not deny this literal meaning, Hesiod's later emphasis (at the end of the spheris) on the Heliconian Muses as the source of his poetic οοφή makes a connection with poetry likely for σοφοφημήνους. This interpretation would make σοφοφημήνους the earliest attested example of a ωοφί word referring to poetic skill (contra Edmunds [above, n. 10] 101). Such a concept is not out of place in Hesiod, for the references to poetic initiatives at Th. 26 35 and W 1662, with their emphasis on the transformation of poetic knowledge from the Muses to the poet, certainly imply the existence of a "skill" of divine origin.
stress that he competed in a poetic competition, won with a ἵμαρός, took away the tripod, and dedicated it to the Heliconian Muses (655–60):

Χαλκίδα τ' εἰς ἐπέρημα· τά δὲ προπερασμένα πολλά ἄνδρεσιν παιδεῖς μεγαλήτεροι· ἐνθά μὲ φημὴ ἵμαρόν νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὑπώνυμα.

τὸν μὲν Ἐρυμάνθι καὶ Σκιανίδεω ἀνέθηκεν,

ἐνθά μὲ τὸ πτωματὸν λυγής ἐπέβηκαν δούλης,

τόσον τοι οὖν γε πεπεῖρομει πολυγόμφου.

By the time the audience hears the τόσον, the focus has shifted from a sea voyage to poetic competition and poetic inspiration. The τόσον, therefore—"such is my experience of ships that have many nails"—has an intimate connection with these poetic topics, and reinforces their connection with sailing.16

The opening section of practical nautical advice (618–45) just before the sphyriphige prepares the audience for this shift from the literal to the metaphorical in the account of Hesiod's own sea voyage. Indeed the opening line itself of the Nautilus, line 618, reveals considerations other than literal sailing: εἰ δὲ σε ναυτιλῆς διοσπερμέλον ἰμαρός αἰρεῖ. The phrase "if desire/impulse for 'ill-tempered' sailing seizes you" is unusual in this context, since someone who undertakes sailing—certainly the man to whom Hesiod offers his advice—would not act upon a sudden impulse. Furthermore, the semantics of ἰμαρός connote almost exclusively a desire that springs from passion, emotion, or irrationality, and it is always used of a desire for something that will ultimately bring pleasure.17 At Theogony 64 Hesiod himself makes Himeros (along with the Charites) a companion to the Muses, giving him a distinct esthetic aspect: πάρο δ' ἀντίς Χαριτές τε καὶ ἰμαρός σαλί' ἠχουσ' ἐν θάλασσα. At Theogony 201, Himeros (with Eros) follows closely after Aphrodite. It is, therefore, practically an oxymoron to speak of a ἰμαρός (a positive, esthetic concept) for something διοσπερμέλος.18 Insofar as line 618 marks a new and digressive section of the poem, the expression ἰμαρός αἰρεῖ must surely be more than a mere façon de parler (one that would be unparalleled in any event) for the bland idea "whenever you want." Rather it stresses, if somewhat paradoxically, a passionate, virtually hedonistic, desire to engage in the activity.19

15. On this term, cf. above, n. 6.
16. πολυγόμφοι may even be employed specifically as an epithet appropriate to the style of heroic poetry, i.e., "much-nailed" = "monumental." Note that it is not a Homeric formula, occurring here for the first time; cf. also Ibycus, PMG 282.17.
17. Hence the Homeric epithet γλυκίς (II. 3.46). Homer frequently uses ἰμαρός with γόος and σάλις, e.g., II. 23.14, 11.89; note also Od. 1.421, ἰμαρόναν ἀνεβαίνει.
18. All other forms of the word in Hesiod (including Sr. and the fragments) also have a distinct esthetic aspect to them; cf. ἰμαρός, Th. 177, ἰμαρόνξ, Th. 8, 104, 359, 919, ἰμαρός, Th. 557. ἰμαρός is also frequently associated with specifically erotic desire; cf. Hom. Od. 14.328, Pind. Or. 1.41, Aesch. PV 649, Soph. Fr. 476, Eur. Med. 558.
19. An esthetic dimension to sailing is evident at Hom. Od. 8.246.53, where we first find the
Lines 646–47 further highlight this paradox by identifying poverty and hunger as motivations for sailing:

εὖτ’ ἄν ἐκ’ ἔμπορίνγον τρέψως ἀνίσφρονα θημόν
βούλησθι χρῆσι τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμόν ἀπερπέα.

With these verses Hesiod repeats the basic sentiment of line 618 (τε δὲ ὁ ναυτικός δυσπερφόλου ἕμφορος άφησι: / εὖτ’ ἄν . . . ) and rhetorically marks the new section, the sphyreis. Subtly, yet smoothly, the notion of ἕμφορος in line 618 merges with the desire to flee χρῆσι and λιμός in line 647: these affections engender and stimulate one’s ἕμφορος to sail.20 The paradox arising from this association—the need to flee indigence as the inspiration of an esthetically tinged ἕμφορος—is resolved only in the sphyreis, where Hesiod equates the motivation for literal sailing with his own motivation for sailing in the metaphorical sense. Here the motivation for sailing—avoiding poverty and hunger—also parallels one’s poetic drive, the “need” to compose poetry, which in turn excites one’s poetic ἕμφορος. For Hesiod, the preferred way of avoiding poverty and hunger on the literal level is to work the land. Others, who fail at this, may be forced to take the more risky path of seafaring. On the metaphorical level, singers too are driven to compose by a need for poetic activity; some will fail at the type of poetry Hesiod composes, but the alternative—more grandiose, heroic poetry—is, like genuine seafaring, a dangerous enterprise.21

noun ναυτικής (its only occurrence in Homer; the verbal form ναυτικίωμα occurs at Od. 4.672, 14.246). In this passage Alcmnois explains to Odysseus the hedonistic/agonistic ethos of the Phaeacians. The Phaeacians’ particular expertise at running and seafaring is mentioned twice (247, 253), and each time Alcmnois also mentions the Phaeacian love of dance and poetic song (καλαζίας . . . χορος, 248; ἀρχάγης καὶ οὐδῆς, 253). This melding of the athletic with the aesthetic is especially prominent in 253, where the distinctly chiasmic form of ναυτικής καὶ ναυτικαῖς ἔργασις καὶ οὐδῆς encourages us to hear the verse as one sense unit, rather than simply as a sequential list of activities, “sailing, running, dance, and song.” The juxtaposition of ναυτικαῖς ἔργασις forms the center of the verse and is bracketed by ναυτικής and οὐδῆς, while a connection between these two elements, sailing and song, is emphasized both by word position and homoioteleuton. Thus the ναυτικής in which the Phaeacians excel emerges as more a sport than a commercial enterprise (as its association with running indicates, 247, 253) and its formal coupling here with οὐδῆς in a context concerned with poetic song (note the verse immediately following. Ἀμφιδίαν δὲ τις ἀέαν χοίρον φόρμαντι λέγεται/οὐδῆς, 255) was probably not lost on Hesiod.

20. Poverty, material need, and hunger, of course, motivate not only sailing in W., but all “work.” At 496–501, for example, it is the δραγός man who suffers ἁρματοντι καὶ ἀπεκείν οὕτως and who “lacks livelihood” (χρηματιζομενον), i.e., the man who pays no heed to Hesiod’s injunctions to work the land properly (cf. also 394–404, contra Pers.). Insofar as sailing for Hesiod represents an alternative to agriculture, it also represents an alternative way to avoid poverty and hunger. Cf. Nagy, “Themis” (above, n. 13) 64–65. Pindar too associates his poetic activity on one level with an attempt to avoid hunger at 1.145–52. On the metaphoric “thrusting” (βυσσόν) for song in Pindar, cf. E. L. Bundy, Studia Pindarica 1, University of California Publications in Classical Philology 18 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1912) 10. Note especially N. 3.6.7, where the thirst for song (βυσσόν) is equated with the positive, affective verb φιλέον.

21. Hesiod’s injunctions toward the close of the Nautilia (687–94), when read metaphorically, make this point eloquently. The poet here advises the person contemplating sailing not to put one’s
The peculiar section about Hesiod’s father (633–40), which immediately precedes the sphygrasis, anticipates this reading. This passage illustrates to Perse what circumstances drive a man to sea: “if a passion for sailing seizes you [618] . . . do the following things [619–32] . . . ὃς περ ἔμοι τε πατήρ καὶ σός μέγιν νάπην Πέρση.” Hesiod states explicitly that his father had no ἄφενος, πλουτὸς, or ὑδας (637), and kept on sailing (note iterative πληξέοις) because he lacked livelihood (βίου κεχρημένος ἐσθλὸν, (634), fleeing “evil poverty” (κυκῆν πενην, 638). By emphasizing his father’s poverty as a cause for frequent sailing, Hesiod implies that his father was unsuccessful at agriculture, the preferred method of making a living.

The detail of lines 639–40, however, has perennially puzzled readers:

νάσσω τὸ δ’ ἡγχ’ Ἐλκινόνος δίκυθή ἐνί καθή,
Ἄσχω, χείμην καθή, θέρει άργυλέη, οὐδὲ ποτ’ ἐσθλή.

Commentators frequently point out that Asca, in fact, is hardly the wholly wretched locale that Hesiod would have us believe it to be. Rather than impute a topographical gaffe to Hesiod, it is most sensible to view the passage as a reflection of the subjective point of view of Hesiod’s father, rather than of Hesiod himself. In some sense, that is, although Hesiod’s father tried to flee poverty by taking to the seas, he was as miserable when he settled in Asca as he was in Kyme. When Hesiod mentions that his father chose a place “near Helicon” (639), there can be little doubt that he wishes to contrast his father’s misery there with his own (poetic) success.

For Hesiod, of course, the essence of success or failure in sailing, as in agriculture, is observing τὸ ὀρατὸν “seasonableness” (617, 630, 642, 665); one should not sail until the proper season, just as one should perform the various agricultural tasks enjoined in the poem only under the proper seasonal and/or meteorological entire livelihood into the ship (μηδ’ ἐν νησίῳ ἔρροιν βίον καθάρισε τίτωξιν, 609), but to leave behind the greater amount (ἄλλα πλὴν λατεύν, τὸ δὲ μίνα φορτίζομαι, 690). The sailor who ensures against a total material disaster at sea by staking only a moderate amount of βίος on one sea voyage is analogous to the poet who avoids the artistic dangers of heroic poetry by composing in a less ambitious genre (where the poet’s βίος is his poetic material).

22 E.g., R. Wallace, “Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses,” CRHS 15 (1974) 8. R. Lamberton (Hesiod [New Haven, 1988] 29–30) points out that in midsummer Asca can in fact be an awful place, but Hesiod’s strong exaggeration (οὐδὲ ποτ’ ἐσθλή) is still remarkable. As Lamberton himself notes (31), “Hesiod’s carping irony about his village is a function of his poetic persona and not of any specific location.”

23 As Hamilton implies (above, n. 2: 68): “To Hesiod’s father Helicon is a terrible place while to Hesiod it is the home of his teachers, the Muses.”

24 The appearance of Helicon in any Hesiodic context has poetic associations. Of its six Hesiodic occurrences, four are in the poem of Thersites, where they describe the haunts of the Muses (1, 2, 7) and the locale of Hesiod’s poetic initiation (23). The other two occur in the autobiographical section of the Nuxinia, nineteen lines apart, in the reference to Hesiod’s father (639) and in the sphygrasis (658), which almost certainly echoes Th. 23.
conditions. In line 641 Hesiod abruptly turns from his father’s hard lot at Ascri to general advice for Perses: τήνη δ’, ὦ Πέρση, ἔγγον μεμνημένος ἔχειν / ὀραίοις πάντων, περὶ νεκτάλικας δὲ μύλλιστα. The direct contrast (τήνη δ’) with their father (“don’t do as our father did”) implies that he failed at both sailing and agriculture because of his ignorance of τὸ ὑπάτιον. Hesiod’s success, however, where his father had failed, at Heliconian Ascri (658–59), highlights his own adherence to τὸ ὑπάτιον and pairs the father and son as a negative and positive exemplum. When Hesiod links his trivial sailing experience to his success in poetry (660–62), we are again encouraged to understand it metaphorically: “My father engaged in sailing for material purposes, but failed because of his ignorance of τὸ ὑπάτιον. I, too, took a sea voyage of sorts once, but it was for poetic purposes (to compete in the funeral games of Amphidamas). My voyage, however, though short, is emblematic of my attention to τὸ ὑπάτιον in my own field of ‘work,’ namely song, and I was eminently successful.” Just as the man who takes to the sea is driven by poverty and hunger (647), like Hesiod’s father (637–38), so the “poverty” and “hunger” that motivate the poet’s metaphorical sailing refer to the inspiration he receives from the Muses (658–62). But such inspiration, Hesiod implies, can only be successfully realized in song by adherence to poetic ὑπάτιον.

A well-known passage in the programmatic opening of Works and Days lends support to this argument for the use of poverty, hunger, and material need as metaphorical representations of poetic drive or inspiration. In lines 20–26, as we noted earlier, all ἔγγον is motivated by the desire to avoid just such ills and to acquire material substance. Such is the operation of the good Eris in the world (20–26):

η τε καὶ ὑπάλλελον περ ὑπατον ἐπὶ ἔγγον ἔγγον ἔγγειρεν.
ἐκ ἔτερου γενὸς τίς τε ἔδωκεν ἔγγον ἔγγειρον πλούσιον,
ὅς σπέρνει μὲν ἀροίμους ἤ δὲ μισεῖς
οἶκον τ’ ἐν θέσει, ζηλοῖ δὲ τε γείτονα γείτον,
ἐκ ἄφθονος σπέρνον: ἀγαθή δ’ Ἐρις ἦν ψεῦτοισιν.
καὶ κεραμεῖς κεραμεῖς κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτονι,
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονεῖ καὶ ὑμίδος ὑμίδο.

Many have suspected that the collocation of “beggar vying with beggar” and “singer vying with singer” in the last line (26)—a line that serves as the rhetorical climax to the whole passage—has special significance. 25 The example of a beggar in this context, to be sure, must seem unexpected and out of place to any audience, since it is not really a “profession” in the same sense as the potter or carpenter mentioned in the preceding verse. The image of one beggar competing with an-

25. West 147, laconically: “it is noticeable that the singer is coupled with the beggar.” For bibliography, cf. W. J. Verdenius, A Commentary on Hesiod, Works and Days v. 1–382 (Lekslen, 1985) 29 n. 122. Verdenius himself denies any significance to the collocation, though his reasoning is hardly persuasive: “it may be doubted whether self-irony is compatible with Hes.’s self-esteem as expressed, e.g. in Th. 26.” The very fact that Hesiod reveals his self-esteem so emphatically (and programmatically) in 26 ff. can only enhance the irony of a passage in which poets are associated with beggars.
other to be a “more successful” beggar can only be ironic, since beggary is a condition that Hesiod cautions Perses to avoid (e.g., WD 394–96); it is hardly an appropriate example of a competitive profession. The professional status of the δούλος also differs from the potter’s and the carpenter’s: his “product”—song—is not tactile or even visible. The singer is more closely allied with the beggar than with the potter or carpenter, since the beggar too must rely on words and persuasion rather than on any material product. The irony, of course, of this connection between the beggar and the singer is that Hesiod qua singer casts himself as a beggar of sorts.26 There is no doubt a touch of self-deprecating humor in this passage, but it also implies that, as with the “professional” beggar, the lot of the singer is to be in some sense perennially “impoverished.”27

When poverty in the Nautilus is understood metaphorically, success in poetry becomes a function of how well one has overcome this condition, which in turn reflects the quality and effectiveness of one’s source of inspiration. It is appropriate, therefore, that within the agricultural cycle of the year, the time when the farmer should himself engage in esthetic pleasures (including poetry) is in the heat of the summer, when there is little he can do with the land anyway, and when, it is assumed, he has already amassed a sufficient amount of βίος.28 This special time of relaxation is introduced in line 582:

\[
\text{ἡμος δὲ σκάλλιμος τ’ ἄνθει καὶ ἄχετι τέττισ}
\]
\[
\text{δενδρεω ἐφεζόμενος λαχηνὴν καταχευετ’ δούλην}
\]
\[
\text{πυκνόν ὑπὸ πτερύγων θέρεος καματόδεος ὕμη.}
\]
\[
\text{ἐπὶ δ’ άθλος πινέμεν οἶνον}
\]
\[
\text{ἐν σκη έξόμενον, κεκρασμένον ἦπος ἐκώθης,}
\]
\[
\text{ἄντιον δυσιές Ζεφύρων τρέμεντα πρόσημα-}
\]
\[
\text{κρήνης δ’ ἀλεώναν καὶ ἀπορρύτω, ἢ τ’ ἀθλότος,}
\]
\[
\text{τρις θάντος προπέτων, τό δὲ τέτματον ἑμεν οἶνον.}
\]

The period of time during which a man may leave off his work is marked by the cicada singing in the trees. There can be little doubt that the word δούλη here is intended to evoke human poetic song. First of all, as Hesiod himself is aware (584), the so-called “song” of the cicada emanates from its wings, not its mouth;

26. Note the “professional competition” between Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) and the beggar Ilos in Od. 18.1–108.

27. We find the stereotype of the impoverished poet throughout Greek literature (and it survives even to this day): e.g., Thucydides 351–53, 649 52, 668–70; Hipparchus 42–44B; Aristoph. Aves 931–35; Crates, Suppl. Hell. 359, 3–4; Matrona, Suppl. Hell. 534.3. But this kind of impoverishment is here a positive state that inspires the operation of the good Eris among men, and points to the metaphorical use of poverty as poetic drive in the Nautilus. In a similar fashion J. Svenbro (La parole et le marbre: Aux origines de la poétique grecque [1.und, 1976] 50–59) argues that the term υποχέρι is used metaphorically in Homer (and also Hes. Th. 26) to represent two opposite conceptions of vagabondage, the one driving a person to productivity, the other to idleness.

28. Hamilton (above, n. 2: 68) notes the connection between βίος (δέμφος, δέβος, etc.) and the ability to sing.
to apply the word ἄοιδη to this sort of noise (however mellifluous) can only be done figuratively. It is, moreover, a word intimately associated with the Muses throughout the proem of Thesmophoria and in the opening line of Works and Days, 29 and Hesiod’s audience would no doubt have known its programmatic significance in the hexameter tradition. 30

That the image of an ἡχίτα τέττιξ pouring out its λυγυρή ἄοιδη must be seen as an ainos 31 emerges clearly when it is juxtaposed with the autobiographical verse that occurs in the Nautilia at line 659. There the Muses set Hesiod on the path of “clear, sweet song” (καθαρὸς ὑμημέρης πρότος ἄοιδης), the same adjective and noun occur in the same metrical position in the phrase applying to the cicada (λυγυρὴν καταχώρου ἄοιδην). 32 Five lines later a virtual repetition of the second hemistich of 584 recalls the cicada passage:

εἶς τέλεις ἡχίτα τέττιξ, καμητόδοτος ἄοιδης (664)
πικχύοις ὑπὸ πτερύγων θέργος καμητόδοτος ἄοιδη. (584)

Moreover, line 664 gives the appropriate time for sailing (cf. 665, ὑμημέρος . . . πλόος) as that very time, described in lines 582–96, when the cicada sings and men relax and turn to esthetic pleasures. 33 In the earlier passage, men are told to relax during the heat of summer; in this passage if they want to sail they should do so.

Linking all these passages strengthens the power of the sailing-poetry metaphor of the sphyra. Line 659, with its reference to a λυγυρῇ . . . ἄοιδη in a context of poetic initiation, alludes to the singing cicada and allows us to identify the cicada with the poet; line 664, which heralds the time for sailing, as we have noted, also echoes that passage (cf. 584) and recalls the cicada’s song. 34 In other words, at the same time as the farmer (the Hesiodic poet) sings a song in the heat of the summer—a song representing the successful defeat of poverty, and hence success at poetry—the sailor (the poet of heroic epos) embarks upon a poetic course the success of which is not as yet assured. For the farmer, this season practically guarantees success in poetry, since he has behind him a year’s worth of hard work and substance. The man who sails out of season, however, either

29. Cf. Th. 22. 44, 48, 60, 104; WD 1.
30. Cf., e.g., Hom. Od. 8. 43–45, 62–64.
31. In the self-consciously related aivos of 202 12 (του δ’ αίωνος τουτέστατα ἡχίτα, φωνήσων και ταῦτα, 202), Hesiod had referred to a nightingale as an ἄοιδης (208). Thespis too adopts the image of the poet as nightingale in 939, αἰὸν ὁδήγησεν λυγυρῇ ἄοιδην ὑμημέρῳ ἄοιδῃ. For other references, cf. C. Calame, Aekum (Rome, 1983) 615, on his fr. 224.
32. Hesiod marks further a connection between the activity of the cicada and human activity with 593, where the man relaxing in the sun drinks wine while sitting in the shade (ἔνι δ’ ἀνήθεν πνεύμων ὑμημέρων ἀνεβασάν τε κατά τὸ ἡχίτον). Here ἡχίτον stands in the same sense as (ὁ) ἡχίτον used of the cicada ten lines earlier (583).
33. West (323 ad 665) notes the connection.
34. Callimachus too found in the cicada an appropriate metaphor for a poet: ἔνι τοῖς γὰρ ἄοιδημον ὅμιλον ἡχίτον, ἀοίδημον δ’ αἰόνοις ἄοιδημαν ἀνον (fr. 1. 29–30 Fl.)
has failed at farming, or (unwisely) chooses to ignore agriculture altogether, staking what few goods he possesses on maritime commerce. He is still in the process, in other words, of trying to overcome poverty, of seeking, on the level of metaphor, his poetic voice.

Once we accept that the cicada stands as an ainos for the Hesiodic poet, moreover, the expression ἄοιδην / πυκνὸν ὑπὸ πτερύγων easily refers to the quality of the song rather than merely to the frequency of stridulation from under the wings, and the notion of a "dense," "compact" song is best understood esthetically, as appropriate to the song of the human ἄοιδης.35 Only forty verses later, in the Nautilia, Hesiod gives the following advice about ships: νηλὶ δ' ἄπειρον ἐφικτὸν πυκνὸν τε λύθοισαν / . . . εὔκομων σταλίων νηλὶ πτερά ποντοσσύρων (624–28). Hesiod here continues the poetic commentary that lies beneath the ainos of the cicada passage. The advice to "pack up one's ships with stones" and to "stow the wings of one's ship in good order" (εὔκομως—an esthetic word) is easily read as veiled poetic advice: don't begin with epic poetry ("stow the wings of one's ship"); compose more "compactly" (as in πυκνόν), for example Hesiodic poetry; wait for the proper time (ἀφαῖνον . . . πλόον, 630; also 642, 665), that is, until one has the appropriate poetic inspiration and technical training.

Theognis 237–50 offers a vivid Archaic example of the metaphorical use of πτερά in the context of poetry. In his quest for Panhellenic acceptance,36 Theognis speaks of his poetry as giving wings to his addressee, Kyknos, and thus bringing them both undying κλέος:

οὐδέ μὲν ἐγὼ πτεραῖ ἔδωκα, σὺν οἷς ἐπ' ἀπειρονα πόντον
ποίησθαι καὶ γὰρ πᾶσιν ἀειμένοις
φημίδαις: θοινης δὲ καὶ εἰλαμπνης πανέμησι
ἐν πάσαις, πολλῶν κείμενος ἐν στόμαισιν,
καὶ σὺν υἱὸ πολυκατούντοις ἑνίοις ἄνδρες
εὔκομων ἐχαρτοι καὶ κατὰ λεγέσι
μαντεῖα καὶ ὶτῃν δυναμερής ὑπὸ κείμεσι γαϊήσ
βῆς πολυποικοτοὺς εἶς 'Αίδιον δόμησιν,
οὐδέποτε οὐδὲ θαυμῶν ἀπολείπεις κλέος, ἀλλά μελήσεις
ἀφθητον ἀνθρώποις ὑαῖν ἔχων δνομή
Κύνε, καθ αἰλάδα γὰρ στραφόμενος ἕκα ἀνὰ νήσους
ὑγίους δειμένων πόντον ἐπʼ ἀθρώμενον,
οὗ γ. ἐπαίσιν νυότοις ἔφημος, ἀλλὰ σε πέριμει
ἀγαλα Μοῦσαν νομά συστέφων.

35. The adjective πυκνός was later incorporated into the language of Greek musical theory, occurring first in such a context in Plato, Rep. 531a. The adjective seems originally to have referred simply to a "narrow" or "compressed" interval, though by the time of Aristoxenos it developed a more technical application to the disposition of the first three notes of a tetrachord, cf. T. Mathiesen, Aristoxes Quintilianus: On Music (New Haven, 1983) 79 n. 66. Though it seems unlikely that πυκνός would have had a specifically technical connotation as early as Hesiod, its later use in musical theory, insofar as it developed from a common, nontechnical usage, can help us understand its nuance in Hesiod
The poet includes in these verses unambiguous esthetic commentary and employs a vocabulary that recalls Hesiod on several counts. Compare Theognis's association of λυγός (241–42) with song to Hesiod's similar use of the adjective (the cicada with its λυγυρή δοιδή, emanating from under its πτέρυγας, 583–84; Hesiod's initiation into λυγυρή δοιδή by the Muses, 659). Theognis's use of εὐκόδωμας with the verb of singing resembles Hesiod's εὐκόδωμας σταλίσας γης πτερά ποντοπόρου (628). Finally, Theognis connects the "gifts of the Muses" (poetry) and the metaphorical flight over the seas (i.e., Κυρνος travels like a bird), but the diction is that of seafaring (χειλόεις τερών πόντον ἐκ ἄφροδετον).

Another passage in the Nautilia that has relevance for the metaphorical interpretation of sailing is found in lines 678–84, where Hesiod notes an alternative time to sail:

οὐ ουλίνος δ' ελαρινός πέλεται πλόος ἀνθρώποισιν,
ομοιός δὲ το πρῶτον, ὄσον τ' ἐπιβάοις κυρώνη
ἐγνιος ἐποιηθεν, τόσον πέτωλ ἄνδρι φιλήν
ἐν κράδη ἄφροδάτη, τότε δ' ἡμιστός ἐστι θάλασσα:
ελαρινός δ' οὕτως πέλεται πλόος. οὐ μιν ἔγχυο
ανηντιν: οὐ γάρ ἔμω θυμῳ κεχαρισμένος ἐστιν
ἄφροδάτος.

The detail of the crow's track in lines 678–84, if noted at all, is usually regarded as a piece of quaint folk wisdom, but it is probably more significant. Note the repeated form of the compound of βαίνω in lines 679 and 681: "when the crow first 'sets out' [ἐπιβάοι] and makes his track... then the θάλασσα is ἡμιστός." The verb ἐπιβάοι (ἐπεβάοσαν) had just been used transitively in line 659 to describe the Muses "setting Hesiod on the road to sweet song" (same sedes...ἐπεβάοσαν δοιδή). Once we have connected the crow's footprint with the "embarkable sea," it is easy to suppose that the crow's footprint itself and the leaves of the fig tree present yet another ainos. A precise explanation of the ainos is elusive, but it is likely that the crow represents a bad poet (as we find it used later in Pindar, O. 2.86, with Σ[χόρικες], and Nem. 3.82 [κολοιφοί]), that ἐποίησαν refers to the activity of composing poetry, and that the ἔγνιος is the poetry itself of the crow-poet.

37. For the association of λυγός with song, cf. Calame (above, n. 31) 350, on Alcman fr. 4 (= PMG fr. 14a); note also Plato, Phaedr. 230c, 237a.
38. Birds are frequently found in Archaic poetry as metaphors for the poet: e.g., Bacchyl. 5.16–30; Pind. O. 2.86, N. 3.80–82; cf. also Alcman frs. 90, 91, 140 Calame (= PMG frs. 26, 39, 40).
39. Note also Theognis 969–70, where the poet speaks of himself metaphorically as a ship: ἐφεύτην ἄνθρωπα πρὸς σκαλέν πάντες συνάγει / ἐνθαλαγεῖν δ' ἡμὶ φιλίας ἐκέρδησα.
40. ἐπιβάοι is also commonly used of setting out to sea; cf. J. Péron, Les images mariannes de Pindare (Paris, 1974) 39–43.
In line 747, the crow appears again in a different, but equally "folksy" and enigmatic context:

μηδὲ δόμων ποιῶν ἄνεπίξεστον καταλήπεσιν,
μὴ τοι ἐφεξομένη κροΐζει λαπέρυζει καρυνή.

Here his "crowning" is at issue (κροίζω), where it is implied that it brings bad luck. The detail there of the crow "sitting down" on the roof (ἐφεξομένη) recalls the cicada passage (χτέτα τέττει/δενδρόεον ἐφεξομένος), where that creature, we concluded, represents the Hesiodic poet. The cicada was "resonant" and "sweet-sounding" (χτέτα... λεγονή καταλεύετε' δαυειν); the crow is, by contrast, "screecching" (λαπέρυζει). 42 We may note also that line 746 warns that the one who makes (ποιῶν) a house should not leave it "unpolished." The participle ποιῶν in conjunction with ἄνεπίξεστον, "leaving (something 'made/composed') unpollished" may very well function as an injunction against a certain poetic esthetic that Hesiod eschews. 43 Some may find it difficult to believe that an άινος about poetry would appear in such an odd context. But even if we take the lines literally as a statement about housebuilding, their appearance is no less gratuitous: they are situated among injunctions that warn against cutting nails at sacrifices, hanging jugs above craters, and eating or washing from pots not used for sacrifice. Rather, through a riddle of its own the passage helps to clarify (to the astute of the audience, anyway) the earlier riddle of springtime sailing.

Yet another indication that springtime sailing refers to poetry appears in lines 682-83:

ἐλευεινὸς δ' οὖσ' πέλεται πλόος, οὗ μὲν ἔφωτε
ἀνείριτε, οὗ γαρ ἔμω θυμοι κεχωρισμένας ἑπτέν.

Hesiod does not recommend (lit., "praise") the springtime voyage, because, he says, it affords his θυμός no χάρις. West says: "the rest of 683 is padding; the formula ἤθεθος, used of people in Homer, is oddly applied to sailing time."

42. The verb λάμος, from which λαπέργα derives, occurs at WD 207, where the hawk insolently addresses the nightingale, δημοτίνη, τι λάμοις; Note Alcan fr. 3.85-87 Calame (= PMG fr. 1), where the chorus deprecates its own singing by comparing itself to an owl screeching from the rafters: [ἲηηήρας μὲν ἀναίδι/παρασιάμοι μέταν ἀπο θρόνον λέαυτον/κλέας. By contrast, when the same chorus speaks of Hagesichora's singing (98-101), her song is that of a swan: φηγεγετέα δ' [[..]] [[..] [[..]. [[..] Σαρδην σιθειν/κινοίς (The construction of the last strophe is uncertain; alternatively, the chorus may liken itself rather than Hagesichora to a swan: cf. D. Page, Alcan, The Parthenon [Oxford, 1951] 98; D. Campbell, Greek Lyric Poetry [London, 1967] 211).

43. Though I can find no other passages where ποιῶν λάμος is used metaphorically for someone who composes poetry, we find a similar metaphor, involving τέκτων, attested in the fifth century: Pind. P. 3.113, 6.7-8, I. 3.4; Cratinus fr. 70KA (= Aristoph. Eq. 530). The word ἄνεπίξεστον occurs nowhere else until the fourth century a.d. (Themistius 322b); its positive form, ἄτεθσις, is nearly as rare, but it occurs twice in the vase of Apollonius Rhodius, where it is used of "polishing" poetry: ἄτεθσις τέκτων θαλαμάτω (Vitr. A. W. Wendel); μετα μετα τα ἄτεθσις καὶ ἀποθέσις (Vitr. A. W. Wendel). The programmatic notion of "polished" poetry, of course, was dear to the Roman neoteric poets; cf. Catullus 2.2.
To accuse a poet of padding is, of course, the easy way out when a line ill suits its context.

It is indeed odd for the poet to make a personal and essentially esthetic judgment about sailing. It is hardly a question of χάρης, since what Hesiod objects to is the riskiness of sailing, that it must be undertaken at a short and critical period: ἄπιστωτος χαλέπως καὶ φύγως κακῶν. Yet it is undeniable that all the words with the element -χαρ- in Hesiod embody an esthetic judgment, and we should not dismiss its occurrence in line 683 as awkward padding. Hence χειροσιμένος suggests that the spring πλόως is a poetic venture. Nagy points out that in springtime one really ought to be plowing, not sailing, in contrast to summer, when one has temporarily suspended agriculture. This observation may explain how Hesiod intends the two sailing times to be understood. At each time, sailing (heroic poetry) is dangerous and inadvisable; but in the springtime it is an alternative to agriculture (Hesiodic poetry), and so all the more risky. Summertime sailing, by contrast, represents heroic poetry by one who has already achieved some success in the less grandiose medium of Hesiodic poetry, that is, poetry on the scale and scope of Works and Days.

The portrait of Hesiod that emerges from this interpretation of the Nautilia presupposes a degree of literary self-consciousness and gamesmanship that we normally reserve for Hellenistic poets. Yet Hesiod’s interest in the nature of poetic inspiration, poetic authority, and poetic truth is undeniable, and it should not surprise us to find evidence of this interest in new places; nor should it surprise us to find a Greek poet using sailing as a poetic metaphor. The “auto-

44. χαρ- Th. 503, 583; WD 65, 190, 709, 720, 723. Χάρις, Th. 64, 907, 946; WD 73. χαρισματικόν, Th. 580; WD 683; χαριστή Th. 129, 247, 260.
47. In post-Hesiodic poetry the metaphor was quite common: cf. Theognis 969–70 (above, n. 39); Alcman, PMG 1 94–95 (where the chorus likens their leader to a ship’s helmsman); Pind. N. 5.2–3, 51–53; P. 10.51–54, 11.39–40; N. 3.26–28. At N. 6.29–34 Pindar even draws a contrast between sailing and agriculture as poetic modes. Among the Augustan poets the metaphor of sailing occurs frequently in poetic recreations; cf. Hor. Carm. 4.15.3–4; Verg. Georg. 2.41–46; Prop. 3.9.3. 36. The most extended treatment of the metaphor is Prop. 3.3.13–24, which is all the more striking because the poem opens with an evocation of Hesiod as Propertius’s poetic mentor (1–2). In 13-24 Propertius explicitly likens the contrast between his own (“Hesiodic”) poetic agenda and the more elevated heroic epic to that between an enterprising sailor on the open sea and the skittish novice.
biographical" kernel of the Nautilia, the sphragis, with its effort to associate sailing with poetic competition, inspiration, and investiture, was the first indication that Hesiod's motives transcended the textual veneer of practical advice. The diction of the Nautilia and of the surrounding passages has suggested that Hesiod has turned the entire Nautilia into an ἀφίκνεσθαι that compares the poetics of Works and Days to the poetics of the Homeric epic. We may, in short, view the Nautilia as a pictorial triptych: two sidepanels depict the activity of sailing literally, while the central panel, the sphragis, by encouraging a metaphorical interpretation of sailing, acts as an exegetical pivot and bestows on the side panels another level of meaning.

University of Pennsylvania

who always keeps the shore in view (cf. esp. 19–24, "ut tuus in sic luminis iactetur saepe libellus, . . . / non est ingenii cumbus gravanda tui; alter remus aquas alter tibi radat harenas. / tutus eris: medio maxima turba mari est." This image is strongly reminiscent of Hesiod's contrast between the Achaean's sea voyage to Troy and his own minor trip to Chalcis, a trip where each shore would always remain in view.