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Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod's Works and Days

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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
Works and Days

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 Ascea 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. 1 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. 2 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 agōn 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 Nautilia, 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 πῶ... ἔπειτα... ἐὰν μὴ ἐξ Ἐβδομαν ἔξει Αὐλίδος). The overt contrast between this voyage (a trip made for a poetic performance) and that of the Achaeans on their way to Troy (Ἀὐλίδος, ἧ ποι'...
'Αχιωτ . . . ἥγεται . . . Τροήθην ἐς καλλιγνώμως), if understood to reflect poetic concerns, implies that Hesiod’s performance at the funeral games for Amphidamas resembled Homeric epos, but was, at best, a minor venture into the realm of heroic poetry.  

The structure of the Nautilia is tripartite, with two sections on sailing, lines 618-45 and 663-94, enclosing a central section, lines 646-62, the spheris, in which Hesiod digresses about his own experience in sailing and his poetic charge from the Muses.  

Clues within the spheris 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 spheris, Hesiod says: δεῖξο δή τοι μέτρα πολυφροσύνεοι θαλάσσιοι.  

West notes that here μέτρα is loosely used of the rules and formulæ 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 οοφία in that sphere of activity. Solon 13.52, Stesichorus S 89.71 Page, and Theognis 876, in particular, mention μέτρον in conjunction with οοφία. Solon and Theognis, moreover, speak specifically of the poet who knows (poetic) μέτρα.  

This connection between μέτρα and οοφία 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 οοφία about the subject: οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεωφυμενός 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 οοφία he possesses about sailing ultimately comes from the Hellenistic Muses, in lines 658-60.  

His claim in lines 648-49 that he will expound on matters requiring οοφία, even though he lacks it, imparts a distinct irony to the passage, and suggests that the οοφία of sailing that he has in mind is not merely a technical skill. In fact, as others have amply demonstrated, οοφία and its cognate forms, though originally associ-
ated with artistry and manual expertise, in Archaic poetry commonly referred to poetic skill. With the participle σοφιστήματος in line 649, 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 oooφία. With the clause beginning τί μην in line 651 he reconsidered his qualifications to speak of sailing, and suggests that perhaps his voyage to Aulis might count as sufficient oooφία; syntactically we are still in the same period that includes his denial of oooφία. As commentators have often noted, for Hesiod to claim that such a voyage would give him oooφία about sailing is absurd; yet this very absurdity suggests that we are to understand his claim as metaphorical. Furthermore, Hesiod’s claim to oooφία 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 as an expert on sailing. Line 660 illustrates this in a striking manner: τόσον τοι γενόμεναι ψευδήματι πολυγήγορον. 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


χρη Μουνόμεν θρέφοντα καὶ ἐγγειον, τί τι περιποιήσει ἐνδείξει, σοφήσι μην φθορεί τἄνθητιν, ἀλλὰ τι μὲν μοιχήν, τοῦ δὲ δεικνύναι, ἀλλὰ δὲ ποιεῖν.

τι φοιν χρήσαται μιανος ἐπιστήμην.

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 [δεικνύναι] some things” is precisely what Hesiod claimed to do in 648 (δεικτείναι). The display of Theognis, however, is a function of his poetic oooφία, whereas Hesiod offers a display in spite of his lack of oooφία (649).

The phrase Μουνόμεν ἐνθέποντα 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) 341. All references to Theognis are from M. L. West, Lambri et Elegi Graeci (Oxford 1972) vol. II.

14. This participle, σοφιστήματος, 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 sapphire) on the Heliconian Muses as the source of his poetic oooφία makes a connection with poetry likely for σοφιστήματος. This interpretation would make σοφιστήματος the earliest attested example of a 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 imitation at 7H. 26 and W1162, with their emphasis on the transfer 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 ἰμέρος, took away
the tripod, and dedicated it to the Heliconian Muses (655–60):

Χαλκίδα τε εἰς ἐπέρραυ· τὰ δὲ προπεφραμίσα πολλά
ἀνθ' ἔθεσαν ποδίς μεγαλήτορος· ένθ' ἥξυμι
ημῶν νικήσαντα φέρεν τρίποδι ἀπόσπα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἔλευσσάνθεου ἀνέθηκα,
ἔνθ' ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτόν λεγόμην ἐπέθηκαν δούλης.
τόσον τοι γὰρ γε πεπείρημεν πολυγόμφων.

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.

The opening section of practical nautical advice (618–45) just before the
sphragis 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
ναυτιλίας διασπεμέλλον ἰμέρος ἅλετη. The phrase "if desire/impulse for 'ill-
tempered' sailing seizes you" is unusual in this context, since someone who under-
takes sailing—certainly the man to whom Hesiod offers his advice—would not act
upon a sudden impulse. Furthermore, the semantics of ἰμέρος 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. At
Theogony 64 Hesiod himself makes Himeros (along with the Charites) a companion
to the Muses, giving him a distinct esthetic aspect: πάρ' ἀντίχεις Χάριτες τε καὶ
ἰμέρος σκλήρ' ἔχουσιν ἐν ταλάντις. At Theogony 201, Himeros (with Eros)
follows closely after Aphrodite. It is, therefore, practically an oxymoron to speak of a
ἰμέρος (a positive, esthetic concept) for something διασπεμέλλος. Insofar as line
618 marks a new and digressive section of the poem, the expression ἰμέρος ἅλετη
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 some-
what paradoxically, a passionate, virtually hedonistic, desire to engage in the
activity.

15. On this term, cf. above, n. 6.
16. πολυγόμφων may even be employed specifically as an epithet appropriate to the style of
heroic poetry, i.e., "much-nailed" = "monumental." "manifold". 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 γλυκος (II. 3.46). Homer frequently uses ἰμέρος with γόδας and
ἀγώνος, e.g., II. 23.14, 11.89; note also Od. 1.421, ἰμέρος ὁ τρεις ἰμέρος.
18. All the other forms of the word in Hesiod (including Sc. and the fragments) also have
a distinct esthetic aspect to them; cf. ἱμέρος, Th. 177, ἱμέρος, Th. 8, 104, 359, 919, ἱμέρος, Th. 577.
ἰμέρος is also frequently associated with specifically erotic desire; cf. Hom. II 14.328, Pind. O. 1.41,
Aesch. PV 649, Soph. Tr. 476, Fri Med. 556.
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:

εὔτ᾽ ἄν ἔπ᾽ ἐμπορίῳ τρέψεις ἀπὸ σφόν την μήν
βούλησι κρέας τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμὸν ἀπερίπτεια.

With these verses Hesiod repeats the basic sentiment of line 618 (εὐ δ᾽ οὖν, ναυτιλίας δυσπερφέλω ήμερος 
καταγιαφεί / εὔτ᾽ ἄν . . . ) and rhetorically marks the new section, the sphragis. Subtly, yet smoothly, the notion of ἡμερος in line 618 merges with the desire to flee χρόσος and λιμὸς in line 647: these afflictions engender and stimulate one's ἡμερος to sail. The paradox arising from this association—the need to flee indigence as the inspiration of an esthetically tinged ἡμερος—is resolved only in the sphragis, 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 ἡμερος. 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.
The peculiar section about Hesiod's father (633–40), which immediately precedes the sphyrgis, anticipates this reading. This passage illustrates to Perses what circumstances drive a man to sea: “if a passion for sailing seizes you [618] . . . do the following things [619–32] . . . ὥς περ ἔμοι τε ποτήρι καὶ σὸς μὲνιν νῆπιε Πέρσῃ.” Hesiod states explicitly that his father had no ἀθενος, πλούτος, or ὀδύς (637), and kept on sailing (note iterative πλώξεως) because he lacked livelihood (βίου κεχρηματίους ἐσόλιον, (634), fleeing “evil poverty” (καυχή πενίης, 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:

νάσσατο δ' ἔγχρις Ἐλικόνος διζηρή ἐνι κηρη,
 Ἀσκρης, χεῖμα κηρη, θέρει ἄργυλέζη, οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐσόλη.

Commentators frequently point out that Ascura, 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 Ascura as he was in Kyume. 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 ὑπάτον “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

testimony in the ship (μῆλ' ἐν νηρών καλλοντα βίου καλλοντα τιμουθα, 689), but to leave behind the greater amount (ἀλλὰ πλῆκτον, τὸ δ' μίνα φυμένοθα, 690). The sailor who ensures against a total material disaster at sea by staking only a moderate amount of ὑπάτος 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 ἀθενος is his poetic material).

22 E. g., P. Wallace, “Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses,” GRBS 15 (1974) 8. R. Lamberton (Hesiod [New Haven, 1988] 29–30) points out that in midsummer Ascura can in fact be an awful place, but Hesiod’s strong exaggeration (οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐσόλη) 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 Theogony, 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 Nauhilia, nineteen lines apart, in the reference to Hesiod’s father (639) and in the sphyrgis (658), which almost certainly echoes Th. 23.
conditions. In line 641 Hesiod abruptly turns from his father’s hard lot at Ascria to general advice for Perses: τύνη δ’, ὥ Πέρση, ἑγγόνον μεμνημένος ἐξαι / ὅρατον πάντων, περι κυατιζής δὲ μυλίσσα. The direct contrast (τύνη 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 ὑφαίστον. Hesiod’s success, however, where his father had failed, at Heliconian Ascria (658–59), highlights his own adherence to τὸ ὑφαίστον 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 ὑφαίστον. 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 ὑφαίστον 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 ὑφαίστον.

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 ἕγγον 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):

ἣ τε καὶ ἀπαλειμένον περ ἰμός ἐπὶ ἔγγον ἐγέρσεν.
εἰς ἔρεν γερ τὶς τε ἐδῶν ἑγγόνο χιτίζων
πλοῦσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἑρῴμεναι ἕκε χιτίζειν
οἶκον τ’ ἐν θέσθη, ζηλοί δὲ τε γεῖτων γείτων
ἐν ἀφένος σπεύδωντ’ ἀληθή δ’ Ἕρις ἤδε βραδύσαιν.
καὶ κεραμεῖς κεραμεῖ κατέει καὶ τέκτων τέκτων.
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἄδικος ἄδικον.

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 (New York 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 doidia 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 quia singer casts himself as a beggar of sorts. 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.”

When poverty in the Nautilia 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 bios. This special time of relaxation is introduced in line 582:

\[
\text{ήμος δὲ σκυλλιμός τ’ ἀνθεὶ καὶ ἤχετι τέττις}
\text{δενδρέω ἐφεζομένος λειψηῆν καταμενεῖ \\ διόδην}
\text{πυκνὸν ὑπὸ πτερύγων θέρεος καματίδεος ὑψη.}
\]

\[
\text{ἐπὶ δ’ ἄθλωσι πινέμεν οἶνων}
\text{ἐν σκηι ἐξομένων, κεχοριμένων ἡπορ ἑδωμῆς,}
\text{ἀντίν ἄντρεισι Ζεφῖροι τρέψεωι πρόσωποι}
\text{χρήσης δ’ ὀλευόντι καὶ ἀπορρήτων, ἡ τ’ ἀθόλοις,}
\text{τρίς ἦδους προχέτωι, τὸ δὲ τέτριων ἡμεῖν οἶνοι.}
\]

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 doidia 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 Iros 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., Theognis 351–53, 649 52, 688; 70; Hipponax 42–441Dg; Aristoph. Aves 931–35, Crates, Suppl. Hell. 539.3–4, Matron, 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 Nautilia. 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 ypogéia 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 bios (ἄθρως, ἀβίως, etc.) and the ability to sing.
to apply the word ἀινή 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 Thɛγονί and in the opening line of Works and Days, and Hesiod’s audience would no doubt have known its programmatic significance in the hexameter tradition.

That the image of an ἡχή τεττεῖχε pouring out its λαγνη άινη must be seen as an ainos emerges clearly when it is juxtaposed with the autobiographical verse that occurs in the Nautilus at line 659. There the Muses set Hesiod on the path of “clear, sweet song” (Εὖ θώ με τὸ πρώτον λαγνη οπήματος άινης); the same adjective and noun occur in the same metrical position in the phrase applying to the cicada (λαγνη καταρχήματος άινης). Five lines later a virtual repetition of the second hemistich of 584 recalls the cicada passage:

εἰς τέλος ἰλλόντος θέρβος, καμιτόδεις ὑρη (664)
pικινίν ὑπὸ πτερήγων θέρβος καμιτόδεις ὑρη. (584)

Moreover, line 664 gives the appropriate time for sailing (cf. 665, ὑμνος . . . πλοῖος) as that very time, described in lines 582–96, when the cicada sings and men relax and turn to esthetic pleasures. 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 sphaigrid. Line 659, with its reference to a λαγνη . . . άινη 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. 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 I.
30. E.g., Iliad. 8.43–45, 62–64.
31. In the self-conscious related ainos of 202–12 (τὸν δ’ οἰνών βασιλείαν ἔχων, ποιεῖν τοῖς ἀνίαις, 202), Hesiod had referred to a nightingale as an άινης (208). This, too, adopts the image of the poet as nightingale in 639, ὡς ἰοντα非常明显 λαγνην ἴππηρ νυμφών. For other references, cf. C. Calame, Akenman (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 summer drinks wine while sitting in the shade (ἐν δ’ άφθονο τεττεῖχεν οἶνῳ ἐπὶ οὐκέτι Εὐρυκρον). Here Εὐρυκρον stands in the same role as (ὁ)Εὐρυκρον 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: ἤν τοῖς γὰρ ἄθυμον ὅμων ἄχων / ἱπτατος, ὅμων δ’ οἴκος θεάματος ἕνων (H. 1.29.30 PFL.)
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 διδύνον / πυκνόν 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 διδύς. Only forty verses later, in the Nautilia, Hesiod gives the following advice about ships: ἕν δ' ἐπ' ἥμεροιν ἐφάρσαν πυκνάσαι τε λίθουσαν / . . . εὑρόδισος στολίζας νηρὸς πτερά πυκνοσφορο (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” (εὑρόδισος—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 (ἀφαιτοῦν . . . πλόου, 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, Theognis speaks of his poetry as giving wings to his addressee, Kynos, and thus bringing them both undying κλέος:

οὐι μὲν ἐγὼ πτέρα' ἔδωκα, σὺν οἷς ἔπ' ἀπείρων πότνον
ποιήμα' καὶ τὴν πάσιν ἀληθινόνισιν
φήμιςς: θυγῆς δὲ καὶ εἰλαστικῆς πετροκήν
ἐν πάσισι, πολλάν κείμενος εἷς στόμασιν,
καὶ σὲ σὺν αὐλικοῖς διηγήσασθαι νέοι ἀνθρώπως
εὑρόδισος ἔματοι καλὰ τε καὶ λεγέντα
φαντασίαν, καὶ ὑπὲρ δυναμής ὑπὸ κείμενοι γαῖς
πολλὰ πολιτικῶν ἐλέγε Ἀδιόμος κλέος,
οὐδέποτε' οὐδὲ θυμὸν ἀπολείπει κλέος, ἀλλὰ μελῆσεις
ἀφθίτον ἀνθρώποις αἰὲν ἔχον ἄνωθυμο
Κύριε, καθ' Ἑλλάδα γὰρ στροφήμενος ἤδ' ἀνά νῆσους
ἐξαθλεῖται περὶ πότνον ἐπ' ἀπειρήσετον,
οὐχ', ἐπὶ πάσιν νύσταινει φήμενοις, ἀλλὰ σε πέμπει
ἀγαλμάτι Μούσασαν δομῆς ύποπτοφάνους.

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, Aristoxenos Quintiullus: 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 λυγοῦσα άουδή, emanating from under its πτέρυγας, 583–84; Hesiod’s initiation into λυγοῦσα άουδή by the Muses, 659). Theognis’s use of ευπόρος with the verb of singing resembles Hesiod’s ευπόρομοι στάλασίας γης πτερά πονταιόρωμο (628). Finally, Theognis connects the “gifts of the Muses” (poetry) and the metaphorical flight over the seas (i.e., Κύρνος travels like a bird), but the diction is that of seafaring (δρονδεντα περον πόντον εξ’ ἄφετεν έτει). 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:

δ’ ελαιρινός πέλεται πλόος ἀνθρώπαισιν ἢμος δὴ το πρῶτον, ὅσον τ’ ἐπιβάλλει κορώνη ἓνος ἐπόμενον, τόσον πέτυλ’ ἀνδρὶ φανηκ’ ἐν κράδι άχροτάτη, τότε δ’ ἐμπιστός ἔστι θάλασσαν ελαιρινός δ’ ὅρος πέλεται πλόος. οὐ μὴν ἔργον αὖθι, οὐ γὰρ ἐμφ θυμώ νεχρομουσίν ἐστὶν ἀμφιπόσες.

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 βαίνει in lines 679 and 681: “when the crow first ‘sets out’ [επιβάλετο] and makes his track . . . then the θάλασσα is ἐμπιστος.” The verb ἐπιβάλει (ἐπήθεσαν) had just been used transitively in line 659 to describe the Muses “setting Hesiod on the road to sweet song” (same sedes, . . . ἐπήθαν άουδης). Once we have connected the crow’s footstep with the “embarcable sea,” it is easy to suppose that the crow’s footstep 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 [κόμυκες], and Nem. 3.82 [κολονία]), that ἐμπρόσθεν refers to the activity of composing poetry, and that the ἓνος 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, Phdrdr. 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. 3.380–82; cf. also Alcman fr. 90, 91, 140 Calame (= PMG ltr. 26, 39, 40).
39. Note also Theognis 969–70, where the poet speaks of himself metaphorically as a ship: ἐσθήναν αύγαμα πρὸς τοῦ κατὰ πάντα πάντα βαμμα / ἐσθίεσα νὰ δ’ ἐμπ θυμίζει ἕκας δῆλον.
40. ἐμπιστος is also commonly used of setting out to sea; cf. J. Péron, Les images maritimes de Pindare (Paris, 1974) 39–43.
In line 747, the crow appears again in a different, but equally "folksy" and enigmatic context:

μηδὲ δόμον ποιούν ἄνεψεςτον καταλιπέιν,
μή τοι ἐφεζομένη κραξὶς λαυκέρυξε κοιμώθη.

Here his "crowing" is at issue (κραξίς), where it is implied that it brings bad luck. The detail there of the crow "sitting down" on the roof (ἐφεζομένη) recalls the cicada passage (ἡχέτα τέτηξ/δενδρόφ εφεζομενος), where that creature, we concluded, represents the Hesiodic poet. The cicada was "resonant" and "sweet-sounding" (ἡχέτα... λευρῆν καταξεύετε θαυμάς); the crow, by contrast, "screeching" (λαυκέρυξα). We may note also that line 746 warns that the one who makes (ποιοῦν) a house should not leave it "unpolished." The participle ποιοῦν in conjunction with ἄνεψεςτον, "leaving (something made/composed) Unpolished" may very well function as an injunction against a certain poetic esthetic that Hesiod eschews. Some may find it difficult to believe that an aimos 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:

εἰρμινός δ’ οὖτος πέλεται πλοίος. οὗ μὲν ἔργῳ
ἀνήρι. οὗ γάρ ἐπὶ ἐπουρ νεκρωμενην κεφαλιν.

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

42. The verb λάκων, from which λακώνια derives, occurs at WD 207, where the hawk insolently addresses the nightingale, δαμινη, τῷ λακώνῳ; Note Alcorn 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: [ηχήνι μὲν ἑταὶ παραγος μὴν ὀν θρόνῳ λακώνια/γλώττῇ. By contrast, when the same chorus speaks of Hagesichora's singing (98–101), her song is that of a swan: φθέγγεται δ’ [. . . ] [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] [. . .]. (The construction of the last strophe is uncertain; alternatively, the chorus may liken itself rather than Hagesichora to a swan: cf. D. Page, Alcoum, The Parthenion [Oxford, 1951] 96; D. Campbell, Greek Lyric Poetry [London, 19672 21]).

43. Though I can find no other passages where ποιοῦν δόμον 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 ἄνεψεςτον occurs nowhere else until the fourth century A.D. (Themistius 322b); its positive form, ἐφερέω, is nearly as rare, but it occurs twice in the vitae of Apollonius Rhodius, where it is used of "polishing" poetry: ἐφερέω κατὰ τὰ ποιηματα (Vitr. A.B Wendel); μὴν ἄτιμα ἐφερέω καὶ ἔφερεσα (Vitr. A.B Wendel). The programmatic notion of "polished" poetry, of course, was dear to the Roman neoteric poets; cf. Catullus 1.2.
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 χάρις, since what Hesiod objects to is the riskiness of sailing, that it must be undertaken at a short and critical period: ἄφαστοσ χαλέπως κε φύοις 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 ξεχωρισμένος suggests that the spring πλόος 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. χαρις. Th. 503, 583; WD 65, 190, 709, 720, 723. Χάρις, Th. 64, 907, 946; WD 73. χαρίζουσα, Th. 580, WD 683; χαριζε, Th. 129, 247, 260.


47. In post-Hesiodic poetry the metaphor was quite common: cf. Theognis 969–71 (above, n. 39); Alcaeus, 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 recusationes: cf. Hor. Carm. 4.15.3; Verg. Ger. 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 ἀνωπόλημος 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.

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