Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod's Works and Days

Ralph M. Rosen
University of Pennsylvania, rrosen@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers

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.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/12
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod's Works and Days

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
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.
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 Ascras 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

I owe thanks to several friends and colleagues for criticism and suggestions at various stages in the composition of this article. Richard Hamilton kindly showed me the final manuscript of his Hesiod monograph when I first began studying the Nautilia, and he offered numerous improvements to an earlier draft of this paper. I have also benefited from the careful readings of my colleague Joseph Farrell. Finally, I thank Carolyn Dewald, one of the editors of Classical Antiquity, and Nancy Felton Rubin, one of the referees, for their generous advice on both substantive and stylistic matters.

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 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 πῶ... ἐπέπλον... ἐλ μὴ ἔξ Εὔβουλον ἐξ Αὐλίδος). The overt contrast between this voyage (a trip made for a poetic performance) and that of the Achaeans on their way to Troy (Αὐλίδος, ἕτοι 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, Ἰ. 16.80–82) 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.
'Αχαιοὶ . . . ἐπειδὴ . . . Τριών ἕξ χαλλιγώνων), 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. 7

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 sphragis, in which Hesiod digresses about his own experience in sailing and his poetic charge from the Muses. 8 Clues within the sphragis 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 sphragis, Hesiod says: δεῖξοι δὴ τοῖς μέτριν πολυφορίσθων θαλάσσησ. 9 West notes that here “μέτριν 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 μέτριη of something was a man who possessed σοφία in that sphere of activity. Solon 13.52, Stesichorus S 89.7f Page, and Theognis 870, 10 in particular, mention μέτρον in conjunction with σοφία. Solon and Theognis, moreover, speak specifically of the poet who knows (poetic) μέτρον. 11 This connection between μέτρον and σοφία makes it all the more unusual that in line 649, after having just claimed that he will discuss the μέτρον of the sea, Hesiod adds that he has, in fact, no σοφία about the subject: οὐτέ τι ναυτιλής σεισοφοριμένος οὐτέ τι νημόν. Nevertheless, Hesiod will proceed to explain the “μέτρον of the sea” (which he has already begun in the first section, 619-40), and it soon becomes apparent that whatever σοφία he possesses about sailing ultimately comes from the Hellenic Muses, in lines 658-60. 12 His claim in lines 648-49 that he will expound on matters requiring σοφία, even though he lacks it, imparts a distinct irony to the passage, and suggests that the σοφία of sailing that he has in mind is not merely a technical skill. In fact, as others have amply demonstrated, σοφία and its cognate forms, though originally associ-

7. We are not told exactly what type of poem Hesiod performed at Chalkis, ἵνα νοθήκην says little about its content (cf. West ad loc., 321) West (321, and Hesiod: Theogony [Oxford, 1966] 41-46) 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 πολυφορίσθων θαλάσσησ, which has distinct associations with the Iliad (occurring there six times).


11. Solon 13.51-52 ἄλλας Ὀλυμπιάδος Μοιραίᾳ πάσα ἡμῶν ἰδεαθεῖσθαι ἤμετρον σοφίας μέτρων ἐπιστήμων. Theognis 870 adopts the role of the poet who “has the measure of σοφία”: μέτρον ἑπονοεῖσθαι

12. Note Bury, PMG 282.23-24, which has σοφίζειμα of the Hellenic Muses as dispensers of poetic knowledge: καὶ τι ἐπιτελήσαμεν σοφίζειμα ἐκ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς μουσῆς ῥάγαθα. In 659 Hesiod uses the same verb as Bury, ἐπιστῆμα, to describe the transmission of this σοφία 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 οὐσοφιτής 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 οὐσία. With the clause beginning εἰ μή in line 651 he reconsiders
his qualifications to speak of sailing, and suggests that perhaps his voyage to
Aulis might count as sufficient οὐσία; syntactically we are still in the same period
that includes his denial of οὐσία. As commentators have often noted, for Hesiod
to claim that such a voyage would give him οὐσία about sailing is absurd; yet this
very absurdity suggests that we are to understand his claim as metaphorical.
Furthermore, Hesiod’s claim to οὐσία in sailing introduces a twelve-line digres-
sion that juxtaposes his own voyage with that of the Homeric Greeks and culmi-
nates 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: τὸσον τοι νηὸν γε πεπεφυμεν πολυγόμφον. The
τὸσον refers specifically to Hesiod’s brief voyage to Euboea, last mentioned in
verse 655. Four intervening lines amplify and describe what happened there: they

Frühgeschichte von ΣΟΦΟΣ und ΣΟΦΗ, Spudasmata 1 (Hildesheim, 1965) 9–15; G. Gianotti, Per
οὐσιφιτός ἐπιθύμητοι τοιοὶ τίπτουν; with G. Nagy, “Theognis and Megara: A Poet’s Vision of His
City,” in Figueira/Nagy 29–30; and Edmunds (above, n. 10) 100–101, who cites appropriately
Theognis 769–72 on the importance of disseminating poetic οὐσία.

χρὴ Μονοσίων θερόποντα καὶ ἄγγιζαν, εἰ τι περισσόν
ἐξετάζῃ, οὐσία μὴ φθάνειν τελθήν.
أنظمة τα μὴ μόνον, τὰ δὲ δεικνύον, ὄλλα δὲ ποιεῖν.
τί οὖν χρήσηται μόνος ἔπισταμενος.

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 ἐπιθυμήν” some things is precisely what
Hesiod claimed to do in 648 (ὅτι... μὴ). The display of Theognis, however, is a function of
his poetic οὐσία, whereas Hesiod offers a display in spite of his lack of οὐσία (649).

The phrase Μονοσίων θερόποντα 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, 1975) 344. All references to Theog. are from M. L.
West, Lambi et Elegi Graeci (Oxford 1978) vol. II.

14. This participle, σοφοφιτής, 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 siphagis) on
the Heliconian Muses as the source of his poetic οὐσία makes a connection with poetry likely for
σοφοφιτής. This interpretation would make σοφοφιτής 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 initiation at Th. 2b. 35 and WD 662, with their emphasis on the
transference 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 ἄμνος, took away the tripod, and dedicated it to the Heliconian Muses (655–60):

Χαλκίδα τ' εἰς ἐπέρημα: τὰ δὲ προπεμφυαμένα πολλά
ἄβλ. ἔθεσαν παίδες μεγαλήτορος: ἐνθά μέ φημι
ἵμνος νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὑπόεινα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μοῦτης Ἐλεάκομενεον ἀνέθηκαν,
ἐνθά με τὸ προτον ληγόρης ἐπέβηκαν δοιοῖς.
tόσον τοι γονὸν γε πεπείρημαι πολύγομφοι.

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 sphyrgis 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: εἶ δὲ σε ναυτικῆς διαπεμφέλου ἵμερος 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 ἵμερος connotes 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 τ' αὐτῆς Χάριτες τε καὶ ἰμερος οὐκ ἔχουν ἐν θαλάσσι. At Theogony 201, Himeros (with Eros) follows closely after Aphrodite. It is, therefore, practically an oxymoron to speak of a ἰμερός (a positive, esthetic concept) for something διαπεμφέλος. Insofar as line 618 marks a new and digressive section of the poem, the expression ἰμερος 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.

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 Hes. PMG 282.17.
17. Hence the Homeric epithet γάλαξ (II. 3.46). Homer frequently uses ἰμερός with γόδα and στόχος, e.g., II. 23.14, 11.89; note also Od. 1.421, ἰμερόν ἐκάθισαν.
18. All the other forms of the word in Hesiod (including Sr. and the fragments) also have a distinct esthetic aspect to them; cf. ἰμιός, Th. 177, ἰμιότης, Th. 8, 104, 359, 919, ἰμιότης, Th. 577. ἰμερός is also frequently associated with specifically erotic desire; cf. Hom. II. 14.328, Pind. O. 1.41, Aesch. PC 649, Soph. Fr 476, Eur. Med. 556.
19. Anesthetic 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:

εἰτ' ἀν ἐπ' ἔμπορόν τρέψας ἄσοφρονα θημόν
βούλησι τι προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμόν ἀπερπέια.

With these verses Hesiod repeats the basic sentiment of line 618 (εἰ δὲν τῶν ναυτικῆς δυσπερφέλου ἱμέρος αῖρει / εἰτ' ἀν . . . ) and rhetorically marks the new section, the sphragis. Subtly, yet smoothly, the notion of ἱμέρος in line 618 merges with the desire to flee χρόνος and λιμός in line 647: these afflictions engender and stimulate one’s ἱμέρος to sail. The paradox arising from this association—the need to flee indigence as the inspiration of an esthetically tinged ἱμέρος—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 ἱμέρος. 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
The peculiar section about Hesiod's father (633–40), which immediately precedes the sphragis, 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] . . . ὀς περ ἢμος τε πατὴρ καὶ σος μέγιν νήπιε Πέρση." Hesiod states explicitly that his father had no ἀφένος, πλούτος, or δῆμος (637), and kept on sailing (note iterative πλούτεοι') because he lacked livelihood (βίου κεφαλημένος ἐπιλοντο, (634), fleeing "evil poverty" (κακὴν πενίην, 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:

νάσσαιτο δ' ἀγχ' Ἐλικονος διζυγη ἐνι καμη,
'Ασκητη, χεῖμι κακη, θερείν ἀργυλέην, οὐδε ποτ' ἐπιλη.

Commentators frequently point out that Ascro, in fact, is hardly the wholly wretched locale that Hesiod would have us believe it to be.22 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.23 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 Ascro as he was in Kyme. When Hesiod mentions that his father chose a place "near Helicon" (639),24 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 ὄρατον "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 ναυὶ ἄπωστο βίου καλημὴ τιθομαι, 689), but to leave behind the greater amount (ἀλλὰ πλῆθο λείπον. το δὲ μίνια φορτιζομαι, 690). The sailor who ensures against a total material disaster at sea by staking only a moderate amount of πλοίον 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 πλοίον is his poetic material).

22 E.g., P. Wallace, "Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses," GRIHS 15 (1974) 8, R. Lamberton (Hesiod [New Haven, 1988] 29–30) points out that in midsummer Ascro can in fact be an awful place, but Hesiod's strong exaggeration (οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐπιλη) is still remarkable. As Lamberton himself notes (31), "Hesiod's carpīng 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 proem of Thūgūn, 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 Nautlix, nineteen lines apart, in the reference to Hesiod's father (639) and in the sphragis (658), which almost certainly echoes Th. 23.
conditions. In line 641 Hesiod abruptly turns from his father’s hard lot at Asca to general advice for Perses: τόνη δ’, ὥ Περση. ἔργον μεμημένος ἐέματ / ὀραίοι τόνη δ’, ἔργα μεμημένος. The direct contrast (τόνη 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 τό ὀραίον. Hesiod’s success, however, where his father had failed, at Heliconian Asca (658–59), highlights his own adherence to τό ὀραίον 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 τό ὀραίον. 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 τό ὀραίον in my own field of ‘work,’ namely song, and it 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 ὀραίον.

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 ἔργον 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 και ἀπάλημιον περ ἓμοιο ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγινεν. εἰς ἔργον γεώ τε ἔργον ἔγινεν τετελέσθην πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρόμενοι ἡδὸν φιλέτειν ὀκὺν τ’ εὖ θέσθην, χείλοι δὲ τε γείτονα γείτον εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδων’. ἡμιήθη δ’ Ερις ἡπὶ βραδινοίσιν. καὶ κεραιμεῖσις κεραιμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτων τέκτων. καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῶ φθονεῖ καὶ ὑποίδος ὑποίδου.

Many have suspected that the collocation of “beggar”-ving 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 (Leiden, 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 Perse to avoid (e.g., WD 394–96); it is hardly an appropriate example of a competitive profession. The professional status of the δοῦλος 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 Nauhtia 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 βιος.28 This special time of relaxation is introduced in line 582:

592

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 δοῦλος 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 42–44Dε, Aristoph. Av. 931–35, Crat. Suppl. Hell. 359.3–4, 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 Nauhtia. 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 υπόθεσις 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 βιος (δήφευς, δήβος, etc.) and the ability to sing
to apply the word οὐκὸς 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 Théognos 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 ἱζῆτα τέτειξ pouring out its λαυρή οὐκὸς must be seen as an ainos 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" (ἐνθά με τὸ προτὸν λαυρὰς ἔσπερμαν οὐκὸς); the same adjective and noun occur in the same metrical position in the phrase applying to the cicada (λαυρὰς καταχτήσας οὐκὸς). Five lines later a virtual repetition of the second hemistich of 584 recalls the cicada passage:

εἰς τέλης ἱζῆτας ἄγαλμας, καματόδες ἄμοις (664)
pικχυν ὡς περίγον ἄγαλμας καματόδες ἄμοι. (584)

Moreover, line 664 gives the appropriate time for sailing (cf. 665, ἄμοις . . . πόλεις) 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 sphaigra. Line 659, with its reference to a λαυρή . . . οὐκὸς 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

30. Cf. e.g., Hom. Od. 8.43, 45, 62–64.
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 δὲ θάλαπα πεντελόμεν άίων / ὠκεν ιδώρων). Here ἱζῆτας stands in the same role as (ἄφο) ἱζητευομαι 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 ἱζῆτας έν άίων / ἱζῆτευομαι, οἵον κ᾿ άίων ἱζητευομαι τοῖς (τι. 1.29, 30 PL.)
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 διώδης/πυκνον ἀπὸ 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 διώδης.35 Only forty verses later, in the Nautilus, Hesiod gives the following advice about ships: νημ δ' ἔπτη' ἡμερῶν ἑρεία πυκνόν τε λίθοιν / . . . εὐχόμεσις στολίνας νηρὸς πτερά ποταμόδορον (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” (εὐχόμεσις—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 πυκνον), for example Hesiodic poetry; wait for the proper time (ὁραίον . . . πλόν, 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 πτερα in the context of poetry. In his quest for Panhellenic acceptance,36 Theognis speaks of his poetry as giving wings to his addressee, Kyros, and thus bringing them both undying θλεος:

οἰοι μὲν ἔγω πτέρων ἔθοικα, σιν οἷς ἐπὶ ἀσπείρων πόντων
ποιησῃ καὶ γῆν πάσην ἀειφίμονον
ἡμίθεος: θυίως δ' καὶ ελλαπήνης πειρόμην
ἐν πάσιν, πολλὸν καίμενον εν στόμησιν,
καὶ σὲ σίν λελίσκοις λευτέρως τεύχος ἄνθρος
εὐχόμεσις ἔμφως καλά τε καὶ λεγέω
θαυμάζει καὶ ὅτιν σνοφρενῆς ἀπὸ κείθεως γινής
μη θεοσοφοῦσις εἰς 'Αίδων δόμοις,
οὐδέποτε οὐδὲ θευνός ἀπολέεις θλεος, ἀλλὰ μελήσεις
ἀπόλυτον ἀνθρώποις αὐλὴν ἔχον δνομι
Κύρη, καὶ Κυρή 'Ελλάδα γυν στροφήμονος ἢ δ' ἀνα νήσους
ἐυθυδέρτης περιὼν πόντων ἐπὶ ἀπεργετόν,
οὖρ, ἐπὶ θυετοῖς ἐφήμενος, ἀλλὰ σὲ πέμψει
ἀγλαία Μούσας δομαί λυπηθείσοντι.

---

35. The adjective πυκνος 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, Aristides Quinianus: On Music (New Haven, 1983) 79 n. 66. Though it seems unlikely that πυκνος 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 λυγυς (241–42) with song to Hesiod’s similar use of the adjective (the cicada with its λυγυρη δοιδη, emanating from under its πτερινης, 583–84; Hesiod’s initiation into λυγυρη δοιδη by the Muses, 659).37 Theognis’s use of ευκοσιωμος with the verb of singing resembles Hesiod’s ευκοσιωμος σπαλιανς γης πτερα ποντοποροκε (628). Finally, Theognis connects the “gifts of the Muses” (poetry) and the metaphorical flight over the seas (i.e., Kyrnos travels like a bird),38 but the diction is that of seafaring (ιχθυοντα περον ποντον επ’ ατρυγετον).39

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:

```
λλος δ’ ελαρινος πελεται πλως ανθρωποις
νμος δη το πρωτον, δοσον τ’ ἐπιβασω κυριων
γινος ἐπιτευκτος, τόσον πεταλ’ ἄνδρι φανη
ἐν κράδη ἄφωτατη, τότε δ’ ἀμβροτος ἔστι θάλασσα
ελαρινος δ’ ουτος πελεται πλως. οι μιν γυογγ
ανημι: ου γαρ ἐμω θυμω κεχαρισμένος ἐστιν
ἀρπακτος.
```

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 μασιν in lines 679 and 681: “when the crow first ‘sets out’ [ἐπιβασω] and makes his track . . . . then the θαλασσα is ἀμβροτος.” The verb ἐπιβασω (ἐπέβασων) had just been used transitively in line 659 to describe the Muses “setting Hesiod on the road to sweet song” (same sedes, . . . ἐπέβασων δοιδη).40 Once we have connected the crow’s footstep with the “embarkable 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 [χορωμες], and Nem. 3.82 [κολοιφο],) that ἐποιης refers to the activity of composing poetry,41 and that the γινις is the poetry itself of the crow-poet.

37. For the association of λυγυς with song, cf. Calame (above, n. 31) 350, on Aiclan 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 Aiclan fr. 90, 91, 140 Calame (= PMG fr. 26, 39, 40).
39. Note also Theognis 969–71, where the poet speaks of himself metaphorically as a ship: ἔφημι γανήμενος πρὸς σκηνα πάντα πάντα παλαμα/ ἰήμα, ουν δ’ ἰημα παλαμα ἔκεις ἐρήμω.
40. ἔμβασων 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:

μηδε δομον ποιουν ανεπεξεστον καταλληλειν,
μη τω εφεξομενη χρωξει λακηφυδα κολυφη.

Here his “crowing” is at issue (κροϊζομαι), where it is implied that it brings bad luck. The detail there of the crow “sitting down” on the roof (εφεξομενη) recalls the cicada passage (χετετα τεττει/δενδρον εφεξομενος), where that creature, we concluded, represents the Hesiodic poet. The cicada was “resonant” and “sweet-sounding” (χετατα...λευκηθη καταχευτη δωδηθη); the crow is, by contrast, “screeching” (λακηφυδα).42 We may note also that line 746 warns that the one who makes (ποιειν) a house should not leave it “unpolished.” The participle ποιον in conjunction with ανεπεξεστον, “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 ainos 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 stated 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:

ελπινος δ’ οιτός πέλτην πλόος. οδ μεν ξωρυχο
αινη’, οδ γαρ ξωρ θυμοχρυσομενος διπλον.

Hesiod does not recommend (lit., “praise”) the springtime voyage, because, he says, it affords his theism no χαρας. West says: “the rest of 683 is padding; the formula ἕτος, το κεχρ., used of people in Homer, is oddly applied to sailing time.”

42. The verb λάκηφω, from which λακηφυδα derives, occurs at WD 207, where the hawk insantly addresses the nightingale, δομονη, τι λάκηφω: 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: κηριην μεν ανατα / πηγανος μπαταν δο λακηφω λακηφυδ/χανε. By contrast, when the same chorus speaks of Hagesichora’s singing (99-101), her song is that of a swan: φλεγγετα δι λακηφωδεν κατατειν ζυγων. (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] 96; I. Campbell, Greek Lyric Poetry [London, 1967] 211).

43. Though I can find no other passages where ποιουν δομον is used metaphorically for someone who composes poetry, we find a similar metaphor, involving τεκτων, attested in the fifth century. Pind. P. 3.113, 6.7-8; I. 3.4; Cratinus fr. 70KA (= Aristoph. Eq. 530). The word ανεπεξεστον occurs nowhere else until the fourth century a.d. (Themistius 322b); its positive form, επεξεστον, is nearly as rare, but it occurs twice in the vitae of Apollonius Rhodios, where it is used of “polishing” poetry: επεξεστον τον ποιητα (Vit. A. Wendel), και των τον επεξεστον και διφθούς (Vit. A. 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: ἄπταπτος χαλέπως καὶ φύγος κακῶν. Yet it is undeniable that all the words with the element -χαρι- in Hesiod embody an esthetic judgment, and we should not dismiss its occurrence in line 683 as awkward padding. Hence οὐχεσθαιμένος suggests that the spring πλούς 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. χαρι−, Th. 503, 583; WD 65, 190, 709, 720, 723. Χάριτες, Th. 64, 907, 946; WD 73.


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 recusationes: cf. Hor. Carm. 4 15.3.4; Verg. Gell. 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’ 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 ἀλυκός 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 scanno tactetur saepe libellus... / non est ingenii cumba gravanda tui. / alter remus aquas alter tibi radat harenas. / tutus eris: medio maxima turbu 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.