

Greek Mythography at Work: The Story of Perseus from Pherecydes to Tzetzes

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AS IS EVIDENT from a variety of media and from the shelves of popular bookshops and research libraries alike, classical myths have appealed to a broad public from time immemorial. In fact, the scholarly study of these myths draws not only upon great poets such as Homer and Ovid, but also upon less-known mythographical writings. Unlike the imaginative creations of poets, the latter treatises approach myths from a non-artistic perspective in an attempt to capture their essential plots. Recently there has been a striking revival of interest in this genre of ancient mythography, resulting in the publication of a number of commented editions and translations.¹ However, as many commentaries are particularly concerned with the elementary identification of the literary sources of the mythographical work, the overall dynamics within this genre are often underestimated. Moreover, rather little attention is paid to the influence of Hellenistic scholarship, the existence of numerous similar collections now lost, and the compilatory technique of mythographers.

This paper aims to illustrate the relevance of such a broader perspective by analysing the Perseus myth as transmitted by various mythographical sources: this inquiry will take us from the fifth-century logographer Pherecydes of Athens to the

¹ For recent publications see R. S. Smith and S. M. Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae. Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology* (Indianapolis/Cambridge 2007) xxvii–xxviii.

imperial mythographer Ps.-Apollodorus—the main surviving Greek representative of the genre² and therefore the starting point of this inquiry³—and the Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes. Thus, this case-study seeks to shed new light on the overall complexity of the mythographical genre in which literary sources, Hellenistic scholarly treatises, and earlier mythographical writings will be shown to be epitomized, modernized, blended, and contaminated continuously. Such a broader perspective contributes also to our understanding of the nature of individual mythographers and their position within this complex mythographical tradition.

1. *From Pherecydes to Ps.-Apollodorus*

When relating the vicissitudes of Perseus, Ps.-Apollodorus⁴ is generally assumed to draw upon the fifth-century logographer

² Cf. A. Diller, “The Text History of the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus,” *TAPA* 66 (1935) 296; Smith-Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus’ Library* xxxii–xxxvii. The *Bibliotheca* by Ps.-Apollodorus (first or second century A.D.) is generally considered the most comprehensive surviving mythographical handbook, tackling almost the whole of mainstream Greek myth and drawing from various excellent sources, including writings that are now lost. In addition, this bulk of information has been arranged pragmatically with all myths discussed fitted into a systematic genealogical framework. Thus, this compendium became a highly important source for the knowledge of Greek mythology and religion, not only for Byzantine commentators (e.g. on Homer’s *Iliad*, on some dialogues by Plato, and on Lycophron’s *Alexandra*), but also for modern scholars.

³ Since Ps.-Apollodorus is likely to have been mostly indirectly acquainted with Greek literature, through intermediary writings such as commented editions, prose summaries, and secondary companions (cf. A. Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* [Oxford 2004] 103), the study of his *ultimate* sources actually results in the study of the sources of these secondary writings on which he greatly relied (cf. A. Söder, *Quellenuntersuchung zum I. Buch der Apollodorschen Bibliothek* [Würzburg 1939] 4). Hence the use of phrases such as ‘Ps.-Apollodorus consulted, drew on, modernized...’ in this paper must be taken with a grain of salt.

⁴ *Bibl.* 2.34–48. The text used here is the most recent edition: M. Papatomopoulos, *Apollodori Bibliotheca post Richardum Wagnerum recognita* (Athens 2010).

Pherecydes of Athens⁵ (fr.10–12 ex schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1091, 4.1515a).⁶ This source identification is convincing, not only by reason of the unique thematic correspondences between both accounts,⁷ but also because of the multiple eye-catching verbal similarities.⁸ However, detailed study of both narratives suggests that Ps.-Apollodorus did not slavishly copy Pherecydes' text, but rather skilfully adapted it to his own age and project—that is, the compilation of a comprehensive survey of Greek myth—by modernizing and abridging the original text. In addition, he is likely to have contaminated Pherecydes' account with yet other sources when developing certain episodes.⁹

First, Ps.-Apollodorus has skilfully adapted his source text to

⁵ Text quoted from R. L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography* I (Oxford 2000). Cf. W. Schmid and O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I.1 (Munich 1929) 710–713; Smith-Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library* xxi. Pherecydes is known to have written ten books of *Historiae* in which the pedigrees of many famous Greek—mostly Attic (e.g. fr.145–155)—heroes are described in a straightforward and lively style. The some 180 surviving fragments in Ionic dialect reveal the logographer's preference for epic sources (esp. Homer and Hesiod) and for the introduction of catalogues (e.g. fr.2) and etymologies (e.g. fr.1). Moreover, Pherecydes is the mythographical authority cited most often by Ps.-Apollodorus (thirteen instances).

⁶ Cf. C. G. Heyne, *Ad Apollodori Bibliothecam observationes* (Göttingen 1803²) 116; Jacoby ad *FGrHist* 3 FF 10–12 (though indirectly); M. van der Valk, "On Apollodori *Bibliotheca*," *REG* 71 (1958) 118; J. C. Carrière and B. Massonnie, *La Bibliothèque d'Apollodore* (Paris 1991) 180; P. Dräger, *Apollodor: Bibliothek. Götter- und Heldensagen* (Düsseldorf/Zurich 2005) 459.

⁷ E.g. Pherec. fr.12 ~ Apollod. 2.46: Dictys is appointed king of the remaining Seriphians.

⁸ E.g. Pherec. fr.10, *χρωμένω δὲ αὐτῷ περὶ ἄρσεως παιδὸς ἔχρησεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν Πυθῳ* ~ Apollod. 2.34, *Ἀκρισίῳ δὲ περὶ παίδων γενέσεως ἀρρένων χρηστηριαζομένω ὁ Πύθιος ἔφη*.

⁹ Van der Valk, *REG* 71 (1958) 114–143: the same working method is evident elsewhere in the *Bibliotheca*, e.g. Apollod. 1.107–109 ~ Pherec. fr. 105 (omission of lively details and implausible elements); Apollod. 2.1 ~ Acus. fr.23a Fowler (contamination with other genealogies); Apollod. 2.113–121 ~ Pherec. fr.16–17 (modernization of the Pherecydean view that the actions of men are guided and prompted by the gods).

the needs of his contemporary public by modernizing various typically archaic features. He has done so in various ways. The lively details that were recorded abundantly in the original have been reduced:¹⁰ for example, when Perseus got possession of the single eye and tooth which the daughters of Phorcus passed to each other in turn, the three maidens are originally said *to have started shouting and to have begged* Perseus to return them (Pherec. fr.11, αἱ δὲ αἰσθανόμεναι βοῶσιν καὶ ἰκετεύουσι τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν καὶ τὸν ὀδόντα ἀποδοῦναι). By contrast, Ps.-Apollodorus records dryly that the Phorcides asked for their single eye and tooth back (2.37, ὡς ἀπήτουν). Another example: after Danaë and Perseus were put in a chest and cast into the sea by Acrisius, the chest is said by Pherecydes to have been *caught in the nets of the Seriphian fisherman* Dictys (fr.10, καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐξέλεικε Δίκτης ὁ Περισθένους, δικτύῳ ἀλιεύων). Ps.-Apollodorus by contrast merely states that the chest was washed ashore on Seriphus (2.35, προσενεχθείσης δὲ τῆς λάρνακος Σερίφῳ).

Second, the development of the plot has commonly been speeded up considerably.¹¹ For example, when Perseus returned from Seriphus in order to see his grandfather Acrisius, he is originally said to *have found nobody at home in Argos*, since Acrisius had fled to Larissa; hence Perseus *left his companions with his mother* and resolved to head for Larissa all alone (Pherec. fr. 12, ἐλθὼν Ἀκρίσιον οὐχ εὕρισκει ἐν Ἄργει ... μὴ καταλαβὼν δὲ αὐτόν, τὴν μὲν Δανάην καταλείπει ... αὐτὸς δὲ ἔβη εἰς Λάρισσαν). By contrast, Ps.-Apollodorus has simply skipped this stopover in Argos (2.47, ἀπολιπὼν Ἄργος εἰς τὴν Πελασγιῶτιν ἐχώρησε γῆν ... παρεγένετο καὶ ὁ Περσεύς).

Finally, the vocabulary has often been adapted to post-classi-

¹⁰ For the typical abundance of lively details in archaic texts and especially Pherecydes see Schmid-Stählin, *Geschichte* 663–666; van der Valk, *REG* 71 (1958) 120–121; P. Dräger, *Argo Pasimelousa: der Argonautenmythos in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* I (Stuttgart 1993) 51.

¹¹ For the slow development of plot typical of archaic texts and especially Pherecydes see Dräger, *Argo Pasimelousa* 52.

cal usage: e.g. Apollod. 2.37 προκαθηγουμένων, first attested in Polyb. 3.6.7; Apollod. 2.40 περιεσπειραμένους, first attested in Diod. 3.3.6. The typically archaic paratactic accumulation of finite verbs has usually been replaced by more concise participial constructions: e.g. Pherec. fr.10, ἐκ τοῦ ὀρόφου χρυσῶ παραπλήσιος ῥεῖ, ἢ δὲ ὑποδέχεται τῷ κόλπῳ· καὶ ἐκφήνας αὐτὸν ὁ Ζεὺς τῇ παιδί μίγνυται ~ Apollod. 2.34, Ζεὺς μεταμορφωθείς εἰς χρυσὸν καὶ διὰ τῆς ὀροφῆς εἰς τοὺς Δανάης εἰσρνεῖς κόλπους συνῆλθεν.¹²

Interestingly, Ps.-Apollodorus can occasionally be shown to have proceeded somewhat negligently while rewriting Pherecydes' text. For instance, after Perseus and Danaë had been washed ashore on Seriphus, Ps.-Apollodorus (2.36) relates that "Polydectes ... was then king of Seriphus and fell in love with Danaë, but could not get access to her, because Perseus was grown to man's estate. So he called together his friends, including Perseus, under the pretext of collecting contributions towards a wedding gift for Hippodamia, daughter of Oenomaus" λέγων ἔρανον συνάγειν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἴπποδαμείας τῆς Οἰνομάου γάμους.¹³ This deceitful pretext requires some explanation, especially since ὁ ἔρανος is used in a rather uncommon way. As LSJ s.v. indicates, the noun refers either to a "meal to which each contributed his share," or to a "loan raised by contributions for the benefit of an individual, bearing no interest, but recoverable." In Ps.-Apollodorus' account, the ἔρανος seems to

¹² Admittedly, Ps.-Apollodorus' text still bears evidence of archaic narrative style (e.g. 2.39, detailed description of Perseus' outfit, cf. Dräger, *Argo Pasimelousa* 51) and sentence connection (e.g. 2.38, αὐτὰι δὲ αἱ νύμφαι: the repetition of nouns and the insertion of demonstrative pronouns as additional connectives, cf. S. Lilja, *On the Style of the Earliest Greek Prose* [Helsinki 1968] 100; 2.47, ἀγωνιζόμενος: a participle in the second clause picks up a verb used in the first for the sake of clarity, cf. Lilja 42), whether this was due to an unwitting imitation of the archaic source or to intentional *sprachliche Archaisierung*.

¹³ Transl. J. G. Frazer, *Apollodorus: The Library* (Loeb 1921) I 155.

resemble the latter fifth-century type of ἔρανος-loan,¹⁴ yet, apart from Ps.-Apollodorus, this meaning is associated with marriage only at [Plut.] *Paroem.* 2.23, Φῶκος γὰρ τὴν θυγατέρα ἔχων ἐπίγαμον ... ἐράνουσιν συνῆγεν ἑστιῶν τοὺς μνηστήρας: just as Phocus was showered with ‘contributions’ or gifts by suitors competing for his daughter’s hand, Polydectes plausibly pretended to be collecting similar contributions or wedding gifts (ἔδνα) in order to persuade Oenomaus to give his daughter Hippodamia in marriage.¹⁵ Schol. Lycoph. *Alex.* 838, which is known to depend upon the *Bibliotheca*,¹⁶ indeed explicitly mentions ἔδνα instead of ἔρανος (πλάττεται ὡς ἔδνων χρεῖαν ἔχει πρὸς γάμον Ἰπποδαμείας τῆς Οἰνομάου).

Why would Ps.-Apollodorus use ὁ ἔρανος instead of the more common and accurate alternative τὰ ἔδνα? The answer may be supplied by considering his relationship to Pherecydes: according to the archaic mythographer (fr.11), Polydectes invited numerous friends for an ἔρανος, i.e. a sumptuous banquet to which each guest was expected to contribute. Curiously, the guests were not expected to bring food to contribute to the feast, but presents for the host of the banquet (cf. schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.72a and 12.25a). It seems, then, that Ps.-Apollodorus has adopted the banquet and specifically the noun ὁ ἔρανος from his main source, but introduced them somewhat clumsily in his own text because, having altered the Pherecydean account by introducing Hippodamia, he consequently had to use

¹⁴ I. Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* (Munich/Leipzig 2006) 122, also attributes this particular meaning to ἔρανος in the Ps.-Apollodoran context.

¹⁵ Cf. W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (London 1968) 41: in Homeric society suitors were expected to offer gifts when they came to sue for a chieftain’s daughter in order to take her to their own house. In addition, suitors were often said to be competing with gifts (e.g. *Od.* 6.158–159; Apollon. Soph. *Lex.* 62.16 Bekker; Quint. Smyrn. 1.727–728; schol. *Il.* 13.366a).

¹⁶ Cf. Diller, *TAPA* 66 (1935) 304: when writing his commentary on the *Alexandra*, John Tzetzes often mined the *Bibliotheca*.

the noun in an unusual and less appropriate sense than had his source.

Similar awkward adaptation has likewise obscured the phrasing of Perseus' contribution to these wedding gifts and has puzzled many commentators and translators (Apollod. 2.36, τοῦ δὲ Περσέως εἰπόντος καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ τῆς Γοργόνας οὐκ ἀντερεῖν).¹⁷ An expression of the type ἀντερῶ ἐπὶ τινι is not recorded in other extant sources; the phrase ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ, moreover, seems to be used exclusively in the literal and local sense (e.g. Hdt. 5.12, Xen. *An.* 2.5.23, Pl. *Symp.* 212E). Despite these oddities, Heyne seems to have elucidated this *locus obscurissimus* plausibly: ἐπὶ + dative can express the condition upon which a thing is done (*hac condicione proposita*; cf. LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.III.3). Hence this highly succinct clause may be interpreted as follows:¹⁸ Perseus took an oath that he would not speak against Polydectes (οὐκ ἀντερεῖν), viz. that he agreed to contribute to the wedding gifts for Hippodamia, even if (καὶ) this commitment would imply (ἐπὶ) that he would have to accomplish a seemingly impossible task, to fetch the Gorgon's head (τῇ κεφαλῇ τῆς Γοργόνας). This explanation is assured if we assume that Ps.-Apollodorus' phrasing has been influenced by Pherecydes (fr.11), as in his use of ὁ ἔρανος: since each guest was expected to contribute to the banquet by bringing presents for the host Polydectes, Perseus asked the latter what contribution was demanded from him (Περσέως δὲ πυθομένου, ἐπὶ τίνι ὁ ἔρανος εὐωχεῖται). Polydectes answered that he wished to receive a horse (τοῦ δὲ φήσαντος ἐπὶ ἵππῳ), but Perseus hyperbolically swore to fetch the Gorgon's head (Περσεὺς εἶπεν ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς Γοργόνας κεφαλῇ). Evidently, Ps.-Apollodorus has again adopted something from his main source (the phrase ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ τῆς Γοργόνας), but failed to adjust it for its new

¹⁷ E.g. C. G. Heyne, *Apollodori Atheniensis Bibliothecae libri tres et fragmenta* (Göttingen 1803²) 136; Frazer, *Apollodorus* I 155; Dräger, *Apollodor* 87.

¹⁸ T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore/London 1993) I 303.

context, in this case the use of a different verb in his abridged version.

Besides modernizing and abridging the original account, Ps.-Apollodorus can be shown to have contaminated Pherecydes' version with yet other sources. For instance, after Perseus had overcome the horrific sea monster which was about to devour Andromeda, he returned to the island of Seriphus in order to take revenge on Polydectes: by showing Medusa's head, he petrified the Seriphian king and all other spectators. The exact circumstances of this petrification have been recorded variously. First, Pherec. fr.11 has it that Perseus ordered Polydectes to assemble his subjects in order to adduce proof of his successful quest for the Gorgon's head: once all islanders were impatiently awaiting the unveiling of the cut-off head, Perseus revealed it with averted eyes and turned all the Seriphians, including their king Polydectes, to stone. Second, Apollod. 2.45 states that Perseus surprised Polydectes and his friends in the royal palace (cf. schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.72a): he was furious because his mother Danaë and Dictys had been compelled to take refuge at an altar on account of Polydectes' violence, and therefore petrified all those present (cf. schol. Lycoph. *Alex.* 838). Third, Hyg. *Fab.* 64 states that Polydectes tried to kill Perseus by treachery after his return from the Gorgons, since he feared the latter's courage. Perseus, however, discovered this plot and turned Polydectes to stone by showing him the Gorgon's head.

Evidently, Ps.-Apollodorus has temporarily exchanged his main source Pherecydes for some other author. Although he does not acknowledge the source from which this episode derives, one might conjecture that the flight of Danaë and Dictys to an altar has been borrowed from a now-lost tragedy, e.g. Aeschylus' Πολυδέκτης (*TrGF* III p.302) or, more plausibly,¹⁹ Euripides' Δίκτης (*TrGF* V.1 330b–348) in which Perseus'

¹⁹ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 126: Aeschylus' play is likely to have been lost since the fourth century B.C.

revenge on Polydectes was staged. Certainly, the solemn ritual of ἱκετεία at the altar of a god is the centre-piece of many Euripidean plays (e.g. *Heracl.*, *Supp.*, *Andr.*, *HF*, *Hel.*). This motif was usually introduced by the tragedian himself and was extraneous to earlier mythographical tradition.²⁰

Curiously, Ps.-Apollodorus fails to mention the name of the god at whose altar Danaë and Dictys took refuge. However, the cult-statue of the god Poseidon is clearly depicted on an Apulian red-figure volute-crater (370/360 B.C.), which probably reflects the main themes of the Euripidean play *Dictys*.²¹ As it happens, the same episode is recounted in a second-century papyrus remnant of Theon's commentary on Pindar's *Pythian Odes* (*P.Oxy.* XXXI 2536): like Ps.-Apollodorus, the papyrus details that Danaë, when Polydectes was trying to violate her, fled for refuge to an altar (col. i.5–7): βιαζομένης γ(ὰρ) τῆς Δα[νάης ὑπὸ τοῦ Πολυδ]έκτου συνέβη αὐτὴν κατα[φυγεῖν πρὸ]ς τὸν βωμὸν τοῦ (*blank space*). Plausibly, the scribe of the papyrus could not read the name of the deity and left a blank space.²² From this we might hypothesize that the Ps.-Apollodoran paragraph is somehow related to Theon's commentary: most probably, Ps.-Apollodorus and Theon ultimately depended upon a common source, for instance a tragic *hypothesis* of the Euripidean play.²³ As noted, the mythographer is gen-

²⁰ H. Strohm, *Euripides: Interpretationen zur dramatischen Form* (Munich 1957) 17; J. Gould, "Hiketia," *JHS* 93 (1973) 85–90; M. Treu, "Theons Pindarkommentar (Pap. Oxy. 2536)," in J. L. Heller and J. K. Newman (eds.), *Serta Turyniana* (Urbana 1974) 70–71; Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 160.

²¹ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 155–156.

²² So E. G. Turner, *P.Oxy.* XXXI p.21. However, the deity must have been male (τοῦ), making Poseidon a possibility.

²³ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 161: Ps.-Apollodorus' text presents certain stylistic features shared by the *hypotheses* of Euripidean plays, for instance the use of the participle παραγενόμενος (2.45) to indicate the first entrance of a hero on stage, the accumulation of participles, and the possibly theatrical nuance of καταλαβόν and εἰσελθόν (2.45). For this reason, Ps.-Apollodorus is more likely to be closely related to a Euripidean

erally assumed to have known ancient literature primarily indirectly, through intermediary writings, such as commented editions, prose summaries, and similar compendia (see n.3 above). Similarly, the Augustan commentator Theon is likely to have derived his mythological material from learned monographs on the poets and from earlier mythographical treatises or closely related writings, such as collections of Euripidean *hypotheses*.²⁴

2. *From Ps.-Apollodorus to Tzetzes*

Given its comprehensiveness and pragmatic genealogical arrangement, the *Bibliotheca* may have appealed to a wide readership, ranging from students who sought access to the cultural inheritance of earlier Greek literature to educated persons who needed a handy guidebook and even professional educators who required a basic overview of Greek myth to answer questions quickly and help prepare lectures.²⁵ By the Middle Ages the handbook had become an authoritative reference work, at least in part because so many similar treatises had been lost, and it was frequently mined by scholars to produce explanatory notes to various texts (e.g. dialogues of Plato, Lycophron's *Alexandra*, and the parodic epic *Batrachomyomachia*) and to flesh out their own writings (e.g. paroemiographical explanations by the *interpolator Zenobii* and Pediasimus' treatise on the twelve labours of Heracles).²⁶

As regards the myth of Perseus, Ps.-Apollodorus' account

hypothesis rather than depending upon Theon's commentary directly.

²⁴ C. Wendel, "Mythographie," *RE* 16 (1935) 1362–1364; Cameron, *Greek Mythography* 105.

²⁵ Disagreement still exists concerning the audience for whom the *Bibliotheca* was designed. For an up-to-date *status quaestionis* see Smith-Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library* xxx–xxxii.

²⁶ For an overview of the text history of Ps.-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* see Diller, *TAPA* 66 (1935) 296–313.

inspired a number of Byzantine scholars.²⁷ First, the so-called *interpolator Zenobii* supplemented the explanation of the proverb Ἄϊδος κυνῆ (1.41), which appeared in the second-century collection of Zenobius, with a ἱστορία taken without citation from the *Bibliotheca* (2.34–42, 45–47). This ἱστορία is interpolated after (1) the explanation of the proverb and (2) the original succinct paraphrase of the myth alluded to, and (3) is introduced by a transitional clause.²⁸ Second, Ps.-Apollodorus' account of the Perseus myth (2.34–49) is used extensively, again anonymously, by the twelfth-century scholar John Tzetzes when explaining the abstruse mythological allusion to Perseus in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron (838 τὸν χρυσόπατρον). Third, an abridgement of Ps.-Apollodorus' account (2.34–47) is included in the *Epitome Vaticana*, a collection of anonymous excerpts from the *Bibliotheca*, again most probably by John Tzetzes. This abridged version was discovered only in 1885 by Richard Wagner in a fourteenth-century Vatican manuscript (*Vat.gr.* 950). The summary of the Perseus myth is one of several independent passages beginning with ὅτι, usually following the order of the full text.²⁹

Just as Ps.-Apollodorus refrained from transcribing his main source Pherecydes slavishly, these Byzantine scholars can be

²⁷ The *Epitome Vaticana* is here quoted from R. Wagner, *Epitome Vaticana ex Apollodori Bibliotheca* (Leipzig 1891), the paroemiographical explanations of the *interpolator Zenobii* from E. L. Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, *Corpus paroemiographorum Graecorum I* (Hildesheim 1839), and Tzetzes' commentary on Lycophron from E. Scheer, *Lycophronis Alexandra II* (Berlin 1958).

²⁸ (1) πρὸς τοὺς ἐπικρύπτοντας ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τινῶν μηχανημάτων (“[said] of those who know to disguise themselves by subtle contrivance”). (2) τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ τοῦ Ἄϊδου κυνῆ, ἣ Περσεὺς χρησάμενος τὴν Γοργόνα ἐδειροτόμησεν. (3) ἡ δὲ ἱστορία ἔχει οὕτως... For the compilatory technique of the *interpolator Zenobii* see G. Dobesch, “Die Interpolationen aus Apollodors *Bibliotheke* in der Sprichwörterammlung des Pseudo-Zenobios,” *WS* 78 (1965) 58–82.

²⁹ For a detailed description of the *Epitome Vaticana* see Wagner, *Epitome Vaticana* 134–150.

shown to have skilfully adapted the *Bibliotheca* to their own project and age by abridging, annotating, and modernizing the original text. In addition, they have likewise contaminated Ps.-Apollodorus' account with other sources when elaborating on certain details.

First, when fitting Ps.-Apollodorus' account into their own writing, they tended to abridge by omitting less relevant details and even entire episodes. Especially source references, variant versions, and catalogues of names were frequently deleted. For example, the *interpolator Zenobii* has left out the variant version according to which Danaë was seduced by her uncle Proetus instead of by Zeus (Apollod. 2.34). Obviously, he did not require all details included in the *Bibliotheca* to explain the proverb in question. In addition, these Byzantines often resorted to paraphrase in order to abridge their source: for instance, the *epitomator Vaticanus* has aptly summarized the beheading of Medusa and the subsequent rescue of Andromeda (Apollod. 2.36–46) in a single clause (p.23, ὕστερον δὲ μετὰ τὸ τὴν Γοργὸν Μέδουσαν κατατομήσαι καὶ Ἀνδρομέδαν ἀγαγέσθαι γυναῖκα).

Second, in order to meet the needs of the contemporary public the original account was frequently supplemented with explanatory remarks, all the more so in that the original context of the *Bibliotheca* was lacking. For instance, the *interpolator Zenobii* has added the specification that Danaë and Perseus were washed ashore on the *island* of Seriphus (προσενεχθείσης δὲ τῆς λάρνακος ἐν Σερίφῳ νήσῳ; cf. Apollod. 2.35), while Tzetzes ad Lycoph. *Alex.* 838 details that Perseus' son Perses was left with his *grandfather* Cepheus in Ethiopia (τοῦ ἑτέρου υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Πέρσου καταλειφθέντος, ὡς εἶπομεν, ἐν Αἰθιοπία παρὰ τῷ πάπῳ Κηφεῖ; cf. Apollod. 2.49). In addition, the language was often adapted to Byzantine usage: for example, Tzetzes ad Lycoph. *Alex.* 838 has frequently interspersed Ps.-Apollodorus' original phrasing with Byzantine idiom (e.g. ἐπιστήθιος, cf. Ant. Mon. *Hom.* 112.99; Joh. Dam. *Imag.* 1.19.18), alternative constructions (e.g. πρὸς τὸ μέσον τῆς ἰδίας ἀσπίδος for ἐν μέσῃ τῇ ἀσπίδι, Apollod. 2.46), and uncommon

synonyms (e.g. ἀνέπηξεν for ἐνέθηκε, Apollod. 2.46).

Most interestingly, these later excerptors were still able to consult some good manuscripts now lost. Accordingly, they have sometimes preserved the correct reading when all surviving manuscripts of the *Bibliotheca* are in error.³⁰ For instance, when Acrisius consulted the oracle about the birth of male descendants (Apollod. 2.34), ominous prophecies were delivered either by ὁ θεός (MS. O, rec. Wagner) or by ὁ Πύθιος (*Epit. Vat.*, rec. Papathomopoulos). Alluding to this passage, M. van Rossum-Steenbeek states that the *epitomator Vaticanus* sometimes added names or explications to the original text:³¹ proper names, for instance, are said to be inserted instead of αὐτός or θεός. Admittedly, when referring to the Delphic oracle, Ps.-Apollodorus commonly prefers the noun ὁ θεός (e.g. 1.84, 1.107, 3.21, 3.48, 3.203) instead of a proper name (e.g. 2.73, 2.103, 3.207). At first sight, the reading ὁ Πύθιος may thus well be considered an explanatory remark, introduced by the *epitomator Vaticanus* himself for the sake of clarity. However, when skimming Ps.-Apollodorus' text, one finds that the frequent θεός is replaced only twice by some proper name in the *Epitome Vaticana*, that is in *Bibl.* 2.82 (*Epit. Vat.* p.27, τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος, for *Bibl.* 2.82, τῆς θεοῦ) and in this prophecy to Acrisius. Furthermore, Ps.-Apollodorus' main source for the Perseus myth similarly wrote ὁ θεός ἐν Πυθοῖ (Pherec. fr.10). Consequently, the *epitomator* has probably copied the reading Πύθιος correctly from older manuscripts which are now lost, whereas the variant reading θεός is merely a simplification of the original text, introduced by later scribes in order to

³⁰ This valuable contribution of the parallel transmission to the textual criticism of the *Bibliotheca* has been amply illustrated by e.g. R. Wagner, "Ein Excerpt aus Apollodors Bibliothek," *RhM* 41 (1886) 137, in connection with the *Epitome Vaticana*, and by Dobesch, *WS* 78 (1965) 81–82, with regard to the *interpolator Zenobii*.

³¹ M. van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests? Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri* (Leiden 1998) 167.

harmonize the linguistic usage of Ps.-Apollodorus who commonly referred to the Pythian god by the common noun θεός.

Finally, the Byzantine scholars can be shown to have contaminated Ps.-Apollodorus' account with other sources. For example, although Ps.-Apollodorus speaks of three daughters of Phorcus (2.37, Ἐνυὸ καὶ Πεφρηδὼ καὶ Δεινῶ),³² Tzetzes mentions only two (schol. Lycoph. *Alex.* 838, τὴν τε Πεφριδὼ καὶ τὴν Ἐνυῶ).³³ The Byzantine commentator may have adopted this anomalous detail from Hesiod who first recorded this version (*Theog.* 273, Πεμφρηδὼ τ' εὐπεπλον Ἐνυῶ τε κροκόπεπλον), since he is known to have written a commentary on the *Theogony*.³⁴ Moreover, one can observe that, although Ps.-Apollodorus follows his main source Pherecydes by referring to *three* Phorcides (Pherec. fr.11, Πεμφρηδὼ καὶ Ἐνυὸ καὶ Δεινῶ), his phrasing of Perseus' encounter with the Phorcides seems to be rather influenced by Hesiod.³⁵ Hence, inspired by this Hesiodic reminiscence, Tzetzes may have turned to the original writings of Hesiod and adopted this divergent detail from the archaic poet in order to bring it into the Ps.-Apollodoran framework.³⁶

3. *A step back in time: the Homeric D-scholía*

Besides the various Byzantine commentaries and literary writings already referred to, the *Bibliotheca* seems to have an intriguing connection with the Homeric D-scholía.³⁷ These

³² Cf. Heraclit. *Incred.* 13; schol. Aesch. *PV* 793a; Hyg. praef. 9.

³³ However, Tzetzes' overall dependence upon the *Bibliotheca* is evident from numerous verbal and thematic correspondences between their accounts.

³⁴ H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978) II 61.

³⁵ Hes. *Theog.* 270–271 (Φόρκυι δ' αἶ Κητῶ γραΐας τέκε καλλιπαρήους | ἐκ γενετῆς πολιᾶς) ~ Apollod. 2.37 (γραΐαι ἐκ γενετῆς).

³⁶ Hesiod is indeed often quoted by Tzetzes when commenting upon Lycophron (e.g. ad *Alex.* 286, 794, 839).

³⁷ Quoted here from the most recent online edition by H. van Thiel,

scholia—named unfortunately for Didymus of Alexandria (I B.C.) with whom they are now known to have no connection—constitute the largest group of Homeric scholia: they contain a heterogeneous variety of explanatory comments, ranging from elementary lexicographical notes through scholarly exegetical comments to lengthier paraphrases, plot summaries, and mythological explanations called ἱστορίαι. Importantly, much of the material in this collection is very old: not only are the chief witnesses for these scholia older than for the other types of scholia, but also the origins of this collection go back far beyond the medieval manuscripts, as is evident from the similarities between these scholia and Homeric scholarship found on papyri. For instance, and most important for our purpose, a considerable number of mythographical ἱστορίαι not only were transmitted in the medieval manuscripts, but also have their counterparts in papyri dating from the first or second to the fifth century.³⁸ In fact, it is commonly held that the two sets of ἱστορίαι represent two different stages in the transmission of a now lost independent and systematic mythological commentary on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, probably compiled around the end of the first century A.D., that related the full versions of the myths alluded to in the Homeric poems. Obviously, the papyrus fragments mirror the original make-up of this commentary, for which its unknown compiler, called *Mythographus Homericus*, may have consulted several excellent sources, possibly Alexandrian scholarly commentaries. In the following centuries, the original collection was supplemented with ἱστορίαι of varied origin and incorporated into the D-scholia.³⁹

Scholia D in Iliadem (Cologne 2000), at <http://ifa.phil-fak.unikoeln.de/6191.html?&L=10>.

³⁸ These papyri are collected in van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?* 278–309.

³⁹ This overview is based on F. Montanari, “The Mythographus Homericus,” in J. G. J. Abbenes et al. (eds.), *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle. A Collection of Papers in Honour of D. M. Schenkeveld* (Amsterdam 1995) 135–172; van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?* 85–118; van Thiel, *Scholia D* 2–3;

The brief mythological accounts called *ιστορίαι*, as preserved on papyrus as well as in the manuscripts of the Homeric D-scholia, aptly summarize a given myth, omitting all variants. The narratives are often followed by a subscription attributing the content of the narrative to some authority, such as Hesiod (e.g. schol. *Il.* 2.336), Pherecydes (schol. *Il.* 6.153), Euripides (schol. *Il.* 14.323a), Callimachus (schol. *Il.* 18.487), and a certain Ἀπολλόδωρος (schol. *Il.* 1.42, 2.103, 2.494). A number of these *ιστορίαι* have close verbal agreements with passages in the *Bibliotheca* (e.g. schol. *Il.* 2.103 ~ Apollod. 2.5–8; schol. *Il.* 2.494 ~ Apollod. 3.21–23). The origin of these scholia, and especially the interpretation of the subscriptions, has been hotly debated:⁴⁰ recent research argues that the subscriptions are simply transcribed from earlier intermediary compendia, the original sources not only unverified but probably also unseen.⁴¹ Further, all references to Ἀπολλόδωρος in the D-scholia are held to refer to the Hellenistic scholar Apollodorus of Athens (II B.C.) and the undeniable verbal similarities between the D-scholia and the *Bibliotheca* are explained by their dependence upon a common source.⁴²

In order to illustrate this indirect relationship between the *Bibliotheca* and the D-scholia, one can study the case of schol. *Il.* 14.319 relating the captivity of Danaë in an underground chamber, her impregnation by the golden shower of Zeus, and finally her exposure in the floating chest. Although the scholion is verbally nearly identical to Ps.-Apollodorus' account (2.34–35), the Homeric commentator attributes a variant version, according to which Danaë was seduced by her uncle Proetus,

E. Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship. A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises* (Oxford 2007) 20, 26.

⁴⁰ E.g. E. Schwartz, "De scholiis Homericis ad historiam fabularem pertinentibus," *Jahrbuch für classische Philologie* 12 (1881) 405–463; Diller, *TAPA* 66 (1935) 297–300; Cameron, *Greek Mythography* 97–106.

⁴¹ Cameron, *Greek Mythography* 104–106.

⁴² Diller, *TAPA* 66 (1935) 298; Cameron, *Greek Mythography* 98.

to Πίνδαρος καὶ ἕτεροι τινές. By contrast, Ps.-Apollodorus (2.34) refers vaguely only to ἔνιοι. Cameron has argued that such divergences within two otherwise identical narratives are to be explained by their dependence upon a common source.⁴³

For the source of the variant Proetus version, the poems of Pindar can be left out of consideration, in spite of the explicit reference to him by the scholiast: the standard version is always what Pindar evokes in his surviving poems, once explicitly mentioning the shower of gold (e.g. *Pyth.* 12.17, *Nem.* 10.11).⁴⁴ By contrast, this rationalizing version⁴⁵ is more likely to derive ultimately from tragedy, especially from Euripides' fragmentary *Δανάη* (*TrGF* V.1 316–330a).⁴⁶ This play staged the oracle that led Acrisius to imprison Danaë in an underground chamber, Zeus' transformation into a shower of gold, and the exposure of Danaë and Perseus in the floating chest.⁴⁷

Since Ps.-Apollodorus is generally assumed to have been acquainted with early literature primarily indirectly, he may have rather depended upon a *hypothesis* of the Euripidean play. His formulation of Danaë's impregnation by the golden shower of Zeus indeed bears verbal resemblance⁴⁸ to the extant manu-

⁴³ Cameron, *Greek Mythography* 99, against the hypothesis of van der Valk (*REG* 71 [1958] 119–120) that the scholiast himself added the reference to Pindar on the basis of his own reading while copying Ps.-Apollodorus' account.

⁴⁴ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 8: although Snell tentatively associated Pind. fr. 70d.14–15 (φύτευε{v} ματρί | [].αν λέχεά τ' ἀνα[γ]καίῃα δολ[]) with this variant version, these verses seem likelier to refer to Danaë's forced cohabitation with Polydectes.

⁴⁵ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 8: “considering that accession to the throne in Heroic Age Greece was often the outcome of marriage to a king's daughter, Danae's rape by her uncle could be explained by an endogamic logic assuring that the power would remain in the hands of a single dynastic group”.

⁴⁶ Contra Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 8.

⁴⁷ Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 22–29.

⁴⁸ M. Huys, “Euripides and the ‘Tales from Euripides’: Sources of Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*?” *RhM* 140 (1997) 322: although Ps.-Apollodorus is

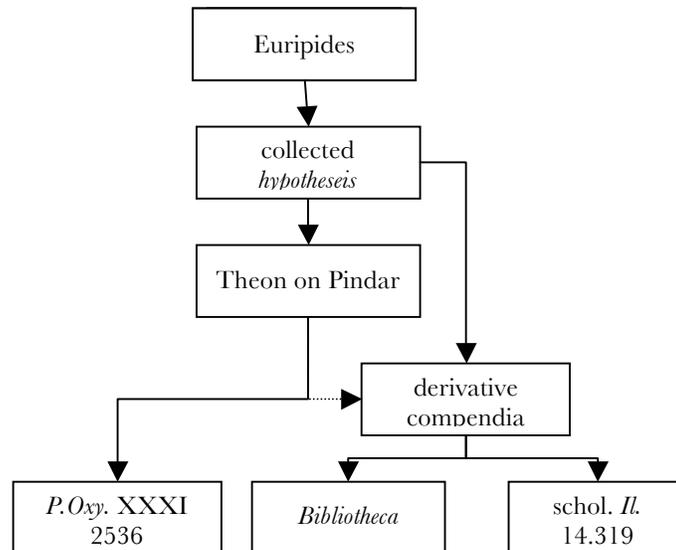
script *hypothesis*.⁴⁹ However, perhaps Ps.-Apollodorus had no direct access to these Hellenistic writings either, but was familiar with their contents via intermediary mythographical companions.⁵⁰ Such an intermediary handbook might well have been the actual common source on which both the *Bibliotheca* and the Homeric scholion depended.

Why then has the Homeric commentator attributed the variant version to Pindar, although it presumably derives ultimately from Euripides? The answer might again be supplied by the second-century papyrus remnant of Theon's commentary on Pindar: the compiler of the common source handbook may have mistakenly attributed the information that he found in the Euripidean *hypothesis* to Pindar because he came across a similarly phrased narrative in the commentary on Pindar's *Pythians* by Theon, who consulted the very same collection of Euripidean *hypotheses* (contamination), as I have demonstrated. When adapting this common source handbook, the Homeric scholiast has simply retained a more detailed, if mistaken, source reference than Ps.-Apollodorus:

shown to have adopted the main outlines of the myth from Pherecydes (fr. 10), the formulation of Danaë's conception by the archaic mythographer—if quoted verbatim in schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1091—is slightly different.

⁴⁹ Apollod. 2.34, Ζεὺς μεταμορφωθείς εἰς χρυσὸν καὶ διὰ τῆς ὀροφῆς εἰς τοὺς Δανάης εἰσρῦεῖς κόλπους συνῆλθεν ~ *hyp.* Danaë, ὁ Ζεὺς ... χρυσὸς γενόμενος καὶ ῥυεῖς διὰ τοῦ τέγους εἰς τὸν κόλπον τῆς παρθένου. Cf. W. Luppe, "Die Hypothesis zu Euripides' 'Danae'," *ZPE* 87 (1991) 3: this manuscript *hypothesis*, preserved in the fourteenth-century *Val. Pal.gr.* 287, is much shorter than the original mythographical *hypotheses*, mainly preserved in papyri. For this reason, there is no objection to the variant Proetus version not being mentioned in this abridged summary. For a full discussion of this *hypothesis* see Karamanou, *Euripides, Danae and Dictys* 47–56.

⁵⁰ Smith-Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library* xxxvi–xxxvii.



4. Conclusion

Through a close reading of the Perseus myth as transmitted by various mythographical sources, this paper has focused upon the actual practices of authorship of the imperial mythographer Ps.-Apollodorus and of some Byzantine scholars excerpting his *Bibliotheca*. It has been demonstrated that Ps.-Apollodorus as well as these Byzantine scholars were part of a continuous tradition in which various literary sources, Hellenistic scholarly treatises, and previous mythographical writings were being abridged, annotated, modernized, and contaminated time and again. In this process, the individual authors were guided by the requirements of their own project, by their attitude towards their predecessors as well as contemporaries, by the changing framework of the contemporary literary context, and by the expectations of their potential readers.

Hence, this case-study may contribute to a more complete and nuanced picture of Greek mythography in general. Most

of the surviving mythographical writings are late—from the first century B.C. or later—and are often viewed as interesting mainly for the light they shed on earlier sources. The present paper, by contrast, has taken a more balanced approach, by acknowledging that ancient mythographical traditions extended well beyond classical antiquity. As a result, Byzantine collections should be treated as having equal importance in formulating a view of the whole genre.⁵¹

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