

Peleus and Acastus' Wife between Nicolaus of Damascus and Aelian

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A SET OF *SUDA* ENTRIES deal with the story of Peleus, Acastus, and the latter's wife. This story involves the so-called Potiphar's wife motif, from the wife of Potiphar who tried to seduce unwilling Joseph (Gen 39:7–23). In the same way, the wife of Acastus tempted Peleus who rejected her, so provoking her reaction: in front of her husband, she falsely accused Peleus of having tried to rape her. In revenge, Acastus plotted against Peleus who managed nonetheless to overthrow him. All these *Suda* entries provide very similar, but not identical, information on the same myth. In particular, they diverge in stating the woman's name, which is, in two different entries, *Atalante* and *Astydamieia*. Their sources can be investigated.

The first *Suda* entry is devoted to *Atalante* (α 4309 [Adler]):

Ἀταλάντη, Ἀκάστου γυνή, ἥτις Πηλέως ἐρασθεῖσα λόγους ὑπὲρ μίξεως εἰσφέρει, ἀναινομένου δὲ δείσασα, μὴ μιν κατεῖποι πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα, ὑποφθάσασα αὐτὸν προσδιαβάλλει τὸν ἄνδρα, ὡς εὐνηθηναί οἱ ἐθέλοντα. ὁ δὲ λόχον ὑφείσας ἐπεβούλευσε Πηλεῖ. καὶ ὅς αἰσθόμενος ἐς πόλεμον κατέστη πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐπικαλεσάμενος βοηθοὺς τοὺς τε Τυνδαρίδας καὶ Ἰάσονα, ἐχθρὸν ὄντα ἐκείνῳ, φίλος αὐτὸς ὦν διὰ τὸ σύμπλους ἐν τῇ Ἀργοί γεγονέναι· καὶ τὴν τε Ἰωλκὸν αἰρεῖ καὶ τὴν Ἀκάστου γυναῖκα σφάττει.

Atalante, the wife of Acastus, who fell in love with Peleus and proposed to him to make love to her. As he rejected her, she was afraid he might accuse her to her husband, so she anticipated him and calumniated him to Acastus, claiming he wanted to seduce her. Having laid an ambush, Acastus plotted against Peleus. When the latter realized it, he waged war against Acastus, sending for both the Tyndarids and Jason, who was hostile to Acastus. Peleus, instead, was a friend of Jason since

they had sailed together on the Argo. Peleus conquered Iolcos and killed Acastus' wife.

This entry clearly depends on Nicolaus of Damascus *FGrHist* 90 F 55, abridged by the Byzantine compiler(s) of the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitis*, with the exception of the name Ἀταλάντη, which is absent from the Nicolaus fragment:¹

ὅτι ἡ Ἀκάστου γυνὴ Πηλέως ἐρασθεῖσα λόγους ὑπὲρ μίξεως εἰσφέρει· ἀναινομένου δὲ δεῖσασα, μὴ μιν κατεῖποι πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα, ὑποφθάσασα αὐτὸν προδιαβάλλει πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα, ὡς εὐνηθηναί οἱ θέλοντα. ὁ δὲ λόχον ὑφείσας ἐπεβούλευσε Πηλεῖ. καὶ ὃς αἰσθόμενος εἰς πόλεμον κατέστη πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐπικαλεσάμενος βοηθοὺς τοὺς τε Τυνδαρίδας καὶ Ἰάσωνα, ἐχθρὸν ὄντα κἀκείνῳ, φίλος αὐτὸς ὢν διὰ τὸ σύμπλους ἐν τῇ Ἀργοῖ γεγενέναι· καὶ τὴν τε Ἰωλκὸν αἰρεῖ καὶ τὴν Ἀκάστου γυναῖκα σφάττει.

Two more entries derive in turn from α 4309 rather than directly from Nicolaus F 55:

α 809: Ἀκαστος. ὁ δὲ Ἀκαστος λόχον ὑφείσας ἐπεβούλευσε τῷ Πηλεῖ. καὶ ὃς αἰσθόμενος ἐς πόλεμον κατέστη. ζῆται ἐν τῷ Ἀταλάντη.

υ 708: ὑφέντες ... καὶ αὐθις· ὁ δὲ Ἀκαστος λόχον ὑφείσας ἐπεβούλευσε τῷ Πηλεῖ. καὶ ὃς αἰσθόμενος ἐς πόλεμον κατέστη.

Atalante as a name for Acastus' wife is transmitted only by *Suda* α 4309. For Jacoby (*ad FGrHist* 90 F 55), the name itself is a mistake, made by the compiler(s) of the Lexicon, in place of the more widespread *Astydamēia*, also attested in the *Suda* (ε 2132).² We may add that such a mistake could have been made

¹ On the derivation of *Suda* α 4309 Ἀταλάντη from Nicolaus F 55 see Adler *in apparatu*. On the relationship of close, and even mechanical, dependence between the historical *lemmata* of the *Suda* and the *Excerpta Constantiniana* see C. de Boor, "Suidas und die Konstantinsche Exzerptsammlung," *BZ* 21 (1912) 381–424, and 23 (1914–1919) 1–127.

² *Astydamēia*: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.164 and 173, also transmitting (3.164) the name *Atalante* for the woman who wrestled with Peleus; schol. Ar. *Nub.* 1063a. *Hippolyte*: Pind. *Nem.* 4.57, 5.26; Hor. *Carm.* 3.7.17; schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.224–226a; schol. Ar. *Nub.* 1063b. *Cretheis* is also attested: Pind. *Nem.*

easier by the presence, in Peleus' story, of the better-known Atalante, the Argonaut who wrestled with him at the funeral games for Pelias at Iolcos.

However, *Atalante* is unlikely to be an error, as is suggested by the fact the compiler(s) of the *Suda* chose not to correct it afterwards: cf. the internal reference to α 4309 found at α 809: Ἄκαστος· ὁ δὲ Ἄκαστος λόχον ὑφήσας ἐπεβούλευσε τῷ Πηλεΐ· καὶ ὃς αἰσθόμενος ἐς πόλεμον κατέστη. ζῆται ἐν τῷ Ἀταλάντη. Nor can *Atalante* be the result of a contamination. In fact, the mechanical dependence of α 4309 on the abridged Nicolaus and the redactional practices of the compiler(s) of the *Suda*, who obviously made mistakes in the transmission of names but did not add foreign elements to the sources on which they drew, allow us to think that Nicolaus himself chose a different name for the wife of Acastus, specifically the rare *Atalante*, perfectly in line with his predilection for rarer versions of the myths he dealt with.³ As we have seen, *Suda* α 4309 depends on Nicolaus F 55, compiled through the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*. It depends however on a different manuscript than the *Turonensis* C 980 which uniquely preserves those *Excerpta*.⁴ This lost manu-

5.26, cf. schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.92a–b; schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.224–226a.

³ For mistakes concerning names see e.g. *Suda* α 4660 (and Ath. 7D), α 3025 (and Nicolaus of Damascus F 13), π 2758 (and Cass. Dio 51.23.51). Cf. A. Favuzzi, “Da Xanto alla Suda e oltre,” *AncSoc* 43 (2013) 255–265, at 258–259, and “False attribuzioni e nuovi riconoscimenti nella Suda,” *AFLB* 51 (2008) 53–61, at 54 and 59. For rarer variants of some myths cf. Nicolaus FF 8, 9, 21, 39; Nikolaos of Damaskos 90 FF 13c*, 13k*, 13l*, 13m*, to appear in Brill's *New Jacoby*.

⁴ So T. Büttner-Wobst, *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* I (Berlin 1906) XXIX–XXXVIII; see also my “Sadyattes and his Niece: a Note on *Suda* α 1423 and α 441,” *Histos* 9 (2015) 111–119, at 113–114. The *Turonensis*, dated to the eleventh century by Büttner-Wobst (XXXI), and to the mid-tenth century by J. Irigoien, “Pour une étude des centres de copie byzantins (suite),” *Scriptorium* 13 (1959) 177–209, at 177–181, has been re-dated to the 970s or 980s by A. Németh, “The Imperial Systematisation of the Past in Constantinople: Constantine VII and his *Historical Excerpts*,” in J. König and G. Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge 2013) 232–258, at 242. The lost MS. must of course date before the *Suda*, which seems to have

script evidently transmitted *Atalante*, which does not appear at f.154^v line 4 of the *Turonensis*—either it has fallen out of the text or it has been intentionally omitted by its copyist. Accordingly, the name of Atalante must be restored, in my opinion, at the head of Nicolaus F 55: ὅτι <Ἀταλάντη> ἡ Ἀκάστου γυνὴ Πηλέως ἐρασθεῖσα κτλ.

The Lexicon also deals with Peleus' and Astydameia's story in ε 2132:

ἐπίρα ... Ἀστυδάμεια ἠράσθη Πηλέως τοῦ Αἰακοῦ, ὁ δὲ ἀναίεται. ἡ δὲ φοβηθεῖσα μὴ κατεῖπη αὐτῆς, σοφώτερα ἢ ἀληθέστερα λέγει, ὅτι αὐτὴν ἐπίρα ὁ Πηλεὺς, εἰποῦσα ...

Made an attempt ... Astydameia fell in love with Peleus, the son of Aeacus, but he rejected her. Fearing he would accuse her, she said things more cunning than true, claiming that Peleus made an attempt on her, and saying ...

Also the extremely short κ 1035, κατεῖπη ... ἐδεδίει γὰρ ἡ γυνή, μὴ κατεῖπη αὐτῆς, probably refers to the same protagonists. Gottfried Bernhardt identified both ε 2132 and α 4309 as coming from a source other than Nicolaus (evidently because of the name Ἀταλάντη, apparently alien to the Damascene):⁵ but it is difficult to deny the identity of α 4309 and Nicolaus F 55. Ada Adler made only an indirect reference to Nicolaus in the apparatus to ε 2132, inviting the reader to compare F 55/*Suda* α 4309.⁶ In fact, ε 2132 transmits the same story as α 4309 (and Nicolaus F 55), with some important differences of wording and content—above all the name *Asty-dameia*, in place of *Atalante*, for Acastus' wife. Hence, we wonder at first whether the two entries (ε 2132 and κ 1035) may be

been completed ca. 1000. For a dating of the Lexicon to 976–986 (Basil II's reign) see A. Kazhdan, "Souda," *ODB* III (1991) 1930–1931.

⁵ G. Bernhardt, *Suidae Lexicon ... post Thomam Gaisfordum* I (Halle/Braunschweig 1853) 377–378: "Suidas usus est scriptore non incito, qui profecerat ab Nicolai Damasceni historiis etiam in v. Ἀταλάντη expromptis."

⁶ Adler *in apparatu* to ε 2132: "cf. Nic. Dam. fr. 55 = v. A 4309."

paraphrases (by the compiler(s) of the Lexicon) of α 4309, since they relate the same subject that it does.

This hypothesis, which cannot be properly evaluated for the shorter κ 1035, must however be excluded for the longer ϵ 2132. The latter transmits in fact a different name, *Astydamēia*, not *Atalante* of the supposedly paraphrased text. Still, ϵ 2132 ἐπεῖρα certainly develops the woman's speech, as it adds a second verbum dicendi, εἰποῦσα, after σοφώτερα ἢ ἀληθέστερα λέγει, ὅτι αὐτὴν ἐπεῖρα ὁ Πηλεὺς which already exhausted the story as it was related in α 4309. Cf. α 4309 Ἀταλάντη, Ἀκάστου γυνή, ἥτις Πηλέως ἐρασθεῖσα λόγους ὑπὲρ μίξεως εἰσφέρει, ἀνανομένου δὲ δεῖσασα, μὴ μιν κατεῖποι πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα, ὑποφθάσασα αὐτὸν προσδιαβάλλει τὸν ἄνδρα, ὡς εὐνηθῆναί οἱ ἐθέλοντα. The text of ϵ 2132—so the speech of Acastus' wife—is suddenly cut off after εἰποῦσα but clearly it should retain a reference to her refusal of Peleus' alleged attempt at seduction, probably expressed through direct speech. That refusal, only implicit in α 4309, was possibly explicit in the source of ϵ 2132 which probably developed this motif. Unlike quotations, paraphrases are unlikely to be suddenly cut off. Above all, paraphrases are unlikely to retain the development of a motif, nor do they introduce an oratio recta which is not attested in the supposed paraphrased lemma. So, α 4309 (on Atalante) and ϵ 2132 (on Astydameia) must depend on two different sources and ϵ 2132 should be derived from a source different from Nicolaus of Damascus, who is beyond any doubt the compiled source of α 4309.

One more *Suda* entry deals with Peleus' story, ϵ 1373: ἐνθύμιον ... καὶ δὴ τὰ πραχθέντα ἔθετο ἐνθύμιον καὶ γενόμενος τῶν Μυρμιδόνων ἐγκρατῆς παραλύει τὸν Ἄκαστον τῆς ἀρχῆς, "(Something) taken to heart ... 'And he took the deeds to heart and when he gained control of the Myrmidons, he removed Acastus from sovereignty'." Thomas Gaisford linked this lemma to Peleus' story ("Referenda haec videntur ad historiam Pelei"). Gottfried Bernhardt agreed with him and attributed

the quotation to Nicolaus (“Recte: sunt autem verba Nicolai Damasceni; cf. v. Ἄκαστος”).⁷ Indeed, some linguistic features figure in Nicolaus: ἐνθύμιος is attested in F 66 §26; ἐγκρατής γενέσθαι in F 53; παραλύω in both F 127 §15 and F 130 §§45 and 80. Once more, however, this entry, which deals with the same matter as α 4309, Peleus’ overthrow of Acastus’ power, cannot be a mere paraphrase of it. There, in fact, Peleus declares war on Acastus after realising that Acastus was plotting against him. He does not do it before assuring the alliance of Jason and the Tyndarids. *Suda* ε 1373 relates instead a different moment of the defeat of Acastus, or reports the same moment in a different way. It keeps an obscure hint to τὰ πραχθέντα and an allusion to the military control of the Myrmidons, obtained by Peleus. Of course, ε 1373 cannot be a paraphrase of α 4309.

According to a more rational hypothesis, both ε 2132 and ε 1373 depend not on Nicolaus but on a different source, whereas κ 1035 could be a short paraphrase of either α 4309 or ε 2132. That seems proved by the different name for Acastus’ wife and also by the differences of wording and content between the two (ε 2132 and ε 1373) and the Nicolaeian α 4309. The second source on Peleus, Acastus, and his wife can be investigated. Our guide must be the recognized principle that the compiler(s) of the *Suda* did not read and quote directly all the sources they cited. In particular, they cited most of the historical or myth-historical sources through *Mittelquellen*. In 1912 C. de Boor argued that the historical lemmata which are not derived from lexicæ and scholia depend on the *Excerpta Constantiniana*: this important result was accepted three years later by J. Becker and then by Ada Adler, who also drew up a list of the authors transmitted through the *Excerpta* to the *Suda*.⁸

⁷ Bernhardt, *Suidae Lexicon* I (Halle/Braunschweig 1853) 265–266. Bernhardt translated “Ille vero quod acciderat ominis loco duxit, Myrmidoni-busque subactis Acastum regno exiit.”

⁸ De Boor, *BZ* 21 (1912) 381–424; J. Becker, *De Suidae Excerptis historicis* (diss. Bonn 1915) 10–16, esp. 13; de Boor, *BZ* 23 (1914–1919) 1–127; Adler,

Accordingly, for the source of ε 2132 and ε 1373 we have to look among those transmitted by the *Excerpta* and appearing in this list. A 'useful' author for our inquiry is of course a fragmentary one who is supposed to have dealt with such a matter. Apart from the fully transmitted authors and those who seemingly did not treat the myth of Peleus and Acastus, the choice seems limited to Aelian's *Περὶ προνοίας* and John of Antioch, both appearing in Adler's list as well known to the compiler(s) of the *Lexicon* through the abridgments of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*.⁹ Other fragmentary authors who appear in the list, such as the Christian ones, may be ruled out as it is difficult to suppose they would have dealt with such a myth.¹⁰

According to Adler's criteria, the two most 'useful' candidates as the sources of both ε 2132 and ε 1373 could only be Aelian and John of Antioch, not Diodorus, who only reports (in his preserved corpus) a tradition that, after Acastus' death, Thessalus was his legitimate successor at Iolcos and gave his name to the Thessalians.¹¹ We can narrow the field further by taking into account the linguistic features of the two lemmas. A linguistic analysis suggests that the aorist passive participle of φοβέω,¹² the comparative of ἀληθής,¹³ πειρώ¹⁴ (all of them in

Suidae Lexicon I XIX–XXI, and "Suidas 1," *RE* 4A 1 (1931) 700–706.

⁹ Both Aelian and John of Antioch dealt with Peleus: *Ael. NA* 2.18 and *Jo. Ant. fr.*40 Roberto.

¹⁰ For a broader discussion of these criteria see my "A New Fragment for Nicolaus of Damascus? A Note on *Suda* α 1272," *Histos* 9 (2015) 67–75.

¹¹ *Diod.* 4.55.2 (where he makes a preliminary announcement of his intention to deal with other traditions on the origins of the Thessalians' name) and the fragmentary 7.7 (7 fr.5 *quater* Cohen-Skalli), where he likely fulfilled that announcement. For a different tradition on Peleus see *Diod.* 4.72.6. On Peleus see also R. Vollkommer, "Peleus," *LMC* 7.1 (1994) 251–269.

¹² *Ael. NA* 7.23 and 30; *VH* 3.43, 10.2; *Jo. Ant. fr.*121 Müller/204 Roberto (with μή), 133 M./215.1 R. (with μή), 136 M./216 R., 40 R., 321 R.

¹³ *Ael. NA* 11.10; *Jo. Ant. fr.*2 M./R. and 72 M./150.1 R.

¹⁴ *Ael. NA* 2.17, 2.23, 2.50, 3.13, 3.16, 3.40, 3.47, 4.13, 5.47, 6.59, 7.21, 9.31, 12.12, 12.15, 12.46, 13.11, 13.27, 14.7 and 8, 15.23; *VH* 1.34, 4.26, 5.13, 6.11, 7.20, 9.11, 12.1, 14.41, fr.55 Hercher/Domingo Forasté, fr.98

Suda ε 2132), and also τὰ πραχθέντα,¹⁵ γίγνομαι ἐγκρατής,¹⁶ and παραλύω τῆς ἀρχῆς¹⁷ (all in *Suda* ε 1373) are attested in both authors. However, the aorist passive of ἐράω, the verbs ἀναίνομαι and κατεῖπον, and the comparative adjective σοφώτερος (ε 2132) are never attested in John of Antioch, nor are ἐνθύμιος or ἐνθυμέομαι (ε 1373). All of them are attested instead in Aelian, even though the significance of that is blunted somewhat by the fact that the preserved corpus of Aelian is much larger than that of John of Antioch. The aorist passive of ἐράω is found nineteen times in Aelian;¹⁸ ἀναίνομαι four times (*NA* 8.27, 15.19, 16.5 and 9), κατεῖπον twice (*NA* 7.10 and 15), the comparative σοφώτερος eleven times,¹⁹ and ἐνθύμιον at least once.²⁰

Accordingly, we can conclude that the compiler(s) of the *Suda* depend(s) on two sources²¹ for the story of Peleus and Acastus' wife: one is Nicolaus of Damascus, who transmits the name of Atalante (α 4309, from Nicolaus F 55; see also α 809 and υ 708, derived from α 4309). The other, anonymous, source relates

H./D.F., fr.100 H./D.F., fr.343 H./D.F.; Jo. Ant. fr.79 M./159.1 R., 119 M./203 R., 130 M./213 R. (bis), 131 M./213 R. (bis), 137 M./217 R., 142 M./221 R., 146 M./224 R., 190 M./284 R., 201 M./293.1 R., 203 M./295 R.

¹⁵ Ael. *NA* 6.42; Jo. Ant. fr.146 M./224 R.

¹⁶ Ael. *NA* 3.25, 6.55, 15.9, 17.37; *VH* 4.5, 9.25, 12.39, 13.27, 14.30, fr.41 H./D.F. (bis) and 86 H./D.F.; Jo. Ant. fr.273.2 R., fr.195 M./289 R., fr.211 M./303 R.

¹⁷ Ael. fr.115 H./D.F.; Jo. Ant. fr.146 M./224 R., fr.211 M./303 R., fr.86 R.

¹⁸ *NA* 1.6, 4.56, 5.29, 8.11, 9.21, 12.37 (bis), 15.23; *VH* 2.4, 7.1, 8.9, 9.39 (ter), 10.2, 10.18, 12.63, 13.1, besides fr.195 H./198 D.F.

¹⁹ *NA* 1.59 (bis), 4.7 and 60, 6.44, 12.21, 14.9; *VH* 8.16 (bis), 12.25; *Ep.* 20.

²⁰ *NA* 7.10, cf. 6.59 τὸ δὲ ἐνθυμηματικόν and *VH* 7.7 τὰ ἐνθυμήματα.

²¹ And even more than two, if we take into account π 1507 Πηλέως μάχαιρα and μ 393 μέγα φρονεῖ μάλλον ἢ Πηλεὺς ἐπὶ τῇ μαχαίρᾳ, from other sources than the *Constantinian Excerpts*.

the story with slight differences of wording and content and knows only the name Astydameia. To this source we may attribute at least ε 2132 ἐπέιρα, on Peleus and Astydameia, and ε 1373 ἐνθύμιον, on the overthrow of Acastus. This anonymous source can be identified as Aelian. The compilers' dependence on two (or even more) different sources concerning the same subject will cause no surprise: it also happens, for instance, at σ 515, where the story of Stheneboea is related using both John of Antioch, fr.21, and Nicolaus of Damascus, F 9.²²

January, 2016

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²² A further question is of course whether Aelian depended on Nicolaus about the myth of Peleus: there are striking similarities in the treatment of the attempt at seduction by Acastus' wife, but the reaction of Peleus to the plot of Acastus is differently related in the two.

It is a pleasure to thank my readers for very helpful comments. Of course, responsibility for the arguments herein expressed is mine and only mine.