

TZETZES' LETTERS AND *HISTORIES*: A SAMPLE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

by

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Title: TZETZES' LETTERS AND *HISTORIES*: A SAMPLE IN ENGLISH

TRANSLATION WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

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The letters and commentaries of the 12th century Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes are an important source of literary material from classical Greece and offer an invaluable record of classical scholarship in his era. Tzetzes explained the myriad and often obscure literary references he makes in his letters as part of his *Histories*, a long poem on various literary, mythological and historical subjects. The first of Tzetzes' letters and the accompanying section of his *Histories* incorporate subjects ranging from ancient Greek representations of idiocy, to the aspects of the god Hermes, to the friendship of Perithoos and Theseus, and incorporate material from authors including Herodotus, Aristophanes, and Homer. This translation of these sections makes a sample of Tzetzes' work available for the first time in English, and is accompanied by explanatory notes and introduction.

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CHAPTER I

PREFACE

I have attempted to render the following translations in idiomatic English while staying as close to possible to the structure of the Greek. Where awkwardness or ambiguity remains it is a reflection of such characteristics in the original.

The line numbers of the following section of Tzetzes' *Histories* derive ultimately from the first edition of the work by Gerbel in 1546, in which he arbitrarily divided the text into sections of one thousand lines each (each section called a *chiliad* from the Greek for "thousand"; this edition therefore entitles the work *Chiliades*). The line numbers of the following translation of the first letter are not conventional and apply only to this edition.

The notes are intended to render the meaning, sources, and connotations of the texts clear, where these are not made sufficiently clear by the translation. With one or two exceptions, I have withheld commentary on the grammar and syntax, because in most cases the translations themselves represent my interpretations. I have included such commentary only when my interpretation requires special justification.

Because the following section of the *Histories* constitutes Tzetzes' commentary on the letter, and this commentary is in turn explained in my notes, my notes on the letter are intentionally minimal.

I have abbreviated all names of ancient authors and works with the abbreviations in Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*. For reference, the abbreviations used here (including those of modern works) appear on the following page.

Abbreviations

- A. = Aeschylus
Eu. = *Eumenides*
Pr. = *Prometheus Bound*
Sept. = *Seven Against Thebes*
 Apollod. = Apollodorus (all references to the *Bibliotheca*)
 Ar. = Aristophanes
Eq. = *Equites*
Fr. = *Fragment*
Ran. = *Ranae*
Nub. = *Nubes*
 Arist. = Aristotle
PA. = *De partibus animalium*
Poet. = *Poetics*
 D.H. = Dionysius of Halicarnassus (all references to the *Antiquitates*)
 Eur. = Euripides
Rhes. = *Rhesos*
h. = *Homeric Hymn*
Herm. = *To Hermes*
 Hes. = Hesiod
Op. = *Opera et dies*
 Sc. = *Scutum*
 Hom. = Homer
Il. = *Iliad*
Od. = *Odyssey*
 Plb. = Polybius
 Hdt. = Herodotus (all references to *Histories*)
 LSJ = Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*
- Luc. = Lucian
Pisc. = *Piscator*
 Lyc. = Lycophron (all references to the *Alexandra*)
 OCD = Hornblower's *Oxford Classical Dictionary*
 Paus. = Pausanias (all references to the *Description*)
Pind. = Pindar
Ol. = *Olympian Ode*
 Plut. = Plutarch
Thes. = *Life of Theseus*
Sol. = *Life of Solon*
Di. = *Life of Dion*
 RE = *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
 S. = Smyth's *Greek Grammar*
 Serv. ad Aen. = Servius' *Commentary on the Aeneid*
 Soph. = Sophocles
Ant. = *Antigone*
 Suid. = *Suidae Lexicon*, Ada Adler, ed.
 Thuc. = Thucydides (all references to the *Histories*)
 Tz. = Tzetzes
All. = *Allegory on the Iliad*
Ex. = *Exegesis in Iliadem*
H. = *Histories*
 Xen. = Xenophon (all references to the *Memorabilia*)

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

Near the middle of the twelfth century a schoolteacher and writer named Johannes Tzetzes wrote a letter to a certain Diakonos defending himself against men who he had heard were talking ill of him. Tzetzes later undertook to explain, in verse, the sources and meanings of the many obscure literary references in his letters. The result was the work known in its first printed edition as the *Chiliades*, and now (properly) as the *Histories*. The following pages contain an English translation of this letter (traditionally designated as the first) and of the corresponding section of the *Histories*, accompanied by a commentary.

Tzetzes was born into a family with connections to the royal house of the Komnenoi. From childhood he was instructed in both “literature and practical affairs” (*H.* III.615-6) by his father Michel. As a young man he managed to maintain himself as a secretary, though the relative poverty of these years is illustrated colorfully in his letters and elsewhere: after being dismissed from his position in Beroia in Macedonia by his brother Isaak he is forced to retreat to Constantinople on foot (*RE* 1961) and to sell his library, book by book, until the poor man is left only with his copy of Plutarch and a second-rate mathematical treatise (*Ex.* 15.13-18). Later we find him complaining about his living quarters, situated beneath a family who keep their pigs indoors (letter 20). As the years passed he continued to make a living as a schoolteacher, eventually settling into

a post at the Pantokrator Monastery (*RE* 1963), and leaving this world quietly some time after 1180.

Throughout his life Tzetzes was both prolific and fiercely, cantankerously outspoken about what he considered to be the exceptional quality of his work. This combination rendered him well known and has secured him an enduring place in the Classical tradition, despite the fact that the actual quality of his work rarely equals his perception of it and is often seriously marred by inaccuracy, false logic and awkward phrasing. Nevertheless, even had he been less vociferous and less productive we might still be discussing his work, because the volume and breadth of his literary acquaintance generally make up for the shortcomings of its quality.

Tzetzes' acquaintance with Classical Greek literature was indeed very wide, and he read many works that have since perished. His writings are mainly concerned with elucidating the texts of ancient authors or reproducing their stories, and so his chief claim to our attention is his ability to clarify our knowledge of these authors. Secondly, he begs scrutiny as an important example of the Byzantine contribution to the Classical tradition. The translations that follow are a representative sample of these contributions, which, so far, have not been available to those who do not read Greek and which have not received extensive commentary.

Of the 108 surviving letters most are concerned with establishing or maintaining Tzetzes reputation, whether by requesting help from patrons, maligning his competitors, or defending himself against similar attacks by these competitors. The first letter falls into this last category. In assuring the recipient of the idiocy of these detractors and of his own

intellectual prowess Tzetzes refers to a large number of passages by ancient authors, comparing himself to Achilles, Diomedes and Rhesos on the one hand, and, on the other, likening his opponents to various proverbial figures of stupidity from sources such as Aristophanes, Homer and Aesop.

Such density of reference is common in the letters, and it is no wonder that Tz. felt the need to explain himself further; but why he should have done so in the form he did requires some explanation. Indeed, the *Histories* can be somewhat baffling on first reading because (among other reasons) certain aspects of its structure and style tend to clash with our expectations. We have a natural inclination to approach it as one would any other work in verse of 12,000 and more lines—as an epic or poetic novel. However, we soon find that its structure is not determined by a plot or focus on particular characters, but by the structure of the texts it is explaining: the main character of the work is not a hero, but Tzetzes' own letters.

The apparent oddity of this disappears when we set the *Histories* beside his *Exegesis of the Iliad*, his *Allegory of the Iliad*, his commentaries on Aristophanes, Lycophron, and Hesiod, and all his other works that survive: The real heroes of these works are almost without exception the texts he is examining rather than the gods and men and far off lands they describe. In general, Tzetzes is primarily concerned not with the events, but with what the ancients said about these events and how they said it. Likewise, because the subject text of the *Histories* is his own letters, the work is fundamentally an examination of what Tzetzes himself said. It is a celebration, not so much of ancient literature, but rather of his knowledge of this literature.

To this basic orientation we must attribute at least some of the recklessness and carelessness of his representations of ancient mythology, folklore and history. As is clear in my commentary, the vast but shallow lake of the *Histories* must be navigated carefully: its extent is impressive, but its depth bears treacherous snags for anyone attempting to reach that distant, shimmering mirage, the thoughts of those long dead.

CHAPTER III

LETTER 1

To the most blessed Diakonos, famous lord and nephew of Side:

I learn that certain *epiphullides* and chatterboxes close to you have been wagging a malicious tongue against us and ridiculing our works in such manner as they could manage. Should they be *bekeselenoi* and *blitomammantes*, thinking as Melitides and Mammakuthos, and believe they are exalting their own works in
 5 slandering those of others, they are more worthy of pity and not of anger, since they are mad. Let those men praise themselves and jabber with their own shadows, just as Makko, being of the same mind as them, used to converse with her own mirror. Let them jabber against me as much as they like, for they will hear not a peep from me. But if they are in fact not such, and are willing to give surety of friendship with me,
 10 and they have arranged it in the manner of Perithoos, I receive that friendship warmly and make a truce with these men, and do not send them away as Solon did that Skythian Anacharsis. But if neither of these is the case, and they in fact pride themselves on their threadbare philosopher's cloaks and round caps, let them know that when Cymaeon asses act like lions, they are proven to be, as it were, little
 15 monkeys acting like people. Otherwise, if they happen to be just arrogant and pretentious, let them not send their darts stealthily upon me, as that Paris, Alexander, did, sitting behind Ilos' tomb; for according to Euripides:

no man in good courage would think it right
to kill his enemy secretly, but goes at him face to face;

20 and from the famous one:

Whoever's spirit struggles within him to fight with me,
let him come here.

For I do not shudder at the fight or the galloping din of horses.

I know how to handle the ox-hide shield on my right and on my left,

25 and in the standing fight with my enemy I know how to dance the dance of Ares.

“For I wish not to seem the best, but to be it”, according to that tragedian Aeschylus of Eleusis. Let not our attentiveness and quietness and modesty embolden them against us. For the maiden’s chamber of Lycomedes once concealed even Achilles, and the Greeks set off more quietly than the Trojans, who made a din with their cries; but
30 all the same the Greeks were no worse than the Trojans, and Achilles was the most distinguished of all; and I am possessed of an unboastful spirit like them, “but the hand sees what needs to be done”. “But I bid those retreating to join the throng, and not to stand against me”,

and wretched are they whose children oppose my might.

35 Let them think better of themselves “before they suffer something evil”, those Molionides and Cacoï and Asboloi, who of old, thinking between themselves that they were somebodies, found out indeed who they really were, when they made a try against Heracles, even while he was sleeping. For the former were a sort of plaything to him, and Cacus stole Geryonos’ cattle and took them away to his cave:

40 And Asbolos, fearing the vengeance of neither gods nor men

Hung from a rich-sapped pine of towering foliage,

Is dedicated as a great feast offering to the ravens of measureless life.

Let them guard against these things so they do not also suffer, lest in any way they should hear from someone perhaps worse than them the tragedy of the incanting

45 Dionysius, which suits them. For that tyrant speaks thus, declaiming in meter:

for the morons of mortals mock themselves.

For know well that I shall in no wise endure to hear such things as these:

For my mind was not reared to be afraid,

nor am I graceless of tongue when it comes to words,

50 but I know by nature where to put my shield,

I know how to wield the spear most skillfully,

I grip my horse, I shrink not from the blow,

I rejoice in it in close combat more than others,

and stretching my bow I am not scared of battles.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORIES IV.783 – V.183HISTORICAL MEANING A' ABOUT *EIPHULLIS*

The *epiphullis*, smallest little bunch of grapes, IV.783
 Can be hidden even by any chance leaf.

STORY β' ABOUT *BEKESELENOI*

How the single story of the *bekeselenos* is two, 785
 Learn from me in manner most refined and true.
 Upon a time Psammetichos, that king of the Egyptians,
 When the Phrygians and Egyptians pled the case
 For their antiquity, and evidence for the matter was hard to find,
 Which had been the first, the Egyptians or the Phrygians, 790
 He judged most cleverly: and learn his judgment.
 He took two newborn babies straight from birth,
 And, having made all provision for them,
 Entrusted them to faithful bodyguards to guard

Enjoining their mothers to nurse them 795

Silently and to spirit them away with every caution,

And lock the babies' house up at once.

Thus it was done, and after the third year

When the king's guards arrived,

The babies ran up and asked them for some *bekos*. 800

When the king learned of this, he gathered each race together

And asked whether among any there were such as thing as *bekos*.

When he learned that bread was called *bekos* among the Phrygians,

He judged the Phrygians to be more ancient than all,

Since the self-taught babes spoke their language by nature. 805

This one half of that story is about the Egyptians

And the Phrygians, but the other concerns the Arcadians.

Hearing this from me now, inscribe it on the pages of your mind:

Some say the tribes of the Arcadians claimed to be

Earlier-born in time than Selena, the Moon, 810

Wherefore they call them pre-Selenians, meaning that they're witless.

But others call them pre-Selenians meaning that they're insolent;

For being insolent is called "to be pre-Selenian" by the Arcadians.

But I say those men are of the pre-Selenians

Because Hermes great among the Greeks, from the stock of

the Arcadians,

815

First discovered the cycles of Selena,
 And the waxing and waning she undergoes every month,
 And also because before the first day of Selena's term
 They always roast acorns on the fire and eat them.

You have the whole story of the *bekeselenoi*,

820

Which is double through and through, and was spoken truly
 In the form of the proverb against fools and morons.
 And since I've now told you about Great Hermes of the Greeks,

Listen to all and learn in manner wise and true,

So you don't think he's the one called "Thrice-Great":

825

The Egyptian Hermes is called the Thrice-Great.

He, peer to Osiris, to Noah, to Dionysus,

Discovered the worship of god and the shapes of letters,

And by means of all the crafts also brought order to life.

But after nearly two thousand years the Arcadian Hermes

830

Discovered many aspects of divination among the Greeks.

ABOUT *BLITOMAMMANTOS* γ'

They used to call all fools *blitomammantes* once

From blite, a vegetable cheaply grown,
 And from *mamman*; for this is what babies call bread.

ABOUT MELITIDES AND THE REST OF THE
 MORONS δ'

The morons of old in number were myriad, 835

But three surpassed all—though incomparably—
 Melitides, Coroibos, and with them Margites.

Of these Melitides, after he was joined in lawful wedlock,

Since he did not sleep with his own wife,

Was asked by some why he didn't sleep with her; 840

He said, "Do you think I'm a moron, that I'd do that,

To be dragged to court at her mother's?"

A man of such sensible character was Melitides.

Koroibos was counting the tides of the waves.

Clever mathematician that he was, he counted till three, 845

And, dismissing the total as being a lot of noise,

He prudently counted again from another beginning,

Saying "One, two, three" all day long.

Just so the child of the country folk, that wise fellow:

Desiring to have a helper against the bailiffs' 850

Abuse and manners, they led him to Constantine's place,

To be taught how to speak against the bailiff's abuses.

And being most good-natured, with a certain gift of money

He learned *alpha*, *beta*, and *gamma* as well along with them.

His countrymen took him back again in honor, 855

And led him to their country and land,

A clever rebutter of the bailiffs' bitterness.

When the bailiff had said many intricate things,

Being mighty of voice and of those of foreign speech,

He cried out again and again, "*Alpha, beta, gamma!*" 860

The antelopes shrieked in delight at him.

Our man will cut this fellow up this with his wise words!

Just as this one knew *alpha*, *beta*, and *gamma*,

So Koroibos counted one, two, and three,

And again mastered another beginning of the numbers. 865

You have from me now the story of Koroibos. Listen to

the story of Margites,

Against whom old man Homer writes in heroic iambs.

He had wits, the old man—in very deed, wits and reason—

And asked who got pregnant and gave birth to him as a baby
 From their belly, whether his father or mother.

870

ABOUT MAMMAKUTHOS ε´

Mammakuthos means the same thing as *blitomammas*,
 Indeed a moron hiding both *mamman* and bread;
 “Fool,” he says, “clearly, hide your *mamman*”.

ABOUT MAKKO ζ´

A foolish woman was Makko, who, holding a mirror,
 Caught sight of her own reflection in the mirror
 And, thinking it was another of the women, talked to it kindly.

875

And why do I tell you the story of Makko? A few days ago
 One of Cotertza’s servants, in the house of Pantechna,
 Suddenly caught sight of a great mirror and her reflection

And yelled, as if to it, “Have you seen my master!?”

880

And when that man was getting ready to run off to the bathroom
 She furnished herself with her master’s cloak.

Since it wasn’t chattering back she said: “You’re stupid,”

“Because you don’t answer me”. And some men saw her

And said to her, "What are you doing?" And still now they are laughing. 885

ABOUT GRUΖ'

Gru is the filth of the fingernail and the sound of the porker.

And a *gruté* is a small vessel of the earthenware type,

Like the small melting pots of goldsmiths,

And all drinking troughs of goldfinches, the birds.

And so indeed *gru* means the smallest possible thing. 890

ABOUT THE FRIENDSHIP OF PERITHOOS FOR
THESEUS η'

Perithoos son of Ixion, ruler of the Lapiths,

Remarkable in courage and youth and strength,

When he heard the buzz of Theseus' fame,

Desired to try a test of the strength of his virtue,

He drove off Theseus' cattle grazing at Marathon. 895

When Theseus heard of this, he did not bear it lightly,

And mounted his horse and rode against him.

But when the one caught sight of the other, they were thunderstruck;

They embraced each other, became dearest friends.

And Perithoos said, as a start for their friendship, 900
 He would make this the greatest one of his acquaintance.
 “Being such as we are, we must also be friends.
 Concerning the driving away of the cattle, whatever you
 pronounce as retribution,
 I am ready to pay it, unless you kindly
 Think this was devised well by me”. 905
 And thus, from such a start, they set out together
 To come down to Hades’ place, both of them because of Koré,
 So they might take her, since Theseus was in love
 When she was a ripe young maid and Hades ruled the Molossians.
 But he confined them, and indeed did away with
 Theseus with a chain 910
 And Perithoos with the hound Cerberos the Mightiest,
 When he saw his daughter’s thief
 And that one’s friend and sidekick Theseus.
 To this very Hades came his friend Heracles later
 And freed Theseus from his prison and chains. 915
 You know now the allegory of Hades and Koré
 And Theseus’ raising of Cerberos the hound.
 I told another allegory about the Koré and Demeter,
 Whom Hades snatched, in my *Hesiod*.

Indeed, telling each, someone says, 920
 Of the popular and common stories, much less of the rare ones,
 Consumes my scrolls and makes more trouble.

ABOUT THE DISMISSAL OF ANACHARSIS BY

SOLON ὁ

The Skythian Anacharsis, being one of the wise men,
 Arrived in Athens at Solon's house,
 And asked that Solon be friends with him. 925
 But when Solon sent him away, saying to him,
 "Make friends for yourself when you come to your own country",
 Anacharsis said: "Therefore indeed, Solon,
 Since you are in *your* own country, make friends with me".
 Solon was impressed and at last became his friend. 930
 Plutarch writes the story in the *Parallels*.

ABOUT THE CUMEAN ASS ἰ

In Cumae there was an ass, mighty among the asses,
 Who put on the skin of a lion and made a great fright.
 But when his voice revealed that the wretch was all ass,

He was led along and beaten with cudgels and clubs 935
 As befits the slavishness of asses pretending to be lions.

ABOUT A MONKEY PUTTING ON THE GARMENT
 OF A HUMAN AND APPEARING
 TO BE HUMAN τα΄

Just so, I suppose, Aesop writes in his stories that a weasel
 Changed into a maiden at a request to the gods,
 And in the maidenly bridal chamber the sleeping maiden
 Revealed her nature—a very weasel’s, not a woman’s. 940
 For when a mouse appeared there, she fled the bridal chamber;
 And once she was full of that prey
 She showed she was weasel through and through, and not a woman.
 And just so again he says: A man saw a monkey
 Destroyed in a shipwreck, and thought it was a person; 945
 Offering his hand, he saved him from the ocean’s waves.
 And when he asked “Where are you from?” He heard “Athenian”.
 And again he asked him if he knew Peiraius.
 — This Peiraius is the Attic harbor —
 The monkey said then that he knew this man well 950
 And all his children, along with his friends.

The other was vexed and pressed on more to strangle him.

Thus one might write in the words of Lucian himself, I suppose:

A man of repute arrayed a monkey in the fancy people's clothes

And made him escape the notice of most, appearing

to be a human.

955

And a spectator from the city threw nuts in the midst of them,

And explained he was a monkey and not a man,

Since he gathered the nuts with a parting of his tunic.

ABOUT THE PARIS LATHRAEOS

THE ARCHER ιβ'

Paris Alexander, it is said in the words of Homer,

Sitting concealed in the tomb of Ilos

960

— This Ilos was one son of Troos —

Struck Diomedes with an arrow in the flat of his foot,

But not to his face, as a noble man would have.

THE SAYING ACCORDING TO EURIPIDES ιγ'

Euripides in his drama *Rhesos* says that Rhesos

Asked to learn about the Greek generals,

965

Which among them was first in courage, which second and
 which third.

And about what he heard of Odysseus' trickery

He says he said the very things in these verses in derision:

"No man of good courage should kill his enemy

Secretly, but going at him face-to-face". 970

ABOUT THE "FOR I MYSELF SHRINK NOT FROM
 A FIGHT NOR FROM THE BEAT OF HORSES" ἰδ'

Homer in his seventh song says that

Hector was about to join in single combat with Ajax,

And when Ajax kept blabbering prodigious, resounding words,

He said to him: "Why, Ajax son of Telemon,

Don't make trial of me as of a feeble child, 975

Or a woman who does not know the works of war.

On the contrary, I know well of battles and murder."

And he says that Hector said these things in order,

Until he said this: "For I shrink not from the fight, nor the din of horses".

And there are still better than this; but we should stop already. 980

THE SAYING “FOR I DO NOT WISH TO SEEM

THE BEST, BUT TO BE IT” 1ε’

The child of Euphronios, the tragedian Aeschylus,

In the drama which is called the *Seven Against Thebes*,

Introduces the king of the Thebans, Eteokles,

Asking about the seven Argive generals:

“Who clashes in battle on the field at the gate of Thebes?”

985

And a messenger pronounces the names of the Argives.

To each of the Argives he compares a Theban,

Recounting for each of them there his fitting praises

When he’s compared to so-and-so of the Argives;

And joining in battle, as it seems to me, he does not keep

aloof from the fight,

990

But proves himself remarkable for the opposite:

And otherwise again from these events he says he has

“An unboastful mind, and his hand sees what needs to be done”.

“For he wished not to seem the best, but to be it”.

ABOUT ACHILLES IN LYKOMEDES'

MAIDEN'S CHAMBER ιζ'

The newer poets of our race, 995
 Of whom one is Tryphiodoros, Lykophron and others,
 Imagine that Thetis knew from prophecies and oracles
 That Achilles, her beloved son,
 Would be short-lived if he should sail to Troy,
 And hid him in the maiden's chamber of Lykomedes,
 having sent him V.1
 Dressed, as they say, in the clothes of a woman.
 And Lycophron says the following in the *Alexandra*:
 "And he will suffer to draw on a woman's robe around
 His body, touching the shuttle's rattle round the loom beams".
 The poets of the new school say these things about Achilles, 5
 And I allegorize it in the *Book of Augustus*.

ABOUT THE CRY OF THE TROJANS AND

THE SILENCE OF THE GREEKS ιζ'

In the third song of Homer's *Iliad*,

Praising the Greeks' order in their line of battle

And slighting the contrary disorder of the Trojans,

Thus he declares word for word in heroic meter: 10

"The Trojans went with a clamor and shouting like birds".

And about the Greeks he says with the following words:

"But they go in silence, breathing force, the Achaeans,

Raging in spirit to defend each other".

And he says as many other things in that passage. 15

ABOUT THE "BUT I BID THEM WITHDRAW

AND GO INTO THE CROWD" ἠ'

In the twentieth chapter of Homer, Achilles

Says these things to Aeneas for the following reason:

Aeneas escaped while they were fighting there in single combat;

He said many other words to him,

And also: "If you think you'll kill me and take the prize to Priam, 20

Know well, Aeneas, that you cannot kill me;

And I say, retreat into the crowd, do not fight with me".

ABOUT THE "AND WRETCHED ARE
THE CHILDREN" 10'

And Homer, in his sixth song, also says

This, as from Diomedes, as to Glaucou.

This Glaucos, of whom I speak, the son of Hippolochos 25

(Hippolochus the son of Bellerophon)

Had on his suit of armor, wholly gilt,

Though all the Trojans cowered before Diomedes,

And went out of his own accord, readying for single combat.

No sooner than Diomedes saw him, 30

He said, "Who are you, bravest one? If you are a god,

Or perhaps a foreign priest or wise man or incanter or wizard,

Or even a pure element, one of the four,

A star or stone of fire, water, air,

I wish never to join battle with such as these. 35

Lycourgos also, hated by all the gods,

Pursuing Dionysos and striking Bacchus with an axe,

Became short-lived when he was blinded by the god".

Learn the allegory: If some useless man meets

with Tzetzes' playthings, he does not escape from there. 40

Nor, he says, was Lycourgos living for a long time,
 Fighting against nature and his mental capacities.
 And since this Lycourgos was the king of Thrace,
 He set down a law for the Thracians not to grow any vines.
 And the axe cut out all their vines, 45
 And fire ravaged those pulled up by the roots.
 And every vintner making wine fled to the opposite bank
 And cultivated his vintner's arts there.
 Finally he was driven out of his mind, this Lycourgos of whom we speak,
 Who, the stories tell me, got his blindness from the god. 50
 "It is the mind", according to Epicharmus, "that sees and hears:
 And all else is blind if the mind is not present".
 Thus he went out of his mind, either tossing and turning
 In sleeplessness and vomiting from not drinking wine,
 Or suffering some other such way from abstinence, 55
 Or having done this senseless thing, the cutting of the vines,
 He was killed right away by a gathering of the people.
 [Diomedes said such things as to Glaucon:
 If you are someone made of stone or star or foreign priest,
 I wish never to join battle with such as these. 60
 And also Lycourgos, of whom I have been speaking to you just now,
 Either senseless from the cutting of the vines

Measured out his life and was killed by the rage of the people,

Or fighting with nature, he was driven out of his mind and died.]

If you happen to be a bread-eating mortal, like me, 65

You also will leave life quickly with me as opponent.

“For wretched are those whose children oppose me in battle”.

ABOUT THE MOLIONIDAE κ'

The Molionidai were the rulers of the Eleians,

Because of whom Homer, as from Nestor, says:

“And now I would have killed the Actorian Molionidai” 70

(For these were the sons Actor, of Molione).

And they were the most ancient of those whom Nestor remembered,

And they were both robbers, Passalus and Aklemon.

And for those desiring to write the stories accurately

These are never called the Molionidai, 75

But in name according to their mother's name, Memnonidai.

These boys happened upon the widow of Memnon,

And, displaying their booty as merchandise and the profit of their murders,

They bragged in speaking of their prowess;

And laughing in derision at the mother when she spoke to them: 80

“You haven't met the Blackbutt Man yet”.

These men once came to Heracles while he was sleeping from fatigue,

Secretly, seeking out his leathern pouch.

He, catching sight of them both and binding their feet,

And hanging up each of them from his shoulder, 85

One from the fore-parts, the other from the rear-parts.

Thus he held to the road and his journey.

But they, hung up face-to-face with each other,

Warmed to good cheer since Heracles was trouserless.

Seeing his buttocks and his shame with along them, 90

Shaggy and black-haired, and remembering their mother,

They were moved to laughter, laughing much and greatly.

Which perceiving, Heracles sent them away free.

The proverb is told commonly by countless men.

And who it is who made up this widespread story, 95

I do not know from the multitude of the many accurate ones.

Lycophron also uses it in the opposite way,

In calling Alexander "Whitebutt" from his unmanly deeds.

And Theologus recalls it, and countless others.

ABOUT CACUS κα'

This Cacus was a robber, an ingenious type of thief,

In the regions where now is elder Rome. 100
 When Heracles came by with the cattle of Geryonos,
 This one secretly stole many of the cattle for himself—the same ones—
 And made them walk backwards into his cave
 So that someone looking at the tracks of the cattle
 Would think more that the cattle had gone out of the cave 105
 Than that they had gone in, as if to him. And scarcely did Heracles
 Realize it but he took the cattle away, and killed Cacus there.
 Dio and Dionysius write the affairs of Cacus,
 And many other historians who write of the affairs of Rome.

ABOUT ASBOLOS THE CENTAUR κβ´

Heracles, working for Eurysthes twelve times 110
 Completed the twelve labors, all except for the incidental ones;
 And one of these minor labors was the one with Asbolos.
 And so now listen and learn the story charmingly told.
 After the labor of the gilt-horned stag, Heracles
 Was being entertained by Pholos himself, the centaur, 115
 From whom the mountain Pholoe takes its name.
 This Pholos, while preparing to give Heracles to drink,
 Opened the common wine-jug of the centaurs.

When the aroma of the wine spread out pleasantly,
 Asbolos called together all the centaurs 120
 And convinced them to clash in battle with Heracles then.
 Herakles killed most of the centaurs,
 But Cheiron unintentionally, who was struck with an arrow in his knee.
 From a distance the dart falls on the arm of Elatos
 And on the knee of the other and kills him. 125
 Thus Heracles killed most of them, wielding his bow.
 And he crucified Asbolos, since he was the first author
 Of the battle's conflict, and wrote a fitting epigram
 For him, Heracles himself did. (For he was most wise,
 Both astronomer and poet, a philosopher and wizard, 130
 And doctor, and other things, so many as Orpheus and others
 Show me in writing. Such a one was he.)
 And the epigram lies in my little letter:
 "Asbolos feared the sight of neither gods nor men and, 135
 Hung from the rich-sapped pine with towering foliage,
 Is dedicated as a great feast offering for the ravens of measureless life".

ABOUT THE VERSE OF DIONISYOS

"FOR THE MORONS OF MORTALS

PLAY WITH THEMSELVES"

This Dionyios, the son of Thermokrates,
 Was lord of the Sicilians, to whom Plato was sold three times,
 As write some of those who love lies, 140
 Because, being asked once by Dionysios
 Who was the best in the whole medium of bronze,
 He answered and said as to him: "He who made
 The monuments of Aristogeiton and Harmodios at Athens.
 And these men were commemorated as tyrant-slayers; 145
 For they killed Hipparchus the son of Peisistratos".
 This is one false cause for the sale of Plato;
 Another, second false one, no worse than this,
 Says that Dionysios was defeated by Plato
 In his writings of literature, and bartered him. 150
 That this is false, hear now from Tzetzes.
 Philoxenos of Cythera also lived then,
 The dithyrambic poet. What sort of man he was, learn,
 And how deserving to be sold, apprehend from me.
 Although he did so many other most improper things, 155
 He was never once sold by Dionysios.
 But he did once send him to the quarries,
 Though he let him out again after a short time.

And then he sent him to the quarry's mines,
 Because, when Dionysios wrote a tragedy 160
 And was about to have it gloriously produced at Athens,
 Dionysios gave it to Philoxenos,
 Saying, "Philoxenos, tend to the tragedy.
 Examine it carefully, and if something is bad, mark it with an X".
 But the other marked the whole tragedy, from
 beginning to end, with an X. 165
 How worthy was he to be sold therefore?
 Nonetheless, Dionysios, after once hurling him
 Into the quarries, brought him out again after a brief time.
 And why, thinking there were others wiser than himself,
 And giving his writings to them to correct, 170
 And being insulted by them that he had not sold them,
 Would he have bought Plato to take charge of his writings?
 This is not the truth, this one of the falsest things.
 The traitor of his kingdom was arrested
 [For in conversation he encouraged Dion, 175
 The cousin of Dionysios, to seize the royal power]
 And sold three times and not killed, the thrice-wise Plato.
 This Dionysios produced many tragedies
 In Athens and came a second and third time.

A certain play, called *For the Ransom of Hector*, 180
Was produced and defeated all in Athens.
He who was written about in the beginning,
I think, read the verse in the play written against Plato,
More of a comedy than tragedy:
“For the morons of mortals play with themselves”. 185

CHAPTER IV

NOTES

Notes on Letter 1

Written probably between the years 1155-1160 to Diakonos Epiphanius, the nephew of the archbishop of Side (Grünbart 177).

1 *epiphullides*: Since Tz. himself thought it necessary to explain the meaning of this term it is fair to assume that it, like the other words reproduced here in italics, would have appeared foreign to his contemporary readers. Consequently I have merely transliterated these words rather than attempting to render them in English.

14 **pride themselves...and round caps**: I.e. affect the proverbial garb of philosophers.

16 **pretentious**: “δοκήται”. Not found in *LSJ* but plainly derived from δοκέω (*dokeo*), “to seem” + the τα (*ta*) suffix denoting agency (S. 839 a. 1.) as seen, for instance, in κρι-τή-ς (*kri-te-s*) “a judge” from κρίνω (*krino*) “to judge”. Thus, δοκήται = “those who (attempt to) seem”, i.e. the pretentious.

Notes on *Histories* IV.783 – V.183

IV.783ff.: Tz. begins by explaining the terms of abuse he hurls against his detractors in the first letter. Ar.'s talent for contumely seems to have made a deep impression on our commentator: all the seven epithets and exemplars of idiocy in the first paragraph derive from his plays.

783-4 *epiphullis*: Lit. “small grapes left for gleaners”, used by Ar. “metaphorically of poetasters” (*LSJ* s.v. ἐπιφύλλις) at *Ran.* 92. Like these leftover fruits, Tz.'s opponents deserve to be overlooked.

785-819: βεκεσέληνος (*bekeselenos*) is coined by Ar. at *Nub.* 398, where Socrates begins an incredulous reply to Strepsiades with “καὶ πῶς ᾧ μῶρε σὺ καὶ Κρονίων ὄζων καὶ βεκεσέληνε...” (“And how, you fool, reeking of antiquity, you *bekkeselenos*...”). Thus βεκεσέληνος seems to emphasize an extreme and mentally debilitating old age. A less colorful English equivalent might be “dotard”.

785 **single story...is two**: Ar. forged βεκεσέληνος (*bekeselenos*) from two elements:

βέκος (*bekos*), a Phrygian word for bread, and σελήνη (*selené*), “moon”. Tz. now provides an explanation of how these elements came to present the meaning above.

786 **learn now from me**: Tz. is fond of commanding us to “listen” and “learn” from him.

Cf. IV.808, IV.824, V.39, V.113, V.151.

787ff.: In his explanation of the first component, βέκος (*bekos*), Tz. shows us that he has read Hdt. The story is at II.2ff. Tz.'s rendition betrays no sign of adaptation for his

own especial purposes, but rather appears to be a simple reproduction. The few differences there are between the two stories are trivial (see below) and best attributed to mildly inaccurate recall as Tz. writes the story from memory. The *Histories* was presumably one of the books he had been forced to sell during hard times (Cf. *Ex.* 13-18).

794 to faithful bodyguards: in Hdt. Psammetichos hands the children over to a shepherd, who provides them with goat's milk.

798 after the third year: “μετὰ τρίτον χρόνον.” Hdt. has “ὡς...διέτης χρόνος ἐγγεγόνεε” (“when the second year had elapsed”) (II.2.3). The discrepancy might be resolved if Tz. is counting inclusively, i.e. if he means “In the third year” (when we would say the babies were two years old). However this would normally be expressed by the genitive or perhaps the dative, instead of by μετὰ (*meta*) with the accusative. See S. 1447.

804 more ancient: The point of the story. The word βέκος (*bekos*) is therefore associated with superlative antiquity.

808 inscribe...mind: for the expression cf. *A. Pr.* 789.

809 Arcadians: *Ar. (Fr.* 591) applies the adjective προσέληνος (*proselenos*), “pre-Selenian,” (i.e. “before the moon”) to them “as priding themselves on their antiquity” (*LSJ* s.v. προσέληνος). Tz. first entertains the notion that the second element of βεκεσέληνος derives from this usage.

812 Others: an alternate explanation of προσέληνος derives it from the word προυσελέω (*prouseleo*), which Tz. says is an Arcadian idiom for ὑβρίζειν (*hubrizdein*), “to treat

with outrage, be insolent”). It is unclear how this derivation would contribute to the current meaning. Tz. discards it.

815 **Hermes**: for the god as Arcadian see *h. Herm.* 2ff.

The usual classical sources do not mention Hermes as an astronomer or mention any special connection of his with the moon. In Homer and the tragedians he is the messenger, the escort (*A. Eu.* 90-2, *Hom. Od.* I.38ff.), or the helper (*Hom. Od.* 20.34-5); to these realms of influence or association his Homeric hymn adds music (25ff.), prophecy (550ff.), trickery and business (cf. the famous story of the raid of Apollo’s cattle [69ff.]); in Pind. he is one of the gods who officiates over games (e.g. *Ol.* 6.78). The *Suid.* connects him with language, as the union of Zeus as mind and Maia as sense (s.v. Ἑρμῆν [ε 3037]), an allegorical explanation of his heritage based on the Hellenistic conception of Hermes as the “word”, the interpreter of the divine will to mankind” (Fowden 24). Probably Tz. is confused about the very distinction he is attempting to clarify, falsely attributing Hermes Trismegistos’ very strong lunar associations to the Greek Hermes. See also the note on 826 below.

819 **acorns**: See *Hdt.* 1.66.2, where the Pythia advises the Lacadaemonians against attacking the βαλανηφάγοι (*balanephagoi*), “acorn-eaters”, in Arcadia; and also *Paus.* 8.1.6 (quoting Herodotus). **of Selena’s term**: “τῆς σεληναίας” (*tes selenaias*), i.e. of the month. I have been able to find no other evidence of an Arcadian ceremony involving eating acorns before the beginning of the month, but it is difficult to imagine how Tz. would have fabricated such an obscure detail; unless,

that is, he is in fact recklessly deducing it from his preconceptions about the meaning of the word he is trying to explain: He thinks the word means “before the moon” and knows that the Arcadians ate acorns; so perhaps, he says, the Arcadians eat acorns before the moon. The usual quality of his logic does not dissuade us from entertaining this as a possibility.

In sum, Tz. believes the Arcadians are called “pre-Selenians” because one of their gods was, so to speak, *before* Selena, the Moon, in that he discovered the pattern of her cycles; and because they eat acorns *before* the first of the month, i.e. the beginning of “Selena’s term”. Tz.’s logic here is extremely weak, and we should no doubt prefer the perfectly reasonable explanation offered in 809.

826 **The Egyptian Hermes:** In Hellenistic times and later the figure of Hermes

Trismegistos arose from the syncretism of Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth. The latter was, among other things, a god of the moon, regulator of time, the “divine scribe, inventor of writing” (Fowden 22), judge of souls and keeper of secret knowledge. Hermes Trismegistos inherited these aspects among others from his Egyptian parent, and was worshipped widely throughout the later Greek world. We know about his cult primarily from the body of philosophical and technical texts now called the *Hermetica*. See Fowden, esp. 22-31.

832 **blitomammantes:** βλιτομάμματος, “booby” (*LSJ* s.v. βλιτομάμματος). Cf. *Ar. Nub.* 1001 where the Unjust Argument attempts to dissuade the young man from taking the Just Argument’s advice: “εἰ ταῦτ’ ὦ μειράκιον πείσει τούτῳ, νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον/

τοῖς Ἱπποκράτους υἱέσιν εἴξεις καὶ σε καλοῦσι **βλιτομάμμιν** (Boy, if you listen to him, by God, you'll be like Hippocrates' boys and they'll call you a **fool**)”.

Tz. takes his interpretation from the scholia on this passage of Ar. *Ran.*, which are somewhat more illuminating than Tz.'s own version: “For the Arcadians say ‘*blittai*’ and ‘*blittones*’ for ‘simpletons’, ‘*mammata*’ for ‘food,’ and ‘*mamman*’ for ‘to eat’; from which the compound *blittomammas*, meaning ‘one eating like a simpleton’”. And again: “from *blité*, which is a weak herb lacking pungency of taste, and from *mamman* which means ‘mother’; and so the compound of these means one who becomes *weak for his mother's food*. Dindorf concludes: “Est autem is, qui infantis instar, matrem perpetuo vocantis, simplex et stolidus est” (“But the *blitomammas* is that man who, like an infant calling perpetually for its mother, is simple and stupid”) (Dindorf Vol. 3 Part 1, 178-9).

838 Melitides, Korybos, Margites: The name of Μελιτίδης (*Melitides*), along with Μαργίτης (*Margites*), is used by Dionyius at Ar. *Ran.* 989 as an insult against those who have not had the advantage of Euripides' instruction concerning home economics, i.e. against the uneducated “blockheads” (*LSJ*). The *Suid.* records that “Βουταλίων καὶ Κόροιβος καὶ Μελιτίδης ἐπὶ μωρία διεβέβληντο (Boutalion and Koroibos and Melitides were mocked for their stupidity)” (s.v. βουτάλιον [β 468]). The stories that Tz. ascribes to Melitides and Korybus/Koroibus are carried out by Margites according to the *Suid.*:

Μαργίτης: ἀνὴρ ἐπὶ μωρία κωμωδούμενος. ὃν φασιν ἀριθμῆσαι μὲν μὴ πλείω τῶν ἐδυνηθῆναι: νύμφην δὲ ἀγόμενον μὴ ἄψασθαι αὐτῆς, ἀλλὰ φοβεῖσθαι λέγοντα, μὴ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτὸν διαβάλλῃ: ἀγνοεῖν δὲ νεανίαν ἤδη γεγεννημένον καὶ πυνθάνεσθαι τῆς μητρὸς, εἶγε ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πατρὸς ἐτέχθη.

(Margites: a man mocked for his foolishness; whom they say could not count to more than 5; married a maiden but did not lay a hand on her, fearing lest when he spoke she should accuse him to her mother; and was such an ignorant lad that he inquired of his mother if he had indeed been born from his father.” (s.v. Μαργίτης [μ 187])

Margites was the hero of the eponymous mock-epic attributed to Homer (Arist. *Poet.* C. 4 1448 B 24). Korybus/Koroibus is also often mentioned in connection with him (e.g. Plb. xii. 4 a).

Probably these three figures of proverbial idiocy were more or less interchangeable in Tz.’s time, and any one of them can act out one of these stock scenes of the sorts of things fools do.

851 to Constantine’s place: Which Constantine Tz. means must remain a mystery.

However, since this anecdote is not elsewhere attested and, on 878ff., we have a contemporary story probably involving a Constantine (Constantine Cotertza the Schoolteacher; see note on 878 below) we might conjecture that we are dealing with the same man, and that this is another caricature drawn from his household.

861 antelopes: βούβαλοι (*boubaloi*). Arist. (*PA* 663) and Hdt. (4.192) (in a variant form) use this word to refer to a species of African antelope. Here it seems to be a term of derision for the foolish country folk, although we do not have another example of such a usage.

867 in heroic iambics: in the *Margites*. The “heroic iambic” meter consists of couplets of a “heroic” dactylic hexameter line followed by a line of iambic trimeter.

871 Mammakuthos: “Μαμμάκυθος”. “Comic word for a *blockhead*, Ar. *Ra.* 990” (s.v. ~ *LSJ*). Dindorf ad loc.: “Grammaticorum opiniones de origine hujus nominis

exponit scholiasta. Est nomen proprium sive verum sive fictitium, quo homo stupidus significantur, ut βλιτομάμματος in *Nub.* 1001. Et alia a μάμη derivata vocabula. Eodem sensu Βουταλίων, Κόροιβος, Μελητίδης dicuntur” (“The scholiast explains the opinions of the commentators about the origin of this name. It is a proper name, whether true or fictitious, by which a stupid man is signified, as *blitomammantas* in *Nub.* 1001. And other words are derived from *mammé*”) (Vol 3 Part 1, 263).

872-3 **Indeed a moron...your *mamman***: “ἤτοι μωρὸν συγκρύπτοντα μαμμάν τε καὶ τὸν ἄρτον / μωρὲ φησί γὰρ προφανῶς σύγκρυπτε τὸ μαμμάν σου”. The meaning of this sentence is unclear.

874 **Makko**: “Makko and Laimo: women who became speechless, viz. slow-thinking (Μακκῶ καὶ Λαιμῶ: γυναῖκες, αἱ ἐγένοντο ἐνεαί, τουτέστι βαρέως νοοῦσαι)” (*Suid.* s.v. Μακκῶ). Although more details of Makko’s story are lost to us, it was familiar enough to Aristophanes’ audience that he could use a verb derived from her name to mean “to be stupid” (μακκοάω [*makkoao*]) in *Eq.* 396.

878 **of Cotertza**: Letters 68 and 102 are addressed to a Constantine Cotertza, whom Tz. (letter 102) refers to as “the Schoolteacher” (διδάσκαλος). It was this Cotertza who subsidized Tz. during the completion of his *Allegory of the Iliad* (see *All.* Π 1-7 and Grünbart 220), and to whom Tz. dedicated his second edition of the *Histories* (see Giske 33). Letter 22 is addressed to a Theodoritos Cotertza, whose son (a different) Constantine Tz. is dismissing from his school because of incorrigible laziness. Which of these two Cotertzas hosted the incident in question cannot be

determined. **in the house of Pantechna:** As Grünbart notes, “in later years [Tz.] wrote to an Alexios Pantechnes (Letter 93)” (177 note 9).

880ff.: Tz.’s use of the pronouns is unclear here, but the idea seems to be that the servant put on her master’s cloak (“furnished herself with”) and mistook her resulting reflection for her master.

886 **Grū:** γρῦ. Properly, the second definition is the correct one (s.v. γρῦ *LSJ*), the other definitions being false conjectures by previous scholiasts. The word is used in negative expressions to mean “not a **bit**”, “not a **syllable**” etc., as in ἀποκρινομένος οὐδὲ γρῦ (“responding not a syllable”).

891 **Perithoos:** Plu. tells of the friendship of Perithoos and Theseus in his *Life* of the latter. The three episodes related by Tz. are at *Thes.* 30.1-2 (meeting), 31.2-4 (imprisonment), and 35.1-2 (Heracles). Tz. is referring directly to his copy of the *Lives*: his versions are very close in vocabulary and structure to Plutarch’s, and we know that the *Lives* was one of the two books Tz. kept possession of even after he was forced to liquidate his library (*Ex.* 13-18).

907 **to Hades’ place:** “πρὸς Ἄιδου (*pros Haidou*).” Plu. has this Molossian king call himself *Aidoneus* (Ἄιδωνέος), *after* the god of the underworld (*Aidoneus* is a lengthened poetic form of *Haidēs* (Ἅιδης; =“Hades” in English)). The king further impersonates the god by naming the remaining members of his household after members of the underworld: Koré (Κόρη) (“the maiden”) is another name for Persephone (the daughter of the goddess Demeter) who had been kidnapped by Hades and forced to live in the underworld with him for part of each year.

Kerberos (Κερβέρος) is the name of the three-headed hellhound that guards the gates of Hades' realm.

Previously, Perithoos and Theseus had kidnapped the adolescent Helen from Sparta; they would cast lots to determine which would marry her. The victor would assist the loser in finding another suitable bride. Theseus won the draw, and was therefore bound to aid Perithoos when he pursued the daughter of this Hades.

909 **Molossians:** a tribe living in Epirus (Plu. *Thes.* 31.4) in the northwest of mainland Greece.

908 **So they might take her...**: “ὡς ἂν ἀρπάζωσιν αὐτήν.” For ἂν in the final clause with ὡς, see S. 2201-2, esp. 2202b.

913 **and his friend and sidekick Theseus:** “τὸν δὲ Θησέα συνεργὸν ἐν φιλικῷ τῷ τρόπῳ.” Lit.: “And Theseus, a helper in a friendly manner.” A somewhat odd way of putting it: we are more inclined to conceive of Perithoos as the “sidekick/helper”, since it is Theseus who is in love with Helen.

917 **And Theseus' raising of Cerberus the hound:** “καὶ τοῦ Κερβέρου τοῦ κυνὸς ἀναγωγῆς Θησέως.” This does not appear to be part of the preceding story, nor does such an episode appear in Plutarch's account of Theseus' life. Perhaps Tz. means to refer to Heracles' bringing up of the genuine Kerberos as one of his twelve labors (Apollod. 1.3.53).

919 **in my Hesiod:** “ἐν Ἡσιόδῳ”, i.e. in Tz.'s commentary on Hes. *Op.* Unfortunately this work was unavailable for reference, as there is no modern edition in circulation.

923 **Anacharsis**: Another story from Plutarch, as Tz. tells us in 931. The source is *Sol.*

5.1.

932 **In Cumae there was an ass...**: Aesop 188.

936-7 **a weasel changed into a maiden...**: Aesop 50, “The Weasel and Aphrodite”. The

weasel fell in love with a young man and pled to Aphrodite to be changed into a woman. The moral is: “And thus those wretched in nature change not their ways if they change their nature”.

943: The version of this third fable of Aesop known to us from elsewhere (Aesop. 73) is commonly referred to as “The Dolphin and the Ape”, since there it is a dolphin, not a sailor, who rescues, and then drowns, the monkey.

948: Leone justifiably brackets this line as being a marginal explanation of “Peiraeus”, which has crept into the text itself.

952 **Thus one...Lucian himself**: “Οὕτω κἀν λόγοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ Λουκιανός που γράφει.”

The sense seems to call for the optative + ἄν (the Potential Optative; S. 1824). ἄν + indicative is normally used only with historical tenses as the “Past Potential” (1784) or the “Unreal Indicative” (S. 1786). We are either dealing with a Byzantine evolution, or the mss. read “γράφει” for “γράφοι”. Leone’s apparatus does not show any alternate readings of the word, so the latter possibility is perhaps the less likely.

For the source of the story see Luc. *Pisc.* 36. One of the characters in Lucian’s dialog here relates how the Egyptian king taught a group of monkeys to do a war dance dressed in purple and with painted faces.

- 959 **Paris Alexander...**: Hom. *Il.* 369ff.
- 961: Bracketed by Leone.
- 963 **Euripides in his drama *Rhesos***: at 479ff.
- 969-70: Eur. *Rhes.* 510-11.
- 970 **in his seventh song**: i.e. in the seventh book of the *Iliad*.
- 974ff.: Hom. *Il.* 7.234ff. The quote is exact.
- 979: Hom. *Il.* 17.175: “οὐ τοι ἐγὼν ἔρριγα μάχην οὐδὲ κτύπον ἵππων”.
- 980 **And there...stop already**: “Καὶ ἔτι δὲ περαιότερον ἀλλὰ παυστέον ἤδη”.
- 984 **Asking about...**: The scout begins his account at A. *Sept.* 375.
- 985 **Who clashes...**: This question does not appear in the drama.
- 993: A. *Sept.* 554. In fact this is Eteocles speaking about Actor, whom he says is an “ἀνήρ ἄκομπος, χεὶρ δ’ ὄρα τὸ δράσιμον” (“an unboastful man, and his hand sees what needs to be done”).
- 995 **The newer poets**: “οἱ νεώτεροι τῶν ποιητῶν.” i.e. the Hellenistic, as opposed to the Classical, poets.
- 996 **Tryphiodorus**: An epic poet who, according to the *Suid.*, wrote “*The Marathoniaca*; *The Capture of Troy*; *The Story of Hippodameia*; a lipogrammatic *Odyssey*” (s.v. Τρυφιοδώρος [τ 1111]). Only fragments of his work survive, chiefly in the *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smirna. Rudolf Keydell (the editor for Tryphiodorus’ entry in *RE*) places him in the second half of the 5th century based on linguistic and stylistic parallels with the authors Nonnos (earlier) and Kolluthos (later). Tz.’s pairing of Tryphiodorus with Lycophron as a Hellenistic author may encourage us

to think of him as later by at least a century, if not more. **Lycophron:** For the debate on the identity of this poet see *OCD* s.v. “Lycophron”. In any case the author of the *Alexandra*, which Tz. quotes in 1003-4, wrote in the early 2nd century B.C. The poem is a cryptic epitome of the epic cycle in the form of a prophecy by Cassandra, the daughter of Priam king of Troy. Tz. wrote a commentary on the work (previously attributed to his brother Isaac; see *RE* 1978).

997: The story of Achilles’ transvestite escapade has its most extensive surviving treatment in Book 1 of Statius’ *Achilleid*. Tz. reported the episode earlier in the prolegomena of *All.* 447-67.

V 3-4: From Lyc. 277-8. “**touching the...loom beams**”: “παρ’ ἰστοῖς κερκίδος ψαύσας κρότων.” A rather elaborate circumlocution typical of the *Alexandra*’s cryptic language. Lycophron does not name Achilles here, but introduces him simply as “ὁ νεκροπέρνας” (“the corpse-monger”).

6 in the Book of Augustus: “τῆ βιβλῳ Ἀυγούστης.” None other of Tz.’s known works bear this title, and although his *All.* fits the description (of containing an allegory of this episode with Achilles; see note above on 996) there is no other apparent reason that this work might be referred to in this way. Tz. is therefore probably referring to a work we no longer possess.

10 **word for word in heroic meter:** “κατ’ ἔπος...τῷ μέτρῳ τῷ ἠρώφῳ” i.e. in dactylic hexameter (see note on 867). Tz. inserts Homer’s 16-syllable hexameter lines between his own 15-syllable lines.

11 “**The Trojans...**”: Hom. *Il.* 2.2.

13 “**But they go...**”: Hom. *Il.* 2.8-9.

17-8 **He said many...and also** “if...: “ὁ δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον ἕτερα πολλὰ μὲν εἶπεν ἔπη, / καὶ

‘εἰ.” Leone’s punctuation does not indicate that a direct quotation begins with

“εἰ”, but we clearly must understand this as the beginning of Achilles’ speech.

18: Cp. Hom. *Il.* 20.179ff.:

ἦ σέ γε θυμὸς ἐμοὶ μαχέσασθαι ἀνάγει
 ἐλπόμενον Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξειν ἵπποδάμοισι
 τιμῆς τῆς Πριάμου; ἀτὰρ εἰ κεν ἔμ’ ἐξεναρξίης,
 οὐ τοι τοῦνεκα γε Πριάμος γέρας ἐν χερσὶ θήσει.

(Does your heart urge you to fight with me,
 Wishing to rule over Priam’s due amongst the horse-taming
 Trojans? But even if you should strip off my arms,
 You will not indeed therefore set Priam’s prize in your hand.)

We can forgive Tz. for inaccuracies in wording, but he seems here to have quite misremembered the point of Achilles’ saying, which is not that Aeneas cannot kill him and take the prize of his death *to* Priam, but rather that even if he should kill him, he will still not achieve his aim of taking the kingship *from* Priam.

22 **And I say...**: “ἀναχωρεῖν ἐς πλῆθος δε λέγω, μὴ μάχεσθαι μοι.” Cp. Hom. *Il.* 20.196:

“ἀλλὰ σ’ ἔγωγ’ ἀναχωρήσαντα κελεύω/ ἐς πλῆθὺν ἰέναι, μηδ’ ἀντίος ἴστας’
 ἐμεῖο,/ πρὶν τι κακὸν παθέειν” (“But I bid you, withdraw and go into the crowd,
 nor stand against me, before you suffer something evil”).

23ff.: Hom. *Il.* 6.127ff. Tz. is paraphrasing here.

27 **armor**: Leone has “πονοπλίαν” for “πανοπλίαν”.

31ff. In Homer Diomedes offers only the suggestion that Glaucón might be a god. There is also no hint in the Homeric scholia that an alternate version may have included

the possibilities mentioned in lines 1032-3. Moreover, the rather Empedoclean reference to the elements (στοιχεῖα) is quite out of place in the mouth of the Bronze Age hero. We can assume that Tz. is taking (somewhat infelicitous) poetic license with his paraphrase.

36 Lycourgos: Our most ancient source for this story of the mythical Lycourgos (to be distinguished from the Spartan and Athenian Lycourgoi) is this speech of Diomedes. Other sources are: Apollod. 3.5.1, Soph. *Ant.* 955, Serv. ad Aen. 3.14, and Tz.'s own note on Lyc. 273. See also the the following notes.

37 struck Bacchus with an axe: The other sources, including Tz.'s own note on Lyc. 273, suggest that Lycourgos only harassed, insulted and expelled Dionysios. Apollod. reports (3.5.1) that Lycourgos struck his son with an axe, mistaking him for a vine; and Servius says that he struck himself with an axe when attempting to hew a vine. Tz. here either reports another alternate version, or (more likely) he has remembered the detail of the axe, but not its precise application.

41: See Hom Il. 6.130-1: “οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ Δρύαντος υἱὸς κρατερὸς Λυκόοργος/ δὴν ἦν, ὃς ῥα θεοῖσιν ἐπουρανίοισιν ἔριζεν” (“Not even the mighty son of Dryas, Lycourgos, lived long when he struggled against the heavenly gods.”). The speaker here is still Diomedes, the subject of Tz.'s parenthetical “he says”.

44 He set down a law...: The other sources do not mention an explicit law against growing grapes, but Tz. could easily have inferred such a law from Lycourgos' axe attack against Dionysios' vines.

- 51 **Epicharmus**: The 5th c. B.C. Sicilian comic dramatist (*OCD* s.v. “Epicharmus”; Norwood 83-113). The very fragmentary nature of his surviving work makes it difficult for us to gain a clear conception of it, but he was respected as a philosopher as well as a dramatist. The dictum is elsewhere rendered: “νόος ὄρῃ καὶ νόος ἀκούει. τᾶλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά” (“The mind sees and the mind hears. Other things are deaf and blind.”) (Kaibel 249). Norwood interprets this as a criticism of Xenophanes’ “οὔλος ὄρᾳ, οὔλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὔλος δὲ τ’ ἀκούει” (“He wholly sees, wholly knows, and wholly listens”) (86-7).
- 53: Tz. attempts a rational explanation of Dionysius’ madness. This explanation appears to be a description of alcohol withdrawal: sleeplessness (ἀγρυπνία) and vomiting (κατεξερᾶν) result “from winelessness” (ἐξ ἀοινίας).
- 57 **He was killed...:** As Apollod. (3.5.1) writes: “Ἡδωνοὶ δὲ ἀκούσαντες εἰς τὸ Παγγαῖον αὐτὸν ἀπαγαγόντες ὄρος ἔδησαν, κάκει κατὰ Διονύσου βούλησιν ὑπὸ ἵππων διαφθαρεῖς ἀπέθανε” (“When the Edonians [Lycourgos’ subjects] heard [that their land would be unfruitful as long as Lycourgos reigned] they led him to Mount Pangaeum and bound him; and there by the will of Dionysius, he perished, destroyed by horses”).
- 58-64: These lines are merely an abbreviated repetition of the preceding, and contain no new information. I therefore bracket them as a probable result of corruption of the text.
- 67 **For wretched...:** Hom. *Il.* 6.127.

68 Molionidae: The tradition is mixed concerning the sons of Actor and Molione. Tz.

attempts to clarify this tradition, but only adds to the confusion. See the following notes for details.

70: Hom. *Il.* 11.750: “καί νύ κεν Ἀκτορίωνε Μολιόνε παῖδ’ ἀλάπαξα” (“and now I would have killed the two Molione boys, sons of Actor”). Here the Molionidai are certain opponents of Nestor in his youth. Nestor is relating a battle with the Eleians, for whom the brothers have been appointed generals.

73 Passalus and Alcemon: The names of two brothers known as the Cercopes

(Κέρκωπες). According to the *Suid.* “they were two brothers on earth who displayed every sort of wickedness” (“δύο ἀδελφοὶ ἦσαν ἐπὶ γῆς, πᾶσαν ἀδικίαν ἐπιδεικνύμενοι”) and eventually fell foul of Heracles (s.v. Κέρκωπες [κ 1405]); see also note below on 1081).

76 in name...mother’s name: “ἀλλὰ τὸ μητρονόμιον τὴν κλήσιν Μεμνονίδαι.” The

syntax of the accusatives μητρονόμιον and κλήσιν is unclear here, but I see no alternative to taking them as accusatives of respect. *LSJ* has “named after one’s mother” for “μητρωνυμικός”, but nothing for “μητρονόμιον”. It is a neuter substantive derived from μήτηρ (“mother”) and ὄνομα (“name”; Attic ὄνομα), so I have translated it as “mother’s name”.

Tz. has now identified the Homeric Molionidai with Passalus and Alcemon, the sons of Memnonis. This rather rash identification appears to hinge on a third tradition handed down by Apollod.: At 2.7.2 he calls the sons of Actor and Molione the Molionidai, but names them as Εὐρύτου and Κτεάτου (*Eurytos*

and *Kteatos*). He further says they were “συμφυεῖς” (“grown together”), possibly born of Poseidon instead of Actor, and opponents of Heracles in his war against the Elean king Augeas. It is this last detail that appears to have led Tz. to conclude the Molionidae of Nestor were the same as the Cercopes (also opponents of Heracles; see note above on V.73), despite the obvious difficulties with that identification.

It is far easier to suppose that both Hom. and Apollod. are referring to a tradition that involves the Molionidai, Eurytos and Kteatos, as protectors of Elis against invasion, whether by Nestor or Heracles; and, on the other hand, that the *Suid.* records a tradition involving the two brigand sons of Memnonis, Passalos and Alcemon, “droll and thievish gnomes” (Smith s.v. Cercopes) who are called the Cercopes (see note above on V.73) and are the main characters in the Heracleian folk tale describe in the following note on V.81.

81 **Blackbutt Man:** The *Suid.* entry cited above in the note on V.73 continues: “When their mother Memnonis saw these things [their wicked deeds] she said, ‘Don’t meet Blackbutt!’, that is, Heracles” (“ἡ δὲ μήτηρ Μεμνονίς ταῦτα ὁρῶσα ἔλεγε, μὴ περιτυχεῖν Μελαμπύγῳ, τουτέστι τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ”).

Further details about this tale are described in another entry:

Μελαμπύγου τύχοις: Μελάμπυγοι ἐγένοντο πέρπεροι, Λίμνης υἱοί. ἀκολασταίνοντων αὐτῶν πολλά, ἡ μήτηρ ἔλεγε φυλάσσεσθαι μήποτε ἐμπέσωσιν εἰς δασύπρωκτον. ἐμπεσόντες οὖν εἰς Ἡρακλέα ἐν ἀνωφόρῳ ἐδέθησαν. εἶτα ὁρῶν αὐτοὺς γελῶντας καὶ κατακύπτοντας ἐπυθάνετο τὴν αἰτίαν. οἱ δὲ ἔλεγον, ὅτι λόγιον ἦν τὸ τῆς μητρός, ἐμπεσεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς εἰς δασύπρωκτον: καὶ γελάσαντα τὸν Ἡρακλέα ἀφεῖναι αὐτοὺς τῶν δεσμῶν. ὅτι τοὺς λευκοπύγους ὡς γυναικῶδες ἐκωμῶδουν.

“You might meet Blackbutt”: The Blackbutts were braggarts, sons of Limne. When they were doing many outrageous things, their mother told them to watch out lest they meet with a hairy-butt. And so in fact having met with Heracles they were strung up in the air. Then when he saw them laughing and stooping down to look, he asked them the reason. And they said that it was a saying of their mother’s that they would meet with a hairy-butt. And [that] Heracles laughed and freed them from their bonds. [Note] that they make fun of “Whitebutts” as those who act womanish.

The entry seems to contradict itself in calling the brothers Blackbutts, instead of Heracles, but the story is clearly enough the same “proverb” (“παροιμία”) Tz. is reproducing.

97-8 **Lycophron uses....**: at line 91.

99 **Theologus**: “In philosophical literature, the name for poets and writers who deal with the nature and history of the gods; and the word θεολογία (*theologia*), derived therefrom, therefore is most nearly equivalent to our “Mythology” (*RE* 2031). Tz.’s citation speaks against this generic characterization in favor of taking it as the name specific individual. However, Tz. is alone in referring to Theologus in this way.

99 **Cacos**: The story of Cacus is probably best known to us now from the first book of Ovid’s *Fasti* and the eighth of Vergil’s *Aeneid*. He is a hideous monster, son of the god of the underworld Vulcan, who inhabits a labyrinth of caverns under the Aventine hill. Heracles is passing through the future area of Rome on his way back to the inhabited world from Erytheia (see following note).

101 **Geryonos**: Geryonos was a fierce three-headed giant in the mythical land of Erytheia. Heracles’ tenth labor was to slay him and retrieve his cattle. See Apollod. 2.5.10.

108 **Dio:** Cassius Dio (c. AD 164-after 229), a Roman politician originally from Bithynia (in modern northwest Turkey) who wrote a history of Rome from its foundation down to the end of the 3rd BC (*OCD* 229 [s.v. “Cassius Dio”]). Dio’s version of the Cacus story (somewhat more abbreviated than Tz’s) is preserved only in fragment 4 (of the Boissèvain edition). **Dionysius:** of Halicarnassus, another Greek historian of Rome of the Augustan age (*OCD* 478 [s.v. Dionysius (7)]). For his more extended version of the Cacus story, see D.H. 1.39.42. Here Heracles naps while Cacus makes off with his cattle.

110 **working for Eurysthes:** The famous 12 labors of Hercules are most extensively related in Apollod. 2.4.12ff.

111 **minor ones:** “πάρεργα” (*parerga*) “incidental deeds”, said to have been performed by Heracles in connection with his twelve labors, but which did not gain acceptance into the canon. The other *parergon* known to us is his conflict with Apollo over control of Delphi. See *OCD* s.v. Heracles.

112ff.: Cp. Apollod. 2.5.4. and another rendering by Tz. himself at H. 2.268-274. The episode is also referred to obliquely in Hes. *Sc.* 184ff.

114 **labor of the gilt-horned stag:** Eurysthes had commanded Heracles to bring him this animal alive as his third labor (Apollod. 2.5.3).

120 **Asbolos called:** As leader of the centaurs who, enticed by the aroma of the wine, have gathered from the surrounding hills at Pholos’ cave in order to drink from the communal wine jug given to them by Dionysios. Heracles and Pholos by force. Pholos had been worried of this eventuality, but Heracles rashly dismissed his fears.

A good example of Tz. frequent lack of clarity in his stories, reflecting his assumption that we already know the stories he is talking about.

124 **on the arm of Elatos:** The arrow is said to have passed through Elatos' arm and then struck Cheiron in the knee. Tz.'s phrasing makes this rather unclear.

127 **crucified:** “ἀνασταυρώσας”. Originally simply “to impale”, but after Roman times more specifically “to impale onto a cross” (s.v. ἀνασταυρίζω *LSJ*).

128 **epigram:** The detail of the epigram is absent from Apollod.'s account.

130 **Most wise:** The fragmentary remains of the work attributed to the mystical writer Orpheus do not allow us to confirm Tz.'s description of Heracles as a philosopher. The Orphic fragments that do introduce the name Heracles only apply it to a primordial two-headed dragon beast also called Χρόνος ἀγήραος (*Chronos ageraos*, “Ageless Chronos”) (Kern 54, 57, 58).

However, the *Suid.* entry on Heracles does call him a philosopher:

... ἄπερ τρία μήλα νικήσαντα τὸν πολυποικίλον τῆς πονηρᾶς ἐπιθυμίας λογισμὸν διὰ τοῦ ῥοπάλου τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀφελῆσθαι ἐμυθολόγησαν, ἔχοντα περιβόλαιον φρόνημα, ὡς δορὰν λέοντος. καὶ οὕτως φονεύσας τῷ ῥοπάλῳ τὸν δράκοντα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἀφείλετο τὰ τρία μήλα, ὃ ἔστι τὰς τρεῖς ἀρετάς: τὸ μὴ ὀργίζεσθαι, τὸ μὴ φιλαργυρεῖν καὶ τὸ μὴ φιληδονεῖν. διὰ γὰρ τοῦ ῥοπάλου τῆς καρτερικῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς δορᾶς τοῦ θραυστάτου καὶ σώφρονος λογισμοῦ ἐνίκησε τὸν υἱὸν τῆς φαύλης ἐπιθυμίας, φιλοσοφήσας ἀχρι θανάτου

(... These are the three apples they say he took away once he had defeated the intricate argumentation of his base desire with his club of philosophy, bearing his mind as a cloak like his lion's skin. And thus, having killed the dragon of his desire with his club he took away the three apples [of the Hesperides], that is, the three virtues: freedom from anger, freedom from greed, and freedom from hedonism. So, with the club of his patient soul and the skin of his most bold and wise argumentation he defeated the son of his petty desire, and practiced philosophy till death.)

This allegory appears to be related to Prodicus' story of Heracles' training by virtue, related in Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21ff.

- 131-2 **and so many...was he:** I punctuate this passage as follows: “...καὶ ἕτερα ὅσα Ὀρφεὺς καὶ ἄλλοι γράφοντές μοι δεικνύσιν. οἷος ὑπῆρχεν οὗτος”. Leone does not insert the period after “δεικνύσιν”.
- 138 **Dionysios son of Thermocrates:** Dionysios the Elder, Syracusan tyrant born c. 430 BC (*OCD* s.v. Dionysios (1)). In fact his father’s name was Hermocrates (e.g. Plu. *Di.* III).
- 139 **sold:** Tz.’s source for Plato’s dealings with Syracuse is Plu. *Di.* Dion, Dionysios’ main advisor, became a disciple of Plato and brought the philosopher from Athens on three separate occasions with the hope that he might persuade the tyrant to curb at least the most grievous ills of his reign. However, Plato’s anti-tyrannical argumentation merely aggravated Dionysios in the end. The philosopher’s first visit ends with his expulsion from Sicily and a plot to sell him into slavery on Aegina (Plu. *Di.* V).
- 142 **Who was...of bronze:** “τίς ὕλης πάσης χαλκοῦ ὁ ἄριστος ὑπάρχει” (Lit. “Who of the whole material of bronze is the best?”) The application of πάσης to ὕλης is rather awkward.
- 144 **Aristogeiton and Harmodios:** For the murder of Hipparchus they became folk heroes of the Athenian democracy (See Thuc. 1.20). Their monument stood in the Agora (Paus. 1.8.5) The original bronze is of course lost, but its the best surviving copy in marble is currently in Naples.
- 152 **Philoxenos:** c. 435-380 BC. Poet known as a musical innovator (*OCD* s.v. Philoxenos (1)).

154 **how deserving to be sold:** “πόσων δὲ τῶν πράσεων ἐπαξιός” (Lit. “Deserving of how many sales”). Diod. also recounts the story at 15.6.1ff. Here Dionysios condemns Philoxenos to the quarries for the censure of his verse at a dinner party, but on the following day relents, reconvenes the same company at a second dinner part, and recites his work again. In response, Philoxenos says nothing, but merely calls to Dionysios’ servants to take him away to the quarries. According the *Suid.*, the story resulted in the proverb “Send me to the quarries”, a saying “for one who refuses to put up with unworthy things” (*Suid.* s.v. Ἀπαγέ με εἰς τὰς λατομίας [α 2862]).

160 **Dionysios wrote a tragedy:** Only very meager fragments of Dionysios’ purportedly clumsy and tedious work survive. See Nauck 793ff.

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