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## Archilochus 8 IEG: A grey, fair-tressed sea, or A goddess?

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### PALABRAS CLAVE

*Arquíloco  
 Elegía  
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### KEYWORDS

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### RESUMEN

*Este artículo examina el fragmento 8 IEG de Arquíloco, centrado en su recepción en la erudición clásica y, tal vez, en el poema de Mallarmé, “A la nue accablante tu. . .”.*

### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines Archilochus' fragment 8 IEG, focusing on it's reception in classical scholarship and, perhaps, in Mallarmé's “A la nue accablante tu . . .”.*

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There is a significant group of fragments by Archilochus on shipwrecks and death at sea. The majority of these are composed in elegiac meter, and are elegies in the modern sense of the term, as far as their matter relates to lament and funeral song. Although many editors quote in association to these fragments a passage in which Pseudo-Longinus,<sup>1</sup> *Sublime* 10.7, mentions a poem of Archilochus on the death of his brother-in-law in a shipwreck, the reference in Pseudo-Longinus is vague and does not allow one to associate it specifically to any of the remaining verses.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, in spite of the efforts to unite the elegiac fragments of Archilochus on shipwrecks, or those that could relate to such subject matter, there is no consensus. Regarding the so-called ‘Pericles elegy’ cited by Pseudo-Longinus, there is great discrepancy in opinion regarding which extant fragments of Archilochus would have belonged to this poem, and in what order. Liebel (1812: 136, 155-6) believed only fragments 8 and 13 *IEG* belonged to this elegy, while Schneidewin (1838) attributed to it 13, 12, 8, 9, 11 *IEG* in this order, as did subsequently Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>), Fick (1888), Hiller and Crusius (1911), Hudson-Williams (1926) and Edmonds (1931).

Fragment 8 *IEG* would not have been part of the “Pericles elegy” according to Bucholz (1883-1886),<sup>3</sup> but only 13, 12 and 11 *IEG*. Diehl (1925<sup>1</sup>, 1936<sup>2</sup>, 1952<sup>3</sup>) also did not include fragment 8 *IEG* in this group, and disposed almost the same fragments considered by Schneidewin (1838) in a different arrangement: 13, 9, 10, 11, 12 *IEG*. De Falco and Coimbra (1941: 102) ascribed fragments 13, 9 and 11 *IEG* (the last two combined in a single fragment) to the poem cited by Pseudo-Longinus, and suggested that fragments 12 and 8 *IEG* could have belonged to it too.

Lasserre (1958) added Archilochus 8 *IEG* to the fragments united by Diehl (1925<sup>1</sup>, 1936<sup>2</sup>, 1952<sup>3</sup>), but in a slightly altered disposition: 13, 8, 9, 10, 12, 11 *IEG*, whereas Treu (1959: 195) followed the ordering proposed by Diehl (1925<sup>1</sup>, 1936<sup>2</sup>, 1952<sup>3</sup>) 13, 9, 10, 11, 12 *IEG*, observing however in a note to 11 *IEG* that there is no indication that 12 *IEG* belonged to the same poem, and that perhaps fragment 8 *IEG* should be included in this group. Adrados (1990<sup>3</sup>) attributed fragments 16, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 11 *IEG* to a single elegy, and for Gentili and Catenacci (2007<sup>3</sup>: 89), 13, 9 and 11 *IEG* “almost certainly” belonged to the same poem, perhaps also 16, 12 and 8 *IEG*. Gerber (1999: 87) cautiously deems “possible that frs. 9-13 (or 8-13) come from the same poem or at least refer to the same disaster”.

Others, however, refrained from suggesting any form of composition of these fragments into a single poem, such as Gaisford (1814), Hoffmann (1898) and van Groningen (1958: 139). West (1971<sup>1</sup>, 1989<sup>2</sup>), likewise, did not unite the fragments and only indicated that Archilochus 8-13 *IEG* are on shipwrecks.

## I. Archilochus 8 *IEG*

8 *IEG* Schol. Ap. Rhod. I.824, ‘θεσσάμενοι’ ἐξ αἰτήσεως ἀναλαβόντες, αἰτήσαντες; θέσ<σας>θαι γὰρ τὸ αἰτῆσαι καὶ ἰκετεῦσαι ... καὶ Ἀρχίλοχος· πολλὰ δ’ ἐϋπλοκάμου<sup>4</sup> πολιῆς ἀλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι θεσσάμενοι γλυκερὸν νόστον ----

*thessámenoi* is to obtain by means of supplication, for *thés<sas>thai* is to supplicate, plead,... and Archilochus:

Praying much on the expanses of the grey fair-tressed sea for a sweet return...<sup>5</sup>

Archilochus is quoted by the scholiast on *Argonautica* I.824, but the verse in the *Argonautica* (οἱ δ’ ἄρα θεσσάμενοι παίδων γένος) has no relation whatsoever to shipwrecks or death at sea: Archilochus is quoted simply because of the participle θεσσάμενοι, from θέσσασθαι, a rare poetical verb that occurs only four times in the extant literature.<sup>6</sup>

## 1. πολιῆς ἄλος and ἄλος πολιοῖο

Πολιῆς ἄλος and ἄλος πολιοῖο are common epic formulas. In the *Iliad*, when Achilles prays to his mother, she “quickly arose from the grey sea, like mist” (*Il.* 1.359 καρπαλίμως δ’ ἀνέδου πολιῆς ἄλος ἤϊτ’ ὀμίχλη). Thetis heard her son’s plea “seated in the depths of the sea, beside her old father” (*Il.* 1.358 ἡμένη ἐν βένθεσσιν ἄλος παρὰ πατρὶ γέροντι) while Achilles wept “on the coast of the grey sea, looking out unto the deep, unlimited sea” (*Il.* 1.350 θῖν’ ἔφ’ ἄλος πολιῆς).

In the *Iliad*, ἄλος πολιοῖο describes the crest “of the grey sea” over which the steeds, sons of Boreas, skip (*Il.* 20.228-9): “but when they skipped over the wide back of the ocean, | they ran on top of the crest of the grey sea” (ἄλος πολιοῖο). The context in this case is that of shipwrecks, and the adjective applies to the color of the “white-caps”, of foam caused by wind and waves.

In relation to Archilochus 8 *IEG*, many quote the Homeric episode in which shipwrecked Odysseus is rescued by Leucothea and arrives at the coast of Phaeacia lamenting to himself: “there seems to be no way of escape from the grey sea” (*Od.* 5.410 ἔκβασις οὐ πη φαίνεθ’ ἄλος πολιοῖο θύραζε).

## 2. ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι

The adjective “grey” (πολιός) may qualify seawaters that are designated simply as ἄλς or θάλασσα (πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης), or conceived as the vast expanses of the sea (ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι), or the paths of the sea (πόντος ἄλος πολιῆς). According to Chantraine (1999<sup>2</sup>, sv. πέλαγος), πέλαγος designates the *deep* sea, even in its combinations with ἄλς: πέλαγος “distinguishes itself from ἄλς and θάλασσα (a common word), and also from πόντος, that designates the sea as an element one transverses”.

Therefore, one may notice how appropriate ἐν πελάγεσσι would be in the context of shipwrecks, in Archilochus 8 *IEG* and in the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33. 15, if it indicates the sea’s *deep expanses*. Some, however, have taken πέλαγος in Archilochus 8 *IEG* in the sense of a plane, flat surface, such as Adrados (1990<sup>3</sup>: “en la llanura del mar espumoso”), in a translation that plays down the color grey in “espumoso”, eliminating a possible oxymoron. Gerber preferred reading ἐν πελάγεσσι as the place where the invoked goddess is located, not the supplicants.<sup>7</sup>

If the participle θεσσάμενοι that opens the second verse in Archilochus 8 *IEG* is rare, in contrast, the preceding hexameter, a strikingly alliterative verse, closes with a formula of the epic diction: ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι.

In the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33.6-7, the Muses are invoked to sing the Tyndarids, Castor and Polydeuces, that save “men on earth | and from swift ships”, when men call on to them, sacrificing white rams on the deck. The twins arrive rapidly with tawny wings, and they make the winds and waves cease in a hexameter that ends with the formula ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι: “and they calm the waves in the expanses of the white (-capped?) sea” (33.15 κύματα δ’ ἐστόρεσαν λευκῆς ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι).

Therefore, the endings of both hexameters, in Archilochus 8.1 *IEG* and the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33.15 are not only similar in form, but their contexts are also comparable. Nonetheless, after the caesura, two different adjectives are employed: “white” (λευκός) and “grey” (πολιός). This may seem a minor variation, both adjectives referring to “white-caps” visible on the windy or tormented sea. For as Irwin (1974: 167-68) notes, the adjectives λευκός and πολιός are often equivalent. However, λευκός may on the contrary qualify calm, peaceful waters, as in the *Odyssey* 10.94, or clear and limpid waters, as in the *Iliad* 23.282, *Odyssey* 5.70, and Aeschylus *Supp.* 23. And it is precisely in this sense that West (2003) translates the verse in the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33.15: “and lay the waves amid the flats of a clear sea”.

The choice of πολιός in Archilochus 8 *IEG*, and of λευκός in the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33.15, is significant because πολιός carries other connotations when related to hair. In terms of color, λευκός indicates a brilliant, shining white, in contrast to πολιός that is a whitish grey, or dull white, applied to the sea, according to

scholiast, because of the color of the foam or froth (Schol. A 350 ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀφροῦ). While the adjective λευκός rarely qualifies hair, πολίος is a common epithet for the grey hair of the elderly (*Il.* 22.74, Pindar *O.* 4.28), sometimes with the sense of the venerable, as in Aeschylus *Suppl.* 673, and its usage is mostly pathetic (*Il.* 22.77, 24.516, *Od.* 24.317, 499, *Hom. Hymn to Aphrodite* 228).<sup>8</sup>

In the Ino-Leucothea episode (*Od.* 5.335), ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι occurs closer to the beginning of the verse, without the adjective πολίος, and referring to the place where Leucothea, who before was mortal, “in the expanses of the sea, was fated the honor of the gods”.<sup>9</sup> The shipwrecked Odysseus will be rescued by Leucothea and her name, the “white goddess” (Λευκοθέη), is significant. After an interval of 75 verses, the epithet πολίος does however figure in the above-quoted speech Odysseus directs to himself on his arrival in Phaeacia: “there seems to be no way of escape from the grey sea” (*Od.* 5.410: ἐκβασίς οὐ πη φαίνεθ’ ἄλος πολιοῖο θύραζε).

According to Stanford (1959<sup>2</sup>: 303), the name Leucothea comes from the froth or sparkle of the calm sea, and he quotes λεύκιπποι (“of white horses”), an epithet of the Dioscuri, divinities that also save mariners in sea storms, calming the waves “in the expanses of the white sea” (λευκῆς ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι). As the twins in the *Homeric Hymn*, Leucothea is winged; she arrives as a sea-bird (αἰθυίη), dark-grey above and white/light-grey below.

The formula ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι also occurs in *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3.73, and the two nouns are combined in what the LSJ considers a “pleonastic” expression in Aeschylus (*Per.* 427 πελαγίαν ἄλα) and Euripides (*Tr.* 88 πέλαγος ... ἄλος).

In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3.73-75, Delos fears that Apollo, once born, might spurn the island because of its rocky soil and “kick it over into the sea’s expanses” (ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι). “Then I shall have the mighty waves surging over my head in a mass for evermore...”<sup>10</sup> If this took place, the island would be submerged into the sea by the god, the waves flowing over its/her head and presumably tossing its/her hair. The formula occurs at the end of the hexameter in *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3.73, as also in Archilochus 8.1 *IEG* and the *Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* 33.15.<sup>11</sup>

In Aeschylus’ *Persae* (vv. 426-28), the messenger narrates the Persian defeat at Salamina and the so-called “pleonastic expression” appears in the context of shipwrecks and death at sea: “and groans and shrieks together filled the open sea (πελαγίαν ἄλα) until the face of sable night hid the scene”.<sup>12</sup> In Euripides’ *Trojan Women* 88, Poseidon threatens to disturb the waters, causing many deaths at sea: ταράξω πέλαγος Αἰγαίας ἄλος (“I’ll stir up the expanses of the Aegean sea”).

### 3. γλυκερὸν νόστον

γλυκερός is a traditional epithet for νόστος, and although the “sweet return” prayed for in Archilochus 8 *IEG* may allude not only specifically to that of Odysseus, but to any other return narrated in the cyclic epics (*Nostoi*), it is however noteworthy that the expression γλυκερὸν νόστον occurs in the *Odyssey* 22.323 in a reference made by Odysseus to his own return.

### 4. εὐπλόκαμος

The adjective εὐπλόκαμος gave rise to numerous interpretations and translations of Archilochus 8 *IEG* since the nineteenth century. Does the epithet qualify the sea or an invoked goddess?

Among the readings present in editions and commentaries, one group accepts the transmitted text as not corrupt, and believes the epithet refers to a goddess summoned by the shipwrecked. There is no consensus, however, regarding whom the invoked goddess or nymph might be. For Schneidewin (1838), the epithet referred to a “sea divinity” whose precise identity he ignored.<sup>13</sup> Crusius (1911), followed by Diehl (1925<sup>1</sup>, 1936<sup>2</sup>, 1952<sup>3</sup>) and Adrados (1990<sup>3</sup>), suggested the divinity was Leucothea, in view of the presence of the formula ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι in the *Odyssey* 5.335.<sup>14</sup> Gerber (1999) translates “and praying often (earnestly?) to the fair-haired (goddess) on the

expanse of the white-capped sea for a sweet homecoming”, and Gerber’s candidate is Artemis,<sup>15</sup> designated as εὐπλόκαμος at *Od.* 20.80, or Aurora, qualified by the same epithet when she announces fair-weather after the storm at *Od.* 5.390.<sup>16</sup>

Other scholars develop a similar interpretation of Archilochus’ fragment, the epithet εὐπλόκαμος still being read with reference to a goddess, but they consider the transmitted text corrupt. Among these, Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>), followed by Hoffmann (1898), Jurenka (1900), Crönert (1911) and Edmonds (1931), accepted Hecker’s (1850: 482) emendation of the text to Παλλάδ’ εὐπλόκαμον (later retracted, however, by Bergk and Hecker), the prayers being directed to Pallas Athena (cf. *Od.* 7.41 Ἀθήνη εὐπλόκαμος). Fick (1888) suggested δ’εὐπλοκάμους Ἀλίας, referring to unspecified sea divinities. Hudson-Williams (1926) read πολλὰ δ’ εὐπλόκαμον with reference to a sea goddess, nymph or Athena (*Od.* 1.86 νύμφη εὐπλοκάμω, 7.41 Ἀθήνη εὐπλόκαμος). However, quoting the *Odyssey* 5.335, Hudson-Williams (1926) observed that this is the sole occurrence of ἄλος ἐν πελάγεσσι in Homer, and of πέλαγος in the plural. In this light, he followed Crusius’ (1911) suggestion that Archilochus may have alluded here to Leucothea.

A third group also held the text to be corrupt, but understood the corrupted adjective as qualifying the sea, not a goddess. Thus Liebel (1812) and Hiller (1911: x) proposed respectively εὐπλοῖμου (“of a fair voyage”, followed by Malusa, 1883) and ἐριγδούπου (“ressounding”), a common epithet of the sea, both eliminating εὐπλοκάμου that applies to goddesses and women. Treu (1959) translated the epithet as relating the sea,<sup>17</sup> but indicated the Greek text as corrupt († εὐπλοκάμου †), because the adjective only refers to living beings in Archaic literature, and it sounds particularly unusual to him (as to Gerber, 1977: 298), if it were to qualify a stormy sea.

A last group of scholars accepted the text as it is transmitted and read the epithet εὐπλόκαμος with reference to the sea. While Fraccaroli (1910), not without hesitation, translated: “per la distesa del mar chiomato di canizie spesso”, the edition of elegiac poets by de Falco (1941: 112) reproduces the transmitted text with the following comment: “the adjective εὐπλοκάμου, applied to the sea, is unquestionably audacious, and for this reason it is very Archilochean”.<sup>18</sup> Bonnard (1958) translated the expression as “la mer bouclée d’écume”, while Lasserre (1958: 2) observed that through displacement of the adjective εὐπλόκαμος, that applies only goddesses and women in Homer, Archilochus created a surprising effect and a novel image out of epic material. Kirkwood (1974) translated the verses as the following: “Praying much, in the swelling waves of the white sea with its beautiful hair,| for the sweetness of return home”, and followed Lasserre and Bonnard (1958) in stating that the Homeric epithet (εὐπλόκαμος) is transferred from its regular usage for women to qualify the sea in Archilochus. Kirkwood (1974: 35) adds that Archilochus’ fragment “both recalls and contrasts with the rescue of Odysseus from death at sea by Ino-Leucothea, *Odyssey* 5”.<sup>19</sup>

Other similar renderings of Archilochus 8 *IEG* are those by Lattimore,<sup>20</sup> Davenport<sup>21</sup> and Burnett.<sup>22</sup> West (1993) also maintains the transmitted text in *IEG*, and translates the verses thus: “And often in the reaches of the white-hair-tossing sea | they prayed for sweet safe homecoming...”. The more recent translations by Nickel<sup>23</sup> and Martins de Jesus<sup>24</sup> follow this same interpretation, as did many others before them quoted by Bossi (1990<sup>2</sup>: 81): Romano (1974: 112), Romagnoli (1931<sup>1</sup>, 1969<sup>2</sup>: 37), Pontani (1969: 17), Franjó (in Snell 1972: 21), Ayrton (1977: 16) and Hofinger (1987: 70).

As seems to be the modern trend among the readings of Archilochus 8 *IEG*, perhaps Mallarmé also understood εὐπλόκαμος as an epithet of the sea, if one follows the suggestion advanced by Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 102, n. 10), who believe “it is quite possible that Mallarmé had noticed [Archilochus’] fragment”.

## II. Mallarmé: “A la nue accablante tu”

Mallarmé’s sonnet “A la nue accablante tu” was first published in *Pan* magazine in 1895, and it is with reference to the verses “Tout l’abîme vain éployé | Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne”, that Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith

(1989: 100) established an intertextual reading of Archilochus 8 *IEG*. In their view, Mallarmé's sonnet offers, "at one interpretive level the description of a menacing seascape in which a sepulchral shipwreck has perhaps just vanished without trace or a siren-child has perhaps drowned."<sup>25</sup> Although Mallarmé's critics have pointed out parallels in ancient Greek poetry, and especially in Pindar, this was the first time verses of Archilochus were quoted as a possible intertext.

If in fact Mallarmé had Archilochus' fragment in mind while composing "A la nue accablante tu", he possibly had read it either in Gaisford's *Poetae Minores Graeci* of 1814, in which the text is neither emended nor commented, in Liebel (1812) or Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>).<sup>26</sup>

Mallarmé's poem is notoriously difficult. Thus, I shall only reproduce a few relevant commentaries on the verses that may throw light on Archilochus 8 *IEG*.

[« A la nue accablante tu . . . »]

A la nue accablante tu  
Basse de basalte et de laves  
A même les échos esclaves  
Par une trompe sans vertu

Quel sépulcral naufrage (tu  
Le sais, écume, mais y baves)  
Suprême une entre les épaves  
Abolit le mâât dévêtu

Ou cela que furibond faute  
De quelque perdition haute  
Tout l'abîme vain éployé

Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne  
Avarement aura noyé  
Le flanc enfant d'une sirène  
[Stilled beneath the oppressive cloud . . .]

"Stilled beneath the oppressive cloud  
that basalt and lava base  
likewise the echoes that have bowed  
before a trumpet lacking grace

O what sepulchral wreck (the spray  
knows, but it simply drivels there)  
ultimate jetsam cast away  
abolishes the mast stripped bare

or else concealed that, furious  
failing some great catastrophe  
all the vain chasm gaping wide

in the so white and trailing tress  
would have drowned avariciously  
a siren's childlike side".

The metaphor uniting the abyss with hair is in part a chiasmic rewriting of the cultural cliché of 'hair like waves'... The phrase *le si blanc cheveu qui traîne*, as critics have observed, is an attraction (in the grammatical sense) of the abyss by the poem's final word *sirène*; this brings about a mythic dimension to the poem and the

shipwreck it describes...<sup>27</sup>

D'Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 101-02) maintain that an oxymoron is established in Mallarmé's sonnet when the color white "suggests the hair of an old man rather than of *an enfant d'une sirène* (if this phrase refers to age and not merely to parentage)". One may compare this to Archilochus 8 *IEG*, where an oxymoron is created if the epithet εὐπλόκαμος is meant to qualify the grey hair –since grey or white hair is never considered beautiful in Greek literature: "The poetic exploitation of a cliché, the attraction into the mythical register of a word describing a simple natural element, and the oxymoron of white yet youthful hair all find their analogue in a Classical text of the lyric poet Archilochus..."<sup>28</sup>

This reading of Archilochus, with the displacement of the epithet used regularly for women to the hoary sea, appeals more to our modern taste and/or our conceptions of poetry, admitting the possibility that Archilochus alluded to the Odyssean episode and created a novel and disturbing image of the stormy sea with beautiful grey hair, in which mariners might be engulfed. And it is not surprising that this is how the majority of modern editors and translators have read Archilochus 8 *IEG*.

D'Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 103) compared the LSJ entries for εὐπλόκαμος and remarked that in the second edition of 1845 there is no reference to Archilochus 8 *IEG*, but that in the sixth edition, that of 1869, the use of εὐπλόκαμος in Archilochus is registered and interpreted as metaphoric, although Liebel's (1812) emendation (ἐϋπλοῖμου) is also indicated. In the eighth edition of the LSJ lexicon in 1897, two years after the publication of Mallarmé's poem, Liebel's emendation is no longer mentioned and Archilochus 8.1 *IEG* is quoted as metaphoric usage of the adjective. And so it stands to this date. According to Bailly's (1950<sup>6</sup>) dictionary, the epithet's use is also metaphoric in Archilochus.

### III. Fair-tressed goddess or sea in Archilochus 8 *IEG*

Although the tendency in more recent times has been to read the epithet "fair-tressed" with "sea" in Archilochus 8 *IEG*, arguments have been voiced against this interpretation. One objection made by Gerber (1977: 298) was that Archilochus would not use two adjectives with a single noun without a connective. But we do have asyndetic phrases in Archilochus,<sup>29</sup> and two adjectives modifying a subject without a connective.<sup>30</sup> Besides, we might have too little of Archilochus in order to establish this as a rule. Another point, also made by Gerber (1977: 298), is that the adjective πολιός in Homer is never followed by a second epithet when describing the sea. This holds true for Homer, but even if Archilochus was held to be one of the "most Homeric" poets, could he not have done otherwise? Moreover, this is the sole extant occurrence of πολιός in Archilochus, so that it is difficult to establish whether his usage followed the Homeric tradition or not.

Nonetheless, the major point brought forth by those who reject the metaphorical reading of Archilochus 8 *IEG* is that the epithet εὐπλόκαμος applies only to females (human and divine) in Archaic and Classical literature.<sup>31</sup> For example, Hudson-Williams (1926: 88) argues that it is "a very fanciful epithet for the sea, and better suited for poetry of a later age", such as that of Pseudo-Oppian, *Cyn.* 2. 131.

The occurrence of the epithet εὐπλόκαμος in Pseudo-Oppian *Cyn.* 2.131 is quoted by lexica beside that of Archilochus 8 *IEG* and, fanciful or not, the verses offer an interesting parallel for the metaphoric use of εὐπλόκαμος with regard to waters (*Cyn.* 2. 128-31):

τοῦνεκεν αὐτίκ' ἔμελλε Διὸς γόνος ἀμφοτέροισι  
νάματα μετρήσειν ῥοπάλῳ καὶ χερσὶ κραταῖς,  
ὔδατα δ' ἐκ πεδίοιο διακριδὸν ἰθύνεσθαι  
εὐπλοκάμου λίμνης ἢ δ' εὐτροχάλου ποταμοῖο.

Therefore was the son of Zeus destined straightway with club and mighty hands to apportion their water unto each, and to give separate course from the plain for the waters of the fair-tressed lake and the fair-flowing river.<sup>32</sup>

In the above quoted verses, the epithet refers to a “fair-tressed” lake (εὐπλοκάμου λίμνης), and one notes that in the entire passage the geographical features are described in terms of the human body (*Cyn.* 2. 132-37):<sup>33</sup>

And he wrought his mighty labour, when he cut the girdle of the encircling hills and undid their stony bonds, and sent the river belching to its mouth, surging incontinent and wildly murmuring, and guided it toward the shores. And loudly roared the deep sea, and the mighty body of the Syrian shore echoed to the din.

It is difficult to ascertain that Pseudo-Oppian (*Cyn.* 2.131) is alluding to Archilochus, since the attribution of human features to landscape and geography is frequent in Greek and other Indo-European poetical traditions.<sup>34</sup> The description of landscape in terms of female anatomy is particularly meaningful in myths of colonization, in which the possession of the land is compared to that of women,<sup>35</sup> and perhaps the same applies here in Pseudo-Oppians’ verses, Heracles being a major colonizing hero.

But if one takes the extant verses of Archilochus in account, one finds a comparison of Thasos to the back of a donkey,<sup>36</sup> of “rugged glens” to human anatomy and,<sup>37</sup> even more pertinently, there is death in the sea’s *embrace*, 213 *IEG*:

Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 704, ‘τὴν πόλιν καὶ ταῦτ’ ἔχοντες κυμάτων ἐνάγκάλαις’  
Δίδυμός (p. 249 Schmidt) φησι παρὰ τῷ Αἰσχύλῳ (cf. *Cho.* 587)· ἔστι δὲ ὄντως παρ’ Ἀρχιλόχου·  
ψυχὰς ἔχοντες κυμάτων ἐνάγκάλαις

Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 704: “and this too when we have the city in the embrace of the waves”  
Didymus (p. 249 Schmidt) says that this occurs in Aeschylus (cf. *Cho.* 587), but it actually occurs in Archilochus:  
with their lives in the embrace of waves.<sup>38</sup>

None of those who favor reading the epithet “fair-tressed” as qualifying the sea in Archilochus 8 *IEG* quote 213 *IEG*, but fragment 213 *IEG* does seem to provide support for this construction: for if waves in Archilochus may have arms, why couldn’t they be hairy? Besides, as D’Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 105) well observed, although Gerber (1977: 298) and others find it inappropriate to pray for sweet return on a “fair-tressed sea”, εὐπλόκαμος could be euphemistic in Archilochus 8 *IEG*, the sea being referred to in flattering terms, since euphemisms are commonly applied to natural elements one dreads.

On the other hand, the problem of reading the epithet as referring to a goddess is that θέσσασθαι is not construed with the genitive of the person and the accusative of the object. In this case, Gerber (1977) argues that the verb is rare and, such as ἰκετεύω in Euripides *IA* 1242-43, it might have been constructed with the accusative (γλυκερὸν νόστον) and an original infinitive that would have stood at the lost end of the pentameter.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the text as it stands admits both interpretations, the epithet referring either to a goddess or to the sea, and for both of these readings one must provide linguistic justifications: either one admits a lacking infinitive at the end of the verse,<sup>40</sup> or one accepts an asyndeton.

In the end, what seems to drive one’s choice and interpretation of these verses among scholars and translators is their overall conception of the poetry of Archilochus. Some, accepting a greater proximity between Archilochean and Homeric diction, imagery, and the possibility of direct allusion or intertextuality,<sup>41</sup> read the epithet with reference to a goddess (mostly Ino/Leucothea); while others, considering Archilochus an innovative poet that plays with epic formulae and deliberately creates new images out of the traditional material at hand, associate the epithet with the sea.

Concerning the poem’s reception in Antiquity, as far as we can tell both the scholiast on Ap. Rhod. I. 824 and Pseudo-Oppian (if the later did in fact know Archilochus’ verse) seem to have read the epithet with relation to the sea. For Pseudo-Oppian’s “fair-tressed lake” is analogous to a “fair-haired sea”, and would not the scholiast on



Apollonius have quoted the infinitive (if there was in fact one in the second verse) to complete the construction of the verb he is interested in?

The image of a “grey, fair-tressed sea” is indeed striking, but since εὐπλόκαμος is a common epithet for goddesses or for women, at the beginning of the hexameter that is most probably what the hearer would relate the epithet to. Immediately after εὐπλοκάμου, one hears πολυῆς, a common epithet for the sea, but also for hair. As one has the fair tresses in mind, an oxymoron is created, because grey hair may be venerable, but never beautiful in Greek literature. The discomfort continues with the development of the image of the grey, fair-tressed sea (all terms being closely bound in the verse by the alliterating π’s and κ’s). This uneasiness would have been resolved in the second verse if the participle θεσσάμενοι were followed by an infinitive that redefined both syntax and sense. But one cannot be sure that was the case. And yet, precisely because it is striking, incongruous, oxymoronic and new, the image of a “grey, fair-tressed sea”, even if it were to be “corrected” by a verbal construction in the second verse, might have never been completely submerged, lingering on in the hearer’s mind.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> These are the same that suggest uniting fragments 13 and 11 *IEG* in a single poem: Liebel (1812), Schneidewin (1838), Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>), Fick (1888) and Tarditi (1968: 68).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Adkins (1985: 36). It is so difficult to ascertain to which verses Pseudo-Longinus would have referred that Russell, for example, in a note to Fyfe’s (1995) translation of Longinus, *On the Sublime*, quotes fragments 105 and 106 *IEG* of Archilochus in which the so-called “allegory of the ship of state” is developed, while Buchholz (1883-1886: 125) supposed the narrative on the shipwreck alluded to by Pseudo-Longinus had been lost.

<sup>3</sup> See also Buccholz and Peppmüller (1911<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> Schol. Apoll. Rh. 1.824; Gaisford (1814). εὐπλοῖμου Liebel (1812); Παλλάδ’ εὐπλόκαμον Hecker (1850: 414-512), dub. Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>), Hoffmann (1898), Jurenka (1900), Crönert (1911), Edmonds (1931); εὐπλοκάμους Ἀλίας Fick (1888); εὐπλόκαμον Hudson-Williams (1926); † εὐπλοκάμου † Treu (1959: 200).

<sup>5</sup> Πολλά in majority of occurrences with verb of praying means “much”, “intensely”, not “often”.

<sup>6</sup> For θεσσάμενος, cf. θεσσάμενοι Hesiod fr. 231, θέσαντο Pindar *N.* 5.10 and πολύθεστος Callimachus *Dem.* 47.

<sup>7</sup> Gerber (1977: 299, n. 6) observes “there is nothing in the fragment itself to indicate a shipwreck”, and that they could be praying for a safe return on other occasions: “They may not even be at sea”.

<sup>8</sup> Chantraine (1999<sup>2</sup>), s.v. πολίος.

<sup>9</sup> *Od.* 5.335: νῦν δ’ ἄλός ἐν πελάγεσσι θεῶν ἐξ ἔμμορε τιμῆς.

<sup>10</sup> *H. Hymn to Apollo* 3.73-75: ποσὶ καταστρέψας ὦση ἄλός ἐν πελάγεσσι, | ἐνθ’ ἐμὲ μὲν μέγα κῦμα κατὰ κρατὸς ἄλις αἰεὶ | κλύσσει· Translation by West (2003: 77).

[11](#) Ruhnkenius, according to West (2003: 9), suggested in 1782 that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3 was composed of two originally distinct hymns, one to the Delian Apollo (vv. 1-178), the other to the Pythian Apollo (vv. 179-546): the hymn to the Pythian Apollo would be from the beginning of the sixth century B. C., the one to the Delian Apollo would be a little later, from the middle of the sixth century. Both hymns would have been combined for presentation in 523 B. C. at Delos during a festival celebrating the two Apollos.

[12](#) Aeschylus *Persae* vv. 426-28: οἰωγή δ' ὀμοῦ | κωκύμασιν κατεῖχε πελαγίαν ἄλα, | ἕως κελαινῆς νυκτὸς ὄμμ' ἀφείλετο. Translation by Smyth (1926).

[13](#) See Tarditi (1968): “e dopo avere tra i flutti del mare canuto insistentemente implorato dalla dea dai riccioli belli il dolce ritorno”, although Tarditi admits the epithet might qualify the sea: “Oppiano fisis, possis εὐπλοκάμου ad ἄλός referre”, as also Podlecki (1984: 33-34).

[14](#) Cf. Sitzler (1894: 152) *apud* Crusius (1911: x).

[15](#) For Artemis, see also Russo (1973-74: 730).

[16](#) *Od.* 5.390-93: ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἤμαρ εὐπλόκαμος τέλεσ' Ἡώς, | καὶ τότε ἔπειτ' ἄνεμος μὲν ἐπαύσατο ἠδὲ γαλήνη | ἔπλετο νηνεμίη.

[17](#) “inständig rufend nach Heimkehr, der süßen, weit draussen im grauen,| schöngekräuselten (?) Meer...”.

[18](#) Coimbra (1941: 81) translated: “No mar de bela, encanecida coma,| suspirosos, pedindo doce volta”.

[19](#) Although the phrase ἄλός ἐν πελάγεσσι occurs in the episode, and the mention of a “sweet return” (γλυκερὸν νόστον) intensifies the Odyssean echoes, Kirkwood (1974: 35) believes Archilochus strikes a contrast with the rare and non-Homeric term θεοσάμενοι “as if the Odyssean *nostos* is denied by the interruption of the Homeric phrases”.

[20](#) Lattimore (1960): “Often along the streaming hair of the gray salt water”.

[21](#) Davenport (1980: 74): “The sea combed | By the wind | Like a wilderness | Of women’s hair”.

[22](#) Burnett (1983: 53, n. 57): “richly curled”.

[23](#) Nickel (2003): “in den Weiten des schöngewellten grauen Meers”.

[24](#) Martins de Jesus (2008): “nas orlas do pardo mar de belas madeixas”.

[25](#) Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 100).

[26](#) Liebel (1812) and Bergk (1882<sup>4</sup>) considered the transmitted text corrupt, the epithet qualifying respectively the sea and Pallas, as mentioned above.

[27](#) D’Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 101).

[28](#) D’Ambrosio-Griffith and Griffith (1989: 101-02).

[29](#) Archilochus 114.3-4 *IEG*: καὶ περὶ κνήμας ἰδεῖν | ροικός, ἀσφαλῆως βεβηκῶς ποσσὶ, καρδίης | πλέως.

[30](#) Archilochus 193 *IEG*: δύστηνος ἔγκειμαι πόθῳ | ἄψθχος, χαλεπήσι θεῶν ὀδύνησιν ἔκητι | πεπαρμένος δι’ ὀστέων.

[31](#) Cf. Gerber (1977: 298), Liebel (1812: 154). Against this restriction, Griffith (1989: 104, n. 21) argue that Homer describes the sea by means of other anatomical features (broad-back *Il.* 2.159, broad-bosom *Il.* 18.140, and an island as the navel of the sea *Od.* 1.50).

[32](#) Translation by Mair (1928).

[33](#) *Cyn.* 2.132-37: ἔρξε δὲ πουλὺν ἄεθλον, ἐπεὶ στεφάνην διέκερσεν | ἀμφιβόλων ὀρέων, λῦσεν δ’ ἄπο λάϊνα

δεσμά, |καὶ ποταμὸν προέηκεν ἐρευγόμενον προμολῆσιν, | ἄσχετα κυμαίνοντα καὶ ἄγρια μορμύροντα, | ἴθυνεν δ' ἐπὶ θῆνας ὁ δ' ἔβραχεν ἠπύτα πόντος | καὶ Συρίου κονάβησε μέλαν δέμας αἰγιαλοῖο.

[34](#) Cf. West (2007: 343-45) and Pindar, where hills are breasts *P.* 4.8, Syracuse is an eye *O.* 2.12, and Cyrene is identified with the eponymous nymph to be possessed *P.* 9.

[35](#) See Dougherty (1993).

[36](#) Archilochus 21 *IEG*: ἦδε δ' ὥστ' ὄνου ῥάχισ | ἔστηκεν ὕλης ἀγρίης ἐπιστροφής.

[37](#) Archilochus 190 *IEG*: καὶ βῆσσας ὀρέων † δυσπαπάλους, οἶος ἦν ἐφ' ἥβης.

[38](#) Translation by Gerber (1999).

[39](#) Cf. Bossi (1990<sup>2</sup>: 80-82).

[40](#) Bossi (1990<sup>2</sup>: 82) suggests *e.g.* τελεῖν.

[41](#) See Page (1964: 134), for example: “*euplókamos* is a traditional epithet, retaining its traditional prosody. *Polies halos* is a common formula. *Halos en pelagessi* recurs in *Od.* 5.335 and *H. Hymn* 33.15 (where *leukês*, for *poliês*, was a lapse of memory). *Thessámenoi* is an Epic verb (*Hes. Fr.* 201Rz.). *glukerós* is a traditional epithet for *nostos* (*Od.* 22. 323).”

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