Reading the Shield of Achilles in Aratus (Handout)

A. Phaenomena 1119-21: Mooing Cattle

1113-17 Ploughmen and cowherds learn of an approaching storm from cattle. Whenever the cattle lick their front hooves, or they stretch out on their right side in their stall (κοίτῃ), the old ploughman expects a delay from ploughing.

1118-21 As when being filled with mooing the cattle are herded while going toward their stall during the unyoking hour, the worried calves immediately observe [from the sound of their parents] that they will be filled with the nourishment of familiar turf safe from the storm.

B. Iliad 18.573-80: The Shield of Achilles

(18.573-69) There [Hephaestus] made a herd of straight-horned cattle, and the cattle he forged from gold and tin, and, with mooing, the cattle rush out from their stall to the pasture along the babbling brook, along the rushing reeds. And there [he made] four golden herdsmen march in a line with the cattle, and with them nine swift-footed dogs follow. And there [he made] two fierce lions gripping the loud-bellowing bull at the head of the herd. And the bull bellowed loudly.

573 ἐν δὲ ἄγελην ποίησε βοῦν ὀρθοκρατάρων· 574 αἱ δὲ βόες χρυσαίοι τετεύχατο κασατέρου ὑπέρομμενοι, 575 μοικηθμαί δ’ ὑπὸ κόπτρου ἐπέσεσεν οὐν οἱ νομὸν ὑποκριθέν τοῦ ἐπειδεύειν τὸν βόεσσιν τῷ χρόνῳ ἐνθαρρύσσω: 576 πάρ τοῖομον Κελάδόντα, παρὰ ρόδαν ὄνα σφιὸ Κίρκης τῷ ἀλαλοίῳ 577 χρύσειοι δὲ νομίζεις ἀμὰ ἐστὶ ὑπέρωντο βόεσσι 578 τέσσαρες, ἐννέα δὲ σφι Κύνες πόδας ἀργοὶ ἐπί οὐνότο. 579 σμερφάλεω δὲ λέοντε ὑπ’ ἐν πρώτῃ βόεσσι 580 ταύρον ἐρύτημαν ἐξέπεσεν· ὅ δὲ μακρὰ μεμυκώμενος

C. Odyssey 12.264-69: The Remembered Lesson of Tiresias (Cattle of Helios)

12.264-69 Then while still at sea on my black ship, I heard the mooing cattle in their stall and the bleating of sheep. Then I remembered the warning of the blind prophet, Theban Tiresias, and of Aeaean Circe, who commanded me many times to avoid the island of the Helios, delighter of mortals. . . . 295 And then I knew that some god certainly was plotting evils [against me] . . . 395 The flesh crawled, the meat bellowed on the spits.

264 δὲ τὸ ἐγών ἐπὶ πόντῳ ἔδω ἐν νη μελαίνη· 265 μοικηθμοὶ τ’ ἱκουσα βοῦν αἰνεσμενάνων 266 οἰνῷ τε βληκτήν καὶ μοι ἐπότο ἐμπέσε πτερυγῳ 267 μάντιος ἀλαλοῖ, θηβαίου Τειρεσία, 268 Κύρκης τ’ Αἰαίης, ἢ μοι μάλα πόλλ’ ἐπέτελλε 269 νίσσου ἐλεύσασθαι τερψιμβρότου Ἡλίου. . . . 295 καὶ τότε δὲ γίγνυσιν δ’ ὁ ἡτα κακὰ μήδετο δαιμόνων . . . 395 εἰρπον μὲν ὄνοι, κρέα δ’ ἀμφ’ ὀβελοῖο ‘ ἐμέμυκε.
Whenever you should bring the well-built ship to the Island of Thrinacia, having fled the crimson sea, there you would find the grazing cattle and fat sheep of Helios who sees everything and hears everything. If you care about your return, you should leave these cattle and sheep unharmed. And you would even reach Ithaca — though suffering much hardship. But if you should do harm, then, I tell you, I interpret utter destruction for your ship and your companions.

(126) I shall tell you a sign quite conspicuous, nor will you miss it.

Just like pasturing calves, after they are full of grass, all leap together around the herded cattle coming to their stall, nor do the stalls restrain them, but they run about their mothers incessantly mooing. — So my comrades, when they saw me with their eyes, crying, they flooded me with their tears.

For with the shield of Achilles having been crafted by the demiurge Hephaistos, which he established as an imitation of the world (κόσμου μύμημα), he made the ocean the border.

2 cf. “μεστα δέ Δίως πάσαι μέν ἄγυαι, / πάσαι δ’ ἁνθρώπων ἄγοραι, μεστή δε θάλασσα / και λιμένες” (Arat. 2-4)
3 τεκμαίρομαι is a thematic word in Aratus. In line 18, describes the relationship between the poet and the muses. In line 38, this is how Greeks use the stars to guide their way. In lines 801, 802, and 1129, the second person optative gently invites the student to try reading the sky on their own. And finally, τεκμαίρομαι is the final word of the poem.
4 σήμα — a key word “occurring forty-seven times in the Phaenomena” (Volk, 215).
5 “Grammarians and philosophers at the Attalid court in Pergamum, 1st half of the 2nd cent. BC, contemporary of Aristarchus [4], teacher of Panaetius (Str. 14,5,16). The Suda refers to him as a ‘Stoic philosopher’ (κ 2342). In 168/7, the Attalides sent him to Rome. After a fall, he was forced to stay there longer than he had intended and, in the meantime, gave public speeches that exerted a significant influence on the emerging philological/exegetical practice in Rome (Suet.Gram. 2,1-4).” (from New Pauly)
G. Phaenomena 96-136: Aition of the Maiden

Just beneath both feet of *Bootes*, you may see the Maiden who holds in her hand the dazzling Wheat. Whether she is the descendant of Astraus, whom they say was the ancient father of the stars, or she is the descendant of another — may she continue in peace.

*Golden Age* Now there is another tale circulating among people, that long ago she was present on the earth. She habitually went face-to-face among people, neither did she ever spurn men nor the race of ancient women. But she sat amidst them even though she was immortal! They used to call her Justice. Whether they were in the market or on the wide street corner, she gathered together the elders, earnestly singing universal laws. At the time, these people never knew of weary strife nor of shameful quarrels, nor of the din of battle. Thus they lived. The unforgiving sea was avoided, ships never imported profit from afar. But cattle and ploughs and Justice herself, their queen and the bestower of justice, supplied everything in abundance. As it was, the earth sprouted this golden generation.

*Silver Age* Longing for the ways of the ancient folk, she was not as enthusiastic to associate with the silver age as she was before. Nevertheless she persisted with the silver race. At the setting of the sun she descended from the echoing mountains — alone. Nor did she mince kind words with anyone. But whenever her presence filled the wide hillsides with people, she rebuked them since she grasped their wickedness. Though they summon her, she denies that she will make an appearance. “This race left by your golden fathers is a disgrace! You will beget even worse offspring. I tell you the truth, there will be wars and unnatural slaughter among humanity, evil will impose suffering!” Speaking thus, she sought out the mountain heights and she left the people straining to find her with their eyes.

*Bronze Age* But when that generation perished, the bronze generation sprung up — they were the first murderous men, the first to wickedly forge the murder sword, the first to taste farm cattle. Justice despising that race of men, flew up into the sky. She occupies this place in the sky, where nightly she appears as the maiden to humankind, being near the conspicuous *Bootes*.

96 ἰμφοτέρεια δέ ποσιον ἵπτο σκέπτοι αὐτή τον κόσμῳ
97 παρθένον, ἣ ἐν χρόνιοι φέρει Στάχυν αἰγλήντα.
98 εἰτ' οὖν ἀστασίαν Κείνη γένος, ὧν ἔδε τέ φασιν
99 ἔστρων ἐξαραίον πατέρ' ἐμμεναι, εἶτε τε ἄλλου,
100 εἰπὶ Κηλος φορέοι: λόγος γε μὲν ἐντρέχει άλλος
101 ἀνθρώποις, ὡς δὴ θεῖον εἰκονίζει πάρος ἔννεφιν,
102 ἔρχετο δ' ἀνθρώπων Καινανάντη, οὐδὲ ποτ' ἄνδρων
103 οὐδὲ ποτ' ἄρχαίων ἴνα τοιφιά τοιφιάναι, γενεαλογοῦν,
104 ἀλλ' ἀναμιξὶ ἐκάθεντο, καὶ ἱστάνεται περ' ἑυσάς,
105 καὶ ἐ Ἰδιην Καλέσκουν: ἀγειρομένη δὲ γέρωνας,
106 ἵπτε που ἐν ἄγορᾳ ἢ εἰρωνήῳ ἐν ἄγορῃ,
107 δημοτέρας ἥειδεν ἔπιπτέργουσα θεμίστος,
108 οἴτω τε, λιγογέλεον τούτε νεῖκος ἵπτάστατο
109 οὐδὲ διακρίσιος πολυμεμφερέος οἰδε Κυδοίμου,
110 οἴτωσι δ' ἔξων: χαλεπτή δ' ἀπέκειτο θάλασσα,
111 καὶ βιον οἴτων νεὺς ὑπόπτοροι ἴπινυεκον,
112 ἀλλ' βοοισ καὶ ἦρωτα καὶ αὐτή ποτίνια λαών,
113 μυριά πάντα παρεῖχε Δίκης, δώσειρα δικαίων.
114 τόφαρ' ἔνν, ὑφ' ἐν τά γάια γένος χρύσειον ὑφεβρεν.
115 ἀργυρεφ' δ' ὅλης τε καὶ οἴκεται πάμπαν έποιμή,
116 ὁμίλει, ποθέοσα παλαιών ἥσαν λαών,
117 ἀλλ' ἐμπείρη της κέινο κατ' ἄργον οινός ἔννεφιν:
118 ἐρχετο δ' εξ ὑρών εἰποδίσελος ἱπήπεντυν
119 μουνάς, οἴτω τε ἐπεμισεινειοιαὶν:
120 ἀλλ' ἀκατηρήτων μεγάλας πλασίασιν, Κολώνας,
121 ἤπιελει δ' ἡπείτεα Καθαπποωεμή Κακός της,
122 οἰδε 'ετ' ἔφη εἰσιωτὸς ελεύσεσαί Καλέσων:
123 "οἴτων χρύοςειοι πατέρες γενεῖν εἵλπιντο
124 χειροτέρην: ἰμείς δὲ κακώστερα τεξεῖσθε.
125 καὶ δι' ἃ πολέμουτ, καὶ δι' ἃ κακονται αἷμα
126 ἔσσεσται ἀνθρώπωσι, κακόν δ' ἐπικέίσεσται ὄλγος." όν
127 ἐς εἴποινδ' ὑρών εἰπεμεινε, τοῦ δ' ὡρα λαώς
128 εἰς αὐτην ἔπι πάντας ἐλιμπάντας παπαντείνατο.
129 ἀλλ' ὁτε δι' ἔκατεινοι ἕσβανον, οί δέ ἐγένοτον,
130 χαλκείνα γενεί, προτέρων ἐνοῦτωτοί ἄνδρες,
131 οι πρώτοι κακώστεροι ἐξ ἕχακεςαστο αὐτή χρήσατον
132 ἀνοδίαν, πρώτοι δὲ βοον ἐπάστεραν ἀροτρήσατον,
133 καὶ τότε μισήσασα διΚην Κείνων γένος ἄνδρων
134 ἐπιπαθ' ὑποφρενίν: ταύτην δ' ὡρα νάσασατ χώρην,
135 ἴχι ποτ εἶνα Χήντῃ ἐπὶ φαίνεται ἀνθρώποισιν
136 παρθένοις, ἐγχίς ἐσίας πολυσκέπτοι αὐτή τον κόσμον.
Bibliography


