

a much cruder and less interesting figure than Odysseus. This familiarity of Odysseus with so many sides of life may be part of his inheritance from pre-Hellenic fable. In spite of many exaggerations, Patroni<sup>1</sup> has made a very convincing case for him as a unique blend of a Homeric hero with a pre-Hellenic wanderer and adventurer, who sailed the Mediterranean as Sindbad the Sailor sailed the Indian Ocean. It is this figure, perhaps, *il grande astuto*, as Patroni calls him, who lends himself to comic treatment of an affectionate and even admiring kind, such as was impossible for those who were Achaian heroes and very little else. Herakles, the peasants' hero, has some contact with the comic side of life, but he does not move in that world with the ease and success of the old Mediterranean adventurer Odysseus.

<sup>1</sup> *Commenti mediterranei all'Odissea di Omero* (Milan, 1950), particularly i. 1-48.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FAT-TAILED SHEEP

Sir,

May I add a note to Miss Juliet Maguinness's interesting information on the sheep mentioned by Herodotos (iii. 113)?

One of the prominent S. African wool farmers, Dr. Eitel Hayward, tells me that his father-in-law used to tell of the little carts' they built to place under the tails of the sheep that were bred in the north-west parts of the Union. The wheels resembled cotton-reels. A tail could weigh as much as 20-25 pounds. There are cases where a sheep with a tail of this weight, on being suddenly scared, broke the tail at the base. This might indicate the reason for the 'cart'. My friend says the length of the tails of these sheep in Namaqualand (north-west part of S. Africa) could be from 30 to 36 inches, in proportion as the grazing is good. When food is scarce, the sheep is nourished by the fat in the tail, which consequently decreases in size.

But farmers are doubtful whether this cart arrangement could ever be of practical use. Many think it was applied in a sportive spirit. And a Cypriot, who is also a classical scholar, Dr. Nikolaidis, says that these sheep, which he calls 'Turkish', had wheels put under their ponderous tails by children 'for fun'. One variety of fat-tailed sheep in S. Africa is known as 'Persian'. Herodotos connects the species with Arabia.

Yours, etc.,  
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