Belief that the Homeric Phaeacians belong to the afterlife is old; but its supporters have always found themselves in the minority. Friedrich Welcker, who first argued the point in 1833, held that the Phaeacians were ferrymen of the dead, and that Scheria was set in or near Elysium. Wilamowitz accepted Welcker’s identification of the Phaeacians, and maintained that Arete and Alcinous were modeled on the underworld rulers Persephone and Hades. Rehearsal of the arguments advanced by these scholars reveals that the evidence has been incompletely and on occasion incorrectly applied; however, a modified version of their theory is still viable and can be used to resolve a number of traditional cruces in the interpretation.

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