

PROTEAN FORMS AND DISGUISE IN *ODYSSEY* 4

In Book 4 of the *Odyssey* as in other portions of the Homeric poems there are three major types of transformation: magical, contrived, and metaphorical¹. I intend to examine the relation of metaphor to the other two types in Book 4, which provides an excellent opportunity to observe how the various types of transformation are linked through language and theme and adapted to the poem's basic theme of shifting appearances and realities. The various connections that can be drawn between these different forms of metamorphosis suggest that the oral tradition is emphasizing the relation between poetry and magic at the same time that it acknowledges their distinction. The poem seems to be commenting on its own kinship with magic, and perhaps its origins in magic, while simultaneously recognizing that it is limited by the sphere of human activity, in which such exploitations of the supernatural are only possible in the realms of language and the imagination. In particular, it can be shown that in the central episode of the Book Proteus and Menelaos exchange aspects of each other's identities. Like Proteus the sea-prophet, Menelaos performs the role of prophet (and by extension bard) for Telemachos in pronouncing an omen about the return of Odysseus. The form his prophetic omen takes is the simile. In using this rhetorical device, Menelaos momentarily resembles the poet, whose means of shifting shape can occur in similes fashioned from words. A certain complicity exists between the poet's own activity and the actions of certain of his characters.

The narrative of *Odyssey* 4 (at least as we have it according to the book-divisions imposed by the Alexandrian editors) falls into three episodes: Telemachos' interview with Menelaos at the Spartan court (1-350), Menelaos' recital of his adventures with Proteus in Egypt and the subsequent offer of gifts to Telemachos (351-620)², and a description of Penelope's and the suitors' very different responses to the news of Telemachos' absence from Ithaka (621-847). Of special interest to the present paper are the two speeches of Helen and Menelaos in the first episode, which, I will argue, are pivotal in the Book and central to the broader themes of transformation and disguise. There has been as yet no attempt to correlate the Proteus episode with Telemachos' earlier interview with Menelaos and Helen at Sparta³. During this exchange at the Spartan court, Helen recounts Odysseus' entry into Troy in disguise, while Menelaos recalls the ruse of the Trojan horse. Helen's account and Menelaos' narration may, of course, be a foreshadowing of Odysseus' transformations and stratagems later in the action, but these tales can be shown to be more immediately linked to the disguise of Menelaos and his men as seals and the metamorphoses of Proteus. Again, while these transformations are part of the larger theme of appearance versus reality in the *Odyssey*, they also have more obvious correspondences in various

episodes of Book 4. In addition to the seal disguise and the shape-shifting of Proteus, there is another type of transformation in the Book, the famous repeated lion-doe simile, which has been deemed absurd by some and by others an interpolation. I hope to show that this instance of metaphorical transformation is integral to the episode on linguistic and thematic grounds. Thus in all there are three types of transformation: contrived (by disguise or other stratagem), magical, and metaphorical. All three types of transformation are linked by an animal motif and by cunning, or in the case of the unwitting doe who places her cubs in a lion's lair, by the utter absence of this quality⁴. How do these instances of transformation relate to the theme of appearance versus reality in the *Odyssey*, and how does this relation influence the poet in his presentation and selection of traditional material?

M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, in *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*⁵, discuss the metamorphoses of Proteus as belonging to the type of myth in which the hero at a critical point in his life must confront a god of cunning who possesses information indispensable to his success. The god has the power to assume all manner of forms which make him difficult to apprehend. A god such as Proteus has a finite cycle of transformations. Once he has exhausted his repertoire of magical shifts of shape, the god can be seen in his true form. In this original state he will reveal the desired secrets to the hero. Proteus' daughter Eidothea⁶, who enables Menelaos and his three chosen companions to grasp the sea god unexpectedly, informs the hero that her father can change into fire and water and "everything that creeps on earth" (ὄσ' ἐπὶ γαίαν / ἐρπετά... δ 418). In the narrative, however, the transformations Proteus actually undergoes are limited to lion, snake, leopard, wild boar, water, and tree⁷.

In order to apprehend a shape-shifter the hero must have a stratagem. In the Proteus episode Eidothea contrives a δόλος for Menelaos and his companions by disguising the men as sea-mammals with seal-skins⁸. In this guise they may approach undetected to ambush the slumbering sea-god, who gains his livelihood herding seals⁹. The seal-skins used for the disguise are taken from Proteus' herd, which he beds down nightly in nearby caves. (The animal disguise and pastoral setting are reminiscent of the *Cyclopeia*¹⁰.) According to this stratagem, then, Proteus will be overcome by two means: ambush and disguise. We are not told why Eidothea would offer to play such a trick on her father, but the action belongs to the folkloric motif of the ogre's daughter helping out his mortal opponent¹¹. Possibly there is a more sensational or complete version of the story now lost in which Eidothea had reason to gain vengeance on Proteus. In a parallel story Thetis' sister Psamathea gave birth to Φῶκος as a result of her union with Aeacus. Earlier she had attempted to flee her father by resorting to her powers of metamorphosis and took the form of a seal¹².

Apart from bamboozling Proteus, the disguise of Menelaos and his men

serves to merge their identities with the animal familiar of the god¹³. *Mutatis mutandis*, the animals into which Proteus changes are those animals particular to warriors in similes in the *Iliad*. Just before grasping Proteus, Menelaos and the three companions raise the battle cry and charge, ἡμεῖς δὲ λάχοντες ἐπεσσύμεθ' ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας βάλλομεν — a line which is composed of formulaic elements from battle narrative¹⁴. The various shapes Proteus then slips into, beginning with the lion, and followed by the snake, leopard, and wild boar (δ 455-58), are all animals occurring in honorific similes in the battle narrative, especially *aristeiai*, of the *Iliad*¹⁵. The quadrupeds especially are held up as appropriate models of warlike fury and courageous spirit, as is clear in a comparison pronounced by Menelaos at Π 19-23 when he complains to Zeus that Euphorbos' excessive pride is greater even than the fury of the lion or the leopard, and the spirit of the boar¹⁶.

Of the two felines mentioned in Proteus' transformations, the lion is the warrior's animal *par excellence* and is especially common in similes of a warrior overpowering or driving off an opponent¹⁷. The lion's epithet in the *Iliad* lion similes, ἠϋγένειος (O 275, Π 109, Σ 318), appears only once in the *Odyssey*, here at line 456 in the Proteus episode.

When attacked by warriors, Proteus acquires the shape of those animals suitable for comparison with warriors; but he does not convert into any sea-creature. That distinction is left to Menelaos, who, in wearing the seal-skin, becomes the sea-animal of the magician, and thereby merges his identity with that of his opponent. As a sea-mammal capable of living on land and sea, the seal is well suited for mingling the identities of the warrior and sea-prophet. Although Proteus effects his transformation by magic while Menelaos works his through disguise, the poet describes both metamorphoses as deceitful. At 437 we hear that Eidothea has plotted a δόλος against Proteus; although the old man doesn't suspect a trick (δόλον, 453), when attacked, he shows that he has not forgotten his arts of deception, οὐδ' ὁ γέρον δολίης ἐπελήθετο τέχνης.

Let us now examine in some detail the transformations of Proteus and Menelaos, the one by magic, the other by disguise, in relation to an earlier metaphorical transformation at δ 335ff.¹⁸. This is the curious repeated lion-doe simile (cf. Π 126), the first developed simile in the *Odyssey*¹⁹. It is unusual in that a character, not the poet, delivers it. Spoken by Menelaos to Telemakhos, the simile foreshadows the eventual return of Odysseus and the destruction of the suitors; as such it is pronounced by Menelaos as a kind of prophecy. Menelaos' use of the simile suggests again an exchange of roles between the warrior and the sea-prophet, who will also reveal information about Odysseus' return²⁰. The Spartan king is indignant to learn that the suitors on the island of Ithaka intend to usurp Odysseus' bed. He compares the suitors contemptuously to fawns left behind in the lair of a

lion while the doe grazes near-by. Soon the lion returns to the lair (εὐνή) and devours the intrusive fawns²¹. In this metaphorical transformation Odysseus is imagined at some future point to be like a lion, and the suitors its prey²².

In the resumptive clause of the simile, Menelaos expresses the wish that Odysseus will inflict a similar fate on Penelope's suitors. To reinforce his wish, he pronounces a short prayer to Zeus, Athene, and Apollo that Odysseus may triumph on Ithaka as he once did on the isle of Lesbos when he successfully pinned King Philomeleides, who would challenge all comers to wrestle with him. The simile and prayer are closely connected by parallel structuring devices. The flashback to the wrestling match in the prayer is introduced by τοῖος (δ 342, 345), a demonstrative that is used in simile constructions (e.g., B 482, Γ 153, Π 164) as an alternative to the commoner ὄς. The wrestling match mentioned in the prayer is echoed by the struggle between Menelaos and Proteus. The parallel might be considered coincidental, were the flashback not so integrally connected by its simile-like construction with the lion simile. For, as we shall see, beyond the coincidence of Proteus' transformation into a lion, the lion simile is closely connected with details of the Proteus episode.

The lair in which the doe beds down her fawns is called both a ξύλοχος (δ 335) and a εὐνή (δ 338); the latter word is used to bring the simile subject closer to one of the objects of comparison, the bed εὐνή (δ 333) of Odysseus in which the suitors intend to lie, εὐνηθῆναι (δ 334). If we look at the preparations for the seal disguise of Menelaos and his companions, we see that Eidothea hollows out lairs (εὐνάς δ 438) for them in the caves where Proteus and the seals bed down for the night (cf. εὐνησε δ 440, εὐνάσω 408). In disguising Menelaos and his men and putting them to bed, Eidothea imitates the nightly duty of Proteus towards his herd of seals. Her activities suggest that she is putting them to bed as a mother does her young. This maternal association is reinforced by their epithet νέποδες (404), if the etymology from ΝΕΠ is accepted²³. The action, which is followed by Menelaos' successful pinning of Proteus, parallels the earlier sequence of the doe placing her young in the lair (εὐνή) of the lion, followed by mention of Odysseus' successful outcome in a wrestling contest. Both the structural and linguistic parallels between simile and narrative argue for the authenticity of the lion simile.

What thematic significance do εὐνή and ξύλοχος in the lion simile have for the poem? The bed/lair suggests the theme of the marital fidelity of Odysseus and Penelope, as symbolized by their famous bed (called both λέχος and εὐνή, Ψ 179²⁴), which is anchored to the trunk of a massive olive tree. But there is obviously a difference between a bed and lair. The one is civilized and connotes acceptable social and sexual relationships. The other

is wild and suitable for creatures of the same species. But both the bed and the animal lair are inhospitable to strange bed-mates. It is inappropriate for a suitor to sleep in Odysseus' bed as if he were a king, an unnatural act that invites comparison with the violated lair of a lion. There may even be a facetious reference to potentially abnormal sexual relations in the Proteus passage. After Eidothea beds down (εὔνησε δ 440) Menelaos and his men encased in seal-skins the poet, in reference to the stench of the skins, asks τίς γάρ κ' εἰναλίῳ παρὰ κήτει κοιμηθεῖη;²⁵.

Menelaos' protean form and aptitude for disguise are paralleled in the portrayal of Helen, whose actions and identities merge in certain respects with those of Eidothea. In the first episode of the Book Helen and Menelaos each recount a story to illustrate the bravery of Odysseus for the edification of Telemachos (δ 235-89). Both speeches involve the motif of disguise and act as a thematic bridge between the continuous narrative that has preceded and the ensuing Proteus episode. Helen recalls how she alone recognized Odysseus in the guise of a beggar. Menelaos describes the stratagem of the Trojan horse and how Odysseus restrained his companions within the horse from answering Helen, who cleverly disguised her voice to mimic those of the wives of the Achaians. R. Schmiel, who compares the speeches of Helen and Menelaos²⁶, observes similarities in form but notes important distinctions in content. Helen presents herself in a passive role, coming to the rescue of Odysseus, then bathing and clothing the hero like a demur servant. Menelaos, on the other hand, characterizes Helen as taking an active role as she encircles the horse three times attempting to betray the Achaians in the belly of the horse. In a self-serving manner Helen diplomatically states that her motive for helping Odysseus arose from a change of heart. According to her, she renounced her infatuation for Paris when she realized that Menelaos was all a woman could wish for in a husband. In her speech she excuses herself, whereas Menelaos in his accuses her of perfidy, albeit indirectly, as Schmiel argues. Yet in both stories Helen shows herself to be clever at detecting disguises.

Further analysis of the roles of Helen in the two speeches reveals that her actions replicate those in the continuous narrative preceding, as well as in the following Proteus digression. As Helen was the only one to pierce Odysseus' disguise (δ 143-46), so she was the first to recognize Telemachos by his strong family resemblance to Odysseus (δ 250). She comes to his rescue, in a sense, by revealing his identity and relieves the young prince of the embarrassment of having to expound on his origins. Helen's personal services for Odysseus recall her wifely role in having her maids supply the newly arrived guests with rugs, sheets, and blankets when Telemachos and Peisistratos express a desire to sleep. She eases their cares and facilitates their sleep by mixing a drug in their wine. She procured the drug, we are told, from Polydamna, the wife of Thon, an Egyptian whose land produces

drugs in the greatest number (δ 229f.).

The mention of the Egyptian provenience of the potion establishes a link with the Egyptian setting of the Proteus episode and with the detail that when Eidothea beds down Menelaos and his companions in seal skins, she relieves the stench by anointing their noses with sweet-smelling ambrosia (δ 445). Like Helen in the continuous narrative and in her own story, Eidothea recognizes Menelaos as a hero in distress and comes to his rescue. Her action of hollowing out “beds” and covering the Achaians in skins echoes Helen’s attention to the personal needs of Telemachos in the narrative and Odysseus in the story.

If Helen in her passive role is like Eidothea, in her active role she resembles Proteus. By mimicking the voices of the wives of the Achaians in the horse, Helen attempts to unmask their disguise by a δόλος; but she is ultimately unsuccessful, thanks to Odysseus who has his men hold fast their tongues (ἀλλ’ Ὀδυσσεύς... ἔσχεθεν, δ 284). Helen’s vocal transformations are answered in the Proteus episode by the sea-god’s corporeal metamorphoses. Proteus attempts to confound his opponents by his cunning art (δολίης... τέχνης, δ 455), but also meets with failure because Menelaos and his companions hold fast their vice-like grip (ἡμεῖς δ’ ἀστεμφέως ἔχομεν, δ 469). In certain respects, then, both Menelaos and Helen briefly exchange identities with Proteus. Helen further participates, as it were, in Menelaos’ Egyptian interlude by her connection with Eidothea. In part the parallels between Helen in the Trojan stories and Menelaos in the Egyptian story can be explained by the tight oral composition of the *Odyssey*²⁷. But the overlapping of activities also has a meaning for the reunited pair. This sort of vicarious experiencing on the part of the wife of her husband’s adventures and *vice versa* occurs with some frequency in the case of Penelope and Odysseus in similes, as Murnaghan and others have shown, and underlines the important role of the idea ἴσοφροσύνη as a counterbalance to the inherently fragile nature of marriage²⁸. In Book 4, for example, Penelope’s lion simile at δ 791-93 allies her with Odysseus, whom she has recently called θυμολέων²⁹. In the case of Menelaos and Helen the dark allusions to deceit and disguise are entirely in keeping with the history of their precarious marriage, which, despite its apparently harmonious state at Sparta, has an undercurrent of anxiety and mistrust³⁰.

In Book 4 it is possible to see how the various types of transformation relate to each other linguistically and thematically and how they enhance the poem’s basic theme of shifting appearances and realities. It is tempting to ask how explicit cases of metamorphosis, as in the Proteus and Circe episodes, relate to cases of metamorphosis contrived by use of disguise, as in the *Doloneia*³¹, as well as to metaphorical transformations, which occur in the many animal similes. Are these three types of metamorphosis premised on the same fundamental beliefs in actual theriomorphoses, for which there

is ample evidence in the Epic Cycle and in early Greek art³²? Unfortunately, the literary evidence does not yield enough information to draw any specific conclusions. The poet is always telling us less than he knows. If the Homeric oral tradition was conversant with certain practices and beliefs such as ritual animal disguise in initiation rites³³, animal transformations of the shaman, or divine bird epiphanies³⁴, the ritual and magical elements are selectively suppressed in favor of adhering to broader literary themes. (The opposite tendency can be observed in the poems of the Epic Cycle, which often present a more primitive or sensational story.) *Odyssey* 4, with its interest in the exotica of Egypt, suggests an acquaintance with the shamanistic function of the bard in neighboring cultures. But if Proteus represents a more primitive bard, Menelaos, who actually plays the role of poet, enacts his transformations not through magic but through metaphor. A reconstruction of the exchange of identities between Proteus and Menelaos along these lines would run as follows. Proteus is a prophet, he associates with an animal familiar, and possesses shape-shifting abilities. In the conflict Menelaos himself adopts these roles, in effect exchanging identities with Proteus, until finally he vanquishes his opponent. In changing his outward appearance from that of a man to a seal, Menelaos becomes the seagod's animal. But changing from human to animal forms constitutes the primary transformation of any shaman. In becoming the prophet's animal, Menelaos imitates the behavior of a shaman. Menelaos also takes on the role of prophet for Telemachos in conveying the omen of the lion devouring the fawns, an opposite description of the suitor's eventual fate at the hand of Odysseus, who is compared to a lion in the battle with the suitors. His omen takes the form of an animal simile, and it is perhaps an ultimate sign of the exchange of identities with Proteus that the sea-god becomes the animals belonging to the warrior in similes. By enacting various shifts of shape Menelaos goes beyond being like the archetypal shape-shifter and becomes the bard, whose shape-shifting takes place in similes. The poet of the *Odyssey* refines his use of metamorphosis even a step further by reshaping the themes of disguise and transformation to serve the broader theme of appearance and reality in the poem. The poem seems to exploit the possibilities of juxtaposing poetic and magical metamorphosis while acknowledging that manipulations of the supernatural are confined to the spheres of language and myth. This implicit recognition of the capacities and limitations of poetry contributes to the greater realism of the Homeric epics in general when compared with the poems of the epic cycle.

Appendix: A Classification of the Three Types of Metamorphosis

A classification of three types of metamorphosis in the early Greek epic is

a somewhat arbitrary analysis of a complex but essential phenomenon in the poems. The epic world-view probably did not sharply distinguish among the three types but saw them as parts of a larger, continuous process. Nevertheless a breakdown of examples into divine and human transformations (including examples from the *Hymns* and the Epic Cycle) can be sketched as follows.

A. Transformations of Gods:

1. Magical. (a) A divinity transforms into an animal in order to elude a mortal. In addition to Proteus, Dionysos, in the *Hymn to Dionysos* 44f., and the ship take the forms of a lion and bear to frighten the sailors who try to kidnap the god. Periclymenus (Hes. *fr.* 33a) has the ability to take on all manner of shapes, including birds, an ant, a swarm of bees, and a snake to escape Herakles.
- (b) A divinity transforms into an animal in order to pursue an animal. The wind-god Boreas assumes equine form in order to copulate with the mares of Erichthonios (υ 223f.). The Boreas example is a variation of (a). In a variation on (b) from the *Titanomachy* (fr. 8 Allen), Kronos transforms himself into a horse to seduce Philyra and thereby to father Cheiron. On Arion sired by Poseidon and Demeter Erinyes (Thelpousa), both in horse-shape, see R. Janko, *The Shield of Herakles and the Legend of Cycnus*, CQ 36, 1986, 52f.
- c) In the Epic Cycle a divinity transforms into an animal in order to avoid the sexual advances of another divinity, e.g., Nemesis' transformations into a fish and land creatures to elude Zeus in the *Cypria* (fr. 7 Allen).

2. Contrived. (a) The so-called "cap of darkness" ("Αἶδος κυνέην), which Athene dons to escape the notice of Ares (E 845).
- (b) Gods may also use animal disguises to mask or incite mortals. The aegis of Zeus is an example of an animal "mask" used by a divinity. Even if the etymology of aegis from αἶξ is not accepted, contexts strongly suggests that the aegis is made of animal parts. Others derive aegis from ἄϊσσω, but see G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary I: Books 1-4*, Cambridge 1985, 162, who says that the aegis is "probably a goat-skin in some form".
- c) Gods, of course, take on human guises as well to incite mortals, e.g., Poseidon assumes the form of Kalchas to rouse the Argives (N 45).

3. Metaphorical. (a) Bird epiphanies (see below, note 34) are expressed in the form of similes (e.g. E 788, H 59, etc.). Evasion, pursuit, and scare tactics are the primary purposes of gods transforming or "masking" themselves.

B. Transformations of Mortals

1. Magical. a) Although mortals are subject to animal transformations, actual heroes do not undergo theriomorphosis. In the Circe episode Odysseus, with the help of the moly plant furnished by Hermes, escapes the fate that befalls his less heroic companions, who are transformed into swine by the witch's drug. The text, however, insists upon the point that, while surrendering their outward form, the men retain their inward thoughts: αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ (κ 240).
2. Contrived. (a) Heroes may, however, display attributes that outwardly lend them the aggressive aspect of an animal. Odysseus describes to his Phaiacian hosts the baldric

of Herakles in the Underworld wrought of gold and fashioned with wondrous works: bears, wild boars and bright-eyed lions. Caps and helmets also work to alter the shape of heroes and warriors. Headgear constructed of animal parts includes the boar's tusk helmet, the common κυνέη, or leather cap (the leather is not restricted to dog's skin, sc. ταυρείη, κτιδέη), sometimes encased in bronze and surmounted by a crest of horse-hair. Headwear of this type does not so much alter the outward appearance of the wearer, in the sense that it makes him *look* like an animal, as it serves to protect him, frighten his opponent, and infuse his character with the stealth or fury of the beast. Wearing animal skins also changes the appearance of a warrior. Sometimes the context suggests that the skins are mere luxury items worn as symbols of status, as Paris' leopard-skin cape (Γ 17). But in the *Doloneia* the animal skin is worn in part as a disguise suitable to the night-time reconnaissance (K 334f). Dolon wears a wolf-skin and a martin-fur cap, while Diomedes wears a lion's skin. The transformation carried out by contrivance may mask only a portion of the wearer, or in the case of the aegis or the boar's tusk helmet, may magically envelope him. Metamorphosis by magic and by disguise in fact often overlap.

3. Metaphorical. The third type of animal transformation mortals undergo is effected by a simile. Some animal similes are simply short comparisons of the type λειοῦσιν ἔοικότες ὠμοφάγοισι(ν) (E 782, H 256, O 592) occurring at end-line position. Others are developed similes intended primarily to evoke a tranquil pastoral scenes (e.g., insects at the milking places, B 469). But the largest single group of similes in Homer pictures quadrupeds, especially lions and boars. Similes occur with the highest frequency in battle narrative in the *Iliad*. Unlike contrivances, which only alter the outward appearance of the wearer, the metaphorical transformation tends to penetrate the object of comparison at the deepest spiritual level. Warriors and animals share inner states described by heroic or psychological terms, such as μένος, ἀλκή, θύμος, δλοόφρων, στήθος, σθένος, etc., cf. J. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, Chicago 1975, 171-77 for a discussion of μένος, θύμος, and related terms. The emphasis on psychic states in animal similes in distinction to other simile types is later echoed by beliefs in metempsychosis in which the soul of a man may pass into the form of an animal. See J. Bremmer on the meaning of the term ἐμψυχον in *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, Princeton 1983, 130. The spiritual aspect may be succinctly represented by an epithet such as θυμολέων, used for example of Herakles in the Underworld (λ 267). The outward appearance of Herakles' baldric (λ 611) ornamented with, among other creatures, lions, complements his inner spiritual quality. The majority of the developed animal similes are composed of two elements - pictorial and emotive - which suggest allusively the physical and spiritual transformations of warriors. The tendency of animal similes to describe both the internal and external transformation of the war-

rior indicates the likelihood that contrived and metaphorical transformation were complementary and premised on beliefs in magical metamorphosis that had the goal, as in the case of Proteus, of frightening or eluding an opponent. If this is the case, the animal simile suggests an underlying belief in the ritual metamorphosis of the warrior who temporarily *became* the animal under certain well-defined conditions, such as initiation, attack, or at death. That the characterization of the emotional qualities or "spirit" of an animal are anthropomorphic is clear, although the reasons for attribution remain obscure. Was there a need and desire to acquire these characteristics for use in war and hunting? Did the process of transformation, through magic or otherwise, represent an entry by man into the animal's state, or an entry of the animal into the human frame as a temporary transformation or an actualization of a human potential?

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Steven Lonsdale

- 1) A classification of three types of metamorphosis in the early Greek epic is given in an appendix to this paper. I have benefitted greatly from the thoughtful comments of R. Janko, S. Murnaghan, and L. Edmunds, one of the American editors of this journal.
- 2) The transitional passage at δ 620f. has been seen as an interpolation by some, but see S. West, ed. *Odissea*, Milan 1981, I on δ 621-24.
- 3) Book 4 has been the subject of several interpretations and approaches, especially its place in the "Telemachy". See F. Klinger, *Über die vier ersten Bücher der Odyssee, Ber. über die Verhandl. der Sächs. Akad. der Wiss. zu Leipzig, Philol.-hist. Kl. 96,1*, Leipzig 1944.; E. Bethe, *Homer II*, Leipzig 1922, 32f., 260f.; A. Maniet, *Pseudo-interpolations et scène de ménage dans l'Odyssee*, AC 16, 1947, 37-46; R. Schmiel, *Telemachus in Sparta*, TAPhA 103, 1972, 467-69. Various attempts have been made to demonstrate parallels between Menelaos' interviews with Proteus and other seers, notably Teiresias, including R. Merkelbach, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee, Zetemata 2*, Munich 1951, 180f; W. Anderson, *Calyppo and Elysium*, CJ 54, 1958, 2f. (reprinted in Charles H. Taylor, *Essays in the Odyssey: Selected Modern Criticism*, Bloomington 1963, 73-86; P. Plass, *Menelaos and Proteus*, CJ 65, 1969, 104-08; B. Powell, *Narrative Patterns in the Homeric Tale of Menelaus*, TAPhA 101, 1970, 419-31; M. Nagler, *Entretiens avec Thésias*, CW 74, 1980, 89-108; M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, tr. J. Lloyd, Sussex and New Jersey 1978, 20-21; 114-15, of *Les ruses d'intelligence: la Métis des grecs*, Paris 1974; cf. J.-P. Vernant, *Thésis et le poème cosmogonique d'Alcman, Hommages à Marie Delcourt*, Latomus 113, 1970, 43 note 1 on Proteus et al. The style and language of Book 4 have been criticized by G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, Cambridge 1962, 369f., who in general finds the first four Books of the *Odyssey* flat and repetitive because of the lack of similes, frequent genre scenes, repetitious reminiscences, and verbose conversations. He makes exception for the Proteus episode. This digression indeed has an intrinsic interest because of its rich folkloric material, its information about the returns of Aias and Agamemnon (as well as hints about Odysseus), and its revelation of a blessed life for Menelaos in Elysium.
- 4) The relation between cunning transformation and the motifs of ambush and disguise in Book 4 in general can be summarized as follows. In the final episode of Book 4 we learn that the suitors are plotting an ambush ($\lambda\omicron\chi\eta\sigma\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, δ 670, cf. $\lambda\omicron\chi\omega\omega\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, 847) for Telemakhos in the harbor off the rocky isle of Asteris midway between Samos and Ithaka. The ambush motif also occurs in the other episodes of

the Book. In the first episode, Menelaos describes the Trojan horse as a κούλος λόχος (δ 227). In the Proteus episode, Eidothea helps Menelaos and his men plot an ambush for Proteus (λόχος, δ 395). Menelaos' ambush of Proteus is complemented by his disguise in seal skins (sc. δόλος, δ 437). The Trojan horse is itself a disguise. The ambush motif also occurs in the simile comparing Penelope's fitful sleep to a lion hemmed in by hunters when they draw about him a deceitful cordon (ὀκνότε μιν δόλιον περι κύκλον ἄγωσι, δ 792), and perhaps in the earlier lion simile, in which the lair is a kind of trap (ξυλόχος, cf. λόχος, δ 335) for the fawns. (On λόχος generally see A. T. Edwards, *Achilles in the Odyssey*, "Beiträge der Klass. Phil." 171, Hain 1985. The related motif of disguise occurs in Helen's story about Odysseus' entry into Troy in the guise of a beggar. Other transformations and disguises are mentioned in Book 4. Athene sends to Penelope a phantom of her sister Iphtime in a dream. In order to ease the pains of remembering the Trojan war Helen mixes a drug in the wine, with the result that Telemakhos and the others undergo a kind of internal transformation. In his recital of the story of the Trojan horse Menelaos tells how Helen imitated the voices of the wives of all the Achaians within. Her shifts of sound in a sense parallel Proteus' shifts of shape. The sea-god's are the most impressive metamorphoses in a Book which, among other things, displays the poet's virtuosity in composing a set of variations on the interwoven themes of transformation, disguise, and deceit.

- 5) (above, note 3) 20-21; 114-15; cf. A. Schnapp-Gourbeillon, *Lions, héros, masques. L'animal dans Homère*, Paris 1981, 202f.
- 6) The name Eidothea probably means "the knowing goddess". L. Preller, *Griech. Myth.* I³ 500, note 2., interprets the name to mean "goddess of metamorphosis", which Roscher, s.v. Eidothea, rejects.
- 7) See Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index D* 610ff. "Repeated transformation". There was considerable debate among the ancient schools of critics as to whether or not Proteus underwent these changes in fact or in appearance only. (See Standford, *ad loc.*) For a summary of the allegorical interpretations attributed to his metamorphoses, see Pauly-Wissowa, *RE* XXIII, col. 940ff. under "Proteus" [Hans Herter].
- 8) Seals are mentioned in Herodotus, in connection with a tribe living near the Araxes river. The tribe reportedly ate raw fish and dressed in seal-skins (I. 202). Suetonius (*Aug.* 90) mentions Augustus' superstition of wearing a seal-skin amulet to protect him from lightning. See further in O. Keller, *Die antike Tierwelt*, Leipzig 1909-1913, i., s. *Seehund*. The only species of seal found in the Mediterranean is *stenorhynchus albigenter*, which is found as far south as 21 degrees.
- 9) Cf. Theoc., *Id.* 8.52 ὁ Προτεὺς φώκας καὶ θεὸς ὦν ἐνεμεν.
- 10) The following parallels between the Proteus episode and the *Cyclopeia* may be observed. Proteus is a servant ὑποδμῶς (δ 386) of Poseidon, who tries to prevent Odysseus from returning home. (B. Powell [above note 3] observes also that both Menelaos and Odysseus are denied their returns until they have confronted the monster.) Menelaos is detained on the island of Pharos off Egypt and is to learn that the reason is a failure to sacrifice. Odysseus is detained by Polyphemos, who claims Poseidon as his father. The monster is cast as a herdsman counting his sheep with which he lives in caves. Odysseus uses the herd animal as deceitful disguise to escape. As the short simile νομαῖς φῶς πῶσι μῆλων (413) emphasizes, Proteus is also portrayed as a herder counting his herds in caves (451); but as a sea-god his flocks are sea-animals. Menelaos also uses the skin of the herd animal as a deceitful disguise. Cf. S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*, Princeton 1987, 28, note 14, "The ability to adopt an animal disguise is clearly a sign of the ability to survive; the capacity actually to become an animal, as in the case of Odysseus' companions who are transformed by Circe, is an indication of the opposite".
- 11) Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index G* 530.2; cf. K 1823 "Animal Disguise". A distant parallel involving an ogre and his daughter and the beneficent effect of seals can be found in the myth and ritual of Sedna, Mistress of the Underworld, as interpreted by the Eskimos of Baffin Island. See Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians*, Cambridge, Mass. 1924, 272-73. B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey*, Wiesbaden 1974, 38 calls the entire episode typical of the "situation of a stranger receiving help on a foreign shore".

- 12) Photius, *Bibl.*, 3.149b; cf. Detienne and Vernant (above, note 3) 173, note 134.
- 13) *idem* 128f., note 17 "The *dólos* conceived by Eidothea is to disguise Menelaos and his three companions by covering them with seal skins. When they slip into these skins of the sea creatures which have just been flayed maybe the humans take on a little of the sinuous personality of their adversary and perhaps they thus share in his wiley [*sic*] intelligence."
- 14) cf. M 143, O 395, Ξ 147, ϕ 433 (battle with the suitors).
- 15) Cf. H. Fränkel, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse*², Göttingen 1977, 60, who observes that the four heroic animals of Proteus' transformation are those which do not shrink from attacking human beings. T. Krischer, *Formale Konventionen der homerischen Epik*, Munich 1971, 49-60, discusses the types of similes (animal and non-animal) used at various stages in *aristeiai*. There are 50 lion similes in the poems, 43 in the *Iliad*, seven in the *Odyssey*. All *Iliad* lion similes belong to warriors. For a list of lion similes in battle narrative, see W. Scott, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Leiden 1974, Appendix 191-205, under the heading "Lion: fighting warrior". Snake: Γ 33, X 93, cf. omens in a martial context at B 208, H 202, and the baldric of Agamemnon, A 39. Leopard: N 103, P 20. Tree and water, the remaining metamorphoses, are also subjects of similes honoring warriors in battle narrative. The tree is a common simile subject in battle narrative: Δ 482, E 560, N 178, 389, Ξ 414, Π 482, P 53 (but see West [above, note 2] on δ 458 concerning the incongruity of the tree metamorphosis), as are rivers, and wind and waves (sc. $\Upsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \delta\delta\omicron\upsilon\pi$, δ 458) B 144, 209, Δ 422, E 87, A 305, N 795, Ξ 394, O 381, 618, Π 263, 384, P 747. A combination of simile subjects drawn from flora, fauna, and natural phenomena may appear in rapid succession, as in the imagery in the Battle of the Ships (O 592-657): lion (592), god/fire (305), wind/waves (618; 624), lion (630). The poet of the *Odyssey* passage is clearly aware of the subjects and epithets used in similes in battle narrative. Schnapp-Gourbeillon (above, note 5) 203, observes "le vocabulaire de l'analogie [est] radicalement exclu des transformations de Protée: le dieu n'est pas 'comme' le lion ou le serpent, il le 'devient' (*généto*) par nature". Lion and boar figure most commonly in similes of attacking animals, e.g. E 136ff., A 173ff., M 290ff. and *passim* throughout the battle books.
- 16) Elsewhere in Book 17 Menelaos is three times compared to a lion (P 61, 109, 657, and his brother merits four lion similes in his *aristeia* in Book 11 (113, 129, 173, 239).
- 17) Cf. the use of the epithet $\omicron\upsilon\pi\acute{\alpha}\kappa\epsilon\tau\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ for the tree, as in a tree simile in battle narrative, N 437.
- 18) This is one of two developed lion similes in δ , cf. 791f. Prior to the second simile which compares Penelope to a besieged lion, she calls her husband $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\lambda\acute{\omicron}\nu$ (724). For lion imagery in the *Odyssey*, see R. Friedrich, *On the Compositional Use of Similes in the Odyssey*, *AJPh* 102, 1981, 120-37; W.T. Magrath, *The Progression of the Lion Simile in the Odyssey*, *CJ* 77, 1982, 205-12.
- 19) Eustathius 1498 considered the simile an apt portent of Odysseus' revenge of the suitors. Fränkel (above, note 15) 70, remarks on the distortion of naturalism in this simile: "Die Unrichtigkeit, die wir oft schon im Gleichnis fanden... ist hier zum Unsinn gestiegert". Since deer have a highly developed sense of smell, and the lion a strong, distinctive odor, it is unlikely that the doe would have left her young in the lair. A. Schnapp-Gourbeillon (above, note 5) 60, considers the simile "totalement artificielle". A. Podlecki, *Some Odyssean Similes*, *G&R* 18, 1971, 83, notes parallels between this simile and the simile in Agamemnon's *aristeia* at A 113-21 in which a lion devours fawns in a lair while the mother looks on helpless. In the *Iliad* simile, it appears that the lion has come to the lair of the doe. Podlecki observes that in the *Odyssey* simile, although the actual fate of the fawns is not described, the audience expects the worst. The inconclusive outcome of the simile creates an expectation which is not frustrated when it is repeated in Book 17 before Odysseus fulfils the portent. The simile is also discussed by W. Scott, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Leiden 1974, 121-24. Some have considered the simile an interpolation because Menelaos seems to be making an informed statement about Odysseus' return in the simile, whereas in the following prayer and elsewhere he merely expresses the wish. C. R. Beye, *Repeated Similes in the Homeric Poems*, in *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow on his Eightieth Birthday*, GRBS Monograph 10, Durham, North Carolina, 1984, 7 note 3 does not consider this instance since it occurs in a *verbatim* repetition of direct speech.

- 20) Like Odysseus at the court of the Phaeacians, he usurps the role of the bard (mentioned in passing at the joint wedding feast for his son and daughter, δ 17) to reminisce at the instigation of Helen. When he begins singing of the returns of the Achaeans, Telemachos, Helen, and Peisistratos react with tears, as if they were listening to a bard, much as Odysseus later responds to Demodokos' song (θ 86f., 93). The narrative strand is picked up by Proteus once he has delivered his prophecy and replies to Menelaos' more general question about the fate of the other Achaeans (486-90). His inquiry prompts Proteus' long reply (491-570).
- 21) ἀμφοτέροισι in 339 may be a reference to both fawns and doe (*contra* S. West, *ad loc.*) or to the observation mentioned by Aristophanes that a doe normally conceives two fawns, cf. Stanford, *ad loc.*
- 22) C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems*, Göttingen 1977, 123f., argues that the lion simile associates Odysseus with Penelope, who is later compared to a lion in a simile at δ 791-93.; cf. W. T. Magrath (above, note 18) 206, who relates the *Odyssey* lion simile to a lion simile for Agamemnon at A 113-121.
- 23) According to other possible etymologies, the epithet derives from νῆ and πούς, or from νέω (to swim), i.e. with the feet; cf. Stanford, *ad loc.*; *contra* Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris 1957, III, 747, who prefers the more plausible meaning "enfant, descendants", cf. Latin *nepotes*. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1970, II, 307f. concurs with Chantraine.
- 24) λέχος is properly the bed-stead, εὐνή the bedding. Etymologically λέχος is related to ξύλοχος and λόχος, which has the meaning of "ambush" in Homer; from tragedy onward it develops in addition the meaning "childbirth". Whether or not λόχος, referring to the ambush of Menelaos and his men, carries this dual meaning here at δ 441, the strictly military ambush, as known in the *Iliad*, suggests in the Proteus passage of a ritual re-birth through transformation of the type that takes place in initiation ceremonies. The passage describing the disguise of Menelaos and his men as seals contains significant details in this regard. Eidothea places ambrosia under the noses of each of the men, ostensibly as an antidote to the foul stench of the skins. But as the etymology of ambrosia (from ἀ + βροτός) suggests (cf. M. Nagler [above note 3] 94), the perfume at this moment also preserves Menelaos and his men from destruction during their struggle with Proteus, a daring deed that brings them dangerously close to death. Second, the seal-skins which Eidothea brings are said to be newly-flayed (νεόδαρτα δ 437), perhaps indicating recent hunting activity. I cannot agree with Nagler that Menelaos' men have killed the seals and that this action is further evidence of hunting, and hence a further connection with shamanism. The context strongly suggests that Eidothea has herself killed and flayed the seals. But it is stated earlier that after the depletion of the ship's supplies Menelaos' men were forced to forage for food by fishing. Nagler (p. 96) argues that the possible significance of Proteus' transformation into land animals may lie in a connection with a "carefully graded progression up the food chain" resulting from the foraging enforced on the companions of Menelaos after the supplies run out. He observes a progression from birds and fish to sea mammals, citing δ 368f (fish) and 436. Doubt is cast on this interpretation by the context of δ 436, which suggests that Eidothea is responsible for killing the seals. Had Menelaos' companions been responsible for killing any of the herd of the sea-god, some mention of the sacrilege would be expected, cf. the illicit taking of the Cattle of Helios. I do, however, agree in principle with Nagler's reconstruction of the tradition for events surrounding the consultations of Proteus and Teiresias in an underlying myth concerned with initiation (p. 101). The possibility that the description of the preparatory actions, disguise, and encounter with Proteus reflect initiatory practices concurs with Nagler's interpretation of both the consultations of Menelaos with Proteus and Odysseus with Teiresias. He posits a myth that originally was concerned with "the initiation of the hero into the cult service of the god". (p.101). Although I do not believe the Proteus episode yields evidence for cult service to the prophet, it is possible to see an underlying ritual involving animal transformation. The isolation of the men on the island of Pharos, their foraging for food, their disguise in animal skins, their lying in pits and being scented with ambrosia, and their successful mastery of Proteus, who in so many respects resembles a shaman, all combine in a form that echoes the type of ritual that prepares young men for admission to war and hunting societies in which the acquisition of the characteristics of certain animals is desirable and necessary.
- 25) In European folktales seals take on human shape. O'Nolan (below, note 27) 13 mentions examples from European folklore in which a seal becomes a mermaid by laying aside its skin. The mermaid is in the

power of whoever possesses the discarded skin. Often fishermen in possession of a skin will marry its owner and have children by her until the "wife" discovers her real skin and slips back into the sea. The rhetorical question in the *Odyssey* passage perhaps indicates a similar folkloric belief now lost to us. The bed/lair ties in with the theme of sleep and death and its opposite, the gradual rebirth and reawakening of Odysseus, as well as of other Achaeans who, like Menelaos, are finally restored to their homeland. For the symbolic death and rebirth of Odysseus, see R. M. Newton, *The Rebirth of Odysseus*, GRBS 25, 1984, 5-20. It is interesting to recall that λέχος as used by Achilles and Laertes in *Odyssey* 24 (44; 295), also means a stand for laying out the dead. The lion simile carries the sinister implication that the bed which the suitors hope to occupy will in fact become their death bed.

- 26) Above, note 3.
- 27) The links between Helen and Egypt, and in particular Proteus, perhaps reveal an acquaintance with the story in Hdt. 2.112-17 in which Proteus is a king of Egypt in power at Memphis when Helen and Paris were blown off course and forced to land along the coast. They were brought before Proteus, who decided to send Paris back to Troy but to keep Helen and her Spartan treasures. S. West (above, note 2) 320f. and on δ 355ff. discusses the interest in Egypt implied by this passage and some of the geographical difficulties presented by the text. For a discussion of Proteus in Homer and other authors, see K. O'Nolan, *The Proteus Legend*, *Hermes* 88, 1960, 1-19.
- 28) H. P. Foley, *Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the Odyssey*, *Arethusa* 11, 1978, 14-21; cf. S. Murnaghan (above, note 10) 43-46.
- 29) Cf. Eustathius 1518 on δ 791. On the apparent incongruity of this simile, see Fränkel (above note 15) 70.
- 30) R. Schmiel (above, note 3) 464 and *passim*.
- 31) A. Schnapp-Gourbeillon (above, note 5) discusses the internal and external transformations of warriors, especially of Diomedes in *Iliad* 5 and in the *Doloneia*.
- 32) See J. Griffin, *The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer*, *JHS* 97, 1977, 90-98. R. Kannicht, *Poetry and Art: Homer and the Monuments Afresh*, CA 1, 1982, 79 and Plate 3, figs. 6 and 6a, in a plausible reconstruction of a scene of Peleus capturing Thetis as a fish-woman indicates one artist's response to poetic descriptions of theriomorphosis. For metamorphoses in art, especially of sea-monsters, see E. T. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek art and Poetry*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1979, 188ff. and 250f., notes 11, 12, 15, 18, cf. W. Burkert, on the *Héllos Géron*, in *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1979, 95f.; 185, n. 13.
- 33) On possible evidence for initiation practices in the Proteus episode, see above, note 24.
- 34) F. D. Dirlmeier, *Die Vogelgestalt homerischen Götter* = SB Heidelberg 1967, 2, challenges the majority view that gods in Homer are capable of assuming the form of birds. In agreement with Heyne's remarks on H 58 (C.G. Heyne, *Iliad, Homeri Carmina V*, Leipzig 1802). Dirlmeier argues that all examples of possible bird epiphanies are to be taken no differently from any other types of short similes. Hartmut Erbse, *Homerische Götter in Vogelgestalt*, *Hermes* 108, 1980, 259-73, has reexamined the evidence for transformations of divinities into human as well as bird and other animal forms and has now shown, I believe conclusively, that the poet has degraded actual theriomorphosis of divinities into a masquerade behind which the god or goddess hides so as to conceal his or her identity. "Der Dichter hat die Tiergestalt, Residuum einer älteren, aber im archaischen Griechenland noch immer lebendigen Form der Gottesvorstellung, zur blossen Maske gewissermassen degradiert, deren Wahl dem Ermessen des jeweiligen Gottes unterliegt" (p. 273). See also H. Bannert, *Zur Vogelgestalt der Götter bei Homer*, *WS* 91, 1978, 29-43, and P. Pucci, *Les figures de la méis dans l'«Odyssee»*, *MHTIS* 1, 1986, 24-25 on the problem of distinguishing between metaphor and metamorphosis. Erbse's theory that bird epiphanies are the residue of theriomorphosis accords with the interpretation (e.g., G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, Cambridge 1962, 35) that animal-related epithets for divinities (e.g., βοῶπις for Hera, γλαυκῶπις for Athene) are vestiges of Mycenaean-Minoan religious conceptions or artistic representations of the divinities concerned in animal forms.