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With and without You: The νόστοι of Helen and Menelaos and the Path to μήτις

Summary

Νόστος is a prime feature of Homer's *Odyssey*. The epic contains many νόστοι and the focus is on the main νόστος by Odysseus. This paper discusses the νόστοι by Helen and Menelaos and how their journeying is presented separately in their story-telling. The purpose for this is to reveal the knowledge gained on their journeys; μήτις is an important facet of the concept of νόστος in the *Odyssey*, and therefore Helen and Menelaos adhere to the finite paradigm. An additional purpose is to highlight the κλέος of the individual relating their own νόστος story. Their story-telling reveals they went to the same places, had similar encounters, both gained knowledge, both shifted in voice or shape and both made a return to Sparta. From analyses of this evidence, this paper argues that Helen and Menelaos went on the same νόστος as a joint path to individual μήτις.

Keywords: Homer; Odyssey; Helen; Menelaos; journeying; knowledge

Νόστος ist ein zentrales Element von Homers *Odyssee*. Das Epos enthält viele νόστοι und die wichtigste ist die νόστος des Odysseus. Dieser Beitrag diskutiert die νόστοι von Helena und Menelaos und wie sie getrennt von ihrer Reise berichten. Ziel ist die bei dieser Reise gewonnenen Erkenntnisse herauszuarbeiten. Im Gesamtzusammenhang der *Odyssee* ist μήτις ein wichtiger Aspekt von νόστος, und deshalb passen Helena, Menelaos und ihre Reise auch in dieses Schema. Ein weiteres Ziel ist, κλέος zu erörtern, das jedem der beiden durch das Berichten des eigenen νόστος zukommt. Ihr jeweiliges Erzählen zeigt, dass sie an denselben Orten waren, ähnliche Begegnungen hatten, beide Erkenntnisse gewonnen haben, sich beide verändert haben und nach Sparta zurückgekehrt sind. Dieser Beitrag weist nach, dass sich Helena und Menelaos auf dieselbe νόστος begeben haben: ein gemeinsamer Weg aber mit je andersartiger μήτις.

Keywords: Homer; Odyssee; Helena; Menelaos; Reise; Erkenntnis/Weisheit/Einsichten

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The *Odyssey* is critically defined by the concept of νόστος, the journey home. In Homer, νόστος fundamentally means a return home from Troy by sea. Conceptually, νόστος means both the return itself as experienced by those having returned and the poetic telling of that experience either by those who underwent it, or by the poet.¹ Within the *telling of that experience*, νόστος additionally means a journey home involving the acquisition of knowledge. Though Odysseus' νόστος is the prime focus of the epic, there are in fact many νόστοι in the *Odyssey*. The beginning of the epic is marked by Phemius' song, which tells of the anguished returns of the Achaeans from Troy.² While the other νόστοι include those of Menelaos, Nestor, Agamemnon, Telemachos, Diomedes, Idomeneos, and Philoctetes, one particular journey that has not been examined as pertaining to the concept, is the one by Helen.

Helen is unique in that she is the only woman in Homer to undergo a νόστος. Her νόστος means that she makes a full return to Sparta. Within the journey she adheres to the Odyssean paradigm that the purpose of the journey is not just travel and visual experience, but more importantly, is about the acquisition of knowledge, μῆτις.³ Significantly, she tells of her νόστος just as the men tell of their own and of other men's νόστοι. The telling of the extraordinary journeys to strange and foreign lands, of the people encountered there, the ξενία relations between these people, the knowledge gained from them while encountering foreign lands, and the knowledge gained from gods and ethereal beings are all aspects of her νόστος that enable the gaining of μῆτις and also contribute to individual κλέος. Both Helen and Menelaos tell the stories of their νόστοι separately without mentioning each other. This, I will argue, serves not to consciously exclude the other from the experiences on the journey, but to highlight the κλέος of the person narrating their story.

In book four of the *Odyssey*, Helen and Menelaos tell μῦθοι as part of their hospitality to Telemachos. The nature of their 'tellings' has been argued as forming part of Telemachos' maturation;⁴ knowing about parts of his father's νόστος contributes to his understanding of the development of male κλέος. However, there are multiple purposes

1 Bonifazi 2009, 481.

2 Hom. *Od.* 1.325–327. This is also noted by Barker and Christensen 2016, 93.

3 The importance of μῆτις in the epic is also demonstrated by Odysseus' distinctive epithet πολύμητις;

he is noted by Slatkin and Nagy as the only mortal to bear this epithet in Homer. Slatkin 1996, 236; Nagy 2013, 280–284.

4 Barker and Christensen 2016, 93.

for the stories told by Helen and Menelaos. In their μῦθοι, ostensibly about Odysseus' wanderings and aspects of his κλέος, they also reveal glimpses of sections of their own respective νόστοι.

When "Helen left her fragrant high-roofed inner room"⁵, ἐκ δ' Ἑλένη θαλάμοιο θυώδεος ὑψορόφοιο ἦλυθεν, the poet tells of the accompanying goods that were brought out with her; including the ἀργύρεον τάλαρον⁶ (silver basket) that had been given to her by Alkandre, the wife of Polybos from Egyptian Thebes.⁷ In turn, Menelaos received gifts from Polybos: δὴ ἀργυρέας ἀσαμίνθους, δοιοὺς δὲ τρίποδας, δέκα δὲ χρυσοῖο τάλαντα, "two silver bathing-tubs, a pair of tripods, and ten talents of gold."⁸ Not only is this an example of gift-giving between men and women, specifically between noble men and women,⁹ but also a glimpse into the νόστος to Egypt by Helen and Menelaos. Clearly it was here that they met another leading couple. Through the interaction of guest-friendship, which implied that they stayed at the home of Alkandre and Polybos,¹⁰ they were presented with the gifts in the ritual of hospitality, ξενία. Gifts were given to Helen by Alkandre; the description of which focuses on their richness and purpose: weaving and the storing of wool.

χωρίς δ' αὐθ' Ἑλένη ἄλοχος πόρε κάλλιμα δῶρα:
 χρυσέην τ' ἠλακάτην τάλαρόν θ' ὑπόκυκλον ὄπασσεν
 ἀργύρεον, χρυσῶ δ' ἐπὶ χεῖλεα κεκράαντο ...

His wife gave separately her own beautiful gifts to Helen:
 she gave her a golden distaff and a silver basket with wheels beneath,
 and the edges done in gold ...¹¹

The various encounters in Egypt glimpsed in this section of book four allude to the fact that both Helen and Menelaos were together. This was a journey they undertook together, and they interacted with another couple in the Egyptian city of Thebes. In Homer, the journey taken by Helen and Menelaos to Egypt is woven into the *Odyssey's* larger μῦθος; it is incorporated into their joint story: their return from Troy. What is not presented in the text is the journey to Egypt, related by either of them.¹² In fact, the other three ancient sources on Helen and Egypt – Stesichorus, Herodotus, and Euripides

5 Hom. *Od.* 4.121–122. All translations are my own.

6 Hom. *Od.* 4.125.

7 Hom. *Od.* 4.126–127.

8 Hom. *Od.* 4.127–128.

9 Reece 1992, 74–90.

10 For a selected discussion on Homeric gift-giving and hospitality outside the martial context see Reece 1992, 74–90; Woodbury 1967, 1–16. Tracy empha-

sizes the self-sacrificing nature and trust between strangers, while Edwards 1975, 51–72 focuses on comparing details in descriptions and metrical anomalies in hospitality scenes. He highlights the irregularities and inconsistencies as a result of the process of oral composition.

11 Hom. *Od.* 4.130–32.

12 Waern 1985, 165.

– do not mention the journey to Egypt by Helen either. Herodotus, writing later in the second half of the fifth century, thought Homer suppressed the Egypt story and gave his own information on Helen arriving in Egypt shortly after leaving Sparta, adding that King Proteus of Egypt, appalled by Paris’ seduction of Helen, refused to allow Paris to take her on to Troy, thus detaining her in Egypt for the duration of the war.¹³ Stesichorus’ work (which was possibly the inspiration for Herodotus) also states that Helen never went to Troy but stayed in Egypt,¹⁴ and Euripides’ play *Helen* has the true Helen in Egypt while her εἶδωλον is in Troy. The Homeric version, that she visited Egypt on her return from Troy (and it is impossible to ascertain if it is the original story), is woven into the narrative and therefore becomes part of the larger μῦθος. It also supports in a crucial way the values espoused throughout the epic, most notably νόστος, μῆτις, and ξενία.

When Menelaos, the men, and Helen have grieved from listening to the stories of Odysseus told by Menelaos,¹⁵ Helen ἐνθ’ αὐτ’ ἄλλ’ ἐνόησ’, “thought of the next thing”.¹⁶ She puts a draught into the men’s wine to make them forget their sorrows and cease crying no matter what emotional pain they were suffering.¹⁷ It is revealed by the poet that these subtle draughts in her possession were

ἐσθλά, τὰ οἱ Πολύδαμνα πόρεν, Θῶνος παράκοιτις
Αἰγυπτίη, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλά μεμιγμένα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά:
ιητρὸς δὲ ἕκαστος ἐπιστάμενος περὶ πάντων
ἀνθρώπων: ἧ γὰρ Παιήονος εἰσι γενέθλης.

Good things, and given to her by the wife of Thon, Polydamna
of Egypt, where the fertile earth produces the greatest number
of medicines, many good in mixture and many bad:
and there every man is a doctor and more knowledgeable
than all men: for they are of the race of Paiëon.¹⁸

In this, the narrator reveals that the wife of Thon, named Polydamna, from Egypt, gave these drugs – and also the knowledge of the drugs – to Helen. In this isolated section of the text, Menelaos is not mentioned. We are told of Helen’s knowledge and her purpose in drugging the wine to be consumed by the men.

13 Hdt. 2.112–120.

14 This is mentioned in Paus.10.26.1. Stesichorus also composed a poem titled Νόστος but it is fragmentary (PMG209). This is also noted by Bonifazi 2009, 485, n. 485.

15 For a discussion on tears in Homer see Tracy 2014, 223–229.

16 Hom. *Od.* 4.219.

17 Hom. *Od.* 4.220–226.

18 Hom. *Od.* 4.228–232.

Literary criticism of this section of the text has focused on Helen's ambivalent nature; she is neither good nor bad, in that while the drugs she deploys are described as ἐσθλά, the effect of them dulls the senses, and makes the men morally desensitized.¹⁹ Scholarship on Helen has also examined this passage and made much, perhaps to extremes, of her knowledge. While M. Suzuki has referred to it as *uncanny*²⁰ with an underlying sense of otherworldliness, M. Gumpert has referred to her as orientalized and as a witch-doctor and noted that it is difficult to ascertain whether she is good or bad.²¹ Similarly, N. Austin stated that the *Odyssey* has interpreted Helen's magic as a medical skill.²² What has not been examined is the fact that Helen has acquired this knowledge, this μῆτις, on her νόστος; specifically, in her sojourn in Egypt. Contextually this incident focuses on the dulling of the senses of the men to ease their pain and moves forward to Helen's μῦθος regarding her encounter with Odysseus. There is a glimpse, however, of Helen's journey and like the prime journey in the epic, that of Odysseus, Helen's journey also contains the important element of acquired μῆτις, which is essential in achieving κλέος in the *Odyssey*.²³

Menelaos also acquires knowledge in Egypt as part of the experience of his νόστος. The poet provides greater detail on Menelaos' encounters there in comparison to what is revealed of Helen's experiences.²⁴ While Helen gains μῆτις from a leading woman, Polydamna, Menelaos encounters two otherworldly individuals who both give him guidance and specific knowledge for his νόστος. Menelaos reveals,

Αἰγύπτῳ μ' ἔτι δεῦρο θεοὶ μεμαῶτα νέεσθαι
 ἔσχον, ἐπεὶ οὐ σφιν ἔρεξα τελεήσας ἑκατόμβας ...
 καὶ νῦ κεν ἦα πάντα κατέφθιτο καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν,
 εἰ μὴ τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο καὶ μ' ἐσάωσε,
 Πρωτέος ἰφθίμου θυγάτηρ ἄλιόιο γέροντος,
 Εἰδοθέη· τῇ γάρ ῥα μάλιστά γε θυμὸν ὄρινα.
 ἦ μ' οἶώ ἔρροντι συνήντετο νόσφιν

Though I was eager to return the gods held me in Egypt
 here, because I had not offered complete hecatombs to them....
 And now all the food would have gone, and the men's strength as well,
 if one of the gods had not been sorry for me, and saved me,
 Eidothea, the daughter of mighty Proteus, the Old Man

19 Suzuki 1989, 66; Gumpert 2001, 41; Bergren 2009, 314–335.

20 Suzuki 1989, 64.

21 Gumpert 2001, 41. Clader also refers to Helen in this incident as possessing 'witch-like' powers. Clader 1976, 32.

22 Austin 1994, 77.

23 For a detailed discussion on μῆτις in the *Odyssey* see Slatkin 1996, 223–238. Also Nagy 2013, 280–284.

24 For the scene as a whole focussed on Menelaos see Barck 1971, 23–26.

of the Sea, for I moved her heart greatly
when she met me wandering alone ...²⁵

Eidothea, the ethereal daughter of Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, is the first other-worldly being Menelaos encounters. She gives him instructions to see her father.

πωλεῖται τις δεῦρο γέρων ἄλιος νημερτῆς
ἀθάνατος Πρωτεύς Αἰγύπτιος, ὃς τε θαλάσσης
πάσης βένθεα οἶδε, Ποσειδάωνος ὑποδμῶς:
τὸν δέ τ' ἐμόν φασιν πατέρ' ἔμμεναι ἠδὲ τεκέσθαι.
τόν γ' εἶ πως σὺ δύναιο λοχησάμενος λελαβέσθαι,
ὃς κέν τοι εἴπησιν ὁδὸν καὶ μέτρα κελεύθου
νόστον θ', ὡς ἐπὶ πόντον ἐλεύσεια ἰχθυόεντα.
καὶ δέ κέ τοι εἴπησι, διοτρεφές, αἴ κ' ἐθέλησθα,
ὅττι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν τ' ἀγαθὸν τε τέτυκται
οἰχομένοιο σέθεν δολιχὴν ὁδὸν ἀργαλέην τε.

A certain always truthful Old Man of the Sea frequents these parts,
the immortal Proteus of Egypt, and he knows
the depths of all the seas. He is Poseidon's servant of the whole sea.
And they also say he is my father, who begot me.
If somehow you could lie in wait and catch hold of him,
he would tell you the way to go, the stages of your journey,
and tell you the means to make your way home on the fish-full sea.
And he will tell you too, one cherished by Zeus, if you so wish,
what evil and what good has been done in your palace
while you have been away on your long and difficult journey.²⁶

Eidothea's instructions are important as a signpost to Proteus. Proteus, according to Eidothea, will give guidance to Menelaos for his journey home and give him knowledge of the events in his palace while he has been away. Not only does Proteus have the appropriate navigational knowledge for Menelaos, he also has knowledge about the occurrences within his own palace in Sparta; extraordinary knowledge, as it is an understanding of happenings at a distance from his own sea life. When he finally meets Proteus and wrestles with him till he can force him to respond, Menelaos asks which one of the gods has stalled him on his journey and how he may make his way home.²⁷ Proteus' response provides him with exactly the knowledge Menelaos requested, no more no less. He says,

25 Hom. *Od.* 4.351–352; 363–367.

26 Hom. *Od.* 4.384–393.

27 Hom. *Od.* 4.454–470.

οὐ γάρ τοι πρὶν μοῖρα φίλους τ' ἰδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι
οἶκον ἐυκτίμενον καὶ σὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
πρὶν γ' ὄτ' ἄν Αἰγύπτιοι, διπτετέος ποταμοῖο,
αὐτίς ὕδωρ ἔλθῃς ῥέξῃς θ' ἱεράς ἐκατόμβας
ἄθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, τοῖ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσι:
καὶ τότε τοι δώσουσιν ὁδὸν θεοί, ἦν σὺ μενοινᾶς.

It is not now your fate to see your own people and return
to your well-made house, and to your ancestral land,
until you have gone back once more to the waters of Egypt,
the river fallen from Zeus, and there have offered holy hecatombs
in honor of the immortal gods who hold wide heaven.
Then the gods will grant you the journey that you so desire.²⁸

In this response, Menelaos learns that he needs to make the necessary sacrifices to honor all the gods so that he may proceed on his journey.²⁹ There is a focus in Menelaos' μῦθος on the concept of the journey and how he needs to acquire μῆτις to complete it.³⁰ In comparison, the glimpses we are given of Helen's νόστος reveal that her acquired μῆτις is in regard to φάρμακα. While Helen's μῆτις is gained on the journey, it is not like Menelaos', which is explicitly for the process of the journey.

Shape-shifting is a common feature of many of the gods. It is particularly the goddess Athena who shape-shifts in the *Odyssey*. In fact, Athena changes shape 16 times in the epic.³¹ Odysseus also changes shape; once on his own, disguised as a Trojan beggar entering Troy,³² and later with the help of Athena, when he is disguised as a beggar so he can enter Ithaca undetected.³³ There are different types of shape-shifting in the epic. Disguise is one type. Both Odysseus and Athena change physical shape as a form of disguise, so that people do not know them. Shape-shifting in the *Odyssey* is an aspect of δόλος; a concept upheld and valued as one result of μῆτις. On their νόστος both Helen and Menelaos *shift*. Helen adapts, *shifts* her voice multiple times so that she is heard and understood to be other women. Menelaos *shifts* his physical shape, adopting the guise of an animal to gain knowledge.

28 Hom. *Od.* 4.475–480.

29 For a discussion of the concept of νόστος by sea see Christopoulos 2001.

30 For further discussion on νόστος and structure in the *Odyssey* see Cook 2014.

31 Hom. *Od.* 1.205 as Mentos, *Od.* 2.268, 401, 416; 22.205–206; 24.503, 547–548 as Mentor; 12.222–

225 as herdsman; 7.19–20 as guide; 5.22 friend of Nausikaa; 19.33–34 as lamp-bearer; 13.288–289 as beautiful woman; 3.371–379 as vulture; 22.238–240 as swallow.

32 Hom. *Od.* 4.244–250.

33 Hom. *Od.* 13.393–403.

Helen's *shifft* takes place at the end of the Trojan war. In his μῦθος, Menelaos relates the circumstances involving the Trojan horse at the gates of Troy.³⁴ He does not focus on himself (though admittedly he does include himself in his μῦθος to ensure his remembrance and therefore κλέος) but on his wife and Odysseus.³⁵ He says,

οἶον καὶ τόδ' ἔρεξε καὶ ἔτλη καρτερὸς ἀνὴρ
 ἵππῳ ἐνὶ ξεστῷ, ἴν' ἐνήμεθα πάντες ἄριστοι
 Ἀργείων, Τρώεσσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φέροντες.
 ἦλθες ἔπειτα σὺ κεῖσε· κελευσέμεναι δέ σ' ἔμελλε
 δαίμων, ὃς Τρώεσσιν ἐβούλετο κῦδος ὀρέξαι·
 καὶ τοὶ Διήφοβος θεοεἰκελὸς ἔσπετ' ἰούση.
 τρὶς δὲ περιστρίψας κοῖλον λόχον ἀμφαφώσωσα,
 ἐκ δ' ὀνομακλήδην Δαναῶν ὀνόμαζες ἀρίστους,
 πάντων Ἀργείων φωνὴν ἴσκουσ' ἀλόχοισιν·
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ Τυδεΐδης καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ἦμενοι ἐν μέσσοισιν ἀκούσαμεν, ὡς ἐβόησας.
 νῶϊ μὲν ἀμφοτέρω μενεήναμεν ὀρμηθέντες
 ἢ ἐξελθέμεναι ἢ ἐνδοθεν αἰψ' ὑπακοῦσαι·
 ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἰεμένω περ.
 ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀκὴν ἔσαν υἴες Ἀχαιῶν,
 Ἄντικλος δὲ σέ γ' οἶος ἀμείψασθαι ἐπέεσσιν
 ἦθελεν· ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐπὶ μάλιστα χερσὶ πίεζε
 νωλεμέως κρατερῆσι, σάωσε δὲ πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς·
 τόφρα δ' ἔχ', ὄφρα σε νόσφιν ἀπήγαγε Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη

Here is the way that mighty man acted and the way he endured
 inside the carved horse, where inside we who were greatest
 of the Argives were sitting and bringing death and destruction
 to the Trojans. Then you came there, Helen; you will have been moved by
 some daemon who wished to grant glory to the Trojans,
 and godlike Deiphobos followed you when you came.
 Three times you walked around the hollow ambush, touching it,
 and you called out, calling to them by name, the best of the Danaans,
 and made your voice sound like the voice of the wives of all the Argives.
 Now I and the son of Tydeus and god-like Odysseus
 were sitting there in the midst of them and we heard you calling

34 For discussion on the Trojan horse story as a narrative technique filling in the story between the end of the war and the present episode in Sparta see

Besslich 1966, 48–50; Heubeck 1954, 18ff.
 35 For Odysseus' accomplishments as expressed by Menelaos see Nestle 1942, 73.

aloud, and Diomedes and I started to get up, both in mind
 to go outside, or else to answer your voice from inside,
 but Odysseus pulled us back and held us, for all our eagerness.
 Then all the other sons of the Achaians were silent:
 There was only one, it was Antiklos, who wanted to call out,
 but Odysseus, brutally closed his mouth in the clutch of his strong
 hands, held him, and so saved the lives of all the Achaians
 until Pallas Athene led you away from us.³⁶

Helen's actions here are certainly morally questionable. Suzuki says that this episode shows Helen in her devastating spectrum: her infidelity to Menelaos is made worse by her marriage to Deiphobus, and her mimicking of the voices of the wives of the Achaians demonstrates her almost supernatural ability to enthrall and enchant.³⁷ Suzuki does have a point here, though she stretches the argument with mention of Helen's infidelity: Helen's marriage to Deiphobus is not part of the story in the *Odyssey*, but appears in the later *Epic Cycle*, specifically in the *Little Iliad*.³⁸ Regardless, Helen's actions are unsettling. Her attempt to deflect Odysseus from his true purpose, his heroic return, does categorize her with the other femmes fatales he encounters on his journey: a point also noted by Austin, Suzuki, and R. Blondell.³⁹ J. T. Kakridis analyses this episode from a narratological viewpoint and has argued for conflated stories regarding Helen and the horse as a way of understanding the contradictory nature of Helen.⁴⁰

Scholarship on Helen has focused on the unsettling aspects of her mimicking the voices of the Achaian wives.⁴¹ D. Olson in particular has interpreted this particular episode as demonstrating the tensions in the marital relationship, the wider sexual dynamics in the epic of the struggle between male and female, and the lack of trust men place in women.⁴² While there are certainly sexual tensions in the *Odyssey*, specifically between Odysseus and Penelope, the relationship between Helen and Menelaos in the epic shows a reunited couple, at least on the surface, who have endured much. What needs to be highlighted in the Trojan Horse episode, is that Helen *shifts* in voice, which in itself is deceptive. Not only does she assume the voices of the wives of the Achaians, from what is implied in what Menelaos indicates about his own response, Helen also projects her own voice and calls to him. Though this is not a *shift*, her intent appears to be deceptive. Helen demonstrates δόλος, a result of μῆτις. The encounter with the Trojan horse marks the beginning of her journey back to Sparta. Therefore, the beginning

36 Hom. *Od.* 4.271–289.

37 Suzuki 1989, 69.

38 Evelyn-White 1936, 510.

39 Austin 1994, 79; Suzuki 1989, 65; Blondell 2013, 79.

40 Kakridis 1971.

41 For Helen as a contrast to Penelope regarding faithfulness and unfaithfulness see Klinger 1964, 79.

42 Olson 1989, 393–394.

of Helen's *return* is signposted by her μήτις. In addition to this, the intent of this section of the narrative was to highlight Odysseus' μήτις prevailing in the episode concerning the Trojan horse.⁴³

Menelaos' μῦθος is partly aimed at giving information to Telemachos regarding his father. It is a form of maturation for Telemachos.⁴⁴ The beginning of Helen's *return* is triply embedded in that it is within Menelaos' own νόστος (his journey within the horse into and then out of Troy), told during the νόστος of Telemachos, and within the main epic νόστος; Odysseus' νόστος. In this way, Helen's δόλος, a result of μήτις, in this episode, shows the beginning of her *return* in her νόστος, framed within the main νόστος; that of Odysseus, which itself is known for δόλος and μήτις. The μῦθος functions for both Helen and Menelaos, as Menelaos includes himself in this particular μῦθος in book 4, which by doing so also indicates that he as well as Helen possesses δόλος.⁴⁵ After all, he is concealed within the Trojan horse, which is itself deceptive. Helen and Menelaos both show δόλος in this episode, demonstrating that they have this in common with regard to their experiences on their νόστοι. While Suzuki and Blondell have mentioned Helen's moral ambivalence,⁴⁶ in this instance Menelaos is just as culpable. Though his desire to fight for and regain his wife is honorable,⁴⁷ his participation in the duplicitous intent of the Trojan horse makes him a party to deception, δόλος.

Menelaos has another episode where he demonstrates δόλος. In this episode he physically shape-shifts, whereas in the Trojan horse episode he inhabits the *shape* of deception, the Horse itself. Menelaos' physical shape-shifting is performed to gain information from Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea. Menelaos is provided with the means to achieve this by Eidothea, Proteus' daughter. Menelaos relates,

τόφρα δ' ἄρ' ἦ γ' ὑποδῦσα θαλάσσης εὐρέα κόλπον
 τέσσαρα φωκῶων ἐκ πόντου δέρματ' ἔνεικε:
 πάντα δ' ἔσαν νεόδαρτα: δόλον δ' ἐπεμήδετο πατρί.
 εὐνάς δ' ἐν ψαμάθοισι διαγλάψασ' ἀλίησιν
 ἦστο μένους': ἡμεῖς δὲ μάλα σχεδὸν ἦλθομεν αὐτῆς:
 ἐξείης δ' εὐνήσε, βάλεν δ' ἐπὶ δέρμα ἐκάστῳ.
 ἔνθα κεν αἰνότατος λόχος ἔπλετο: τεῖρε γὰρ αἰνῶς
 φωκῶων ἀλιοτρεφῶων ὀλωτάτος ὀδμή:
 τίς γάρ κ' εἰναλίῳ παρὰ κήτεϊ κοιμηθείη;

43 For Odysseus' *Odyssean* qualities in this episode see Fränkel 1962, 96, 99.

44 For discussion on the education of Telemachos by Menelaos see Petropoulos 2011, 52–56.

45 For detail on the rhetorical sophistication of Helen's and Menelaos' speeches see Janka 2001, 7–26.

46 Suzuki 1989, 70; Blondell 2013, 84–85.

47 Achilles' behavior and reaction to Briseis being taken away from him in the *Iliad* reveals the nature of their relationship. He makes a brief comparison between Menelaos' love for Helen and him fighting for her, and his own love and care for Briseis and fighting for her. Hom. *Il.* 9.339–343.

ἄλλ' αὐτὴ ἐσάωσε καὶ ἐφράσατο μέγ' ὄνειαρ:
 ἀμβροσίην ὑπὸ ῥίνα ἐκάστῳ θῆκε φέρουσα
 ἠδὺ μάλα πνεύουσαν, ὄλεσσε δὲ κήτεος ὀδμήν.
 πᾶσαν δ' ἠοίην μένομεν τετληότι θυμῷ:
 φῶκαι δ' ἐξ ἄλός ἦλθον ἀολλέες. αἰ μὲν ἔπειτα
 ἐξῆς εὐνάζοντο παρὰ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης:
 ἔνδιος δ' ὁ γέρων ἦλθ' ἐξ ἄλός, εὔρε δὲ φώκας
 ζατρεφείας, πάσας δ' ἄρ' ἐπώχετο, λέκτο δ' ἀριθμόν:
 ἐν δ' ἡμέας πρώτους λέγε κήτεσιν, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
 ὠϊσθη δόλον εἶναι: ἔπειτα δὲ λέκτο καὶ αὐτός.
 ἡμεῖς δὲ ἰάχοντες ἐπεσσύμεθ', ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας
 βάλλομεν: οὐδ' ὁ γέρων δολίης ἐπελήθετο τέχνης,
 ἀλλ' ἦ τοι πρώτιστα λέων γένετ' ἠυγένειος,
 αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα δράκων καὶ πάρδαλις ἠδὲ μέγας σῦς:
 γίγνετο δ' ὑγρὸν ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον:
 ἡμεῖς δ' ἀστεμφέως ἔχομεν τετληότι θυμῷ.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἀνιάζ' ὁ γέρων ὀλοφώια εἰδώς,
 καὶ τότε δὴ μ' ἐπέεσσιν ἀνειρόμενος προσέειπε:

Meanwhile she (Eidothea) had dived down into the sea's great bosom
 and brought forth the skins of four seals from the water; and
 all were newly skinned. She planned a trick on her father.
 She hollowed out four beds in the sand of the sea, she sat there
 waiting, and we came very close to her. Then there
 she made us lie down in a row, and spread a skin over each man.
 That was a most dreadful ambush, for the terrible
 stench of those seals, bred in the salt water, badly distressed us.
 Who would want to lie down next to a sea-born monster?
 But she herself rescued us and devised a great help.
 She brought ambrosia, and put it beneath each man's nose,
 and it smelled very sweet, and got rid of the stench of the monster.
 All that morning we waited there, steadfast in spirit,
 and the seals came forth thronging out of the sea, and when they came out
 they lay down in a row along the shore of the sea.
 At noon the Old Man came out of the sea and found his well-fed
 seals, and went over to them all, and counted their number,
 and we were among the seals he counted first; he had no idea
 of any betrayal. Then he also lay down among us.
 We with a yell, sprang up and rushed upon him, seizing him

in our arms, but the Old Man did not forget the craftiness of his arts. First, he turned into a great bearded lion, and then a serpent, then a leopard, then a great boar, and he turned into fluid water, into a tree with high and leafy branches, but we determinedly held on to him with steadfast spirit. But when the Old Man versed in devious ways grew weary of all this, he questioned and spoke to me in words ...⁴⁸

The purpose of Menelaos' shape-shifting is to acquire μῆτις, and this is done both on the journey and for the sake of his return journey. Shape-shifting is certainly about δόλος, deception, in the *Odyssey*. Its purpose enables the hero to proceed on his νόστος; consider Odysseus entering Ithaca disguised as a beggar,⁴⁹ and also Odysseus as described in Helen's μῦθος entering Troy in disguise on the spying mission.⁵⁰ Both of these instances in the prime νόστος in the epic involve shape-shifting as a means to gain μῆτις, knowledge. Menelaos' shape-shifting adheres to this principle. Through the telling of this extraordinary μῦθος, Menelaos ensures that he will be remembered,⁵¹ and therefore he will have achieved κλέος.

Helen's *voice shift* however, is something different. Her purpose for mimicking the voices of the Achaians' wives is not to gain μῆτις. For it reveals that she already knows the color and timbre of their voices, and she has the ability to assume them to the extent that even their husbands are convinced it is their wives outside the Horse. In this way, Helen's *shift* demonstrates her δόλος and μῆτις, not a pursuit of μῆτις. However, her μῆτις, despite its moral ambivalence in this episode, signifies that this is the beginning of her return journey to Sparta. While Helen is outside the Horse, Menelaos is inside, and it is at this juncture that they both have a shared (but independent) experience and begin their *return* to Sparta.

Therefore, νόστος and μῆτις are demonstrated to be interdependent concepts valued in the *Odyssey*, not just in relation to Odysseus' νόστος, but in relation to Menelaos' and Helen's νόστοι as well. Barker and Christiansen consider the νόστοι in the *Odyssey* as glimpses of rival traditions that are woven into the narrative to develop the poem's meanings and exploration of its themes.⁵² These other traditions are not *rivals* per se, but other narratives concerning the individuals involved in and associated with the Trojan war; essentially the Troy stories. The fact that they are incorporated into the narrative

48 Hom. *Od.* 4.435–461.

49 Hom. *Od.* 13.429–440.

50 Hom. *Od.* 4. 239–258.

51 Mueller discusses women and remembering, specifically Penelope and remembering in the *Odyssey*, and how this is associated with κλέος. Moran 1975,

337–362. On remembering in Homer see Mueller 2007, 195–211. On specifically story-telling and κλέος in the *Odyssey* see chapter 1 Olson 1995. For the complexities of κλέος, including remembering and story-telling, see Segal 1983, 22–47.

52 Barker and Christiansen 2016, 90–91.

structure of the *Odyssey* is indicative of their importance in reinforcing the values deemed necessary to be repeated and highlighted in this epic. It is also about the theme of the journey home. Helen and Menelaos each tell their μῦθοι, revealing glimpses into their νόστοι. Their joint νόστος foreshadows the successful return to the οἶκος for Odysseus. Their self-reporting serves the purpose of revealing the knowledge they gained on their journeys, as well as creating individual κλέος for each of them. They both have encounters at the fall of Troy that result in them gaining knowledge, they have the guidance of gods, *shift* in voice or in shape exemplifying δόλος, acquire μήτις in Egypt from foreign and otherworldly individuals, and both return to Sparta. Helen and Menelaos have a joint νόστος as they journey to the same places, have similar encounters, and return together. Their narrations and glimpses into their joint νόστος serve the purpose of highlighting the *Odyssey*'s prime focus, that of the νόστος. The uniqueness of their individual but joint νόστος highlights not only the conceptual facets of the physical and sensory experiences of their journey, but also their pathway to individual maturity; their acquisition of μήτις, which greatly contributes to their κλέος.

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