

Port, reading the telltale signals and aware of the dangerous northern exposure there, sailed right on, rounding Guardafui and putting in at Tabai. They lost little by doing so, for, from Tabai it was but 400 stades to Opônê, and Opônê handled just about the same objects of trade as the Spice Port.<sup>15</sup>

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prediction. He himself had time to take refuge at a harbor some 50 nautical miles from San Domingo. See Bartolomé de la Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, Bk. 2, chap. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Periplus* 12, 13.

### A convention of metamorphosis in Greek art\* (PLATE VIII)

As part of his recent study of 'Narration and allusion in Archaic Greek Art',<sup>1</sup> Professor A. M. Snodgrass has cause to treat of the famous Attic black-figure vase<sup>2</sup> which depicts Circe handing a cup containing her sinister brew to one of Odysseus' sailors. She is stirring it with her wand the while, and yet this sailor, and three companions besides, have already been transformed into various animals (or at least his head, and their heads and arms have been). Professor Snodgrass has no difficulty in explaining the apparent simultaneity of separate events here and elsewhere on this vase-painting as relating to what he calls the 'synoptic' technique of early Greek Art, that familiar device whereby several successive episodes in a narrative are presented together within the same picture. And he is inclined towards a similar line of explanation as regards the partial transformation of Odysseus' ἑταῖροι: the artist 'wished to express the passage of time by indicating a half-way stage in the transformation'.<sup>3</sup>

Snodgrass at once proceeds to point out that such an interpretation 'is not fully compatible with the "synoptic" method as outlined above, since it would involve representing different individuals at the same moment of time'. Partly in view of this difficulty, partly for other reasons, I should like to advance a quite different explanation: the artist chooses to depict the metamorphoses in this manner (which, if interpreted *literally*, would lead to the conclusion that the transformation was incomplete) because he wishes to signify that the ἑταῖροι are not really pigs (or lions or horses or rams to

\* Professor John Boardman and Dr Michael Vickers kindly read and improved earlier drafts of this note.

<sup>1</sup> The eleventh J. L. Myres Memorial Lecture (delivered at New College, Oxford, on 29th May 1981; published 1982).

<sup>2</sup> The name-piece of the Painter of the Boston Polyphemus and datable c. 560 BC (Boston 99.518: *ABV* 198): Chr. Zindel, *Die Irrfahrten des Odysseus* (Basel 1984) No. 8 (with bibliography). Reproduced here as PLATE VIIIa with the kind permission of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

<sup>3</sup> Snodgrass (n. 1) 7. Literary representations of metamorphosis sometimes choose (usually for comic effect) to depict an incomplete stage of the process: see e.g. A. S. Hollis, *Ovid Metamorphoses Book VIII* (Oxford 1970) xvi f. Snodgrass 5 rightly says that the Boston vase is 'always chosen to express the quintessence' of the 'synoptic' technique. Since he wrote it has so been treated again by, for instance, W. Raeck, 'Zur Erzählweise archaischer und klassischer Mythenbilder', *JDAI* ic (1984) 4 f.

mention the respective heads of the other companions) but that they were 'really' (or at least were 'originally' and are 'basically') human beings. Their status as transmogrified humans is thereby stressed.<sup>4</sup>

Snodgrass also considers an alternative explanation for the artist's choice of schema: perhaps he 'wanted a composition of upright figures, not grovelling animals'. A composition which in fact chose to portray Odysseus' men as 'grovelling animals' would encounter another difficulty besides: it would not be at all clear that they were anything but perfectly normal swine, lions or the like.<sup>5</sup> Such a conclusion at least is suggested by the extreme rarity of this alternative. The only ancient instance of a composition where the men *are* totally metamorphosed into animals occurs on a cup (dated to before 480 BC) by the Brygos painter<sup>6</sup>: though fragmentary, this reveals the potentially confusing nature of the design.<sup>7</sup> Such vacillation crucially dilutes the impact of the picture, and one can instantly see the advantages over this approach of the convention employed by the vase painter of our black-figure cup.

If we are right to see in his composition a mode of distinguishing metamorphosed men from real animals, we might interpret it as analogous to the point made by the *Odyssey's* poet<sup>8</sup> (x 239 f.)

οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνήν τε τρίχας τε  
καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ.

Compare Ovid *Metam.* iii 203 f. of Lycaon's metamorphosis: *lacrimaeque per ora/non sua fluxerunt: mens tantum pristina mansit.*

Such an interpretation certainly matches other modes of representing metamorphosis in Greek art. We are familiar with the stylised depictions of Thetis' transformations during her struggle with Peleus, whereby the essential and original shape of the sea nymph is stressed (e.g. on the red-figure cup signed by Peithinus<sup>9</sup> where

<sup>4</sup> This will, of course, be true of the numerous other depictions of the story in ancient art, which almost invariably show Odysseus' comrades with only their heads metamorphosed into various animals: see F. Brommer, *Odysseus* (Darmstadt 1983) 70 ff., esp. the summary on 79. Raeck (n. 3) 16 ff. The latter (like Snodgrass, whom he does not mention on the Boston vase) interprets the device as an 'Übergangsform'.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. O. Touchefeu-Meynier, *Thèmes Odysseens dans l'art antique* (Paris 1968) 124.

<sup>6</sup> Athens Acropolis 293: *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 369.5; cf. Brommer (n. 4) 72.

<sup>7</sup> The potentiality for confusion emerges still more clearly from such a specimen of more recent art as a seventeenth century tapestry woven from a design by Jacob Jordaens, where it is uncertain whether we are being shown some men as totally transformed into swine and others as yet unchanged, or whether the pigs are perfectly normal animals whose company the as yet unmetamorphosed companions will soon join. (Tapestry designed c. 1630-35 AD, woven by E.R.C. and other unidentified weaver at Brussels, now in Mexico [private collection]. Illustrated in R.-A. d'Hulst, *Jacob Jordaens* [Sotheby Publications 1982] plate 104 [143]).

<sup>8</sup> According to Snodgrass (n. 1) 7 our vase 'shows familiarity with the *Odyssey*, yet paradoxically at the same time declares its independence of literary influence'. I am less sure about the second half of this statement.

<sup>9</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museum 2279: *ARV* 115.2 (illustrated in J. Boardman, *Athenian red figure vases: the archaic period* [London 1975] fig. 214.1). X. Krieger, *Der Kampf zwischen Peleus und Thetis in der gr. Vasenmalerei (eine typologische Untersuchung)* (Diss. Erlangen 1973) deals with other vase-paintings of the subject that employ this convention. A similar device is often used to depict Nereus' resort to metamorphosis in his struggle with Heracles: cf. the column-krater by

snakes coil around the arms of the combatants and a small lion perches precariously on Peleus' elbow). Again, to have shown Peleus wrestling with what to all appearances constituted a real lion or snake would have run the risk of confusion with a feat of, for instance, Heracles. Similarly, to avoid confusion with a normal scene of hunting, representations of the metamorphosis of Actaeon into a stag either show him clad in a deerskin and attacked by his hounds or (a seemingly later development) partially transformed (e.g. the Boston Bell-krater by the Lycaon Painter<sup>10</sup> where, in the words of Caskey and Beazley, Actaeon has 'not only . . . antlers and animal ears, but . . . forehead, nose and cheeks . . . covered with fur—rendered by brown stippling').

A recent survey<sup>11</sup> of modern artistic depictions of Actaeon's fate (that is from the Renaissance onwards) makes clear that the same technique for depicting this metamorphosis has survived from antiquity. Thus, on a painting of the story by Jacopo del Sellaio,<sup>12</sup> Actaeon's metamorphosis is once more rendered by equipping him with a stag's head. Obviously this is not merely a means of showing an early stage of the transformation, for Actaeon reappears in precisely the same guise in the second and final scene which shows the hounds snapping at the human legs and flanks of their master. Similarly with Titian's late masterpiece where the beasts leap up onto a human trunk with a stag's head.<sup>13</sup> The technique is even less susceptible of crudely literal interpretation in the case of the twentieth century sculpture by P. Manship<sup>14</sup> considered in the above-mentioned survey, where the metamorphosis is confined to two fairly short horns on the head<sup>15</sup> (which any alert individual would promptly have concealed

beneath his hunting cap). Actaeon is nevertheless savagely assailed by his hounds. It is also perfectly consistent with a characteristic of archaic Greek art to which Professor Snodgrass himself draws attention, one 'exemplified by those depictions of the Judgement of Paris in which the hero, who according to the story is living incognito as a shepherd on Mount Ida, is nevertheless shown . . . regally accoutred and sceptred, because this is an essential and permanent attribute of a king's son'.<sup>16</sup> The same underlying principle explains why the earlier art figures on Geometric vases exhibit features difficult to explain realistically because, to quote Professor Snodgrass again, 'they retain certain permanent attributes by which their status can be recognised . . . whether or not these attributes are relevant or suitable for the action that the figures are currently performing'.<sup>17</sup> So the apparently incomplete metamorphosis in reality indicates that the afflicted figure was originally, and remains basically, a human being.

A final point remains to be made: Professor Snodgrass supposes his 'synoptic' interpretation of the black-figure cup to be confirmed by 'the fact that the other sailors have animals' forelegs while the latest victim still has human arms'. But this feature may be explained by a crucial aspect of the design: the relevant sailor must still have human arms (and, more to the point, hands) because he alone in the scheme is required to gesticulate in eloquent remonstrance, an important detail less meaningfully depicted, for instance, in the unfortunate figure with the ram's head and realistically depicted hooves who stands immediately behind him.<sup>18</sup>

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Sophilos (Athens NM 12587: *ABV* 40.24) or the hydria from the Leagros group (Paris Cab. Méd. 255: *ABV* 361.18); see, in general, R. Glynn, *AJA* lxxxv (1981) 124 f. and n. 34 (who illustrates the first of the vases just mentioned as fig. 2).

<sup>10</sup> Boston 00.346: *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1045.7 = *LIMC* 1.1 F<sup>2</sup> 81 (462), described by L. D. Caskey and J. D. Beazley in *Attic vase painting in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* ii (Boston 1954) 83. The unsatisfactory nature of depictions which show a fully transformed Actaeon emerges from such examples as Rubens' oil sketch (Brussels: Collection J. Nieuwenhuys: S. Alpers, *The decoration of the Torre de la Parada* (Corpus Rubensianum L. Burchard IX [1971]) fig. 12; and even more clearly from G. B. Tiepolo's painting (formerly Maurice de Rothschild Collection New York, now in Bührle Collection Zurich: fig. 246, 36 in A. Morassi's *Catalogue Raisonné* [London 1962]) where the mistress of Diana and her nymphs in the foreground, while a seemingly normal stag is harassed by hounds in the background, merely perplexes.

<sup>11</sup> L. Guimond, 'Aspects de la Survie du Mythe d'Actéon' in *Mélanges d'études anciennes offerts à Maurice Lebel* (Quebec 1980) 411 ff. Ancient depictions are surveyed in *LIMC* 1.1 454 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Yale University Art Gallery, inv. 1952.37.1 and 1871.48: illustrated in Guimond (n. 8) figs 1 and 2.

<sup>13</sup> National Gallery 6420: H. E. Wethey, *Titian* ii (London 1975) no. 8 pls. 151–3. Martin Robertson, 'Beazley and After' (*Münchener Jhb.d. bildenden Kunst* 27 [1976] 30) has suggested that Titian was perhaps directly influenced by Greek vase-paintings of the death of Actaeon.

<sup>14</sup> Brookgreen Gardens, inv. 5.36.12 illustrated in Guimond (n. 11) fig. 3.

<sup>15</sup> A similar device in the painting of Actaeon by the young Delacroix (Lee Johnsen, *The paintings of Eugène Delacroix: a critical catalogue* 1816–31 [Oxford 1981] Vol. i [Text] Catalogue No. 60 [37]; Vol. ii [Plates] pl. 52).

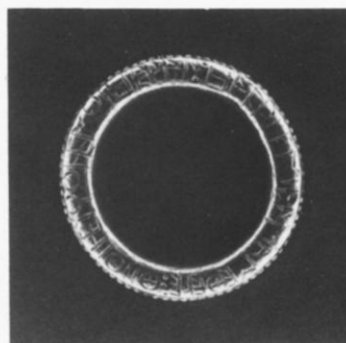
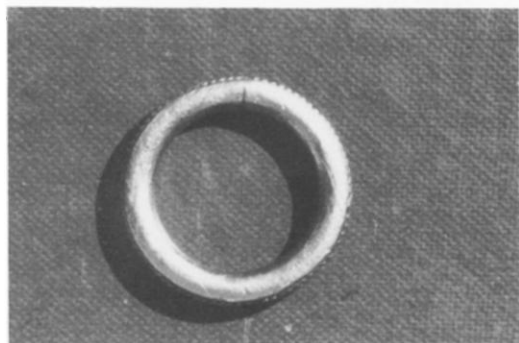
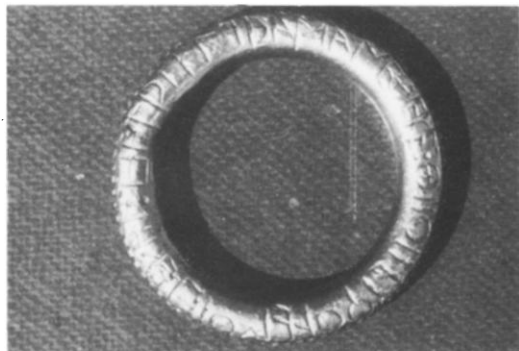
<sup>16</sup> Snodgrass (n. 1) 16.

<sup>17</sup> Snodgrass (n. 1) 16 f.: 'stationary male figures have lightly-bent knees and striding legs to indicate their potential mobility: horses stand with their rear hooves on tip-toe for the same reason; hunters and Centaurs wear helmets to indicate their prowess as fighters'.

<sup>18</sup> Why this (and other vase depictions of Circe's ministrations) includes a dog is not clear and Professor Snodgrass does not attempt an answer. One might hazard that this genuine animal was intended as a foil for the fully human Circe and the metamorphosed εἰστροφοί. Interestingly enough, the tapestry based on a design by Jacob Jordaens mentioned above (n. 7) also shows a dog (this time a rather intimidating mastiff) perhaps similarly to bridge the gap between full humans and transmogrified. Many depictions of the story in antiquity do not confine the animal heads to pigs: as we have seen, the black-figure vase gives its εἰστροφοί the heads of lion, horse and ram; this has been connected with the *Odyssey's* statement that former men now in the shape of wolves and lions stood on hind legs and fawned on Odysseus' companions (*Od.* x 210 ff., cf. 433). Apollod. *epit.* 7.15 in an account of Odysseus' adventures largely based on Homer has Circe change the companions into wolves, pigs, asses and lions and Brommer (n. 2) 72 deduces the antiquity of this variant version from the vase-paintings. But it is impossible to match the exuberant variety of every vase painting of this scene with a literary text (consider for instance the Berlin lekythos [F 1960] illustrated on p. 71 of Brommer's book which includes a swan-headed individual) and I prefer to suppose we have at work the visual artists' desire to avoid monotony, and with Apollodorus a misremembrance of Homer (cf. Dio Chrys. viii 21 [i 126 de Budé]). For an ingenious explanation as to why the *Odyssey* prefers pigs as the animals into which the men are changed see K. Reinhardt, *Die Abenteurer der Odyssee in Tradition und Geist* (Göttingen 1960) 79.



(a) Circe with companions of Odysseus, who have been transformed into different animals. Attic Black-figured Kylix, 550-525 BC. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



(b)-(e) Inscribed gold ring from the Argolid. Courtesy of Paul Getty Museum.

A CONVENTION OF METAMORPHOSIS IN GREEK ART (a).  
AN EARLY INSCRIBED GOLD RING FROM THE ARGOLID (b)-(e).