

## NARRATIVE PATTERN IN THE HOMERIC TALE OF MENELAUS

BARRY B. POWELL

*Northern Arizona University*

In *The Singer of Tales* Professor Lord notices the similarity between the story of Odysseus and that of Menelaus, which is told in part by Nestor in *Od.* 3 (254–328) and by Menelaus himself in *Od.* 4 (235–592).<sup>1</sup> His discussion, while excellent, is somewhat general. I propose here to take a closer look at the morphology of the Menelaus episode than Lord has done, directing an eye also to clarifying the theme of death and rebirth that the tale shares with the *Odyssey* as a whole.

Homer's story of Odysseus contains five main features:<sup>2</sup>

1. The hero goes to war, leaving his wife and fortune behind.
2. His return is interrupted, during which:
  - (a) A storm besets him.
  - (b) He visits various islands, meets assorted death demons, then is stranded, also on an island (Ogygia).
  - (c) A member of the crew dies unexpectedly (Elpenor).
  - (d) On the advice of a goddess (Circe) he journeys to the Underworld to gain knowledge.
  - (e) In this episode (Nekyia) he communes with the supernatural magically and learns of his future.
  - (f) He acquires wealth.
3. Meanwhile his wife is tempted by usurpers.
4. Before coming home he stops on an intermediate island (Scheria).
5. Having returned home, he assumes a disguise, penetrates his household, ambushes the enemy, and avenges his honor.

Now in its broad outlines the story of Odysseus is of the death-

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York 1965) 165–69.

<sup>2</sup> For this sort of structural analysis, see Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* = *International Journal of American Linguistics* 24:4 (1958). Cf. also Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *JAF* 68 (1955) 428–44.

rebirth type: the hero, lost at sea, is presumed dead and, in fact, he visits the Underworld (= death); he returns to assume his original identity (= rebirth). Odysseus' travail is, then, a fight with Death; Polyphemus, Circe, Scylla and the others are aspects of the chaos dragon,<sup>3</sup> and Odysseus' completed *nostos* and *anagnorisis* represent a kind of rebirth.<sup>4</sup> By identifying these same features, not always in the same order, in the story of Menelaus I intend to show that it too is an expression of this death-rebirth theme.

Let us first look at the information about Menelaus that we receive from Nestor in Book 3.

The first misfortune that Menelaus encounters, Nestor relates, is the death of his helmsman, Phrontis, who falls mysteriously to the arrows of Phoebus Apollo as their ships pass Cape Sunion (3.278-84). This is 2(c), "A member of the crew dies unexpectedly," and corresponds to the equally mysterious death of Elpenor, who falls from Circe's roof when he hastens to join his comrades below (10.550-60). Lord notices the similarity of these two incidents and the parallel death of Tiphys in the *Argonautica* and Palinurus in the *Aeneid*.<sup>5</sup> But he fails to develop the necessary consequence: that Egypt, where Menelaus' journey takes him, is a typological equivalent to the Underworld. For this "mysterious death" is somehow integral to the descent to the other world and return and probably represents ritual sacrifice of some sort.<sup>6</sup>

Menelaus stops to bury the helmsman (as Odysseus returns to Aeaea to erect a mound over Elpenor), then resumes his journey. At Cape Malea a storm overtakes him and scatters his ships, sending half of them to Crete and half, together with Menelaus, to Egypt (3.286-92). This is 2(a), "A storm besets him." Odysseus too had encountered a storm soon after resuming his journey from Ismaros (9.67-71). But, in accordance with the expanded narrative given to the protagonist, Homer refines and widens his description of this parallel incident. Thus the storm that besets Menelaus receives three lines, the storm that

<sup>3</sup> See J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley 1959) *passim* for an encyclopedic treatment of the chaos dragon and the dragon combat, many features of which are found in the *Odyssey*.

<sup>4</sup> My doctoral dissertation, *Archetypal Patterns of Death and Rebirth in the Homeric Odyssey* (Berkeley 1970), presents an exhaustive analysis of the *Odyssey* from this point of view.

<sup>5</sup> Lord (above, note 1) 168.

<sup>6</sup> Lord (above, note 1) 168.

assails Odysseus fills nine, including the added detail that he and his men wait out the storm ashore (9.74-76). It is again in rounding Cape Malea that Odysseus loses his *nostos* and is blown South past the island of Cythera, which corresponds structurally to Crete in the Menelaus story, into lands of a different reality.

Nestor goes on to recount that in Egypt Menelaus gathered "much livelihood and gold" (3.301). The winning of the treasure of great price is a traditional theme<sup>7</sup> in the hero's fight with the death dragon and appears in the main story as the treasure that Odysseus receives from the Phaeacians. This gives us feature 2(f), "He acquires wealth."

We have said that Egypt is equivalent typologically to the Underworld. Besides the structural analogies we have already noticed, there is further support for this position in the fact that Menelaus' stay in Egypt lasts seven years. This is a number popularly associated so often with "wholeness" and the complete cycle that we are permitted, I think, to see in Homer's use of the number the significance which has nearly always been given to it. Thus there are seven days to the week, seven tones in the scale, seven days of creation, seven planets (classically) that surround the sun, seven churches in Asia, seven seals on the Book of Revelation, seven years of bad luck that follow the shattering of a mirror, and, even, the seven-year itch. The eighth year, then, refers to the inception of a new cycle, which the concept of rebirth of course represents.

Odysseus too passes seven oblivious years on the island of Calypso, "The Concealer," a goddess of death. As Ogygia is a far-away mysterious island, suggesting in many ways an *Ἡλύσιον πεδῖον* (*Od.* 4.563), so does Egypt have these associations. Since regular Greek-Egyptian trade was not established until the seventh century,<sup>8</sup> Egypt, in Homer's day,<sup>9</sup> was still a land cut-off and, in general, inaccessible by

<sup>7</sup> Some examples of the dragon's treasure are the Golden Fleece demanded of Jason, the dragon's hoard in *Beowulf*, and the Nibelungs' pile of gold. We find it in a different, possibly original, form in the "maid-in-distress" of typical romance: Andromeda, from classical myth, is an instance, as well as Penelope herself: for the latter see my dissertation (above, note 4) 135.

<sup>8</sup> G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 43.

<sup>9</sup> Most Homeric scholars will agree on the eighth century for Homer's *floruit*; Kirk, for example, gives the late ninth and early seventh centuries as the extreme limits during which the poems were given their extant monumental form: Kirk, (above, note 8) 3; C. Whitman suggests ca. 725: see *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York 1965) 19.

ordinary means.<sup>10</sup> It was in Egypt too, we remember, that Helen learned how to concoct the magic potion by which she comforts her guests:

Such cunning and healing drugs the daughter of Zeus had which Polydamna had given her, the daughter of Thon, an Egyptian woman, for in Egypt the fertile earth bears the most drugs, many of them that heal when they are mixed and many that are deadly. There each man is a physician and has knowledge above all men (4.227-32).

A kind of drug has appeared in the course of Odysseus' wandering in the Land of Death in the Lotophagi episode and in the Circea (the magic potion Circe gives to Odysseus and his men); we should therefore pay attention to Homer's remarks. The name of the Egyptian Polydamna, "The Much-Conqueror," suggests besides a death goddess.

If this were not enough we have only to consider Nestor's concluding exhortation to Telemachus:

But I urge and command you to go to Menelaus; for he has recently returned from afar, from men whence he could have no hope in his heart to return, he whom storm winds once had driven into a sea so great that not even the birds return from it in the course of a year, since it is great and terrible (3.317-22).

This is a description of journey to the other world, removed and separated from intercourse by ordinary means with this world.

So far, then, we discover these features in Nestor's account of Menelaus' adventures:

2. The hero's return is interrupted, during which:
  - (a) A storm besets him.
  - (c) A member of the crew dies unexpectedly.
  - (f) He acquires wealth.

<sup>10</sup> Rhys Carpenter says about this period: "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that in the opening phases of this stirring epoch of new awakening in Greece there is no Egyptian component. Whatever in the decorative motifs and new artistic impulses of late eighth- and early seventh-century Greek art may at first glance look Egyptian is actually so only at a second hand through Phoenico-Syrian or Assyrian derivative forms. This can only mean that Egypt at this time was still inaccessible and unknown to the Greeks . . ." *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley 1946) 91.

This is interesting but not conclusive, the signs that Egypt is equivalent to the Underworld notwithstanding. For there are more features missing than present. Two of these features, it is true, while not mentioned explicitly, are present implicitly. Thus, in the story, Menelaus' wife has been tempted by Paris while Menelaus was absent from Sparta; this is feature 3, "His wife is tempted by usurpers," displaced to a time before the Trojan war and the *nostoi* of the heroes. Feature 5, "Having returned home, he assumes a disguise, penetrates his household, ambushes the enemy, and avenges his honor," is also displaced; the Trojan Horse is the disguise, Deiphobus replaces Paris as the enemy. But the dynamics of the tale pattern are strong enough, I submit, that Homer includes material that *explicitly* fills these slots, and others, in the pattern. Let us take a harder look at Nestor's narrative.

The first thing we should notice is that the garrulous old king's speech to Telemachus is not confined to the misfortunes of Menelaus. It is both introduced and concluded by a reference to the story of Agamemnon-Aegisthus-Clytemnestra. This is in response to the two-part question that Telemachus puts to Nestor:

O Nestor, son of Neleus, do tell me truthfully; How did Atreides perish, wide-ruling Agamemnon? Where was Menelaus? What treacherous death did Aegisthus plan for the king, since he killed a man by far his superior? Was not Menelaus in Achaean Argos, but wandering somewhere else among men, and Aegisthus, taking heart, carried out the murder? (3.247-52)

How was Agamemnon slain? Where was Menelaus? One might wonder why Telemachus asks these questions at all since the ostensible purpose of his journey is to inquire about his father, a purpose that is reiterated by Athene shortly after disembarkation (3.15-16).

To answer this let us go back to Telemachus' first meeting with Nestor. Pessimistically ignoring Athene's instructions Telemachus does not ask where his father is now, but where he died:

Therefore have I now come to your knees, hoping you might be willing to tell me of his wretched death, if perhaps you witnessed it with your eyes or heard it from some other wanderer. (3.92-95)

In reply Nestor describes the internecine difficulties that the Achaeans suffered in leaving Troy, and appends a foreshortened catalogue of *nostoi* (3.102-200). Telemachus' original question is more or less forgotten in the course of the long-winded speech, receiving, in fact, no reply at all save what Nestor implies in the (contradictory) introduction to the catalogue: "Nor do I know anything about those men, who of the Achaeans were saved and who perished" (3.184-85). The catalogue ends with Agamemnon. This inspires Telemachus to wish that he might be like Orestes (3.201-9). But Odysseus might one day come home and destroy the suitors, rejoins Nestor (3.210-24). Even the gods could not bring this to pass, comments Telemachus, a remark which causes Athene to declare that the gods can do anything (3.225-38). It is here that Telemachus reaffirms his conviction that his father is long dead and goes on to ask the question about Agamemnon and Menelaus. I would like to suggest that this question fulfills, structurally, the young man's original intention in coming to Pylos; because he had, at least rhetorically, decided that his father is dead, the question "What became of Odysseus?" becomes "What became of Agamemnon and Menelaus?" If this is accurate we have a way of understanding the inclusion of this tale at this point, for Nestor's answer, as I will demonstrate, does contain many more of the features of the tale pattern, except that they are attached to Agamemnon, not Menelaus. Therefore inasmuch as the story of Menelaus-Agamemnon is a structural analogue to the story of Odysseus, Nestor *is* answering Telemachus' original question, only the answer is displaced into this form. We can examine this point by point.

Nestor begins his reply by observing that Aegisthus would have endured a fearful fate indeed had Menelaus come upon him still alive in the halls of Mycenae (3.254-61). It was while Agamemnon toiled on the plains of Troy that Aegisthus, dawdling in horse-pasturing Argos, began to beguile Clytemnestra. Implicit in this is feature 1, heretofore missing: "The hero goes to war, leaving his wife and fortune behind."

Of course the story of Agamemnon is of itself a parallel to the story of Odysseus-Menelaus. One may therefore object to the combining of the two stories to establish the presence of the pattern. But only in this way is it possible to show why Agamemnon's story enters where it

does in the narrative (besides the fact that, taken separately, either story is truncated).

At first Clytemnestra resisted—Nestor continues—but Aegisthus removed the minstrel set to watch over her to a desert isle and “left him to be prey and spoil for the birds” (3.271). What is this minstrel doing here? And why does Aegisthus cart him to a desert isle instead of dispatching him in some more efficient manner? Aegisthus, after all, has no very strong scruples about murder. I think we can answer this question in terms of our tale pattern. First, Agamemnon, we are told, had charged the minstrel to guard his wife (3.268), to act, in other words, in his place during his absence. Second, the position of the minstrel on the island is identical to that of Odysseus on Ogygia (and the other islands he visits). This is, I think, none other than element 2(b), “The hero is stranded on an island.” Structurally, then, the minstrel is equivalent to Agamemnon-Menelaus-Odysseus, and this tells us why Aegisthus deals with the minstrel as he does: a usurper tempts the wife while the protector (the husband) is stranded on an island, which is feature 3.

At this point Nestor abruptly breaks off his narrative about Aegisthus and describes Menelaus’ journey home from Troy, the death of Phrontis, the storm, and the sojourn in Crete (3.276–302), which we have already discussed. Then he leaves Menelaus in Egypt, and, without interruption, resumes the story of Aegisthus: “But meanwhile Aegisthus devised these evil plans at home” (3.303). Now after Aegisthus had reigned seven years Orestes returned in the eighth and killed him, the very day that Menelaus returned from Egypt. Why should Menelaus return *ἀντήμαρ*? The answer is clear. When the king returns the usurper is killed. Menelaus is not in a position to do this, but Orestes is; Orestes, we remember, went to Argos disguised as a messenger,<sup>11</sup> although Homer does not mention the fact. This gives us 5: “Having returned home, he assumes a disguise, penetrates his household, ambushes the enemy, and avenges his honor.” And it accounts for the entire pattern save only 2(d): “On the advice of a goddess he journeys to the Underworld”; “The hero communes with the supernatural magically and learns of his future”; and 4: “Before coming home he stops on an intermediate island.” But these features

<sup>11</sup> Aesch., *Choeph.*

are not missing for long, for Menelaus himself provides them in his extended narrative in Book 4.

On the first day of Telemachus' arrival at Sparta Menelaus repeats in conversation substantially the same story of his wanderings that Telemachus had received from Nestor: he returned in the eighth year, laden with wealth, having suffered much and wandered wide; in the meanwhile his brother was treacherously slain through the machinations of his wife. He adds a few place names and names of peoples not mentioned by Nestor that he has visited: Cyprus, Phoenicia, the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, the Erembi, and Libya (4.83-85). The Erembi are as fabulous as the Laestrygonians of the Phaeacians; in Libya the ewes are said to bear thrice yearly so that no one ever lacks for cheese, meat, or milk (4.87-89), a description that suggests the timeless and fantastic world through which Odysseus wanders. This information, it is easy to see, belongs to feature 2(b), "The hero visits various islands." The meeting with a death demon and the hero's being stranded, which also belong to this feature, must wait momentarily.

On the following day Telemachus, who has revealed his identity, asks Menelaus if he knows of Odysseus' wretched death (4.323). Here we receive the missing features. Menelaus was held back on an island, Pharos, for lack of wind. He was detained for twenty days (4.360), as many days as the years Odysseus was absent. Pharos, as an island situated between Egypt and home, is like Scheria which is, similarly, a kind of halfway-house for Odysseus. This is feature 4, "Before coming home the hero stops on an intermediate island." But the position of Menelaus on the island, who is held there by contrary winds, is also parallel to Odysseus' position on Ogygia. Therefore this episode is not only 4 but (2b) as well: "The hero is stranded on an island." We have here a simultaneous appearance and conflation of themes that are particularized and separated in the larger narrative, a phenomenon that should produce little surprise to anyone familiar with the workings of oral poetry.

Eidothea's functional equivalence to Circe,<sup>12</sup> who tells Odysseus to go

<sup>12</sup> And to Leucothea. Eidothea comes to Menelaus' aid when he has troubles at sea, as Leucothea comes to Odysseus' aid, the former on Pharos, the latter just before Scheria. Cf. J. Fontenrose, "White Goddess and Syrian Goddess," *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* 11 (Popper Festschrift 1951) 128.



to the Underworld and inquire of Teiresias, has been noticed by Lord.<sup>13</sup> Her appearance to advise Menelaus that he seek information from her father is, then, feature 2(d): "On the advice of a goddess the hero journeys to the Underworld to seek knowledge." This suggests immediately that Proteus is in fact a demon of death.

Odysseus' raising of the spirits of the dead around a pit of blood is generally recognised for what it is, an act of necromancy. The detailed procedure in which Circe instructs him strongly suggests ritual. His sprinkling of milk and honey, wine, and water around the pit is the description of a magic circle. And the sword which prevents the incorporeal shades from reaching the blood is the familiar magic sword, a tool rivaled only by the wand in the traditional arsenal of the magician.

By analogy we can recognize similar elements in the Proteus incident, whose semblance to necromancy has not been generally recognized. There Eidothea likewise prescribes quite precisely the procedure that Menelaus is to follow. After all, why must Menelaus and his men suffer the unpleasantness of crouching beneath malodorous skins of seals between the time of the sun's rising and high noon, the time at which Proteus rises from the sea? This, too, suggests a ritual prescription. Eidothea warns Menelaus that Proteus will change himself into "all the creeping things upon the earth, and water, and flaming fire" (4.417-18). When he is actually seized by Menelaus Proteus changes into these diverse shapes: a strong-bearded lion, a serpent, a leopard, a large boar, flowing water, and a tree (4.456-57). This curious account reads very much like any of a number of descriptions of infernal spirits in the famous medieval grimoires, as in the *Lemegeton* (or *Goetia*), called *The Book of Evil Spirits*.<sup>14</sup> As Proteus rules over the seals—this appears to be his special charge in the universe—the spirits of the *Lemegeton* similarly rule over a host of inferiors. The spirit Bael, for example, commands "66 Legions of Infernal Spirits."<sup>15</sup> This same spirit "appeareth in divers shapes, sometimes like a cat,

<sup>13</sup> Lord (above, note 1) 165.

<sup>14</sup> L. W. de Laurence, *The Lesser Key of Solomon: Goetia—The Book of Evil Spirits* (1916).

<sup>15</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 22.

sometimes like a toad, and sometimes like a man,"<sup>16</sup> the "protean" nature of these creatures being nearly the only constant they share. Asmoday "hath also the tail of a Serpent, and from his mouth issue Flames of Fire."<sup>17</sup> Vine "appeareth in the Form of a Lion, riding upon a Black Horse, and bearing a viper in his hand,"<sup>18</sup> and so forth. Most of them will give up their monstrous form and assume human shape, even as does Proteus: "But after he will put on Human shape at the request of the Exorcist, and speak with a hoarse voice."<sup>19</sup> Of course the brute force that Menelaus uses to subdue Proteus makes as little sense imposed upon "flowing water" and "divinely-blazing fire" as does the effect of Odysseus' sword, until one recognizes the affinity with magical ritual both incidents share. Once the demon is subdued, the *Lemegeton* reads: "Then he or they will be obedient and bid thee ask what thou wilt, for he or they be subjected by God to fulfill our desires and commands."<sup>20</sup> Proteus asks: "Who of the gods, O son of Atreus, joined you in council that you might lie in ambush and take me unwilling? Of what do you have need?" (4.461-62).

The *Nekyia* and the meeting with Proteus have, therefore, these factors in common: (1) In either case it is a woman who tells the hero what he must do (Circe and Eidothea); (2) Both incidents share signs of being ritual evocations in disguise, and both take place by the side of the sea; (3) Both heroes receive an unsolicited prediction about their futures; Odysseus learns that he will die ἐξ ἁλός (11.134), Menelaus that he will be conveyed to the Elysian fields; (4) In each episode the ostensible purpose of the evocation is for the hero to learn of his *nostos*; for Teiresias, says Circe, will tell Odysseus "your way and the measures of your journey, how you will travel over the fishy sea" (11.539-40); Proteus will tell Menelaus the same thing exactly: Homer uses the same words (4.389-90); (5) Both heroes offer sacrifices to the gods; Odysseus offers two sheep to the spirits of the dead; Menelaus is told by Proteus to offer hecatombs to the gods, that he might find

<sup>16</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 22.

<sup>17</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 32.

<sup>18</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 36-37.

<sup>19</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 34-35.

<sup>20</sup> *Goetia* (above, note 14) 65.

favorable winds for his journey home. Why is Menelaus instructed to go once more to the waters of the Aegyptus, the heaven-sent river, to perform this task? And why does he respond so violently to this prescription: "Thus he spoke, but within me my spirit was shattered, that he ordered me to travel over the misty sea to Aegyptus, a long and trying way" (4.481-83). What Proteus commands is that Menelaus return to the Land of the Dead, whence he has just come. This accounts for his expression of dread. The ὕδωρ Αἰγύπτου to which Menelaus must return to perform his sacrifices to the gods is, then, a parallel to the shore of Ocean where Odysseus must go before he, too, can hope for the day of his return.

But the Proteus episode reminds us not merely of the Nekyia; it is structurally similar to the Cyclopa as well. Thus Odysseus, trapped in Polyphemus' cave, is in the same position as Menelaus on the island of Pharos. To each the *nostos* is denied until the monster is met face to face, challenged, and defeated. Menelaus, to effect the conquest of Proteus and his escape from the island, hides himself and his men under the skins of seals. Odysseus hides himself and his men under Polyphemus' sheep, which Polyphemus carefully counts as they leave the cave, just as Proteus is a counter of seals. In either case the hero remains undetected and so wins a victory over the demon. This is another example of the conflation of elements which in the larger narrative are treated in separate episodes.

So far we have considered the story of Menelaus to consist of two accounts taken together, that of Nestor and that of Menelaus himself. We have isolated features 2(b)—"The hero is stranded on an island"—and 2(e)—"The hero communes with the supernatural magically"—in Menelaus' account and found the others in Nestor's tale. But are these other elements present only in Nestor's narrative? I think many of them recur again in Book 4, and, again, the cognate tale of Agamemnon supplies the material necessary to the pattern.

Proteus, after relating the fate of Aias, tells to Menelaus the story of his brother Agamemnon. His journey home was protected by Hera (as was Odysseus' by Athene); when he rounded Cape Malea, however, a storm wind caught him and bore him "to the edge of the land, where Thyestes dwelt formerly, but where now lived Aegisthus, the son of

Thyestes" (4.517-8). Where on earth is that? Cythera would fit the description, the island past which Odysseus was driven, and there was in fact a tradition that connected Thyestes with that island.<sup>21</sup> But Cythera is plainly meaningless in this context, since Aegisthus was now living at Mycenae. Stanford suggests the East edge of the Argolic promontory.<sup>22</sup> This will "save" the text, but it is difficult to imagine a storm wind rising off Malea and blowing the hero to the Argolic promontory, especially when Homer follows this statement with the information that "from hence (i.e., wherever this 'edge of the land' is) a safe return appeared and the gods turned round the wind and they returned home" (4.519-20). Cape Malea simply does not fit this context. But its presence here can be explained by reference to the story-type which we have been looking at, since both Odysseus and Menelaus lost their way here. Feature 1—"The hero goes to war, leaving his wife and fortune behind"—is implied in this mention of Agamemnon; features 2—"The hero's return is interrupted"—and 2(a)—"A storm besets him"—are present explicitly.

Agamemnon arrives home, but Aegisthus has posted a watchman who warns of the king's arrival. This is an expression of feature 3: "Meanwhile his wife is tempted by usurpers." Feature 4—"Before coming home the hero stops on an intermediate island"—might be present, if we accept Cythera as the reference in *ὅθι δώματα ναίει Θυέσσης* (4.517) which, if it does not fit the story, does agree with the story pattern. In any event, by extending the hypothesis of a constant pattern underlying diverse surface elements, this slot in the pattern can be considered filled by Proteus' description of Odysseus, which immediately follows his story of Agamemnon. The hero, Proteus says, is shedding big tears on the island of Calypso (4.556-58). One might find feature 5 in the story of Agamemnon too—"He penetrates his household and avenges his honor"—only it is present in an inverted form: it is Agamemnon who is ambushed and slain, rather than Aegisthus. If we view the material in this fashion, we can see an interior order and logic to the potpourri of heroic detail which the Ancient of the Salt Sea delivers up to Menelaus.

<sup>21</sup> C. Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks* (New York 1960) 306.

<sup>22</sup> W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1959) 282.

Here is a tabulation of all the above information:

Odysseus	Menelaus	Agamemnon (= Menelaus)
1. The hero goes to war, leaving his wife and fortune behind.	1. The hero goes to war to recover his wife and fortune.	1. The hero goes to war, leaving his wife and fortune behind.
2. His return is interrupted.	2. His return is interrupted.	2. His return is interrupted.
(a) He is beset by storm, then loses his direction after rounding Malea.	(a) He is beset by storm after rounding Malea.	(a) He is beset by storm after rounding Malea.
(b) He visits various islands, then is stranded on Calypso's island for seven years.	(b) He visits various lands, stays seven years in Egypt, and is stranded on Pharos.	(b) The minstrel (= Agamemnon-Menelaus) is abandoned on a desert isle.
(c) Elpenor dies unexpectedly.	(c) His helmsman dies unexpectedly.	—
(d) On the advice of Circe he journeys to the Underworld to gain knowledge.	(d) On the advice of Eidothea he goes to Proteus' cave to gain knowledge.	—
(e) He conducts a magical evocation during which he learns of his return and future from Teiresias.	(e) In the course of a meeting reminiscent in some ways of a magical evocation he learns of his return and future from Proteus.	—
(f) He receives a great treasure from the Phaeacians.	(f) He gathers wealth in Egypt.	—
3. While he is absent, Penelope is tempted by the suitors.	3. While he is absent, Helen is tempted by Paris (displaced).	3. While he is absent, and after the minstrel has been removed, Clytemnestra is tempted by Aegisthus.
4. Before coming home he stops on Scheria.	4. Before coming home he stops on Pharos.	4. Before coming home he stops on Cythera (?).
5. Disguised as a beggar he enters his house and kills the suitors.	5. Hiding in the Trojan Horse he enters Troy and kills the enemy (displaced).	5. Orestes (= Agamemnon-Menelaus) returns to his home (disguised as a messenger) and kills Aegisthus; and, Aegisthus ambushes and kills Agamemnon (inverted theme).

I think we can see in the story of Menelaus (and Agamemnon) the same features which in the story of Odysseus appear in a different context or are developed more fully. And each story follows the same pattern. The theme which the pattern expresses is the death of the hero and his rebirth. This theme is fairly transparent in the case of Odysseus; it is only by analogy that we can recognise it in the story of Menelaus too.