

## I. Introduction: Invisibility and the Senses

**Foster** (1988, ix): “the difference between the terms [vision and visuality] signals a difference within the visual — between the mechanism of sight and its historical techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations — a difference, many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein.”

**Neis** (2013, 26): “much of what we call ‘seeing’ goes on in the brain rather than in the eye; what makes sight meaningful or sensible is largely in our heads. Scientific accounts of vision thus tend not to follow a correspondence theory of representation: the brain does not simply represent the visual world but actively constructs the things that the eye perceives.”

## II. A. S. Pease on Invisibility

Pease concludes that humans are portrayed as becoming invisible: (1) because of unsought divine intervention; (2) by intentionally and mysteriously disappearing without the use of magic “so as to encourage the belief that their invisibility is evidence of their own divinity”; and (3) by deliberately procuring invisibility as “magical wonder-workers” through a variety of “magical techniques.” (p. 18, 21, and 23).

## III. Invisibility in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: A New Taxonomy for Invisibility Narratives

Robert Renehan observes that Homer and other epic authors do not frame invisibility as immateriality, but instead “in terms of ‘covering’ or ‘clothing’.” This is because in much of earlier Greek literature, “the world and all that was in it was more or less material” and the Greeks at this time “were not in a conceptual position to do otherwise.” (p. 108-109) Indeed in his broader treatment of the topic, he goes further by asserting that “so far as is known, Plato was the first thinker to recognize a mode of existence which is not in space” (p. 129).

Invisibility in Homer (Phillips 2020):

- (1) Distracting or Altering Perceptions (Inattentiveness: Athena distracts Penelope, *Od.* 19.476–479; Sleep: Hermes affects Achaean guards, *Il.* 24.334–348 and 443–447; Cloudy vision: Poseidon affects Achilles, *Il.* 20.321–325, and a dark mist hangs over suitors, *Od.* 20.357)
- (2) Covering or Clothing the Body (External Environment, Night: Hephaestus saves Idaeus *Il.* 5.22–24, Ares covers the battlefield, *Il.* 5.506–507, and Zeus makes battle over Sarpedon’s body more difficult, *Il.* 16.567–568; External Environment, Clouds and Mists: Athena hides Odysseus, *Od.* 7.14–17, 142–145, and Apollo hides Hector, *Il.* 20.443–446; Clothing, Robe: Helen before Trojan women, *Il.* 3.419–420; Clothing, Cap of Hades: Athena escapes Ares, *Il.* 5.844–845; Physical Change, Shape-shifting and Transformation: Athena transforms Odysseus, *Od.* 13.397–403, 429–438; 16.172–176; Circe transforms Odysseus’ men, 10.237–240, 212–215; Proteus shape-shifts before Menelaus, 4.455–459)

- (3) Sudden Rapture and Bodily Relocation: The gods snatch up Ganymede for Zeus, *Il.* 20.234–235; Aphrodite snatches away Paris, *Il.* 3.380–382; Apollo rescues Aeneas, *Il.* 5.344–346; Apollo saves Hector, *Il.* 20.443–444, and Agenor, *Il.* 21.597.

#### Invisibility and Vision

(Soph. *Aj.*, 51–52) Athena explains how Ajax would have murdered the Greek leaders, had she not “cast upon his eyes intolerable fantasies,” δυσφόρους ἐπ’ ὄμμασι / γνώμας βαλοῦσα.

(Soph. *Aj.*, 69–70) Athena (to Odysseus regarding Ajax): “I will keep the averted rays of his eyes from seeing your presence,” ἐγὼ γὰρ ὀμμάτων ἀποστροφούς / ἀγὰς ἀπείρξω σὴν πρόσωπιν εἰσιδεῖν.

(*Il.* 14.342–345) Zeus (on his planned rendezvous with Hera on Mt. Ida): “Hera, do not fear that any gods or men will see this. I will envelop you with such a golden cloud; nor could even Helios look through at us, whose light is the most piercing to behold,” Ἥρη, μήτε θεῶν τό γε δεῖδιθι μήτε τιν’ ἀνδρῶν / ὄψεσθαι· τοῖόν τοι ἐγὼ νέφος ἀμφικαλύψω / χρύσειον· οὐδ’ ἂν νῶϊ διαδράκοι Ἥλιός περ, / οὐ τε καὶ ὀξύτατον πέλεται φάος εἰσοράσθαι.

(Soph. *Aj.*, 85) Athena (regarding Ajax): “I shall place his eyes in darkness, even though they see,” ἐγὼ σκοτώσω βλέφαρα καὶ δεδορκότα.

#### IV. Some Concluding Observations

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