INDO-EUROPEAN POETIC FORMULAS
IN CHRISTIAN GREEK LITERATURE

Edwin D. Floyd

University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: Eager to utilize the earliest available material, students of Indo-European poetics have concentrated on Vedic and Greek texts from the second and first millennia B.C. Italic material (both Latin and Umbrian) from the first millennium B.C., along with Old Irish and Old English, first attested around 600 A.D., have also been utilized, but Greek texts of comparable date have pretty regularly been neglected. Authors such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Nonnus, and Quintus of Smyrna, however, and even Cometas (ninth century A.D.) exhibit many archaic and/or archaizing features. In fact, these first millennium A.D. Greek poets offer crucial supporting evidence for the validity of going into this period in the discussion and recovery of Indo-European poetics. "Late" Latin material too, including the prose inscription on the Arch of Constantine, exhibits the same pattern.

Key-words: Arch of Constantine; Cometas; Gregory of Nazianzus; Hesiod; Homer; Indo-European; Nonnus; poetics; Quintus of Smyrna; Vergil

I. SOURCES FOR INDO-EUROPEAN POETICS.

Many studies of Indo-European poetics have relied heavily on second and first millennium B.C. material. Kuhn's pioneering work (1853) dealt with just two such texts, Rig-Veda 1.40.4 and Homer, Iliad 9.413. Even today, over half the citations in the index to Watkins (1995) are to early Vedic and Greek texts. Later material, though, has also been brought into the scholarly net. Kuhn was doing this with Germanic as early as 1864, and Watkins (1995): 75 argues as follows for including Old Irish in our purview: "Despite the enormous differences in tone and cultural outlook the system, the structural position of the poet in each society, is

remarkably similar in India and Ireland, and the Irish system remained basically static over the 1000 years from the beginning of our documentation to the collapse of the Gaelic world."

Yet even as Celtic and Germanic material has been thus utilized, "late" Greek sources have been accorded little respect in the study of Indo-European poetics. In fact, it may be not too severe to say that a de facto cut-off date for scholarly interest in Greek as a source of information for Indo-European poetics intrudes itself as early as 400 B.C. Hellenistic material is occasionally cited, but anything from as late as the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. seems to be beyond the pale.

II. HIMASSEIN "TO LASH"

A good example of the situation vis-à-vis fourth and fifth century A.D. Greek poetry is provided by chapter 46 (pp. 448-459) of Watkins (1995). As Watkins points out, the Greek words himas "thong" and himassein "lash", cognate with Hittite ishimas "rope, cord", constitute persistent parts of the vocabulary associated with the narration of a god's dealing with a monstrous opponent. Zeus's conflict with Typhoeus, for example, is so treated by Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric Hymns. There are also some 72 examples of himassein from Nonnus (fifth century A.D.) Not all of these are exactly examples of a god's dealing with an opponent, but the overall outline of Nonnus' usage fits closely with what Watkins identifies as a Greek inheritance from Indo-European; nevertheless, Watkins (1995): 459 refers to Nonnus' usage as "bizarre" in this regard. I would eschew the adjective "bizarre" and say instead that Nonnus is better seen as part of a broader pattern.

The general pattern also appears in Christian Greek literature. Not only Nonnus' Dionysiaca (on which Watkins' comments concentrate), but also his Paraphrasis of John uses the verb himassein. (For a recent discussion of relationship of the Christian and pagan aspects of Nonnus' poetry, cf. Willers 1992.) In section 6 of Nonnus' sometimes verbose hexameter rendering of the Gospel According to John, there is, from line 70 to line 88, an off and on description of a storm on Lake Tiberias. The setting is of course Christian, but the specific context is the divine Jesus' walking on water; correspondingly, the use of himassomenês at 6.88 (paraphrasing, more or less, John 6.22) closely parallels other references to Typhoeus (from Homer to Nonnus himself) as a meteorological phenomenon, to be controlled by a more powerful divine force.

III. THE MOST FAMOUS FORMULA: KLEOS APHTHITON

The granddaddy of all Indo-European poetic formulas qua poetic formula is kleos aphthiton "fame imperishable". This was first discussed by Kuhn (1853), and it is still accorded a position of respect by Watkins (1995): 173-178.

Most treatments of kleos aphthiton have focused, more or less, on the idea that the poet preserves fame. This seems an obvious association of the phrase; furthermore, it is clearly implied as an association of the formula at Iliad 9.413, where the reference is to Achilleus' posthumous fame, if he remains at Troy and dies gloriously there. In Floyd (1980), on the other hand, I discuss various Vedic and Greek passages, down to the Hellenistic period,

which instead emphasize the idea that the poet enhances fame in the here and now. Now, carrying my 1980 Glotta presentation forward as much as a thousand years, I would point out that the focus of the Vedic cognate sravas aksitam on (1) festive celebration, possessions, and long life, (2) given by the gods – a set of associations which is at least adumbrated in a number of archaic Greek examples of kleos aphthiton, such as Schwyzer (1923): no. 316 (p. 160) and Hesiod, fr. 70.5 – continues as late as Gregory of Nazianzus (fourth century A.D.) and even Cometas (ninth century A.D.)

Gregory at 1313.7, for example, uses kleos aphthiton as follows in a poem concerning fasting during Lent:

> kai Christou patheôn kleos aphthiton, hois m' etheôsen.

"And the imperishable fame of Christ's sufferings, by which he immortalized me."

This might superficially seem to be merely a willful or aberrant modification of the way kleos aphthiton is used at Iliad 9.413. Seen in a broader light, though, Gregory's usage, even as it is from a religious perspective which was then relatively new, is yet fundamentally traditional. In particular, it very neatly continues the pattern seen in Hesiod, fr. 70.5, where the focus is on the gods' granting physical immortality to Ino-Lukothee.

It is also instructive to consider the way in which the adjective aphthitos by itself (i.e., without the noun kleos) is used, in the century after Gregory, by Nonnus. In his "pagan" work (the Dionysiaca), Nonnus consistently uses aphthitos to refer to gods (7, 366, 8.414, and 47.430) or their accouterments (32.95 and 45.27). Mutatis mutandis, the usage is exactly the same in the Paraphrasis of John, where the reference is to Christian concept of everlasting life, as in Periphrasis 3.86 (paraphrasing, more or less, aiônion "everlasting" in the well-known John 3:16), along with 6.127, 6.143, 6.173, and 14.35. The idea a poetic transcendence of an individual human's life is, however, almost entirely absent from Nonnus' use of aphthitos "imperishable". In fact, in all of Nonnus' work, whether pagan or Christian, the only exception comes at Dionysiaca 25.253, where Nonnus, in discussing his own poetic aspirations, addresses Homer as Achaiidos aphthite kêrux "imperishable herald of the Achaian land". Only with reference to Homer himself, then, does Nonnus use aphthitos with the resonance it has at Iliad 9.413.

Several centuries after Gregory and Nonnus, Cometas (ninth century) twice uses the archaic formula kleos aphthiton, at Anthologia Graeca 15.40, lines 29 and 57. Somewhat like Nonnus' Paraphrasis, this poem is based on The Gospel According to John – in this case, the Lazarus story in chapter 11. In line 29 the speaker is Jesus, referring to his intention of acquiring kleos aphthiton through raising Lazarus, and at line 57, with which the poem concludes, the story is summarized in terms of the multitude praising God's imperishable fame, demonstrated through his Son's activities. In both passages, then, the idea of someone's reputation (as in Schwyzer 1923: no. 316 [p. 160]) and of a physical conquest of death (as in Hesiod, fr. 70.5) is present. Conversely, Cometas' usage diverges more or less sharply from the reference to Achilleus' posthumous fame at Iliad 9.413.

To be sure, Cometas was a Homeric scholar. Most discussion of Anth. Gr. 15.40 therefore calls attention to his use of Homeric material in the poem. Paton (1918): 149, for example,

says it is "chiefly made up of Homeric reminiscences", and Beckby (1958) and Buffière (1970) cite specific lines from Homer which are taken over by Cometas. Beckby (1958): 550, though, also points out that Cometas' phrase hos hupertata dômata naieis "you who inhabit the highest dwelling" in line 41 recalls Hesiod, Works and Days, 8. Along with Homer, then, Cometas was familiar with other archaic epic poetry, and besides the Works and Days, he could also have drawn on what we know as "Hesiodic" fragments.

Cometas is also a witness to even more ancient Indo-European patterns. At line 8, for example, his use of rhetheôn "limbs" picks up a Homeric word which Watkins (1995): 499-500, n. 3 tentatively puts in the perspective of an Indo-European formula, found also in Old English, at Beowulf 2819-2820. Likewise, Cometas' reference at line 14 to Mary and Martha as lamenting Lazarus' fate (tou potmon gooôsai "weeping for his fate") picks up another Homeric reference (Iliad 16.857 and 22.363) hon potmon gooôsa "lamenting its fate" (used in reference to a slain warrior's psuchê "soul"); in turn, as one considers the context of this phrase in the Iliad, it emerges that it occurs in the immediate context of the phrase lipous' androtêta kai hêbên "leaving behind manhood and youth", which, metrically speaking, must go back at least to the Mycenaean period (for discussion and references, cf. Watkins 1995: 499.)

Of course, Cometas did not know Mycenaean Greek – let alone proto-Indo-European. There is not, however, anything unduly mysterious in the claim that he could have been mining his own Greek tradition for patterns which we moderns can sometimes more readily observe outside of the Classical Greek canon and/or outside of Greek itself. Cometas is likely, for example, to have known the full context of the "Hesiodic" poem which we now know only as the very lacunose "fr. 70" Correspondingly, as we find Cometas manipulating and alluding to such sources, we can see, far more than with first millennium A.D. Celtic or Germanic poetry, how very ancient Indo-European poetic traditions could survive down to a relatively late period and into a new cultural and religious milieu.

IV. "GREAT VALOR / SPIRIT"

Still another important instance of conservatism in Greek poetics revolves around a formula meaning "great spirit". One part of the combination, viz., the word menos, is well known in the study of Indo-European poetics in connection with a divinity's instilling "spirit" or "valor" into a hero; cf. Schmitt 1967: 114-115.

There is also an important variant of the formula, as Greek menos is sometimes combined with mega "great", while in Sanskrit manas is similarly combined with mahat "great". Schmitt (1967): 114, n. 704 seems to regards this variation on the basic pattern as not having any particular significance, inasmuch as he refers to its Vedic and Greek occurrences as "Zufallsparallelen". This judgment is, perhaps, a result of Schmitt's focus on menos as referring to how a divinity affects a human hero. At least, it seems easy enough, from such a perspective, to overlook the fact that in both Vedic and Greek the particular combination "great valor / spirit" is fairly consistently focused on a competition and/or interaction between various divine forces, with any human element being correspondingly more or less secondary.

On the Vedic side, we see this connection of maha manasa, etc. in Rig-Veda 1.165.2 and 10.103.9. Throughout Rig-Veda 1.165, the main issue is the comparative merits of Indra and the Marutas, and in the other passage, 10.103.9, the reference is to gods contending with other gods. Comparable on the Greek side is the usage at Homer, Iliad, 15.232 (Zeus encourages Apollo to stir up Hektor's "great spirit" against the Greeks) and 20.110 (Apollo, a god supporting the Trojan side, inspires Aineias and so attracts the attention of the pro-Greek Hera). Also, well over a thousand years later, Quintus of Smyrna, post-Homerica, 1.40 refers to the great menos of winds as potentially contending against one another.

On still other occasions in Greek, we have, not the actual combination "great valor / spirit", but instead some other syntactic association of the two words. Like the passages already considered, these too illustrate some sort of divine conflict. At Hesiod, Theogony 687, for example, the menos of Zeus, in the conflict with the Titans, appears in the line following an adverbial phrase with megaloi, and at Quintus of Smyrna, 13.560, we learn that even the menos of "great" Zeus yields to fate.

The pattern also appears in the Christian poet Gregory of Nazianzus, at 547.2. Having referred to various notables, stretching from Moses, through David and Solomon, to the Apostles, Gregory goes on to refer to the menos of great-hearted (megalêtoros) Paul. The setting is of course monotheistic, but even within Gregory's Weltanschauung there are two ways in which conflicting divine or spiritual claims are nevertheless illustrated here. First, there is a contrast of traditional Jewish law, as represented by Moses, et al., with "great-hearted Paul's" different vision. Secondly, it is the conflicting claims of Virginity and Marriage as human vocations which are at issue in this poem.

V. A LATIN PARALLEL: MENTIS MAGNITUDINE

More or less implicit in the program I have thus far outlined is that one should pay more attention to "late" Latin than has usually been the case in the study of Indo-European poetics. Early Latin, to be sure, has been fairly extensively mined as a source of traditional material; however, as one progresses chronologically, especially into the Christian era, scholarly attention to this language as a source of Indo-European poetics drops off precipitously. Much as with Greek, though, Latin continued to use highly traditional patterns. A good example, in fact, is provided by combinations of Latin mens "mind" (derived from the root *men-, from which Sanskrit manas and Greek menos are derived) and magnus (cognate with Sanskrit mahant- and Greek megas).

The earliest example I am aware of for the pattern in Latin is Vergil, Aeneid 6.11. A captious critic, I fear, might object that Vergil is so dependent on Greek models (especially Homer) that he could be of little independent use in elucidating Indo-European poetics; at least, this may be the reason that Vergil has been only sporadically cited in this regard. The truth, however, seems to be that the use of fundamentally archaic patterns is both deep and consistent in the Aeneid. The poem's opening line focuses on Aeneas' having first brought the Trojan gods to Latium (Aeneid 1.1) and thus develops an Indo-European motif (cf. Watkins 1995: 508). No less, the poem's concluding line (12.952), as it refers to Turnus' life departing unwillingly to the shades, picks up a Homeric phrase, hon potmon gooôsa, (Iliad

16.857 and 22.363) which, in its Homeric context, is embedded in a poetically archaic setting, as we have already seen in connection with Cometas' poem on the Lazarus story.

It is therefore surely worth noting that at Aeneid 6.11, Vergil refers to the Sibyl, for whom the Delian god (Apollo) inspires her "great mind". From one perspective, this may seem to exhibit merely the more general pattern of divine inspiration, seen in various Vedic passages with manas and Greek passages with menos. Later on in the passage, though, at 6.77-82, there is mention of her struggling against the divine possession, and so there is also an element of conflict in the god's interaction with her.

Another Latin poet, Juvenal, also uses the combination. At 7.66, he says that a poet must have a "great mind" if he is to describe epic themes such as the goddess Juno's manipulation of another divine figure, the Fury Allecto. As it happens, Juvenal is here picking up another Vergilian motif, since the allusion must be to Aeneid, Book 7. The pattern is not, however, limited to Vergil and Vergilian reminiscences, in view of Silius Italicus, 15.71. In this passage, Virtus and Voluptas ("Virtue" and "Pleasure") compete for the attention of Scipio's "great mind"; like the passage from Gregory 547.2, this Latin passage replaces the contending gods of many other passages with equally contentious abstractions.

There is also a more or less specifically Christian instance of the pattern. According to lines 3-4 of the inscription on the Arch of Constantine (just after 312 A.D.), it was by instinctu divinitatis, mentis magnitudine, cum exercitu suo "by the impulse of divinity, by greatness of mind, with his army" that the emperor defeated his enemies. Combining the two etyma *men- and *meg-, the second element in this triad exactly reflects a pattern stretching back to Indo-European, as it states that Constantine's victory came in the course of what many viewers of the inscription would read as a conflict between the Christian God and pagan tyranny, led by Maxentius.

Like many another government document, ancient and modern, the inscription on the Arch of Constantine is composed in a more or less hackneyed prose. Especially in the case of Italic, though, we fairly frequently find traditional formulas embedded in such a form. Examples are Cato's formulas for the lustration of fields (Latin) and the Iguvine tablets (Umbrian); for discussion of these, cf. Watkins (1995): 197-225. Neither document is exactly metrical, but in both the syntactic divisions can readily be printed as separate lines, as Watkins (1995): 199-201 and 224-225 does. Both also contain excellent examples of verbal collocations which, elsewhere in Indo-European, are cast in more specifically metrical form. At Tabulae Iguvinae VIb.10-11, for example, the phrase dupursus peturpursus "for bipeds and quadrupeds", is readily correlated with a frequent Vedic combination, illustrated by dvipade catuspade in Rig-Veda 1.114.1. The formula of Vedic and Umbrian is also to be found in Latin, both in prose and in verse. Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.286, for example, gives us a verse example in the phrase pecudesque virosque "herds and men". This no longer includes a reference to creatures with various numbers of feet, but as Watkins (1995):15 points out, the underlying pattern is essentially the same. A closer Latin parallel is provided by a prose passage, Cicero, de Domo sua 18.48, referring to an enemy in the phrase omnium non bipedum sed etiam quadripedum impurissimo "most unholy of all, not only of men but also of beasts". Inasmuch as it is in prose, this admirably illustrates not only the persistence of the formula but also its penchant for gravitating to prose in Italic.

Following Watkins' lead with Cato's lustration formulas, we can divide part of the inscription on the Arch of Constantine into syntactic, more less poetic units, as follows:

instinctu divinitatis	by the impulse of divinity
mentis magnitudine	by greatness of mind
cum exercitu suo	with his army

As the various elements are thus isolated, still another instance of this inscription's appeal to inherited material emerges the more clearly. Elsewhere in Latin, there are quite a few instances of the combination which appears here as instinctu divinitatis "by the impulse of divinity". At Cicero, De divinatione 1.66.4, for example, the combination appears (as divino instinctu "by divine inspiration") in a reference to Cassandra, seized by Apollo's prophetic inspiration, and at Livy, 5.15.10 we find the phrase divino spiritu instinctus "impelled by a divine spirit" in a context of competition between different oracles. There is also a Sanskrit parallel in various passages in the Mahabharata (1.26.32, 3.160.18, etc.) in which combinations of the Sanskrit cognates tejas "splendor" and deva "god" appear in a context of either divine conflict or the subordination of lesser gods to a higher one.

Also important is the statement, in lines 5-6 of the Constantine inscription, that the emperor was victorious over an unnamed tyrant and all his faction. Watkins' archetypal Indo-European myth, around which How to Kill a Dragon revolves, is a hero's victory over an individual reptilian opponent; however, the canonical presentation of this myth (in Rig-Veda 1.32) also refers to the fact that this serpent's menacing activities are supplemented by those of one or more other bad individuals. Another Indic occurrence of a hero's facing multiple opponents comes at Rig-Veda 1.165.2, where Indra asks who it was that spurred on the Marutas to compete with him (Indra) mahā manasā "with great spirit". A similar pattern is also found elsewhere in Indo-European, as for instance in Beowulf's conflicts with both Grendel and Grendel's mother. The pattern is also to be seen in the Constantine inscription, with a particularly close parallel emerging vis-à-vis Rig-Veda 1.165.2. To Indra's question concerning the ultimate source of his opposition, the god receives no answer, and in the Latin inscription too, we have a hero (Constantine) who (1) operates with "greatness of mind" and (2) has to face a threatening group, led by an unnamed leader.

VI. "TREE" AND "ROCK"

Another instance of a comparatively late reuse of an ancient pattern appears at Nonnus, Paraphrasis 18.127-128 (based on John 18.26). Here, the ancient pattern is a combination of etyma for "tree" and "rock".

The original association of the combination may have been just with truth; cf. Schindler apud Watkins (1995): 161-164. There is an Iranian parallel, centering around "truth", at Yasht 13.99 = 19.85; with particular reference to Plato's connection of the combination of "tree" and "rock" with the word alêthê "true things, truth" at Phaedrus, 275b, Watkins suggests that there is a deep-seated correlation between the resonances of the Iranian and Greek phrases. This seems reasonable, and one could also point to the fact that in Germanic, the same Indo-European root as seen in Greek drus gave rise to both English "tree" and "true".

There is, however, another dimension to the problem, inasmuch as the second element in the Avestan combination, viz., pauruuan "mountain", is not directly cognate with Greek petrê "rock". In view of the semantic divergence between the two formulas ("tree" and "mountain" vs. "tree" and "rock"), we should therefore be alert to the possibility of some corresponding divergence between the associated resonances of the two formulas.

In Greek, the locus of the divergence with the Iranian formula is petrê. The point is both obvious from comparison with the Iranian formula and it is also corroborated within Greek at Odyssey 19.163. There, the adjective palaiphatou "anciently spoken of" (mentioned by Watkins as attesting to the antiquity of the combination) is attached specifically to druos, but not to the other word petrês; in short, Homer can be heard here as identifying one, but only one part of the combination (druos) as pre-eminently ancient.

Petrê, the other element in the Greek formula, is a word of obscure etymology. An attractive possibility, though, is a connection with piptein "to fall" (cf. Porzig apud Frisk 1960-72: 2, 523). In addition to having a general semantic plausibility (e.g., by way of a "rocky waterfall"), there is explicit poetic support for the connection of "rock" and "fall" at Hesiod, Aspis 375. Within this one line, there is a reference to "rocks" (petrai) which "fall" (piptôsi) on a great "mountain" (oreos, line 374), and the next line (376) gives us the word drus, referring to trees which are likewise involved in the catastrophe.

Whether the petrê ~ piptein connection is a genuine etymology or a powerfully resonating folk-etymology (actually, the line between the two can sometimes be a tenuous one), the connection adds an important, complementary dimension to "tree and rock". With a nuance of "fall" included, the basic association of "tree" with "truth" would, I think, be almost automatically supplemented with "falsehood". At any rate, just such a connection is attractive, both in Homer and in other ancient authors.

At Odyssey 8.507, for example, the wooden horse is referred to as doru (etymologically related to drus), while in the next line the Trojans consider, as one of three possible plans, hurling it kata petraôn "down from the rocks". (The other two plans entertained by the Trojans are to destroy it with bronze weapons or, basically, to leave it alone.) Like Hesiod, Aspis 375, then, this passage supports a connection (even if by folk-etymology) of petrê with "fall", inasmuch as "falling" would be the natural result of its being hurled "down from the rocks". Additionally, both truth and falsehood are implicit in the Odyssey passage, since, from the standpoint of the Achaian warriors at Troy, the horse is a solid vehicle of truth, whereby they can finally capture Troy, but for the Trojans it will be the deceptive means to their destruction.

The other Odyssey passage which combines "tree" and "rock" is 19.163, where Penelope urges the stranger (the disguised Odysseus) to give an account of his background, since he is not from "tree or rock". In its context, an allusion to truth and falsehood is clearly appropriate. About sixty lines earlier, at 19.104-105, Penelope had asked the stranger to give his background (name, family, etc.) In response, he gives no direct answer, but instead praises his hostess (Penelope) for her wise management of her household. Since his answer to her question has, up to this point, been roundabout, Penelope could accordingly be implying in 19.163 that what the stranger has said about his background has been so incomplete that it could not really be described as either true or false.

It is less obvious, but the same overall package of resonances will also fit the other Homeric usage, at Iliad 22.126, where Hektor says he cannot speak to Achilleus, as a man and maid speak "from tree or rock". The main association of the phrase seems to be simply with the idea of "talk": now, no conversation, of whatever nature, will be serve in dealing with Achilleus, but Hektor must instead fight him. More specifically, though, a sense of "true" and "false" will fit both the underlying comparison and its specific setting in the Iliad. First, this combination of associations will vivify the comparison, as alluding to a picture of youthful·dalliance between man and maid, with each leading the other on with a calculated mixture of truth and falsehood. Secondly, such an allusion will also be grimly appropriate in the Iliad setting, as a kind of foreshadowing, through the word petrês, of Athena's subsequent deception of Hektor, as she appears to him in the guise of his brother Deiphobus (22.297-299).

The same basic package of allusions for "tree and rock" will also illuminate Hesiod, Theogony, 35. This has regularly been regarded as an inscrutable crux (cf. West 1966 on this passage). Just a few lines back, though, there is a statement by the Muses, at lines 27-28, that they can deal in both truth and falsehood. Following this, the rhetorical question at line 35 ("what has this to do with tree or rock?") falls readily into place, as one dealing with the same contrast of truth and falsehood that the Muses have just presented.

There is also a probable reminiscence of this traditional pattern at Aristophanes, Clouds, 401-402, even though only one of the two key words is actually used here. The passage refers to Zeus' penchant for striking great trees and the promontory of Sounion with his thunderbolt, when what he should really be doing is striking down perjurers. Both the idea that Zeus should be a god of truth and that he acts somehow falsely or mistakenly are therefore important in the context. Nor is it a fatal objection that petrê does not occur explicitly in the Aristophanes passage. The other word, drus, does appear, and the rocky nature of Sounion (referred to here, with an apparent reminiscence of Odyssey 3.278, as the promontory of Athens) is obvious enough to allow us to hear the passage as an instance of the old combination.

In view of the centrality in Christianity, especially in Roman Catholicism, of the idea that Peter (Petros) is the firm and true "rock" on which the church is founded (so Matthew 16.18), it might seem that the preceding observations, connecting petrê in some formula with falsehood, would offer little scope for any Christian usage. Other formulas, one might say, could be so used, but surely not this one. Nonnus, though, does exactly this, as at Paraphrasis 18.127-128 (based on John 18.26), he combines druoentos ... kêpou "tree-filled ... garden" with the proper name Petros "Peter, Rock", precisely in the context of Peter's three times denying Christ. Here, then, we have both of the inherited elements dru- and petr-, and the context is also reminiscent of what we observe in Homer and Aristophanes. As in the Aristophanes passage, the surface focus is just on false witness. Behind the Aristophanes passage, though, Nonnus' focus on a threefold denial eerily recalls the three-fold deliberation of the Trojans in Odyssey, Book 8 and, more generally, the sense of crisis one hears in Hektor's ratiocination at Iliad 22.126.

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