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"... AND SHE BECAME A MAN": SEXUAL METAMORPHOSIS IN PHLEGON OF TRALLES' *MIRABILIA*

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Ex feminis mutari in mares non est fabulosum.
The cases of women who have changed to men are not a fable.
(Plin.NH.7.36)

Greek mythology abounds with metamorphoses, but there is one type which appears particularly striking, namely the spontaneous sex change. It seems that only a few such stories were in circulation and among these the most popular were the myth of Teiresias as well as that of Kaineus. Together with these two stories of sex change from ancient times, which are connected with personages classified as "mythical" by scholars, other contexts can be found in ancient literature that may be regarded as historical or semi-historical accounts.

An impressive collection of individuals who changed sex was gathered by Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of the emperor Hadrian (114-137 AD), in his compilation on human oddities best known under its Latin title of *Mirabilia* (further *Mir.*).

The compiler mentions six cases of sex change, quoting the stories of Teiresias (*Mir.*4) and Kaineus (*Mir.*5), but also reporting four other cases of genuine (or so-called "genuine") sex change (*Mir.*6-9). Moreover, the sex-changers constitute only a part of a larger section on two different forms of intersexuality. Strictly speaking, these anomalies are differentiated in modern classifications, but in ancient times all were grouped in the same category. In other words, the two types of sexual anomaly portrayed by the Greek author, such as those born with both male and female genitals, as well as those that underwent

a spontaneous sex change, usually during the age of puberty, were both referred to as hermaphrodites. However, these phenomena seem to have had different religious meanings and different repercussions in ancient societies.

At that time any extraordinary phenomenon, particularly a deformed or abnormal human or animal fetus, could be regarded as an omen. As described in many Greek and Roman accounts – historical, legendary and fictional – hermaphrodites (in the modern understanding) were considered maleficent portents, signs of divine wrath. If a sexually ambiguous child was born, special rites were performed in order to appease the gods. The most important of these was an act which eliminated the portentous creature, usually achieved by drowning[1] or burning[2] the hermaphrodite[3], or alternatively by abandoning it in a desolate place[4]. Whereas the occurrence of sex-changers, although clearly regarded as "successive hermaphrodites" in antiquity, seems not to have given rise to equally grave consequences: the sources suggest such individuals were often spared death or exile.

Nevertheless, although Phlegon of Tralles apparently does not distinguish between sex-changers and actual hermaphrodites, in order to meet the requirements of the topic under consideration (metamorphosis), this paper will discuss only cases of sexual transformation; hermaphrodites will be viewed as belonging to a different category.

In Phlegon of Tralles' *Mirabilia* the section devoted to sexual anomalies begins with the mythical story of Teiresias, which is then followed by another myth, namely that of Kaineus; after this four "historical" sex-changers are reported. As is usual in this kind of literature, no commentary is provided by the compiler, nor are his selection criteria explained. There is, however, an evident difference between sexual metamorphosis based on a myth and that based on events from real life: the former refer to prehistoric times, when humans interacted with gods, whereas the latter may be dated more or less precisely. Also, the mythical sex-changers were famous personalities: Teiresias was a great seer and Kaineus a great hero, unlike the "genuine" sex-changers who were ordinary people. Furthermore, scholars mostly agree that the mythical sex-changers are fundamentally different from the historical instances: "in this kind of successive *androgyny* we must not see a transposition of genuine cases where an adolescent turns out not to be of the sex supposed at his birth.

[1] Cf. Livy *Epit.* 27.11.4-6; 27.37.5-7; 31.12.6-10; Julius Obs.22, 27a, 32, 34, 47, 48, 50, 53.

[2] Cf. Diod.Sic.32.12; Ps.-Callisth.*Alex.Rom.* 3.30.

[3] See William Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles' Book of Marvels* (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 1996), 87-88.

[4] The ancient evidence refers generally to monstrous and deformed children, not to hermaphrodites explicitly; all of the cases are described by Marie Delcourt, *Stérilités mystérieuses et naissances maléfiques dans l'antiquité classique* (Liège et Paris: Droz, 1938), *passim*.

The stories of Kaineus and Teiresias do not spring from concrete experience. They are indeed myths, born of customs or beliefs – and, moreover, each one requires a separate explanation"[5]. Before establishing these explanations, this paper will begin with Phlegon's account of each tale.

In chapter 4 of his *Mirabilia* Phlegon, invoking Hesiodos (fr.275 Merkelbach-West), Dikaiarchos (fr.37 Wehrli[2]), Klearchos (uncertain)[6], Kallimachos (fr.576 Pfeiffer) and "certain others", relates the following incident: Teiresias, son of Eueres, saw one day a pair of snakes copulating on Kyllene, a mountain in Arkadia, wounded one of them, and immediately changed his form from a man into a woman. After this transformation "she" had intercourse with a man. Apollo told "her" in an oracle that if "she" encountered another pair of snakes and once again wounded one of them, "she" would return to his previous form. Teiresias did this and became a man again. Later, Zeus and Hera had an argument on the subject of sexual pleasure during intercourse: Zeus claimed that the woman had the greater share, more than the man, and Hera claimed the opposite. Since Teiresias had experience of both sexes, they decided to consult him on the matter. He replied that the man experiences only one tenth of the pleasure, whereas the woman experiences nine tenths. The furious Hera made him blind, but Zeus gave him the gift of prophecy and a life-span of seven generations.

In general, the author follows the most popular version of the myth[7]; and although the original passages referred to by Phlegon have not survived, they are attested in other sources[8]. These sources differ from Phlegon's version only in such details as the proportion of male and female sexual pleasure, although in all cases the latter has the greater share.

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[5] M. Delcourt, *Stérilités mystérieuses*, 34.

[6] See Antonio Stramaglia, ed., *Phlegon Trallianus. Opuscula de Rebus Mirabilibus et de Longaevis* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 29.

[7] For another version of the story of Teiresias in which he accidentally sees Athena naked in a bath, whereupon the enraged goddess deprives him of his sight, but eventually gives him in compensation the power of divination, see e.g. Callim.*Hymn*.5.75ff.; Prop.4.9.57-58; Nonn.*Dion.*5.337-41. In this version no sex change is mentioned although without doubt both versions are related, since they present the breaking of an ocular taboo: in one Teiresias sees the copulating snakes and his sexual integrity is threatened, in the other he sees the naked goddess and is punished through the loss of his sight. Cf. Luc Brisson, *Le mythe de Tirésias*, *passim*; Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite*, 33-43; Alexander H. Krappe, "Teiresias and the Snakes" in *Amercian Journal of Philology* 49 (1928): 267-275; Paul M.C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 162-170; Gherardo Ugolini, *Untersuchungen zur Figur des Sehers Teiresias* (Tübingen: Narr, 1995), 33-65. A third version of the myth also exists, according to which Teiresias was originally a woman. While she was wandering in the mountains, Apollo coveted her. In exchange for sexual favors he taught her about music. Once she was proficient, she refused to give herself to Apollo. Thus, the god changed her into a man so that Eros could experience her. She was also a judge in the quarrel between Zeus and Hera. After that she changed her gender a few more times in different circumstances; cf. Eust.*Od.*10.494.

[8] Hyg.*Fab.*75; Lactant.*Theb.*2.95 Jahnke; Apollod.*Bibl.*3.6.7; Ov.*Met.*3.316-39; Ant.Lib.*Met.*17.5.

The most striking aspect of this story is the fact that the Teiresias' transformation is supernatural and unexplained. The apparent cause of the transformation – wounding a snake – seems mysterious, even odd. In Phlegon's text there is some evidence which indicates that the sex of the wounded snake in both the first and the second event is not accidental. As Luc Brisson[9] notices, the compiler seems to play with the meaning of the word ἕτερος ('one or the other of two'): he does not use the term in its most common sequencee τὸν ἕνα... τὸν ἕτερον – 'the one and the other', but in fact uses the exact opposite, saying that Teiresias wounded first τὸν ἕτερον – the other, and then, in the second instance, τὸν ἕνα – the first, that is the one. The word-play relies on the double meaning of ἕτερον, which signifies 'the other of two' and also 'the different one'. Therefore, the term used in the story may suggest that Teiresias first wounded 'that different/other one of the two snakes', which means 'different from him' in terms of sex, namely the female, and was as a result immediately transformed into a woman. As Hansen[10] points out, such an explanation is confirmed in a number of texts (*Schol. in Hom.Od.*10.494, and Eust.*Od.*10.492) which specify the gender of the snakes, and notes that Teiresias first struck the female, whereas in the second event it was the male reptile that was wounded, so the resulting change was first from a man to a woman, and secondly from a woman to a man.

The spontaneous change of sex was not explained either in Phlegon's version of the story, or in most other versions. The only reason given for the transformation is Teiresias' encounter with the copulating snakes. Delcourt[11] (1961: 37) proves, however, that the sight of copulating snakes is a taboo in the folklore of many nations. The French scholar references a similar incident involving the father of Gracchi (Plin.*HN*.7.36) who, when returning home, saw two copulating snakes. An augur told him that his life would be saved if he killed the female. The Roman answered that it would be better to kill the male, since his wife Cornelia was young and could still bear children. Delcourt[12] concludes that "in the Roman tale, the sight of the snakes threatened the life of the onlooker; in the Greek tale, it threatened his sexual integrity". Moreover, in classical times snakes were believed to bring the gift of prophecy: the soothsayers Melampos, Kassandra and Helenos allowed snakes to lick their ears, so that they could understand the language of animals and the noises of the natural world[13]. On the other hand, such a special gift was believed to cause a loss of some sort in order for a balance to be maintained, as, for instance, the loss of his sight in the case of Teiresias.

[9] Luc Brisson, *Le mythe de Tirésias: Essai d'analyse structurel* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 12.

[10] W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 114.

[11] Marie Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite. Myths et Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Jennifer Nicholson (London: Longacre Press Ltd., 1961), 37.

[12] M. Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite*, 38.

[13] Ibid.; cf. L. Brisson, *Le mythe de Tirésias*, 46-77.

According to some scholars, the strange legend of Teiresias is a remnant of the ritual transvestitism that was centered around the periodic changing of clothes, from male to female, which was performed by shamans in ancient times. In the Greek interpretation, the memory of an old rite was changed into the story of a famous mythical prophet, using folklore themes to give it perfect cohesion[14]. Teiresias sees the snakes copulating and after that his sex changes; as the only human to have had authentic male and female sexual experience, he is asked by two gods to settle their quarrel over the sexual pleasure of men and women during intercourse. His response invokes the anger of the goddess who deprives him of his sight, but he is eventually compensated by being given the power of divination. "The idea underlying the many stories about blind soothsayers, of suffering or mutilated magicians, is that superiority in any one direction must be paid for, and often at a high price. When the Greeks had lost the sense of this mysterious contract whereby a god could claim from a human something of his substance in exchange for a special gift, they represented blindness as a punishment. This is clear in the story of Teiresias"[15].

This notion of folkloric themes in the story of Teiresias mentioned by Marie Delcourt was developed by other scholars[16] who observe that the pattern of Teiresias' story – the repeated encounter – is not unusual in international folktales, in which a man arrives at a certain place, or is engaged in a certain activity, and is then suddenly transformed into a woman. In this new form he/she lives as a married woman and bears seven children. After seven years he/she is engaged in the same activity or arrives at the place where metamorphosis previously occurred, and is changed back into man again. He returns home and learns from his wife that his absence lasted only a few moments. Hansen[17] suggests that the legend of Teiresias is a mythologization of this international tale in its ancient form, which, in fact, does not exclude Delcourt's hypothesis of the story originating in the ancient rite of transvestitism: many folktales motifs – as Propp[18] proved – have originated from ancient customs and beliefs.

The most interesting question is why Phlegon chose to include this mythical story among the historical accounts of the sex-changers and other "genuine stories" of different human oddities. The obvious answer would be that the story addresses "successive hermaphroditism", and thus it found its place in the section devoted to sexual transformation. Certainly, Phlegon may have not differentiated between myths and historical accounts, simply considering the former to be very

[14] M. Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite*, 41-42.

[15] Ibid., 39.

[16] Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis*, 164-165; W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 114-115.

[17] W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 115.

[18] Vladimir Propp, *Historyczne korzenie bajki magicznej* [*The Historical Roots of the Magic Tale*], trans. Jacek Chmielewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 2003), *passim*.

ancient. Nevertheless, even he must have realized there are problems in dating these mythical stories, since, as can be observed, he was careful to give details of the time and the place of a strange event whenever he could. In this case he could only refer to as many sources as possible. Nevertheless, by using Teiresias' story to open this part of *Mirabilia*, the author achieved a chronological sequence of sorts: from ancient times to his own time. From this perspective, the historicity of the 'mythical' case is confirmed by the modern cases quoted by the compiler, and conversely the 'historical' cases may be interpreted as manifestations of a divine intervention, which used to happen in very ancient times; the phenomenon of sex-change is thus presented as a fact that always occurred in human history.

Moreover, the story of Teiresias is a unique example of a transformation from a woman into a man. Perhaps, due to the lack of similar such metamorphoses, Phlegon decided to put this story in his compilation. The case of Teiresias is sensational due to the fact that the prophet changed his sex twice, and each time he became either fully female or fully male. The section devoted to is thus opened with an account of a rather special sex-change, in which the change happened under mysterious circumstances to a man who was not an ordinary mortal in other respects. However, the compiler truncates Teiresias' "biography" by limiting it to the episode of sexual transformation, an event which was apparently his main interest, and so omits the rich story of Teiresias' career as a famous seer. For Phlegon, the extraordinary double metamorphosis is the most important part of the myth, since it fits into his collection of human oddities, particularly the section concerning sexual anomalies, and for this reason the rest of the story was ignored.

Phlegon addresses the story of another mythical personage in a similar manner, a story which follows that of Teiresias in *Mirabilia*. The reader learns from chapter 5 that:

> The same authors relate that in the land of Lapiths a daughter was born to King Elatos and named Kainis. After Poseidon had had sexual intercourse with her and promised to fulfill any wish for her, she asked that he change her into a man and render her invulnerable. Poseidon granted her request, and her name was changed to Kaineus[19] (trans. Hansen 1996: 38).

Phlegon again refers to the same authors that were quoted in the previous story, namely Hesiodos (fr.87 Merkelbach-West), Kallimachos (fr.577 Pfeiffer) and Dikaiarchos (fr.38 Wehrli[2]). Yet again, the compiler focuses only on the

[19] *Mir.*5: Οἱ αὐτοὶ ἱστοροῦσιν κατὰ τὴν Λαπίθων χώραν γενέσθαι Ἐλάτῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ θυγατέρα ὀνομαζομένην Καινίδα. ταύτῃ δὲ Ποσειδῶνα μιγέντα ἐπαγγείλασθαι ποιήσειν αὐτῇ, ὃ ἄν ἐθέλῃ, τήν δὲ ἀξιῶσαι μεταλλάξαι αὐτὴν εἰς ἄνδρα ποιῆσαί τε ἄτρωτον. τοῦ δὲ Ποσειδῶνος κατὰ τὸ ἀξιωθὲν ποιήσαντος μετονομαθῆναι Καινέα.

beginning of the story that concerns the sex change, and ignores the rest, which is as follows: Kaineus became a tyrant, planting his spear in the middle of a market-place and ordering that everybody pay divine honors to it and swear by it. Zeus, angered by his impiety, sent the centaurs against him. Since the centaurs could not wound him, they overwhelmed him with tree-trunks and drove him into the earth[20]. Significantly, Phlegon fails to consider Kaineus' biography except for his metamorphosis from a woman to a man.

In this story, Delcourt[21] again observes a relic of the ancient rite of changing garments, a rite in which women wore male clothes. The scholar interprets Kainis' wish as implying a certain invulnerability not only in the ordinary sense, but with a sexual connotation, since, as she says, "the vocabularies of Greek and Latin, at all stages, from the style of tragedy to that of farce, assimilate the sexual act to a wound"[22]. The scholar also notes the etymology of the name Kaineus which, regardless of its actual origin, for the Greeks also meant καινίς, the sword; καίνω, to kill; καίνυμαι, to excel; καινός, new. Delcourt explains that transvestitism is a rite of passage and initiation, so "the youth who has renewed himself is invulnerable and stands erect and living under the trees that have overwhelmed him. Although the story has been twisted to fit a morality foreign to its primitive meaning, the ethics of rites of adolescence is still perfectly distinguishable in it"[23]. Forbes Irving[24], however, does not agree with this rational interpretation of the myth and proposes it should be viewed as an entirely imaginative construction. Forbes Irving argues that the myth of Kaineus is in fact a much more complex narrative based on the antithesis of male and female, in which the episode involving the sex change is not the story in itself, but only a prelude to the main story of Kaineus that depicts his rise as a famous hero. In this account, Kaineus becomes an extremely masculine and virile man who transcended the basic opposition of male and female. Specifically, Kaineus is transformed from something less than a man to something more than a man. This analysis justifies Kaineus' decision to become an aggressive superman as a manifestation of female resentment and rivalry[25]. Although it is impossible to determine the actual origin of Kaineus' story,

[20] Cf. Pind.fr.167 Bergk; Apollod.*Epit.*1.22; Ap.Rhod.*Argon.*1.57-64 and schol.; Verg.*Aen.*6.448 and Serv.; Hyg.*Fab.*14; Ov.*Met.*12.169-209 and 458-531; *Schol. in Hom.Il.*1.264. The strange death of Kaineus seems to be a favorite subject in early art: the earliest depiction dates from the 7th century; see Karl Schefold, *Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art*, trans. A. Hicks (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), pl.27c; for vases see Frank Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1973), 499-501.

[21] M. Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite*, 35.

[22] Ibid., 35.

[23] Ibid., 36.

[24] Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis*, 155-162.

[25] Ibid., 155-162.

the interpretation offered by Forbes Irving seems persuasive. Undoubtedly, the myth of the sex change, when contrasted with the story of the later fate of Kaineus as a man, appears to be based on the male/female opposition and thus to emphasise the relative importance of men and women in society.

Viewed from this perspective, the compiler's reduction of the story of Kaineus again appears to be significant: the omission of the later part of Kaineus' life in the male form highlights Phlegon's particular interest in the phenomenon of the sex change itself. The author neglects the sensational, even paradoxical, existence of the individual after his sexual transformation and focuses only on the metamorphosis. Phlegon's focus on sex changes becomes even more evident in the next section of his work, in which he relates four other cases of such metamorphoses, this time, however, dating from historical times. Again he concentrates his attention solely on the sex change and ignores the later fate of sex-changers.

Chapter 6 in *Mirabilia* is the longest and the most detailed of all the accounts of "genuine" sex-changers in the compilation. Phlegon relates an occurrence which took place in Antioch, by the Meander River, in 45 BC, "when Antipater was archon at Athens and Marcus Vinicius and Titus Statilius Taurus, surnamed Corvinus, were consuls in Rome". After this short introduction the story goes as follows:

> A maiden of prominent family, thirteen years of age, was good-looking and had many suitors. She was betrothed to the man whom her parents wished, the day of the wedding was at hand, and she was about to go forth from her house when suddenly she experienced an excruciating pain and cried out. Her relations took charge of her, treating her for stomach pains and colic, but her suffering continued for three days without a break, perplexing everyone about the nature of her illness. Her pains let up neither during the night nor the day, and although the doctors in the city tried every kind of treatment they were unable to discover the cause of her illness. At around daybreak of the fourth day her pain became stronger, and she cried out with a great wailing. Suddenly male genitals burst forth from her, and the girl became a man (trans. Hansen 1996: 38-39)[26].

This is the only such story mentioned by Phlegon in which the transformation is regarded as an evil omen, as it is shown towards the end:

[26] *Mir.* 6.2-3: παρθένος γὰρ γονέων ἐπισήμων τρισκαιδεκαέτις ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἐμνηστεύετο, οὖσα εὐπρεπής. ὡς δ' ἐνεγυήθη ᾧ οἱ γονεῖς ἐβούλοντο, ἐνστάσης τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ γάμου προϊέναι τοῦ οἴκου μέλλουσα αἰφνιδίως πόνου ἐμπεσόντος αὐτῇ σφοδροτάτου ἐξεβόησεν. ἀναλαβόντες δ' αὐτὴν οἱ προσήκοντες ἐθεράπευον ὡς ἀλγήματα ἔχουσαν κοιλίας καὶ στρόφους τῶν ἐντός· τῆγ δὲ ἀλγηδόνος ἐπιμενούσης τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἑξῆς ἀπορίαν τε πᾶσι τοῦ πάθους ποιοῦντος, τῶν πόνων οὔτε ἡμέρας ἔνδοσιν λαμβανόντων, καίτοι πᾶσαν μὲν θεραπείαν αὐτῇ προσφερόντων <τῶν> ἐν τῇ πόλει ἰατρῶν, μηδεμίαν δὲ τοῦ πάθους δυναμένων αἰτίαν εὑρεῖν, τῇ τετάρτῃ τῶν ἡμερῶν περὶ τόν ὄρθρον μείζονα τῶν πόνων ἐπίδοσιν λαμβανόντων, σὺν μεγάλῃ οἰμωγῇ ἀνακραγούσης, ἄφνω αὐτῇ ἀρσενικὰ μόρια προέπεσεν, καὶ ἡ κόρη ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο.

> Some time later she was brought to the Emperor Claudius in Rome. Because of the portent he had an altar built on the Capitoline to Jupiter the Averter of Evil (trans. Hansen 1996: 39)[27].

According to Phlegon, in this story we are dealing with a hermaphrodite, since he begins his account saying: "There was also a hermaphrodite in Antioch..." Evidently, although the girl was not born with both male and female genitalia, the fact that the male organ appeared suddenly, adequately classifies her as a hermaphrodite. Strictly speaking, she does become a hermaphrodite, since one may infer that her female organs must have remained after the male genitals burst forth, and thus she became equipped with two sets of reproductive organs. Nevertheless, she is considered as a "hermaphrodite" by Phlegon, and regarded a maleficent portent, since the emperor Claudius built an altar on the Capitoline to a divine being referred to as "Zeus Alexikakos" by Phlegon. William Hansen translated this as "Jupiter the Averter of Evil" due to the fact that a prominent temple of Jupiter stands on this hill[28]. In this account the construction of the altar is the only reaction to the portentous event, and there is no mention of the execution or exile of the hermaphrodite: the life of the man-woman does not seem to be at risk.

As Hansen[29] points out, the story disturbs us due to the mysterious transformation, which is explosive, unexpected and unexplained. Certainly, the girl's form changes in a most unusual manner: from an ordinary human being she becomes ambiguous, no longer simply a woman, nor a normal man. Nevertheless, nothing about the individual's later life is mentioned, which again suggests that it was of little interest to the compiler who limited his account to the extraordinary phenomenon of the sexual transformation.

The other stories in *Mirabilia* also fail to mention any responses or reactions to the appearance of the individuals after their sex-changes. The story in *Mir.*7 is much shorter but very similar to that one above:

> There was also a hermaphrodite in Mevania, a town in Italy, in the country house of Agrippina Augusta when Dionysodoros was archon in Athens, and Decimus Iunius Silanus Torquatus and Quintus Haterius Antoninus were consuls in Rome.
> A maiden named Philotis, whose family came from Smyrna, was of marriageable age and had been betrothed to a man by her parents when male genitals appeared in her and she became a man (trans. Hansen 1996: 39)[30].

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[27] *Mir.*6.4: μετὰ δὲ χρόνον εἰς Ῥώμην ἀνηνέχθη πρὸς Κλαύδιον Καίσαρα ὁ δὲ τούτου ἕνεκα τοῦ σημείου ἐν Καπετωλίῳ Διὶ Ἀλεξικάκῳ ἱδρύσατο βωμόν.

[28] W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 119.

[29] Ibid., 117-118.

[30] *Mir.*7.1-2: Ἐγένετο καὶ ἐν Μηουανίᾳ, πόλει τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἐν Ἀγριππίνης τῆς Σεβαστῆς ἐπαύλει ἀνδρόγυνος ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνησιν Διονυσοδώρου, ὑπατευόντων ἐν Ῥώμῃ Δέκμου Ἰουνίου Ειλανοῦ Τορκουάτου καὶ Κοΐντου Ἀτερίου Ἀντωνίνου. Φιλωτὶς γάρ τις ὀνόματι παρθένος, Σμυρναία τὸ γένος, ὡραία πρὸς γάμον ὑπὸ τῶν γονέων κατεγγεγυημένη ἀνδρί, μορίων αὐτῇ προφανέντων ἀρρενικῶν ἀνήρ ἐγένετο.

The story is dated to 53 AD. Its outline is identical to that in *Mir.* 6, although the account ends dramatically at the climax. Again, the reader does not learn anything about the fate of the girl after the transformation, and similarly the metamorphosis happens when the girl reaches puberty, which is symbolically expressed by her being of marriageable age. The forthcoming wedding makes the sex change more dramatic. Based on the resemblance between these two stories, Hansen[31] presumes that Phlegon recorded both stories from the same source.

However, the case of the unnamed maiden is rendered more exciting due to the great pain and mysterious disease experienced by the girl, which are described in detail: her protracted suffering builds the suspense in the story; the story of Philotis is deprived of such tension. Again, nothing is said about what happened to the person after the transformation.

The next two accounts are rather different, since here the reader is informed, admittedly very succinctly, of the subsequent fate of the sex-changers. The brief story in *Mir.* 8 goes as follows:

> There was another hermaphrodite at this same time in Epidauros, a child of a poor family, who earlier was called Sympherousa but upon becoming a man was named Sympheron. He spent his life as a gardener (trans. Hansen 1996: 39)[32].

The date when the event occurred is not stated explicitly, but "at this same time" may refer to the previous story which is dated precisely as AD 53. Thus the case of Sympherousa can be placed, albeit approximately, in the middle of the 1st century AD. Hansen (1996: 119) suggests, however, that an Epicurean philosopher of the 1st century BC, Philodemos of Gadara, might have alluded to the case of Sympherousa as "the person in Epidauros who married as a maiden but then became a man" (*De Signis* 1-2 De Lacy = P.Herc.1065.II.9-11)[33] in his illustrations of rare occurrences. If this is the case, the event must have taken place no later than Philodemos' lifetime (*c.* 110 – *c.* 35 BC), and thus the chronological sequence of the section devoted to the sex-changers in *Mirabilia*, including the previous two accounts from AD 45 and AD 53, and the following example (*Mir.* 9) from AD 116, is disrupted[34]. However, there is a similar story to which Diodoros (32.11) refers when discussing a sex change, that also happened

[31] W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 119.

[32] *Mir.* 8: Καί ἄλλος δέ τις ἀνδρόγυνος κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἐγένετο ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ, γονέων ἀπόρων παῖς, ὅς ἐκαλεῖτο πρότερον Συμφέρουσα, ἀνὴρ δὲ γενόμενος ὠνομαζετο Συμφέρων, κηπουρῶν δέ τὸν βίον διῆγεν.

[33] Recently revised and edited by Joëlle Delattre and Daniel Biencourt, "Le recour au *mirabilia* dans les polémiques logiques du Portique et du Jardin (Philodème, De Signis, col. 1-2)", in *'Mirabilia' – Conceptions et représentations de l'extraordinaire dans le monde antique*, ed. O. Bianchi and O. Thévenaz (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2004), 236.

[34] W. Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles*, 119.

in Epidauros thirty years after the death of Alexander Balas[35] (ruler of the Greek Seleucid kingdom 150-146 BC, died in 145 BC), thus about 115 BC. In that case the story centered on an orphan Kallo, who was supposed to be a girl. She had an imperforate vagina, but in addition to the so-called pecten she had from birth a perforation for urination. When she reached maturity she wed a fellow citizen. For two years she lived with him, but since she was incapable of intercourse as a woman she was obliged to submit to anal intercourse. At a certain point a tumor appeared on her genitals, causing her great pain, and thus a number of physicians were called to attend to her. One apothecary who offered to cure her cut into the swollen area, whereupon male genitals emerged, namely testicles and an imperforate penis. The apothecary completed the operation by making a passage into the urethra. After that he demanded double fees, saying that he had found a female invalid and made her into a healthy young man. Kallo laid aside her loom, no longer performing female activities, and changed her name to Kallon. She was also said to have been a priestess of Demeter before her change to a man's form, so because she had witnessed things forbidden to men she was brought to trial for impiety.

The account related by Diodoros may be another, more detailed, version of the story quoted by Phlegon, which situates the event at the end of the 2nd century BC, thus supporting the passage written by Philodemos. Therefore, there are two versions of the story dated around the end of the second century BC (Philodemos and Diodoros), with one version by Phlegon that is not explicitly dated. Instead there is the somewhat vague expression "at this time" which seems to refer to the previous story dated precisely to AD 53.

The following explanation can be suggested: although Philodemos, Diodoros and Phlegon may refer to the same story, the latter could have found a different date in his source that would place the event in the 1st century AD. Such an explanation enables us to understand the phrase "at this time" (κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους) in the context of the three other stories and situate the account of Sympherousa within the chronological sequence: AD 45 (*Mir.* 6) – AD 53 (*Mir.* 7) – "at this time", namely the middle of the 1st century AD, albeit approximately (*Mir.* 8) – AD 116 (*Mir.* 9). Another possibility is that Phlegon copied the story word for word from his source and ignored the fact that the phrase "at this same time" originally referred to a different context and to a much earlier time.

In Diodoros' report, as also in the case of Kaineus, a certain female rivalry and resentment may be observed: Kallo gives up work reserved for women, which suggests that she engages in male activities. The author does not mention any attempt to expel the girl who apparently is not regarded as portentous.

[35] Incorrectly identified as Alexander the Great by William Hansen, Phlegon of Tralles, 120-121.

However, her metamorphosis has different repercussions – she is accused of impiety, which, in fact, is somewhat surprising, since the girl at the time was innocent and completely ignorant of the events about to occur. It seems that in this case a retrospective law demonstrates how serious the breaking of such a taboo was considered to be in those times.

In Phlegon's version, however, the life of the sex-changer is not at risk, as nothing is reported to indicate a portentous interpretation of the event. Moreover, for the first time we are informed of the fate of the woman who became man: apparently he lived a quiet life working as a gardener, and most probably suffered no ill-effects as a result of the transformation. Interestingly, his new occupation is not typically masculine, or at least not of the kind that would emphasize his masculinity. This story appears to lack exaggeration and is, therefore, the most plausible among all the stories of this kind quoted by Phlegon and other authors.

The last story in this sequence in *Mirabilia* is essentially similar to the previous example:

> Likewise in Syrian Laodikeia there was a woman named Aitete, who underwent a change in form and name when she was living with her husband. Having become a man Aitete was renamed Aitetos. This happened when Makrinos was archon at Athens, and Lucius Lamia Aelianus and Sextus Carminius Veterus were consuls in Rome.
> I myself have seen this person (trans. Hansen 1996: 39)[36].

This is another instance in which no consequences appear to result either from the sex change or the change of name, which seems to indicate that the later life of the individual renamed Aitetos was uneventful. This occurrence took place much later than the previous ones, since it is dated AD 116 – the time of Phlegon. This is one of the rare passages when the author marks his presence as he claims to be an eye-witness, most probably in order to give credence to his report.

In all the cases described by Phlegon, none of the sex-changers are victimized or harassed. Although they are labeled as hermaphrodites, they are not excluded from society, unlike the androgynous infants that are regarded maleficent portents, with the concomitant unfortunate consequences.

Similarly in the accounts of other authors, successive hermaphrodites do not seem to be in danger. Besides the story of Kallon from Epidauros, Diodoros quotes a number of other examples of metamorphosis, always from a woman to a man. In the passage 32.10.2-9 there is a relatively long story which is associated

[36] *Mir.* 9: Καὶ ἐς Λαοδίκειαν δὲ τῆς Συρίας γυνή ὀνόματι Αἰτητή, συνοικοῦσα τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἔτι μετέβαλε τὴν μορφὴν καὶ μετωνομάσθη Αἰτητὸς ἀνὴρ γενόμενος, ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνησιν Μακρίνου, ὑπατευόντων ἐν Ῥώμῃ Λουκίου Λαμία Αἰλιανοῦ καὶ <Σέξτου Καρμινίου> Οὐέτερος. τοῦτον καὶ αὐτὸς ἐθεασάμην.

with the death of Alexander Balas. When the king was consulting an oracle of Apollo in Cilicia, the god told him that he should beware of the place that bore the "two-formed one". At the time the prophesy seemed enigmatic, but its meaning was later revealed. In Abai in Arabia a certain woman named Heraïs, who had a Macedonian father and an Arabian mother, being of marriageable age, wed a man named Samiades. After living with his wife for a year, Samiades departed on a long journey and Heraïs was struck by a strange infirmity. A serious tumor appeared at the base of her abdomen, and continued to grow, and at the same time she had high fevers. The physicians who were summoned applied remedies, which they thought would reduce the inflammation, but on the seventh day the tumor burst and male genitalia appeared from her groin. As this occurred when only her mother and two maidservants were present, they decided to keep it a secret. After recovering from her illness, she continued to wear female clothes. However, when Samiades returned and wished to have sexual intercourse with her, she was ashamed to be seen by him and refused. Not surprisingly, he grew angry. A quarrel broke out, since Heraïs' father, in spite of his son-in-law's demands, was also too ashamed to disclose the reason for his daughter's behavior. Thus Samiades brought a suit against her father for the return of his own wife. After the judges determined that it was a wife's duty to go home with her husband, she eventually disrobed and revealed the truth, thus challenging the court in a rather dramatic fashion for forcing two men to live together. All present were amazed at the turn of events. The doctors, concluding that her male organ had been abnormally encased within the female organ and concealed by a membrane, surgically completed the transformation. Heraïs changed her name to Diophantus, and was even enrolled in the cavalry under Alexander Balas. When the king was assassinated at Abai – "the birthplace of the two-formed one" – the message of the oracle became clear. Samiades, overwhelmed by shame over his unnatural marriage but still in love with his former wife, made Diophantus his heir and took his own life. The story ends with a statement that she who was born a woman adopted a man's courage, while the man proved to be weaker than a woman.

Therefore, it seems that after the transformation nothing prevented the woman from continuing to live as a man: she is by no means an outcast from society. In fact, just the opposite, since she undertook a career as a cavalryman. In this account yet again an ordinary girl changes into a manly man.

"The cases of women who have changed to men are not a fable"[37], asserts Pliny (*NH.*7.36) a century after Diodoros, and he relates the story of a girl in Casinum who was living with her parents when she became a boy. However, on the orders of the augurs she was deported to a desert island. In this case,

[37] Plin.*NH.*7.36: ex feminis mutari in mares non est fabulosum.

the transformation resulted in the exile of the "hermaphrodite". On the other hand, Pliny quotes Licinius Mucianus who asserts that he saw in Argos a man named Areskon, whose name was previously Areskousa – she married a man, but after she developed a beard and other male features, she, now he, took a wife. The author also claims to have seen in Africa a certain Lucius Constitius of Thysdritum, who changed into a man on his wedding day (*NH.*7.36). In only one of the three cases presented by Pliny is the sex-changer condemned to a life in exile. In another of the three instances the account mentions briefly that the individual whose sex changed chose the life of a normal man and married a woman.

In all the narratives discussed above a common pattern is observed: the protagonist is a young woman, betrothed or married, who suddenly undergoes a mysterious metamorphosis from a female to a male when male genitals burst out of her. As a result, the marriage or the marriage arrangement is broken. In some cases we learn about the subsequent life of the sex-changers who usually take up a typically male occupation.

In other words, all the sexual transformations quoted in *Mirabilia* and in other sources are from a woman to a man rather than the reverse (with the exception of Teiresias). Perhaps, for anatomical reasons, the phenomenon of a metamorphosis from a female to a male was regarded as more probable and imaginable. It was also supported by the physiological theory of Galen who in the famous passage (*De usu part.*2.297, 299 Kühn; cf. also Ps.-Galen 14.719 Kühn) claims that female genitals are inverted and internalized male genitals which may be extruded if the body's heat is very high. Another possible explanation is the cultural bias which saw a woman as inferior to a man and of a less stable – therefore potentially changeable – state[38]. This may be the reason why the sex-changers seem to have been accepted by ancient society: since they evolved from an inferior being, for this is how they were viewed, to a superior being, namely a man, they gained a higher status within the society. This is best illustrated in both the story of Kaineus, who although initially an insignificant girl became a strong, powerful man and king and the story reported by Diodoros (32.10.2-9) of a girl called Heraïs, who after having changed sex, took the male name Diophantus and became a great warrior. Both examples reveal that the change of sex from a woman to a man socially advanced the individual whose sex changed. It would also explain why they did not share the fate of the hermaphrodites and were not exiled or killed, but could live in society after their transformation.

[38] Mary Beagon, trans., ed., *The Elder Pliny. On the Human Animal. Natural History Book 7* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 173; see also Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), *passim*.

As can be seen from all the testimonies quoted above, only two mention instances when a sex change triggers a reaction from the state: one is found in *Mir.* 6, where the metamorphosis from a woman to a man results in the construction of an altar to Zeus The Averter of Evil (proof that although Phlegon truncated his stories, he would not fail to report such a dramatic detail as the removal of the sex-changer or a ritual performance); a further example is related by Pliny (*NH.* 7.36) who says that the person whose sex changed was exiled to a desert island. The remainder of the cases seem to indicate that the transformations were not in the main regarded as evil omens and so did not result in unfortunate consequences for the individuals whose sex changed. This fact seems to disagree with Marie Delcourt's[39] opinion that both phenomena were considered maleficent, and instead indicates that the sex-changers were regarded as less dangerous than hermaphrodites. Thus, the sex-changers most probably did not arouse the same level of fear as hermaphrodites, and were grouped together with those afflicted with a mysterious disease, rather than as those meriting divine wrath.

In fact, although the ancient reports of a sudden spontaneous sex change seem fantastic, there are grounds to treat some as potentially true when discussing them using terms from modern medicine. The characteristics of the phenomenon described by the ancient authors actually resemble the genetic defects in a disorder called "hypospadias" in modern medical terminology[40]. The term "hypospadias" is derived from the Greek word ὑπό, "under", and σπάδων, meaning "rent" or "fissure", and refers to one of the most common genital anomalies currently treated by pediatric urologists. "A hypospadic boy may be registered as a girl; the mistake is discovered at puberty. On the other hand, there are girls whose external genital organs resemble those of boys, and it is difficult to distinguish a little girl so equipped from a hypospadic boy. When the Ancients (and for that matter the moderns too) speak of a change of sex, they are simply describing the moment when the real sex, undisclosed at birth, is revealed"[41]. Certainly, the ancient accounts are often exaggerated and for the sake of sensation they described a metamorphosis not as a process but as a sudden change.

Thus hypospadias may be an explanation for the references to sex-changers in ancient texts. Another possible disorder which presents similar symptoms to the ancient cases of sexual transformation is the so-called pseudo-hermaphroditism, characterized by an ambiguity of the external organs, which appear to be intermediate between the typical female and male genitals. In most cases they resemble female genitals, but at puberty the real sex is revealed[42].

[39] M. Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite*, 44.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] George Androutsos, "Hermaphroditism in Greek and Roman Antiquity", *Hormones* 5 (2006): 214.

As was mentioned above, although both groups – the hermaphrodites and the sex-changers – were often described using the same term in ancient times, they do not seem to have been treated equally. Children born with androgynous genitals were usually removed from society, whereas the sex-changers encountered hostile reactions. Nevertheless, many must have taken both phenomena quite seriously. There is a passage by Diodoros (32.12.1) in which the author after mentioning a few examples of sex change and hermaphroditism, concludes with a complaint about the superstitious beliefs of his contemporaries:

> Not that the male and female natures have been united to form a truly bisexual type, for that is impossible, but that Nature, to mankind's consternation and mystification, has through the bodily parts falsely given this impression. And this is the reason why we have considered these shifts of sex worthy of record, not for the entertainment, but for the improvement of most of our readers. For many men, thinking such things to be portents, fall into superstition, and not merely isolated individuals, but even nations and cities (trans. Oldfather 1910)[43].

It can be inferred from Diodoros' words, which are an amazingly rational reflection on the nature of hermaphrodites and sex-changers that his view was not commonly shared and accepted in his time. The opinions of the ordinary people with regard to these abnormalities could have differed significantly.

Interestingly, Diodoros, who lived in the first century BC, asserts that he recorded all the examples not for entertainment, but for the improvement of his readers. Perhaps such an improvement had finally taken place, at least within the educated elite, as at the beginning of the Christian era, Euenos of Athens (*Anth.Gr.* 9.602) composed this epigram:

> Formerly I raised my youthful hands to Cypris, offering her pine torches to grant me a child, for already in the nuptial chamber I had loosed my virgin dress. Now suddenly I see myself revealing a virile form. They call me bridegroom, bride no longer. After the altars of Aphrodite, I garland those of Ares and Hercules. Thebes in olden time sang of Tiresias. Calchis today has seen me put aside the *mitra* to assume the chlamyde[44].

His words can be taken as evidence that in his time a sex change was for many a simple curiosity. One century later, Phlegon's collection of curiosities

[43] Diod.Sic.32.12.1.: οὐκ ἄρρενος καὶ θηλείας φύσεως εἰς δίμορφον τύπον δημιουργηθείσης, ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ τῆς φύσεως διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν ψευδογραφούσης εἰς ἔκπληξιν καὶ ἀνθρώπων. διόπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰς περιπετείας ταύτας ἀναγραφῆς ἠξιώσαμεν, οὐ ψυχαγωγίας ἀλλ᾽ ὠφελείας ἕνεκα τῶν ἀναγινωσκόντων. πολλοὶ γὰρ τέρατα τὰ τοιαῦτα νομίζοντες εἶναι δεισιδαιμονοῦσιν, οὐκ ἰδιῶται μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις.

[44] *Anth.Pal.* 9.602: ἅ ποτε παρθενικαῖσιν ἱλασκομένα παλάμῃσιν / Κύπριδα, σὺν πεύκαις καὶ γάμον εὐξαμένα, / κουριδίους ἤδη θαλάμῳ λύσασα χιτῶνας, / ἀνδρὸς ἄφαρ μηρῶν ἐξελόχευσα τύπους: / νυμφίος ἐκ νύμφης δὲ κικλήσκομαι, ἐκ δ᾽ Ἀφροδίτης Ἄρεα καὶ βωμοὺς ἔστεφον Ἡρακλέους. / Θῆβαι Τειρεσίην ἔλεγόν ποτε: νῦν δέ με Χαλκὶς / τὴν πάρος ἐν μίτραις ἡσπάσατ᾽ ἐν χλαμύδι. Trans. Jennifer Nicholson.

was undoubtedly composed for entertainment alone, and not for the education of the readers; this feature differentiates the attitude of Phlegon from the approach of Diodoros. The content of Phlegon's work – *Mirabilia* – manifests the author's evident fondness for human oddities. The collection consists exclusively of strange events which are of a 'corporeal' kind: sex-changers as well as hermaphrodites, ghosts, prophesizing heads deprived of their bodies, deformed and human-animal newborns in addition to other extraordinary beings, together with various extraordinary phenomena, such as amazing human fertility or unusual multiple deliveries, all of which make up this strange literary collection of human curiosities. A particular emphasis was placed on the anomalies of human sexuality and procreation; therefore, the accounts of sexual metamorphosis are not an accidental addition to *Mirabilia*.

That the compilation was created for the sake of entertainment is proven by the fact that the majority of the stories collected were limited to the episodes in which the extraordinary event occurred; the original context was lost. As has been observed, the reports of the sex-changers in *Mirabilia* were truncated by removing all the elements that did not concern the transformation directly. The phenomenon of spontaneous sex change is in itself worth noting, irrespective of whether it happened to a mythical person or an ordinary human being. Since the majority of the compilation consists of "genuine" events, it may be assumed that these were regarded by the author as more interesting and sensational than the myths. Nevertheless, it seems that Phlegon included the story of Teiresias in his work primarily because it addresses an exceptional metamorphosis, from a man to a woman and back, thus a double transformation. Most likely, the compiler could not find an analogous example from more recent times; therefore, he used the myth in his collection together with that of Kaineus. In order to effectively incorporate the myths into his book on curiosities, the author shortened both in the same manner as the other stories in the compilation, by restricting the tale to what he considered the central event.

Furthermore, not only in the cases of the sex-changers, but throughout the entire work, neither commentary nor explanation is provided by the author, which suggests he was not interested in the education or improvement of his potential readers. His intention was to arouse and/or satisfy his audience's and most probably his own need for the curiosities that were so popular in imperial Rome: a fashion, especially for human monstrosities and anomalies, was a feature of the time[45]. In particular, the emperors, from Augustus onward, were patrons

[45] On this topic see esp. Carlin A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), *passim*; Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), *passim*; Philip Hardie, ed., *Paradox and the Marvellous in Augustan Literature and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), *passim*.

of curiosities and possessed impressive collections of diverse oddities (Garland 1995: 45-58)[46]. Hadrian too shared this penchant: Phlegon relates in chapter 34 of *Mirabilia* that in the emperor's storehouse an embalmed hippocentaur was displayed. Moreover, since Hadrian travelled a lot[47], Phlegon, as a member of his court and most likely the emperor's secretary, may have accompanied him, so gaining many opportunities to study and admire curiosities in various parts of the imperium[48]. An indication that he travelled with Hadrian can be noted in chapter 9 of *Mirabilia*, in which the compiler claims to have seen with his own eyes a woman called Aitete, who changed sex and, as a consequence, her name to Aitetos; Phlegon claims the episode happened during the reign of the emperor Trajan in 116 AD in the city of Laodikeia in Syria, where Hadrian, Trajan's close friend and the future emperor, held an important position at that time as a governor of the province of Syria; Phlegon, Hadrian's freedman, most probably accompanied his master.

Surrounded in his everyday life by oddities, Phlegon of Tralles may have developed a desire to create his own collection of strange phenomena. It seems, his choice was not accidental: it can be easily observed in ancient times, and indeed it still holds true today, that the sexual life of humans is an intriguing subject. The majority of Phlegon's work was devoted to the most fascinating aspects: the sexual anomalies, among which the sex-changers and hermaphrodites are the largest group, with six reports of the former and two reports of the latter. Other such curiosities in the book concern one case of necrophilia (*Mir.* 1), two cases of males who gave birth (*Mir.* 26 and 27), four additional examples of amazing multiple births (*Mir.* 28 to 31) and two further stories about children who at the age of six or seven years were able to beget offspring (*Mir.* 32 and 33). There are also six cases of monstrous births which indirectly impinge upon the sexual sphere by emphasizing the monstrous fetus as a product of portentous female fertility. Altogether there are twenty-three cases of the "sexual kind" out of a total of thirty-five stories in the compilation. The sex-changers and the hermaphrodites are thus the most represented type of curiosity in Phlegon of Tralles' *Mirabilia*, which, in fact, is hardly surprising, since a sex-change is without doubt one of the most imaginative metamorphosis ever.

[46] Cf. e.g. Plin. on Pompey the Great (*NH.* 7.34) and on Augustus (7.75); Suet. on Augustus (*Aug.* 43.4; 72.3; 83), on Tiberius (*Tib.* 61), on Domitian (*Dom.* 4.2); Tac. on Claudius (*Ann.* 12.49), on Nero (*Ann.* 15.34); *Hist. Aug. on Commodus (Commod.* 10.9 and 11.2), on Alexander Severus (*Alex. Sev.* 34.2-4).

[47] On Hadrian's travels see esp. Anthony Birley, *Hadrian. Cesarz niestrudzony* [*Hadrian. The Restless Emperor*], trans. Robert Wiśniewski (Warszawa: PIW, 2002), *passim*.

[48] Despite the lack of evidence for Phlegon's role at the imperial court, scholars assume that he documented Hadrian's itinerary, cf. Sylvia Fein, *Die Beziehungen der Kaiser Trajan und Hadrian zu den literati* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994), 193-199, accompanying the emperor from the beginning, cf. Birley, *Hadrian*, 104, 286): such a conclusion is drawn from fragments of Phlegon's *Olympiads*, whose two books – 15 and 16 – describe the reign of Hadrian, cf. Birley, *Hadrian*, 230.

"... and She became a Man": Sexual Metamorphosis in Phlegon of Tralles' *Mirabilia*

Summary

This paper is devoted to the motif of a spontaneous sex change which appears several times in Phlegon of Tralles' *Mirabilia*. The reports quoted by the author concern mythical characters (Teiresias, Kainis), as well as historical (or allegedly historical) figures; all of the reports present a transformation of woman to man, with exception of the myth of Teiresias who underwent a reverse metamorphosis. Each account has been truncated by the author and limited to the mere episode of the sex change; none has been commented or explained. This indicates that the author tries to focus his readers' attention only on the elements of the marvelous and supernatural in order to astonish them. This fact proves that *Mirabilia* which are a literary collection of oddities may be regarded as a part of a wider cultural phenomenon – the vogue for collections of various curiosities, so popular in Phlegon's times.

„... i stała się mężczyzną": metamorfoza płci w *Mirabiliach* Flegona z Tralleis

Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest motywowi samoistnej zmiany płci, który kilkukrotnie występuje w *Mirabiliach* Flegona z Tralleis. Opowieści przytaczane przez autora dotyczą zarówno postaci mitycznych (Tejrezjasz, Kainis), jak i historycznych (czy rzekomo historycznych), wszystkie jednak przedstawiają przeistoczenie się kobiety w mężczyznę, z wyjątkiem mitu o Tejrezjaszu, który uległ odwrotnej metamorfozie. Każdy przekaz został skrócony przez autora zbioru i zredukowany do epizodu przedstawiającego samą zmianę płci; żaden zaś nie został opatrzony komentarzem czy wyjaśnieniem. Wszystko to wskazuje, że autor dla uzyskania efektu zaskoczenia i zadziwienia czytelnika stara się skupić jego uwagę wyłącznie na elementach niezwykłych i nadprzyrodzonych. Fakt ten pozwala z tym większą pewnością ściśle łączyć *Mirabillia*, stanowiące literacką kolekcję osobliwości, z szerszym zjawiskiem kulturowym, jakim była w czasach Flegona moda na zbieranie wszelkiego rodzaju kuriozów.