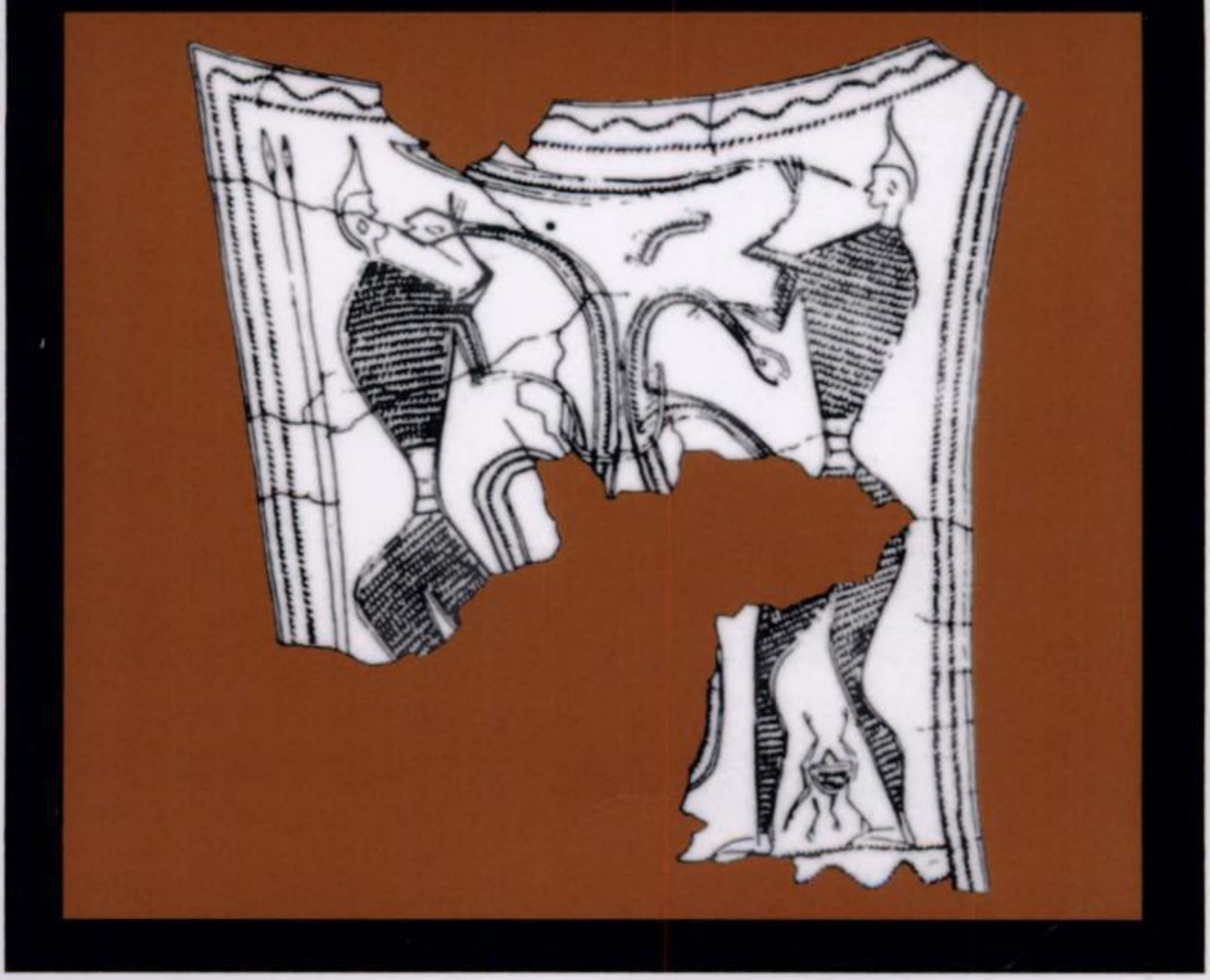
Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual

WALTER BURKERT



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ogy, psychology, and biology are rapidly dispelling the ancient notion of 'human nature' as an immutable standard. This means for the optimist that man is perfectible, for the pessimist that man is destructible, to be replaced by some better adjusted construct. Our own situation may thus be called dramatically historical, as it is changing at the most profound levels. What has been assumed to constitute 'human nature' turns out to be just the tradition of mankind as developed in a unique historical process up to the present day. In this perspective, humanism might finally merge with anthropology.

It remains to thank all those who have helped me to produce this book. I greatly profited from the discussions following the Sather Lectures, and some chapters of them I was invited to present at other universities. My special thanks are due to the colleagues at the Department of Classics, and to Alan Dundes, Frits Staal, and Wendy O'Flaherty at Berkeley, and to Norbert Bischof and Max Lüthi at Zürich. Parts of the manuscript were corrected by Brian Vickers and Paul Y. Hoskisson at Zürich, and by Stephen Gruen and Thomas Knight at Berkeley, all of whom provided much more than mere stylistic advice. Susan Peters, Jesse M. Phillips, and others at the University of California Press prepared the text for the printer with exemplary care. The responsibility for any faults left is mine.

Uster/Zürich, December 1978 W.B.

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PG *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. A. Migne, Series Graeca et Graecolatina

PL *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. A. Migne, Series Latina

PMG *Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. D. L. Page, Oxford 1962

PP *La Parola del Passato*

PR L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, 4th ed. by C. Robert, Berlin 1894–1926

PW *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, new revision begun by G. Wissowa, Stuttgart 1893ff.

PY E. L. Bennett, J. P. Olivier, *The Pylos Tablets*, I-II, Rome 1973–76

RA *Revue archéologique*

RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*

RAL *Rendiconti dell' Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*

REA *Revue des Etudes Anciennes*

REG *Revue des Etudes Grecques*

RFIC *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*

RGG *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed. by K. Galling, Tübingen 1957–1965

RHR *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*

RhM *Rheinisches Museum für classische Philologie*

RML *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ed. W. H. Roscher, Leipzig 1884–1937

RPh *Revue de Philologie*

SAVk *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*

SB *Sitzungsberichte*

SCO *Studi Classici e Orientali*

SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

SIG *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. W. Dittenberger, Leipzig 1915–24[3]

SLG *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*, ed. D. L. Page, Oxford 1974

SMEA *Studi Micenei e Egeo-Anatolici*

SMSR *Studi e Materiali di Storia della Religione*

SVF *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. v. Arnim, I–III, Leipzig 1903–21

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may appear in such diverse forms as a book of Homer, a digression in Pindar, a whole tragedy, an allusion in a choral ode, a passage in Apollodorus, or a scholion on Aristophanes. A myth, qua tale, is not identical with any given text; the interpretation of myth therefore is to be distinguished from the interpretation of a text, though both may evolve in a hermeneutic circle and remain mutually dependent on each other. We know, after all, that we can remember a good tale, and a myth, by hearing it just once, without memorizing the words of a text. What is it, then, that we do remember?

It is not anything 'real.' A tale, while not bound to any given text, is not bound to pragmatic reality either. I think this holds true on quite a fundamental level. A tale has no immediate reference,[13] in contrast to a word or an atomic sentence: this is a rose, this is red, this rose is red. A tale is not, and cannot be, an accumulation of atomic sentences; it is a sequence in time, linking different stages by some internal necessity. There might be immediate evidence only for the last stage, but usually the whole tale is in the past tense, and there is no immediate way to verify things past. In fact there is no isomorphism between reality and tale; it seems increasingly as if piles of computerized information were more representative of reality than any tale; it is not by coincidence that modern writers are more and more unwilling, and unable, to tell a straightforward tale. Reality does not automatically yield a tale. Even a reporter in a live transmission of, say, a football game can only give a personal selection of what is going on simultaneously; and if anyone tries to retell what has happened, there is immediately much more selection, condensation, structuralization. The form of the tale is not produced by reality, but by language, whence its basic character is derived: linearity. Every tale has a basic element of *poíesis*, fiction.

Myth, then, within the class of traditional tales, is nonfactual story-telling. This keeps us close to the sense of the Greek word *mŷthos* as contrasted with *lógos*: *lógos*, from *légein*, 'to put together,' is assembling single bits of evidence, of verifiable facts: *lógon didónai*, to render account in front of a critical and suspicious audience; *mŷthos* is telling a tale while disclaiming responsibility: *ouk emòs ho mŷthos*,[14] this is not my tale, but I have heard it elsewhere. Just by disregarding the question of truth one may enjoy myth, or wonder, and start thinking.

Yet myth is generally held to be not a passing enjoyment, but some-

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five cities, and four tribes seems to put quite a strain on the memory, and details multiply, if we add parents and further offspring, to make up the dreary pages of mythological handbooks. But the tales told adapt themselves neatly to a sequence of five 'functions,' easy to understand, which I would call 'the girl's tragedy': (1) leaving home: the girl is separated from childhood and family life; (2) the idyl of seclusion: Callisto joins Artemis, Tyro takes a lonely walk to the river, Auge and Io become priestesses, Antiope becomes a maenad, Danaë is incarcerated in a tomb-like vault; (3) rape: the girl is surprised, violated, and impregnated by a god—it is Zeus for Callisto, Danaë, Io, and Antiope, Poseidon for Tyro and Melanippe, Heracles for Auge; (4) tribulation: the girl is severely punished and threatened with death by parents or relatives—Antiope and Tyro are enslaved to a kind of stepmother, Melanippe is blinded and incarcerated, Danaë is enclosed in a coffin and thrown into the sea, Auge is sold to strangers, Io is turned into a cow and chased away, Callisto is turned into a bear, hunted, and shot; (5) rescue: the mother, having given birth to a boy, is saved from death and grief, as the boy is about to take over the power to which he is destined. The agents, places, motivations and all the details vary; but there is the fixed sequence of departure, seclusion, rape, tribulation, and rescue as a prelude to the emergence of the hero.[19] Yet there is a complication with regard to the animal metamorphosis of Callisto the bear and Io the cow: our texts are conspicuously at variance as to the occurrence of this transformation, before or after mating with the god, or much later.[20] It would be begging the question to postulate that, since animal metamorphosis is 'primitive,' it should happen as early as possible in the tale, turning the god animal too. We must rather state that metamorphosis and sexual union are not in a fixed motifeme sequence; the linearity of the tale structure is suspended at this point. In fact metamorphosis is not a 'motifeme' in this series or elsewhere, let alone an independent tale type, but a widely applicable motif to mark a change of roles, or to hint at some reference outside the tale; both bear and cattle are of special, ritual importance. This, however, will lead from folktale to myth.[21]

Another example may illustrate how far this method of analysis can succeed in establishing identity or nonidentity of parallel versions of ancient myths. I take the Hittite myth about the dragon Illuyankas[22] and the Typhon myth as transmitted by Apollodorus; the basic similarity of

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'action' which, in the case of Propp's series, would be the 'quest.' Practical analysis, however, has to take advantage precisely of the alternatives and variants presented in a set of parallel tales, which make clear the turning points and 'joints.'[3]

What is more generally troubling about structuralism in the wake of Propp is the apparent lack of system: thirty-one 'functions'; this seems quite a random series. Every Platonic mind will try to reduce this multitude to some neat, preferably binary, scheme from which they can be generated: "from chain to system"![4] Dundes has introduced some binary motifemes, such as 'Lack–lack liquidated,' while retaining an open group of various sequences. Much more systematic models have been worked out by Greimas and Bremond,[5] still on the basis of Propp's achievement but aiming at a general, formalized 'narrative grammar.' One may wonder, though, how one can ever get back from such neat and barren systems to describing any identifiable tale in its dynamics, as Propp's quest series did.

Less systematic, but much more radical, is the other variant of structuralism, headed by Lévi-Strauss.[6] His impact has been compared to the advent of abstract painting.[7] I do not think Lévi-Strauss has proved anything, but he has shown in an unprecedented way what scholars can do with myths. For him, a folktale, taken as a 'syntagmatic chain,' makes no sense at all.[8] Thus the sequence of the tale is broken up, and all its elements—persons, objects, properties, and actions—become free to serve just as terms in abstract relations: oppositions, proportions, reversals, logical quadrangles, 'functions' in the mathematical sense. As Nathorst put it: "He has perhaps found the harmony, but he has certainly lost the melody."[9] We are told there are multiple levels of coexisting 'codes' which must be decoded by setting out the fundamental, binary relations. Lévi-Strauss usually arrives at two columns of concepts representing the basic opposition and an intermediary between the two, and he seems to show that this '*médiation*' is the real achievement of myth.

The method, carried out with an intelligence that keeps surprising the reader, may work an irresistible spell on the humanities' craving to become, after all, scientific. And the bewildered objection that this structuralism produces structures which nobody had seen or understood before[10] is countered from the start: these are unconscious; a native speaker does not usually know the grammar of his own language in any

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fer' of an object.[6] The meaning of a tale, even at the level of a 'Proppian' sequence, is much richer, and more complicated. The very sequence, however, represents one major semantic 'rule,' which determines the meaning of the elements.

But such a rule has its very special dynamics. The 'sequence of motifemes' could as well be described as a 'program of actions'; the linguistic representative of 'action' is the verb. In fact if we look more closely at Propp's sequence, the major part of his 'functions' can be conveniently summarized in one verb, 'to get,' corresponding to the substantive 'the quest.' And this three-letter word does imply quite a complicated program of actions. To 'get' something means: to realize some deficiency, or receive some order to start; to have, or to attain, some knowledge or information about the thing wanted; to decide to begin a search; to go out, to meet partners, in a changing environment, who may prove to be helpful or antagonistic; to discover the object, and to appropriate it by force or guile, or, in more civilized circumstances, by negotiation; then, to bring back the object, while it still may be taken away by force, stolen, or lost. Only after all that, with success established, has the action of 'getting' come to its end. Now these are in fact Propp's functions 8–31, leaving out the role of the helpful partner, and this well-structured sense is more specific, and more complicated, than any zero-formula such as $-1+1=0$, or even 'Lack–lack liquidated.' This structure is not directly derivable from formal logic; note the asymmetry: the search is quite different from the return or flight; neither Odysseus nor the Argonauts can get back on the route whereby they came to Circe or Aia. Even this, though, has a ring of reality.

In fact if we ask where such a structure of sense, such a program of actions, is derived from, the answer must evidently be: from the reality of life, nay, from biology.[7] Every rat in search of food will incessantly run through all these 'functions,' including the peak of agitation at the moment of success: then the rat has to run fastest to find a safe place before its fellow rats take its prey away. In the Propp series there is the motifeme sequence called the 'magical flight,'[8] which often constitutes the most thrilling part of a fairy-tale, when the magical object, or the bride, has been gained and the previous owner starts a pursuit. This probably is just a transformation of the action pattern described.

Protest will arise that now we have committed the worst *metabasis eis*

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tastrophe will be especially idyllic and serene. Hence the beautiful flowers in the meadow plucked by Little Red Riding Hood as well as by Persephone before the big bad wolf or Death himself enters into the action.

Another form of contrast is to duplicate the tale by introducing alternatives: the hero has more than one chance. He may fail at the first attempt but succeed at the second; examples range from the Storm-god and Illuyankas[3] to well beyond Parsifal; or success may be followed by failure. Or else contrasting characters are introduced, one destined to fail, one to succeed: the two brothers, or sisters; the good and the bad, the silly and the clever; this fits with the Interdiction–violation series, as well as with the combat tale.

A more effective crystallization, with contrasts integrated into symmetry, is achieved by the clash of two standard action-patterns, notably sexuality and aggression. Mating and procreation are actions which define the roles of male and female, parents and offspring. A combat of men with women is a startling inversion—the Amazon myth, or the wife killing her husband; worse still is the father killing his daughter, or the son killing his mother, perverting in addition the bonds of family descent. These then are most concise and memorable narrative structures, which may even combine to form an almost systematic series: a father killing his daughter, a wife killing her husband, a son killing his mother—the *Oresteia* tragedy.

'Fantasy' has often been invoked as the major force in folktale and myth; that "everything becomes possible"[4] has been repeatedly claimed. But sparkles at the surface may be just reflections produced by some deep rhythm of the waves. In fact the element of the 'fantastic'—in the sense of the 'impossible,' from our point of view—is not indispensable in myth and not even in fairy-tale; there is nothing impossible in "Hänsel and Gretel," one of the best-known fairy-tales of the Brothers Grimm collection,[5] just as there is nothing supernatural in the Oedipus story[6] besides the well-established use of an oracle. There are elements of magic or shamanism in other tales, no doubt, and there are elements of ritual especially in myths; the remarkable role of animals largely belongs to these levels. Not being bound to reality, the tale may skip the finality of death and introduce 'fantastic' reversals such as cutting off heads and putting them back on, or being swallowed and

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would be my final thesis: *myth is a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance.*[5] Myth is traditional tale applied; and its relevance and seriousness stem largely from this application. The reference is secondary, as the meaning of the tale is not to be derived from it—in contrast to fable,[6] which is invented for the sake of its application; and it is partial, since tale and reality will never be quite isomorphic in these applications. And still the tale often is the first and fundamental verbalization of complex reality, the primary way to speak about many-sided problems, just as telling a tale was seen to be quite an elementary way of communication. Language is linear, and linear narrative is thus a way prescribed by language to map reality.

The phenomena of collective importance which are verbalized by applying traditional tales are to be found, first of all, in social life. Institutions or presentations of family, clan, or city are explained and justified by tales—'charter myths,' in Malinowski's term;[7]—or knowledge about religious ritual,[8] authoritative and absolutely serious ritual, and about the gods involved, is expressed and passed on in the form of such tales; then there are the hopes and fears connected with the course of nature, the seasons, and the activities of food supply; there is the desperate experience of disease. But also quite general problems of human society, such as marriage rules and incest, or even the organization of nature and the universe, may become the subject of tales applied; still it is only philosophical interest, both ancient and modern, that tends to isolate the myths of origin and cosmogony,[9] which in their proper setting usually have some practical reference to the institutions of a city or a clan.

A clear and well-known indication of the difference between myth and fairy-tale is the appearance of names. Proper names need not have a 'meaning,' but they have a reference.[10] From the viewpoint of tale structure, the persons are blank entities, left nameless in the fairy-tale or gratuitously filled in with some Hans, Jack, Ivan. Also the name of 'Polyphemus' the 'much-famed' Cyclops is a filler, produced by accident in the oral tradition;[11] the dragon or dragoness at Delphi can be nameless[12]—but 'Delphi' gives the reference, and 'Apollo': gods and heroes are present powers in collective ritual, beyond any tale. Even Odysseus

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not produced by facts. More often the incongruence, the tension, between facts and verbalization will become manifest. The tale tends to crystallize, by way of contrast and symmetry; it needs distinct and plausible characters, motivation, and continuity to be effective. On the other side there are simply facts, stubborn and often annoying. The tale is flexible, it may accommodate itself; there are many possibilities of reinterpretation and reelaboration to make the tale fit the circumstances. But the tale may also break loose again, starting into a flight of free fantasy according to its own, nonreferential logic.

And this is what must have happened again and again to myths in history: consecutive changes of crystallization and application. A well-structured tale, taken to elucidate some complex phenomenon or situation, may become, in a certain cultural environment, the established verbalization. It may take over characteristic details from there, which enlarge and modify its own structure; it may acquire sacred status and become immobilized; but if retold in a new situation, it will tend to crystallize again, still preserving some elements of its former application; in its new form it can again be applied to new circumstances, and so over and over again.

This is the historical dimension of myth, as of language in general. If we are to understand any given myth in all its details, we have to face the fact that it bears the marks of its history, of multiple levels of application and crystallization. It is possible to disregard this, to build up an all-embracing structural pattern; but the effects of transmission are there. Tradition is history, and the traditional tale cannot be exempt from it. In modern linguistics, and folklore, the synchronic, structural approach has been prevalent for some time; the historical schools appear to be old-fashioned. And in fact we could hardly accept the claim once made that folklore is a "historical science . . . largely concerned with origins":[3] the concept of 'origin' is mythical thinking, applying the tale of birth or creation to the constant flux of reality. Preoccupation with the 'origin' of myths is bound to result in the perspective of etymology: there should be a 'true' original meaning of a myth; and this must end up in a vicious regress. Yet the renouncing of 'origins' in the absolute sense should not prevent us from taking account of the dynamics of tradition. More pertinent than 'etymology' would be the analogy of metaphor.[4] In

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FIGURE 1
ENTWINED SERPENTS, ORIENTAL. Relief goblet of Gudea, c. 2200 B.C., Louvre. (H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament* [Berlin 1927²] fig. 367.) See I 8 n. 11.

Odysseus and the Cyclops.[13] Kirk has given an interpretation in the terms of Lévi-Strauss; he finds, not surprisingly, "a systematic confrontation between nature and culture" in "the orderly confusion of attitudes" as to civilization and savagery in the description of the Cyclopes.[14] Most interesting, then, are the verses which give this general description (*Od.* 9, 106–12): the Cyclopes lead a life reminiscent of the Isles of the Blest and still without any regard for either law or religion. But what has made the Cyclops famous, *polýphemos*,[15] is hardly this description; trying to memorize the tale, I would most easily forget just these verses. What is unforgettable is the action, the encounter with the ogre, the horror, and the narrow escape. The ambivalence of savagery is a by-product of crystallization, which needs the idyl as a contrasting

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II.
The Persistence of Ritual

1. THE BIOLOGICAL APPROACH

Stoic philosophy defined man as an animal endowed with speech, *zôon logikón*, and modern anthropology has not proceeded too far beyond this. Dealing with myth, I tried to make sense of the epitheton, the *differentia specifica*; turning to ritual now, I must perhaps ask for a certain humility while inquiring into more humble aspects of the *zôon*, which still belong to *zoé*, life, and which are important for understanding ancient religion, and perhaps religion as such. In fact religion has become quite a problem ever since the Greeks discovered their more modern variant of *lógos*.

The word 'ritual' may arouse even more ambivalent associations than the word 'myth.' 'Ritual' is something atavistic, compulsive, nonsensical, at best circumstantial and superfluous, but at the same time something sacred and mysterious. Ambivalent, too, was the response of classical scholarship to the concept. The impact of 'ritual' on classical studies can be dated to the year 1890, when within twelve months there appeared those three books which inaugurated the 'Cambridge school' of anthropology: Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites*,[1] Jane Harrison's *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*,[2] and the first—and slim—edition of *The Golden Bough* by James George Frazer.[3] The most original thinker among these may have been Robertson Smith; his influence on Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud bears witness to it. But for the general public in the English-speaking world the books of Jane Harrison, with those of the outstanding scholars Gilbert Murray[4] and Francis Macdonald Cornford[5] in her wake, and above all *The Golden Bough* in diverse abridged editions, with the monumental third edition in the background, gained overall influence, looming large even in poetry and literary criticism as well as in general anthropology. Before Frazer, Wil-

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absurd, and no result deduced from it is to be considered reliable. Yet much of what is called primitive mentality or primitive ideas has been deduced in this way.

Once again structuralism steps in to escape the regress from *obscurum* to *obscurius* and the willful reconstructions of 'origins.' Structuralism offers a careful, detailed, and lucid description of 'what is being done' without hazardous assumptions about any 'original meaning'; all explanations in these terms are denounced as being 'secondary elaborations.'[31] But what is left finally seems to be an empty form from which the very substance of ritual has been evaporated: being told that the ritual has *A*, a beginning, *B*, a middle, and *C*, an end,[32] is hardly satisfactory, even if *C* should be an inversion of *A*.

Ethology is more substantial. Ethology observes behavior with the double question 'How come?' and 'What for?'[33] Dealing with both history and function, it can answer such questions without the 'if I were a horse' method. Thus for an interpretation of human ritual we may tentatively adopt the biological perspective to see how far we can get by asking what is the pragmatic, unritualized function of a behavioral pattern, in order to understand its form and the message transmitted. In this way, we need not start from any reconstructed 'ideas'; we need not assume that there was, first, a conscious or even verbalized idea and then, secondly, some ritual action.[34] But we have to acknowledge a historical sequence, and historical continuity, in the development. And if it should turn out that ritual, in some cases, is older than mankind, this may seem surprising, but it does not discredit the approach.

2. HERMS, LIBATIONS, AND BRANCHES

Let us start with a shocking but memorable case from the midst of Greek religion: the herm.[1] More than two thousand years have done their best to mutilate extant herms and to obliterate what would still today be scandalous in public; but anybody familiar with vase-paintings knows what a classical herm looks like: a rather dignified, usually bearded, head on a four-cornered pillar and, in due place, an unmistakable, realistically molded, erect phallus. What is more, the Greeks did not even speak of 'a herm' as an object, but of *Hermês*, the

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perspective, we cannot overlook the fact that marking a territory by pouring out liquids is a 'ritual' behavior quite common in mammals, especially predators; we are all familiar with the dog's behavior at the stone. To connect this with libation seems to be an outrageous joke—which, incidentally, occurs in ancient literature.[25] Once on the track, however, one may find that beneath the level of highly developed civilization even in twentieth-century folk customs there is 'ritual behavior' at frontiers or boundary stones quite similar to what the dog does.[26] If we are told that such behavior in mammals is directed toward "familiar, conspicuous objects" as well as "novel objects," if it is explained as deriving from "autonomic responses to the unknown" and functioning to "maintain the animal's familiarity with its environment,"[27] the similarity to libation ceremonies, from Hattusa to Delphi, seems to be more than superficial. In fact divers species of mammals have evolved special glands for scent marking; cultural evolution has supplied man with utensils for similar functions.

Another, less embarrassing ritual is the carrying of branches in procession. This is quite common in Greek religion; we know of it in the procession of *mýstai* at Eleusis,[28] and especially of the members of the Bacchic *thíasos*—the *thýrsos* is the stylized form of it;[29] but the custom was nearly ubiquitous in cult. Often the worshiper, approaching an altar or a statue of a god, takes up a branch, or a bundle of branches, while praying;[30] so do the magi;[31] and the Babylonian seer used to wield a cedar staff at sacrifice.[32] Now the pragmatic function of using a twig is obvious: it is one of the simplest tools enlarging the force of the arm and its radius of action; it may be used for aggression or at least for keeping other people away, as we see maenads using their *thýrsos* against greedy satyrs. The Roman flamen Dialis carried branches to keep people off while going to sacrifice.[33] Thus carrying a branch is a general and evident sign of status and power. Still it is remarkable that male chimpanzees in imposing display swing branches and even break them from a tree and draw them along, stamping and howling.[34] A Dionysiac *thíasos* moving through town, dancing, shouting, and swinging branches—isn't this too a display of energy, demonstrating the power of the god?

But this is not the whole story about carrying branches. A branch is ceremoniously carried by somebody pleading for peace or pardon, a

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FIGURE 4

PRISONERS IN BANGLADESH, PLEADING FOR THEIR LIVES. News photograph. (*London Daily Express*, December 20, 1971; *Time*, January 3, 1972, p. 33.) See II 2 n. 42.

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out referring to language which denotes some extrahuman entity, the Power, the Numinous, the Divine, the Spirit, the God. But the biological analogy is not yet done with; it has still some bearing even on the question of 'symbolism.'

Ritual has been defined as an action redirected to serve for communication. There is consequently an element of 'as if' even in animal ritual. Those graylags of Konrad Lorenz cry triumphantly 'as if' they had just chased off a rival, having launched an attack at a nonexistent interloper.[18] At Phigalia in Arcadia, the priest of Demeter, wearing the mask of the goddess, takes a rod and 'thrashes those from under the earth.'[19] The pious Muslim, during the hadj, has to throw six stones toward two ancient stone-heaps; this is to hit the devil, they say.[20] The superstitious man throws three stones where a weasel has crossed the road,[21] to chase not the real animal, but the evil it may portend. The Incas once a year, armed and shouting, would drive off 'all the evils' toward the four points of the compass.[22] In European folk custom —still alive in some smaller towns and villages of central Switzerland —there are days in winter or spring when the youngsters assemble to crack their whips throughout the community, or to ring bells all around the stables and the wells.[23] Folklorists will tell them that 'originally' they believed—with Tylor—that the purpose was to drive away witches or evil spirits by this noise, or—with Mannhardt—that it was to wake the sleeping vegetation. The ancients spoke about men chasing away wolves with whips, *lykóorgoi*, *luperci*[24]—this would indeed be a pragmatic, unritualized function of such a behavior. But the ritual does not need wolves, as it does not need strong belief in spirits of any kind. People have now been losing their belief in evil spirits for some centuries, but they perform the ritual for the sake of tradition and just for fun—and this is not a form void of content: it serves its communicative purpose as before, independent of beliefs; the important thing for the youngsters is to be in the group and to display their strength to the eyes and ears of the others.[25] In a deeper sense the imposing display may help to overcome private anxieties and tensions; Konrad Lorenz has shown that the shiver of awe and enthusiasm which we feel running down our back in exaltation is the relic of the nerves and muscles which raise the hair on the ape's back and arms.[26] Reflex, and ritual, functions 'as if' there were an adversary for the sake of imposing dis-

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fore and after hunting. One characteristic feature is collecting the bones, especially the thighbones, of the victim and depositing them in some holy place, and setting the skull of the animal on a tree or on a pole; this is attested since the Paleolithic period[3] and it forms the center of Greek sacrificial practice: burning thighbones on the altar, *meríakaíein*, and setting up *boukránia* to mark a sanctuary or an altar. To explain this practice by language, one may speak of 'giving back' the animal to some supernatural owner, to tell a myth about how an animal sprang from the collected bones, new and alive;[4] sometimes the hide is spread out and stuffed, so that the animal seems indeed to be restored; this too goes back to the Paleolithic period.[5] By such means, anxiety about the extinction of life is both aroused and overcome; these methods, these ritual restrictions, have proved more stable than rational exploitation.

Hunting lost its basic function with the emergence of agriculture some ten thousand years ago. But hunting ritual had become so important that it could not be given up. Stability stayed with those groups who managed to make use of the social and psychological appeal of the ritual tradition by transforming, by redirecting, it until the whole action became a ritual. As the pragmatic importance declined, the symbolic value increased. At the Neolithic town of Çatal Hüyük,[6] about 6000 B.C., hunting wild cattle was practiced in ritual form and in a religious context. Paintings show men clad as leopards swarming around the bull: evidently a group of priests or initiates who imitate predators. Two leopards guard the Great Goddess enthroned at Çatal Hüyük,[7] while the horns of the hunted bulls are set up in 'sanctuaries' where a large clay figure of a naked goddess is attached to the wall, her legs outspread, giving birth to animals. The sacred place is marked by transferring thereto the relics of hunting: giving back, setting up the horns as a guarantee of new life, which can only come from birth. Thus death is no ultimate menace; the bones of the dead are buried in these sanctuaries, beneath the horns, beneath the goddess. The sequence of hunting ritual, deliberate death for the maintenance of life, with all the anxiety of bloodshed aroused and appeased by symbolic restoration, helps to overcome the real anxiety of death.

Wild cattle became extinct among the Neolithic farmers; in the place of game, domesticated animals were introduced into the ritual.[8]

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III.
Transformations of the Scapegoat

1. *ERYTHRAI*, HITTITES, AND *DEVOTIO*

When in A.D. 161 once again a war broke out between Rome and Parthia, and the Emperor Lucius Verus, adoptive brother of the more famous Marcus Aurelius, marched east with his army to fight the enemy, many of the intellectuals of those days who most appropriately called themselves sophists felt seized by patriotic fits, and they offered their not too modest contributions to paper warfare.[1] Among them, an otherwise obscure Polyaenus dedicated to the emperor a collection of strategems in eight books.[2] This work probably did neither good nor harm in a war of which the main effect was to bring a disastrous plague from the orient to the empire, but it has survived, whereas so much of more important literature has perished; and some chapters contain details of ancient history not transmitted anywhere else.

One of these chapters has a story about the foundation of Ionian Erythrae in Asia Minor, an event to be dated about 1000 B.C.; it is supposed in this text that there were 'Cretans' in the place before the Ionians, and it is tempting to relate them to the traces of Minoan-Mycenaean influence in Bronze Age Asia Minor,[3] though the name may just stand for 'Carians.' Polyaenus writes: "When the Ionians came to colonize Asia, Cnopus, from the family of Codrus, made war on those who held Erythrae"—the 'Cretans.' "The god gave him an oracle that he should get the priestess of Enodia from Thessaly as his general. And he sent an embassy to Thessaly and informed them about the oracle; they sent him Chrysame, the priestess of the goddess; she was an expert in drugs. She took the biggest and finest bull from the herd, had his horns gilded and his body adorned with fillets and purple cloths stitched with gold; and she mixed into his food a drug which provokes madness, and made him eat it. The drug drove the bull mad,

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The actions involved are: selection, investiture, and expulsion of the victim to be 'accepted' and destroyed by some hostile force. The 'investiture' is ambivalent, adornment for the animal or the 'woman,' slave's clothes for the king. Both mark the transformation from a previous 'normal' state among the others to the status of a victim singled out and left alone. Why its annihilation is so effective remains mysterious. Greek tales offer different rationalizations, the drug or the Trojan horse, whereas the Codrus story simply introduces an inscrutable oracle.

If we look at Rome, we find the animal ritual of Cnopus and the heroic myth of Codrus combined, as it were, in the ritual of *devotio*.[15] The self-sacrifice of P. Decius Mus in 340 B.C. seems to have become a kind of heroic myth itself, obscuring the normal procedure which Livy still mentions: the consul or dictator may choose any soldier who is a citizen and legally drafted; this man must speak the formula of *devotio*, unarmed, while stepping on a spear, with veiled head, touching his chin with his hand. This gesture is evidently the opposite of a normal soldier's pose—armed, fiercely staring, aggressively stretching forth the chin, brandishing arms. The 'devoted' soldier is then expected to rush against the enemy, taking up his arms, and to be killed; he may, though, survive. In this case an effigy of superhuman dimension must be buried instead, and an animal is slaughtered to purify him.

Livy, in his description of P. Decius Mus, compares him to an "expiatory sacrifice for all against the wrath of the gods, which transfers the plague from his own side into the enemy's"—Livy must indeed know of rituals quite similar to the Hittite type. Wherever Decius went, he says, terror spread among the enemy, "as if hit by a star which brings about plague";[16] and when he collapsed, the cohorts of the enemy panicked and fled. This comes remarkably close to the effect of Chrysame's frenzied bull. The divine agents remain in the dark. All the gods are invoked, but both victim and the enemy are handed over to the 'Manes' and to 'Earth,' who are not formally addressed in prayer; their names stand simply for the victim's destination, to join the dead beneath the earth. Details of the ritual prescription can be seen to be typically Roman *religio*; but there is a more general pattern behind it which would be obscured by calling the procedure 'simple magic' and

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assess in the case of Tarpeia; Sabines and Romans had long since coalesced into one community when the tale was recorded; but the ambiguity of honor and expulsion, *parentatio* at a grave and hurling off a cliff, remains indicative of the scapegoat pattern transformed.[34]

Conquest, as wish fulfillment, is a disturbance of balance provoking retribution; abstention and abandonment can bring rescue, and even success. In the primordial situation, the value of sacrifice for the sake of the community stands against the problematic rescue of the others; and still the hope of life rests with those who overcome and survive. No wonder there is a deep and disconcerting emotional response to the pattern; it hints at a basic antinomy of life, which may seem perplexing even to the rational morality of our time.

IV.
Heracles and the Master of Animals

1. GREEK ORIGINS?

Heracles[1] is the most popular and the most complex character of Greek mythology, and he was more than that: a most familiar figure of common belief and imagination—whom you would invoke at any situation of amazement or anguish: *Herákleis!*—and the recipient of cults all over Greece and well beyond her borders. Everyone knew, and we all know, what Heracles looked like, manly but usually good-humored, with a huge muscular body, with his club and lionskin, incarnation of the beautiful victory, *kallínikos*.

Historians, though, not content with what we see and know, have given themselves the trouble of asking how these beliefs, these cults and myths about Heracles arose. This is the question about the 'origin' of Heracles which is both controversial and frustrating. Our evidence, which begins toward the end of the eighth century, is variegated from the start: there are exploits with Lion, Hydra, Hind, Birds, and Amazon among the very earliest pictorial representations of any myth in Greek art;[2] there are references to the enmity of Hera to Heracles, to Eurystheus and the labors, but also to the story of Hesione and Troy and to adventures at Pylos and Cos in Homer's *Iliad*.[3] The formula *bíe Herakleeíe* evidently comes from the technique of oral epic,[4] where Heracles must have been a major character at least for some generations of singers. But there is no Greek evidence earlier than this.

Any theory about a Greek origin of Heracles must thus remain speculative, and it will reflect the scholar's general approach toward myth. To the Romantic mind, Heracles appeared to be the idealistic projection of the Greek people itself, conceived and elaborated on by Greek creative poets, of whom, unfortunately, we know nothing. Thus Wilamowitz,

in his classical commentary on Euripides' *Heracles*,[5] following Karl Otfried Müller, boldly declared Heracles to be the overwhelming expression of Dorian personality; and since Hera is the goddess of Argos, where the Dorian invaders broke in at the beginning of the Dark Ages, her enmity toward Heracles is easy to explain. We have, then, a mythical personality as a projection of a collective ideal, and we have the exploits of this person mirroring historical accidents. The message of the Heracles myth, according to Wilamowitz, a message central to the original Dorians, is that man, by toils and sufferings, may become a god: "born a man—risen to god; suffered toils—conquered heaven."[6] The reader may note that even the style betrays that Wilamowitz is attributing a pseudo-Christian credo to his presumptive proto-Dorians "when sitting deep in the mountains of Macedonia"; and with Hera so far away in Argos, why should the original Heracles have had to suffer any toils? Later on, in his last work, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*,[7] Wilamowitz lightly dismissed the Dorian hypothesis, yielding to the argument of Farnell that Heracles plays no role in Dorian Crete. Thus eighth-century Argos became the place where Greek Heracles must have originated. In a similar vein, though diverging in details, Paul Friedlaender[8] had tried to reconstruct and localize early archaic poems about Heracles, creations of Greek poets in special circumstances. A belated adherent to the method has made his way into one of the last supplements to Pauly-Wissowa, where, surprisingly enough, he relates the discovery that Hera was the clan goddess of the Dorians, whereas Heracles stands for the Achaeans;[9] this is why Hera is so dominant; the conflict remains, as Wilamowitz saw it, mirroring the historical Dorian conquest.

The conflicting results bring out the arbitrariness of presuppositions and method. It is true that myth may reflect certain historical situations to which the traditional tale had been applied, but it is wrong to conclude that if a myth is used and makes sense in a certain situation, it has been invented or 'created' expressly for this purpose. As to the dark centuries, even that situation is a construct made up in correspondence to the interpretation of the myth. Another problem is whether a myth has its nucleus in a 'character,' however vivid this may happen to appear, or rather in patterns of action; the findings of Propp and his followers[10] give reason to opt for this latter alternative.

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his golden cup in which the sun travels every night along the circle of Oceanus from West to East, to rise to the sky again.[5]

It is clear that this is a tale which, to a large extent, exactly fits the pattern of Propp:[6] the hero, by order, sets out on the quest (functions 9-11), meets a helper, reacts to him, succeeds in getting the object he needs (12-14); reaches the place of destination (15), begins a fight with the possessor (16), defeats him (18), gets the cattle (19), returns (20); even the repetition that the hero loses his prey and must endeavor a second time to get and keep it is in Propp's pattern (8-15bis), as it is in the myth of Heracles and his cattle. There are special features which distinguish the Geryon tale from the general pattern: there is the cosmic geography with the way of the sun and the golden cup; Oceanus is the place where sky and earth meet; appropriately the island is 'red' like the color of sunset. And there is the three-headed giant who owns the cattle, super-human and infra-human at the same time.

It is astonishing to see to how many local traditions this tale has been applied; it is always the cattle which, getting lost or stolen, cause new labors for Heracles. Thus he became involved in a war with Pylos, wherever this Pylos may be situated;[7] in Epirus a race of *Larinoì bóes* was said to descend from these cows, which Heracles had set free to honor Zeus of Dodona;[8] likewise wild cattle in Thrace were traced to the herd from Erytheia.[9] But most of the tales are set in the West:[10] The story of how Heracles was attacked at Marseilles played a part in the *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus.[11] He had similar adventures at Rome,[12] Cumae,[13] Croton,[14] though these places were not strictly on his way to Argos, and he was believed to have even passed through Sicily, notably Motye,[15] Eryx,[16] Solus,[17] Himera,[18] Agyrion,[19] and Syracuse.[20] Most prominent, through the *Aeneid* of Virgil, became the Roman adventure with Cacus who stole and hid the cattle in his cave, but was discovered and properly killed; this is the foundation myth for the Ara Maxima in Rome.[21] All this belonged somehow to pre-Greek tradition; the Greeks knew they had arrived in Italy and Sicily well after the epoch of Heracles. In the eyes of the colonists, such tales must have given a touch of familiarity to the unknown countries: our Heracles has been here before, and if the barbarians were unfriendly, they had to be sorry for it. But there is more to it.

Italia means 'land of cattle,' as the Greeks correctly understood; and

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Shalala is only one appointment, it has been said. (Yes, but to an agency whose budget is larger than the national budgets of every country except Germany and Japan). There are no doubt other appointments to come in domestic affairs which will buttress the Left's seizure of the culture. (It is rumored that Joseph Duffey, who has made appeasement of the radicals into performance art at the University of Massachusetts, is on the short list to take over USIA and thus to dictate how America is portrayed abroad; and that Catharine Stimpson, whose lugubrious advocacy of PC as head of the Modern Language Association is legend, may be given control of the National Institute of Humanities.) With her connections with Hillary, Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund (an organization which may be a 90s version of the Trilateral Commission), Shalala is more than a Secretary; she is a symbol. In her, the long march through the institutions is complete. No one believed it possible back in the early l970s when the first burned out New Leftists re-enrolled in the universities they had spent the previous years trying to destroy, but this was always a march on Washington.

During the last few weeks before the election, some warned that we were headed for a PC administration. But they were told that Clinton himself would stand against such nonsense. That was why he had created the Democratic Leadership Council, after all. The DLC was an organization based on political common sense and recreating the vital center. Yet at least from the time of the Democratic convention it has been clear that the President-elect was a paper hound dog. The convention itself had the feel of a l2-step clinic. "Recovery" was in the air — a psychological as well as an economic imperative. Everyone there seemed to be "in recovery" — from AIDS, from abuse, from harassment, from prejudice. They were overcoming co-dependency, a Yuppie version of guilt; and low self esteem, the Yuppie version of sin. Everyone had a tale of how they had overcome. The robotic Al Gore had the story of his son — a nightclub imitation of a moral quickening. Clinton's self-defining vignette was doctored with a slightly different spin. When he was presented as the boy who had stood up against an abusive stepfather, it was an attempt to impress them with the heroism he never achieved in war on the battleground of the dysfunctional family. The subliminal message was that this primal trauma had left a mark. No wonder that he had perhaps strayed from the course during a life lived in these psychological shadows. But the important thing was that he had seen the light and was in recovery, and the misdeeds he never admitted committing in his marriage were behind him.

Despite the clumsy attempt at premature closure it was easy to see the subtext: Clinton had signed not just a truce with his wife, but an unconditional surrender. Every marriage conceals a deal. But not since FDR has the deal had such national repercussions. It is easy to imagine