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WHY DID ODYSSEUS BECOME A HORSE?

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WHY is a culture the way it is? Because that is how far it has evolved along some world-wide scale(s); because of such and such outside influences or local inventions; because it works; because that is how the human mind has here expressed itself; because it benefits those with power. All the standard isms can help in answering the general question, but they are not exhaustive: there is another approach, seldom aligned with the others, but of long standing, and sometimes of use when others are not.

If one asks why a *language* is the way it is, everyone knows that the answer lies partly in the prehistoric proto-language from which it derives. One cannot automatically transpose from language to culture, but the two have often been transmitted alongside each other, and were so all the more, I suppose, when the world had fewer people in it and more space around them. So one can often ask of a cultural feature whether it goes back to a reconstructible feature of the proto-culture associated with the proto-language. We all know this in a shadowy way, and do not need a Dumézil to remind us; but the scope and limits of 'language-family-based cultural comparativism' still need exploration.

The cultural feature examined here comes from classical Greece. It is widely known that there is more to the story of Odysseus than we learn in Homer. When the hero visits Hades, Tiresias prophesies that his adventures will continue after his return to Ithaca, and accounts of these later events can be found in post-Homeric sources, notably in the 'Epic Cycle' and in the summary of Greek tradition by

Apollodorus. But the tradition that Odysseus turned into a horse is mentioned in neither of these sources, and my unsystematic soundings suggest that it is not widely known even among classicists. Grimal (1982) omits it in his entry on Ulysses (Latin for Odysseus), though it appears under the obscure figure of Hals. Stanford (1963: 88) slips past it in less than a line—naturally enough, since the theme was to have no future in European literature.

Nevertheless, obscure though it is, the tradition certainly existed, references to it being assembled in the large encyclopaedias (Schmidt 1897–1909: 692; Wüst 1937: 1993) and discussed in Hartmann (1917). Three authors are cited.

(i) The little-known first-century AD mythographer Ptolemaeus Hephaestus or Khennos (*Nov. Hist.* 4, pp. 194–5 Westermann).

> In Etruria they say that there is a place called the Tower of Hals, and that it is named after an Etruscan sorceress (*pharmakis*) called Hals, who became a handmaiden to Circe but later absconded from her mistress. When Odysseus came to her [Hals], she reportedly turned him into a horse by means of her magical drugs (*eis hippon meteballe tois pharmakois*), and kept him with her until he grew old and died. From this story one also has a solution to the puzzle in Homer (where he says that) 'death will come to you [Odyseus] from the sea' (*ex halos*—*Od.* 11.134).

Hals ('sea', cognate with the English word 'salt') is not mentioned by any other classical sources, and was no doubt invented to make sense of the prophecy by Tiresias. Similarly, the reference to old age (*gērasas*) recalls the continuation of the prophecy: Odysseus will die 'overcome with sleek (or comfortable) old age (*gērai*)'. But Tiresias in no way hints at the metamorphosis. If the latter is to be explained, we need a different approach.

(ii) In the next century the sceptical philosopher Sextus Empiricus makes two passing references to the tradition when discussing history and truth. In one passage (*Adv. Math.* 1.264), he distinguishes between three sorts of narrative, *historia*, *muthos* and *plasma*, and exemplifies the second ('legend' in the Loeb translation) by citing two stories of births (of poisonous spiders and snakes from the blood of the Titans, and of Pegasus from the severed head of the Gorgon), and three stories of transformations (*metaballō* intrans.) (of the companions of Diomedes into sea birds, of Odysseus into a horse, and of Hecabe [Priam's wife] into a dog). A few lines later (1.267), discussing contradictions, Sextus cites three versions of the death of Odysseus. One says that the hero was killed in ignorance by his son Telegonus (the version found in the epic cycle and in Apollodorus), another that he died when a sea-gull dropped on his head the spike of a poisonous fish (a fragment of Aeschylus says something similar), and yet another that he was transformed into a horse (*eis hippon metebale tēn morphēn*).

(iii) Two centuries later still, Servius was writing his learned Latin commentary on the *Aeneid* and decided to annotate the reference to Ulysses in 2.44. He mentions (following no very obvious order) the hero's surreptitious exploration of Troy, his family, his death at the hands of Telegonus, his headgear in paintings,

and his post-Troy wanderings, which 'Homer made familiar to everyone'. Then he continues:

> Concerning him another story also is told. For when he had returned to Ithaca after his wanderings, it is said that he found Pan in his home. Pan is said to have been born from Penelope and all the suitors, as the very name Pan ['All'] seems to proclaim. However, others say that he was born from Mercury [Latin for Hermes], who had changed into a he-goat before sleeping with Penelope. But Ulysses, after he saw the misshapen child, is said to have departed (again) on his wanderings. He met his death either through old age, or at the hand of his son Telegonus, being killed by the spine of a sea beast. It is said that when he was just setting off, he was changed by Minerva [= Athene] into a horse (*in equum mutatus*).

The two versions of the birth of Pan will occupy us later. The spine or sting of the sea beast (*aculeus marinae beluae*) parallels the sharp spine of the marine sting-ray (*kentron thalassias trugonos*) in Sextus, though, as is by far the commoner story, it is here wielded by Telegonus, not dropped by a bird. But I cite the passage now for its confirmation of the equine metamorphosis.

The three authors say nothing about their sources, but the differences make it unlikely that the later ones draw on the earlier. More likely, all three drew on lost written sources predating Khennos; and one can reasonably imagine that the first such source was recording an oral tradition. But why should anyone *invent* the story that, towards the end of his life, Odysseus turned into a horse? The idea is odd, and those to whom I mention it are surprised. The hero's previous life hardly suggests that this would be a fitting or natural ending, and one casts around for an explanation. Might the tradition have something to do with the Wooden Horse? Or with the hero's victimization by Poseidon, Tamer of Horses? Recent comparativism offers a more promising lead.

I have shown elsewhere that in one part of his career Odysseus closely resembles Arjuna, the central hero of the longer of the two Sanskrit epics (Allen 1996). The comparison is between the second half of Odysseus' return journey from Troy to Ithaca and the journey which Arjuna undertakes as a penance in Book 1 of the *Mahābhārata*. Shortly after his marriage to Draupadī, Arjuna leaves his young wife to visit the four quarters of India, and in each quarter he encounters females, human or non-human; then he returns to Draupadī. Odysseus encounters successively Circe, the Monsters (i.e. the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis), Calypso and Nausicaa, before returning to Penelope. The comparison is not merely an abstract one involving four plus one structural elements; in spite of numerous differences between the two epics, the encounters can be matched one for one in respect of many details. Such precise matching excludes independent invention and implies a common origin; and for many reasons, this origin or 'proto-narrative' must have been oral. But as Dumézil showed, the proto-Indo-Europeans possessed

a typology of marital unions, and the pattern of encounters in the epics, especially in the Sanskrit, conforms quite well to what one might expect of such a typology. The chances are, therefore, that the proto-narrative was once told in proto-Indo-European.

If the careers of Odysseus and Arjuna are cognate at one point in their respective epics, it by no means follows that they will be cognate at other points. Perhaps the encounters with females represent an exceptionally conservative structure within two narrative traditions that in other respects were subject to all-pervasive innovation and flux. But perhaps not. It is obviously worth looking at other parts of the two careers to see if they too might be cognate. Moreover, in doing so, one can bear in mind a point of logic. Judgements of similarity between episode *x* in one story and episode *X* in another are apt to seem methodologically suspect: there will always be differences between the two stories, and the weighing of similarities against differences will always involve subjective judgement. But suppose *x* belongs to a biography that includes episodes or characters *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, and *X* to one including *D*, *E*, *F*, *G*, *H*, similarities d-D etc. already having been established. In that case similarities between *x* and *X* can be judged more charitably and less sceptically.

So, given that Odysseus becomes a horse, does Arjuna? Certainly not: neither he nor any of his brothers are ever transformed into animals. But towards the end of his career Arjuna does have an important relationship with a horse, in Book 14 of the epic. Before we come to the details, here is the context.

The *Mahābhārata* centres on the conflict between two branches of a royal dynasty. The goodies are the five Pāṇḍava brothers, of whom Arjuna is the third by age. Although it is he who wins Princess Draupadī, she is married polyandrously to all of them. The Pāṇḍavas are banished and disinherited, but Krishna helps them win a great eighteen-day battle, and the eldest, Yudhishṭhira, takes the throne.

Now comes Book 14, 'The Book of the Horse Sacrifice' (see Roy n.d. Vol. XII). The remaining four books are relatively brief and narrate the deaths of the main survivors from the great war. The epic ends with the deaths of the Pāṇḍavas themselves as they journey towards the Himalayas and Heaven.

The Horse Sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) is the highest of the royal rituals and establishes the cosmic supremacy of a king. It is a lengthy and elaborate undertaking, lasting more than a year and including a three-day *soma* offering. The details are given in the Vedic texts called the Brāhmaṇas, composed as we know them before 500 BC (I shall refer exclusively to the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa). Naturally the epic, which was written down in the centuries surrounding the year 0, gives little space to ritual niceties, but it states repeatedly that the performance conformed with the scriptures.[1]

1. A historical study of the ritual could include the traces of it identified by Biardeau (1989: 166-241) in certain contemporary Tamil villages.

Roughly speaking, the ritual can be divided into two parts. In the first, after some preliminaries, a specially selected stallion is released near the capital and wanders at will across the face of India. During the following year it is accompanied by warriors whose job is to prevent any interference with it. Assuming none of the challengers is successful, the second part of the ritual takes place back in the capital, in the presence of a large gathering. The horse is sacrificed together with other victims, and (as we shall see) the queens take an active part in the performance.

Let us return to Book 14. A few months after the great war, Yudhishṭhira is still in despair over the death of his beloved grandfather and over his own sins. The sage Vyāsa proposes that the sins be annulled by performance of a Horse Sacrifice. Vast wealth will be needed, and an expedition sets off to obtain it from the Himalayas. Meanwhile, Arjuna's grandson Parikshit, who is stillborn, is resuscitated by Krishna.

When the Himalayan party returns, Arjuna is selected to accompany the horse. While the animal circumambulates India (clockwise, starting in the north), Arjuna has to defeat a number of challengers, his most interesting conflict taking place in the east, in Manipura. In Book 1 Arjuna had followed a similar route, going first to the north, where he cohabited with the serpent maiden Ulūpī, then to Manipura, where he married Princess Citrāngadā. Ulūpī's son had died in the great war, but Citrāngadā's son Babhruvāhana had remained uninvolved and was now king of Manipura. Arjuna insists that his son, having been born a warrior, is duty-bound to fight off any encroacher. Ulūpī also appears and urges her step-son to fight.

In the ensuing duel Arjuna is shot with an arrow and collapses. Shattered by his parricide, the son faints. Citrāngadā hears the news and hastens to the scene. On recovering, Babhruvāhana laments his deed, but Ulūpī summons up a magic stone which, placed on Arjuna's chest, revives him. She now explains. During the great war, Arjuna had used dishonest means to kill his grandfather and had been cursed for it. Defeat by his son would lift the curse, and that was why she had incited the duel. Arjuna issues invitations for the Horse Sacrifice and continues his mission.

The horse returns safely to the capital. Three hundred animal victims are tied to sacrificial stakes, and Draupadī is put beside the suffocated stallion. The latter is dissected and offered into the fire, whose smoke purifies the Pāṇḍavas. Largesse is distributed to all present on an enormous scale, and the concourse disperses.

The contrast between the two epic traditions is great. The Greek material bearing on the horse is so scanty that I have cited it all, while the Sanskrit is so copious that I have had to précis ruthlessly (Book 14 has some 2900 shlokas, say 6000 lines). Together with a difference in length goes a difference in narrative integration. The Greek gives no hint as to *why* Odysseus was turned into a horse: the motives of Hals are as obscure as those of Athene. In contrast, Arjuna's dealings with the horse make perfect sense. The ritual is a well-established institution; its performance at this point in the epic is well justified; the reasons

why Arjuna should accompany the animal are detailed by Vyāsa (71.14–18).[2] To omit the Horse Sacrifice would be to leave the triumph of the goodies incomplete.

Another difference is that Arjuna is never explicitly identified with the horse. His job is simply to follow it in his chariot and protect it from interference. Nevertheless, his association with the animal is close: a challenge to it is a challenge to himself. When the expedition sets out, crowds gather to gaze at horse and follower (*haya* and *hayasāriṇa*), shouting 'there goes the son of Kuntī and the glorious horse' (72.10, 12). When Babhruvāhana invites him into the city, Arjuna declines: his ritual obligation means that he cannot leave the horse even for one night (82.30–1). When the party returns, the proximity of man and horse is again emphasised (89.16).

The association is more than a matter of protection and proximity. As was noted, the second part of the ritual involves the royal wives. The ritual texts list four of them, with separate titles and characteristics, ranging from chief queen to low-caste wife. The group intervenes at a number of points (see Dumont 1927), for instance by anointing the horse before it is suffocated; but the most interesting episode occurs after the death. The chief queen lies beside the carcass, a covering is placed over them, and the queen simulates copulation.

Although the epic says rather little about the role of the queens, two points are significant. First, after the sacrifice of the various victims according to the scriptures, the priests cause Draupadī to 'lie beside' the horse (*upasaṃveśayan* 91.2; cf. *saṃviś*, 'approach, cohabit with'). Secondly, although nothing is said of the other wives' involvement in ritual, they are certainly present. After the duel, the two wives are explicitly invited (82.24); when they reach the capital, they meet Princess Subhadrā, who is already there (90.2); and after the ritual is over, the three of them are included in a list of the ladies at court (15.1.21).

In the capital, the 'closeness' of Arjuna and horse takes on a new dimension. When the horse is roaming 'the whole earth' (89.18), the symbolism evidently concerns territorial dominion. But there is more to kingship than military supremacy: a traditional king has cosmic links with a chthonic female principle and, more mundanely, he also has to produce an heir. It is therefore natural that Draupadī, as chief queen, should have a part to play in the ritual, but the interesting point is that Arjuna's conjugal role is here taken on by the horse, albeit post mortem. Draupadī is a dutiful wife, and obviously her ritual act with the horse has nothing to do with adultery. She is miming intercourse with a substitute for Arjuna, who is himself the central and most representative of the Pāṇḍavas.[3]

To sum up so far, Odysseus is physically transformed into a horse, while Arjuna is symbolically associated with one; and the reason for the involvement of

2. All *Mahābhārata* references, unless otherwise noted, are to Book 14 of the Critical Edition.

3. In the *Harivaṃśa*, the 'appendix' to the *Mahābhārata*, during the Horse Sacrifice held by Arjuna's great-grandson, Indra substitutes himself for the stallion, partly in order to enjoy the beautiful chief wife (118.10 ff.). I cite this Indra–horse link as 'harmonizing' with the Arjuna–horse link.

horses in the two biographies is that something similar was present in the proto-narrative from which they both derive. My wording is vague, but that is deliberate; for although one can imagine the proto-narrative as closer to the well-integrated Sanskrit than to the scrappy Greek, it would be premature to attempt any precise reconstruction. Instead, I turn to some of the other issues arising from the rapprochement.

One puzzle concerns the consequences of the ritual intercourse. One might expect a successful Horse Sacrifice to result in offspring, as indeed the Brāhmaṇa implies (1.9.9).[4] However, Draupadī's five children, one born from each husband, were all killed at the end of the great war, and neither she nor the husbands produce any more. Yet the line does not die out. For although Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna and Subhadrā, was also killed in the war, he left his wife pregnant with Parikshit; and Parikshit, as already noted, was resuscitated by Krishna. But Krishna was present at the right moment explicitly because he had been invited for the Horse Sacrifice (51.46, 65.2). Thus, although the survival of the dynasty is ensured *before* the ritual copulation, the two events are not unconnected.

A more important objection to my argument might be that in carrying out her role in the sacrifice, Draupadī is acting not, or not primarily, as the wife of Arjuna, but as the chief queen of King Yudhishṭhira, for whom the ceremony is being held. The relation between the two brothers is a fundamental and far-reaching problem which I hope to discuss elsewhere, but one point is very clear. To all intents and purposes, Yudhishṭhira has only the one wife, Draupadī, while Arjuna does indeed have four. Moreover, unlike his elder brother, he acquired them by his own acts (he won Draupadī in an archery contest, and she always loves him best). Thus it is easy to envisage Arjuna as being in some sense the 'real' royal husband of Draupadī, even if Yudhishṭhira is the official one. This line of thought lessens the conceptual gap between Arjuna, who is not a king, and Odysseus, who is one (he has of course no elder brother).

The rapprochement can be further strengthened by moving from Odysseus-as-horse to the father–son conflict with which Sextus and Servius associate it. The killing of Odysseus by Telegonus is well attested: in his invaluable notes to Apollodorus, Frazer (1921, Vol. II: 303) collected fifteen classical references, and the story has not infrequently been related (as by Katz 1990: 198) to other father–son duels such as Rustam–Sohrab or Cúchulainn–Conlaí, as well as to Arjuna–Babhruvāhana. The picture is enriched by another Greek story (recorded by Parthenius *Erot.* 3) in which it is the father who kills the son: Odysseus kills Euryalus, his son by Euippe (from *hippos*, 'horse', which is suggestive). Altogether, there must be material for a book-length study; but having previously used the story in arguing for the Calypso-Citrāngadā homology (Allen 1996), I look at it here only for its bearing on the horse. The relation between the

4. All references to the *Śatapatha Brâhmaṇa* are to Book 13.

father–son duel and the equine theme varies. Sextus treats the two as alternatives, with a third added for good measure. Servius juxtaposes them, but without making it clear exactly how he sees the link. The Sanskrit situates the duel as a short episode within the year-long association of hero and horse, which of course presupposes that the duel is not fatal. But in all three cases the two themes are somehow related.

At first sight Khennos is an exception, since he does not refer to a duel. But the matter is not so simple. Hals starts off as a servant (perhaps a pupil?) of Circe, and she resembles her mistress in being a magician who uses drugs to transform humans into animals, as Circe does in the *Odyssey*. In that sense she is a doublet of Circe. But Circe, who is regularly given as the mother of Telegonus, is certainly involved in the story of the duel. In Apollodorus it is when she tells her son about his father that he sails for Ithaca; and according to an *Odyssey* scholion (to 11.134) she procures the weapon he uses. Moreover, there are independent grounds for seeing Circe as cognate with Ulūpī; and Ulūpī is several times mentioned as Babhruvāhana's 'mother' in a classificatory sense (she is of course his step-mother), and it is she who engineers the duel. Again, according to the commentary on Lycophron's *Alexandria* (line 805), it was said that after Odysseus had been killed by Telegonus, Circe resurrected him with her drugs (*pharmakois*) —compare Ulūpī's resuscitation of Arjuna. Thus, in connecting the equine metamorphosis with Circe, Khennos is indirectly connecting it with the duel.

Servius raises a lot of interesting issues on which I must be very brief.

(i) *Wanderings* Odysseus' return journey from Troy was indeed a matter of wandering (*errores*), since he was largely at the mercy of wind and wave; but a priori his subsequent departure from Ithaca could have been direct to a fixed destination. Servius' use of the word *errores* here too might perhaps recall the wandering of the sacrificial horse, even if he had omitted the last sentence of his annotation.

(ii) *Helper deity* The attribution of the transformation to Athene is natural, given her long-standing association with the hero and her previous transformations of him, e.g. into a beggar and back. But in general (Allen 1996: 18), Athene as helper deity to the hero corresponds to the god-on-earth Krishna, and Krishna's role in Book 14 is extensive. He is the first to suggest to Yudhishṭhira the idea of a sacrifice (2.3); then, after giving Arjuna a lengthy religious discourse and visiting his own home town of Dvārakā, he resuscitates Parikshit; and finally, he is offered the leading role in the Horse Sacrifice (70.21), though he politely declines. The Athene–Krishna relationship is potentially a vast topic.

(iii) *Totality* According to Servius' first variant, Pan was begotten by all the suitors. Though this accords ill with the Homeric portrait of the faithful Penelope, similar traditions are known from other sources, and one might wonder if they are somehow related to Draupadī's polyandry. However, I consider here only the folk etymology of the child's name: *pan* is the neuter of *pas*, 'all'. The link between Pan and totality is made in a different form at the end of the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*: the gods called the boy Pan because he delighted the hearts of all of them

(*pasin*, the dative plural). But Draupadī's five sons collectively incarnate the Vishvedevas, the 'All-gods' (*viśva*, 'all, every, whole, universal').

(iv) *Goats* According to Servius' second variant, Pan was begotten by Hermes in the form of a goat. Ignoring Hermes, I focus on the collocation goat–horse—Penelope first has a lover who takes the form of a goat, then a husband who is given the form of a horse; and the Indian ritual involves the same sequence of animals.

(a) As is regularly mentioned (e.g. Kane 1941: 1228), the Horse Sacrifice is first referred to, some centuries before the Brāhmaṇas, in two Vedic hymns (RV 1.162–3), which are in fact used in the ritual; and in exalting the horse, both hymns associate it with a he-goat. The first describes a procession: 'This goat for all the gods [note the adjective *viśvadevya*, corresponding to Vishvedeva] is led forward with the racehorse as the share for Pūshan' (O'Flaherty 1981: 89–90). The goat is the preliminary sacrificial victim, the *Voropfer* (Geldner 1951, Vol. I: 222), and when the procession circles three times leading the horse, the goat goes first, 'announcing the sacrifice to the gods'. The second hymn confirms this picture. 'The racehorse has come to the slaughter, pondering with his heart turned to the gods. The goat, his kin, is led in front; behind come the poets, the singers' (O'Flaherty 1981: 88).

(b) The Brāhamaṇa also associates the two animals, albeit less straightforwardly. To the central stake is bound 'the horse, a hornless he-goat and a gayal (?)', and around the horse are tied a whole set of he-goats (2.2.1–10). The horse himself is dedicated to Prajāpati (here treated as the supreme deity), and the 'body-encirclers' are each dedicated to some other god.

(c) The *Mahābhārata* account mentions only bulls and 'aquatic animals' (90.33) and ignores goats, as does the account of the ritual in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.13.24). Nevertheless, I suppose that the successive appearance of goat and horse in the biography of Penelope is related to the successive sacrifice of goat and horse in the Indian ritual, and that the animals appeared in that order in the proto-narrative.

This essay has explored only a selection of the post-Homeric texts and has done so only selectively; but for my final comparison I return to Homer (11.119–34). Tiresias does not mention horses, but he does mention *two* sacrifices. After killing the suitors, Odysseus is to set out with an oar over his shoulder and travel until he comes among people who know nothing of sea, salt, ships or oars. When he meets someone who mistakes the oar for a winnowing fan, he is to plant it in the earth and sacrifice a ram, bull and boar to Poseidon. Then he is to return home and sacrifice sacred hecatombs to the gods, to all of them in sequence (*pasi mal' hexeiēs*).

The two sacrifices stand in contrast. The first takes place far from home among strangers, is directed solely to Poseidon, and is relatively modest in scale—three victims, and presumably no guests. The second is at home (on the smallish

sea-girt island of Ithaca), is directed to all the gods (including Poseidon again?), one after another—*hexeiēs* implies a listing—and is on a large scale, for a *hekatombē* is 'a great public sacrifice'. Even in Homer, as the dictionaries tell us, the number and nature of the victims does not always accord with the etymology (*hekaton*, 'hundred'; *bous*, 'ox'), but the connotations of the word, especially in the plural, are clear enough.

In Book 14 Arjuna is essentially involved in two and only two sacrifices. The second we already know about: the Horse Sacrifice is celebrated in the capital on a quasi-cosmic scale, both as regards human guests and deities. For although Prajāpati is central, the Brāhmaṇa makes it clear that he does not stand alone; he had wanted to keep the ritual for himself, but the other gods demanded their share (2.1.1). 'The horse is the nobility, and the other animals are the peasantry...the horse alone belongs to Prajāpati, and the others are sacred to the gods' (2.2.15). 'Seeing that the horse is sacred to Prajāpati, why is it sprinkled for other gods too?', asks the text. It is because all the gods are concerned in the sacrifice (1.2.9). 'The horse is slaughtered for all the deities' (3.4.1). But the pantheon is not honoured simply as an anonymous collectivity. When the omenta are offered up to the gods, the sacrificer 'gratifies them deity after deity (*yathādevatam*)' (5.3.1–6). Sometimes the text gives a sequence of divine names: 'Hail to A..., Hail to B...' (1.8.2–8), or 'Such and such a goat to A..., such and such to B...' (2.2.3–9).

Arjuna's earlier sacrifice takes place during the Himalayan expedition. The capital is in the plains, and to reach its goal the party must traverse 'lakes, rivers, forests and groves' (63.6), which implies a considerable distance; moreover, their northward journey takes them away from the sea. The expedition is sizeable, but compared with the Horse Sacrifice it is modest in scale and involves no guests. Above all, it is directed not to all the gods, but primarily to Shiva, and only secondarily to his associates. The gold was originally buried by a king who obtained it by obeying instructions to go to the mountains and propitiate Shiva (8.12–31); Bhīma urges that they do likewise (62.13); and so they do (64.1–4). Offerings are also made to Shiva's friend Kubera and to other supernaturals, but the expedition is certainly oriented primarily to Shiva, to whom alone offerings are made before both legs of the journey (62.18–19; 64.18). But apart from anything else (it is another vast topic; see Allen in press), Shiva and Poseidon are both characteristically trident-bearers.

Thus the argument is that Poseidon's sacrifice : hecatomb :: Shiva's sacrifice : Horse Sacrifice.

When comparing two things, say two stories, the easiest procedure is to take one as a starting-point and present the other as diverging from it. Since the Sanskrit epic tradition is copious and coherent, and the area of Greek tradition studied here is scrappy and incoherent, one is tempted to take the Sanskrit as starting-point. Diachronically speaking, this is obviously nonsense. There is no possibility that

the *Mahābhārata* lies behind the Greek, and if detailed similarities exist it must be because both descend from a third body of narrative. The latter must have contained some linkage between proto-hero and horse, and presumably the story was indeed more similar to the Horse Sacrifice than to the unmotivated metamorphosis in the Greek.

Comparativists will not be surprised at this conclusion, which relates to a long-running debate: royal horse-sacrifice was first postulated as a proto-Indo-European institution by Schröder (1927). Schröder's brief paper is often referred to, e.g. by Dumézil (1975: 215–19) and O'Flaherty (1980: 338), but what exactly can be reconstructed remains controversial (Polomé 1994a, 1994b; Sergent 1995: 365). The rapprochement presented here provides new material for the debate, which is already quite complex.

What is perhaps more surprising is that the sources used in the rapprochement are so late by Graeco-Roman standards. I suppose the lateness is due partly to the loss of earlier writings; but if one is surprised, it is probably more because scholarship has tended to underestimate both the endurance of oral tradition and its ability to bypass the earliest texts so as to surface in later ones. But how could the bypass be demonstrated except by language-family based comparativism?

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